

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD WEDNESDAY, 25  
SEPTEMBER 2024 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 Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor John Leech	Manchester City Council
Councillor Anthony McCaul	Manchester City Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Terry Smith	Rochdale Council
Councillor Dylan Williams	Rochdale Council
Councillor Lewis Nelson	Salford City Council
Councillor Helen Hibbert	Stockport Council
Councillor Rachel Wise	Stockport Council
Councillor Naila Sharif	Tameside Council
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Shaun Ennis	Trafford Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan Council

**ALSO PRESENT:**

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

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mark Atherton	GMCA
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Karen Chambers	GMCA
Simon Elliott	Transport for Greater Manchester
Caroline Simpson	GMCA
Nicola Ward	GMCA
Steve Warrener	Transport for Greater Manchester

**O&SC 24/24                      APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Imran Rizvi (Bury), Councillor Mandie Shilton - Godwin (Manchester), Councillor Joshua Brooks (Salford), Councillor Claire Reid (Tameside), Councillor Ged Carter (Trafford) Cllr George Devlin (Trafford) and Vernon Everitt, Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester,

**O&SC 25/24                      CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair welcomed Caroline Simpson to her first GM Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in her new role as Group Chief Executive for the GMCA, GMFRS and TfGM.

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.

The Chair advised that the report to the Committee regarding GM Mayoral Advisors has been deferred to a future meeting once the Arts Council have reported on their enquiries.

It was noted that in order to enable attendance, the order of the main substantive items on the agenda be amended, therefore taking item 6, GM Five Year Environment Plan, first.

## **RESOLVED /-**

1. That members as per their obligation stated in the Code of Conduct would complete their Annual Declaration of Interest form and return it to the Governance & Scrutiny Officer.
2. That the report to the Committee regarding GM Mayoral Advisors be deferred to a future meeting.

## **O&SC 26/24**

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

## **RESOLVED /-**

No declarations were received in relation to any item on the agenda.

## **O&SC 27/24**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 14 AUGUST 2024**

## **RESOLVED /-**

That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 August 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

## **O&SC 28/24**

## **DRAFT FIVE YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN 2025 - 2030**

The Chair invited Councillor Tom Ross, Portfolio Lead for Green City Region and GMCA Environment Director, Mark Atherton to present this item.

Councillor Tom Ross introduced the report. The first Five Year Environment Plan (5YEP) was published in 2019. It set out the ambition for Greater Manchester to become a carbon neutral city region by 2038. In the same year a climate emergency was declared by GMCA and the ten Local Authorities and, in 2021, a biodiversity emergency was also declared.

5YEP ran from 2019 – 2024 and focused on five key priority areas: energy supply, transport and travel, homes and buildings, production and consumption, and the natural environment. Since 2019 there has been significant progress made against the targets in the 5YEP, however achieving the carbon targets remain challenging. To stay on track to achieve carbon neutrality by 2038 there will need to be an acceleration and scaling up of current activities.

The new 5YEP will run from 2025-2030 and builds on the previous ambitions and progress against the first plan. This new plan has eight key aims, which are, energy, buildings, transport and travel, natural environment, circular economy and waste, resilience and adaptation, plus a new addition of air quality and sustainable growth.

After internal development, initial engagement with external partners had begun to further develop the new vision, aims and objectives for the new plan. External engagement has continued throughout the development process and a key focus has been developing those actions outside of Local Authority control. External organisations have been encouraged to feedback on the specific actions for their sector/organisation. In addition to this, the plan has been presented to the equalities panel, the Youth Combined Authority, GM Bee Net Zero Board and the Sustainable Energy Association.

The version members have received is the first full draft which is currently out for consultation.

Officers shared a presentation with the Committee which highlighted the following;

- The structure of the plan
- The aims and objectives of the plan

Officers drew attention to the actions in the plan which had been split into direct and enabling actions. Direct Actions were aimed at decision makers that own homes and

cars as this was the group that really need to take action. Enabling actions were the actions required by local authorities and other organisations.

There were eight aims, each of which had four or five objectives. Draft targets had been made challenging but achievable within the next 5 years.

The plan will be presented to the GMCA in November with a view to launching the plan at this year's Green Summit.

Members asked how the impact of this work would be measured to ensure that pollution and emissions were reduced and were advised that there has been an increase in EV buses coming through via the Bee Network which will help to reduce pollution and emissions caused by public transport however, private transport, HGV's and vans used by businesses present more of a challenge. In addition to this, there was a lot of work ongoing to help residents to make the decision to use public transport, walk or cycle and use electric vehicles. The Committee agreed, it was vitally important for residents and businesses to understand what options were available in terms of transport and also how they can save money on energy bills over the longer term.

Members asked what opportunities devolution may bring to help with climate resilience funding, and if there will be any scope to simplify retrofit funding streams for residents to better understand what options they have. Members added that a positive narrative around the benefits to the public needed to be considered, such as car free streets and cleaner air. It was also noted that it was important to ensure the language used was clear and that education and awareness was a barrier for some residents and that trust in our ambitions needed to be strengthened. Officers advised that devolution does bring flexibility and could cut out potential blockages in relation to retrofitting. It is hoped that the new Government would lead the way with enthusiasm in this sphere of work. It was also confirmed that a version of the plan, aimed at the public, and other key partners will be produced to ensure they can be incentivised. There was data available which could be used to create bespoke

communications fitted around the aspirations of communities. Members suggested the use of clearer terms, such as 'adding' rather than 'enhancing' and 'reducing energy consumption' rather than 'sustainable growth' to more clearly articulate the plan's ambitions and ensure the public can come along.

Members reported that in some areas, bus services were not reliable or regular enough to encourage residents to use them. It was noted that it was vital to ensure that bus routes meet the needs of residents, as this helps improve social mobility within the population. Members were advised that the GM Mayors plan for an integrated transport network aims to ensure that all residents have access to transport to enable them to access work and healthcare.

Members asked if there was any monitoring in place within Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) to check if pollution and emissions had been reduced by the changes put in place. Officers advised that there are live air quality monitors online that can be checked but it is not known whether these are in low traffic neighbourhoods; although in relation to the LTN scheme at Deansgate, it was confirmed that monitoring was in place and available via officers at the council. It was noted that there was nothing in place to measure if the low traffic neighbourhoods were causing residents to take longer journeys.

Members enquired whether the use of Green Hydrogen had been investigated and it was confirmed that this needs to be explored further as this was an area of real opportunity for growth to support those industries that cannot electrify.

Members requested more inclusion in the plan on the subject of enhancing nature. Officers advised that the GMCA has a Nature Recovery Plan, and this will be incorporated into this work. The recent State of Nature report outlines what work is needed in terms of our natural environment, and these should be intersectional as one shared issue

Members noted that in order to encourage more people to convert to electric vehicles, more needed to be done to make EV charging more accessible. Officers advised

that TfGM are examining the availability of EV charging stations in each locality to ensure that there is a fair coverage of EV charging points and access to charging points throughout the conurbation.

It was noted that invasive plants continue to pose challenges within our waterways. While local authorities have enforcement powers to address invasive plants, it was ultimately the responsibility of landowners to resolve the issue, but this was complex and expensive.

Officers advised that the Integrated Water Management Plan has been implemented with the aim of managing flood risk and advised that it was very important to ensure that developers were given correct information regarding flood risk when planning new developments. This was something that would be picked up within the work of the Integrated Water Management Plan, to ensure all parties address risk.

Members commented that more could be done locally to ensure that the city-region were better adapted and more resilient to the increasing impacts of climate change and were advised that learning from other sectors and other areas of the country will be a continuous part of the plan. The learning from the first iteration of the plan should also be reflected in the new version.

Members noted that in some areas, the public attitude towards climate change has shifted, and the plan needed to ensure that the public continue to be engaged. Officers advised that from the behavioural insights work that has taken place, we know that our residents are passionate about conserving nature so maybe we can do more to link this to climate change. Residents need to be encouraged to take action and this was reflected in the tone of the report. Officers advised that a separate informal briefing session would be arranged in order to share this behavioural insight data with Committee members.

Members commented that more could be mentioned in the report in relation to carbon capture, such as peat bog restorations and this will be taken on board.

Officers advised that a climate change adaptation plan would be an annex to this report and will contain more on this.

The Committee were advised that the GM Mayor and GM Leaders had been working with colleges to enhance future learning opportunities in green trades. A Green Skills Hub has been launched in Trafford for young people which also provides opportunities for residents to retrain in order to develop the skilled labour to carry out the work that is anticipated for the future.

Members asked what more could be done to help schools become more energy efficient. Officers advised that work was ongoing to ensure that the public estate was fit for the future. Many public buildings and schools had benefitted from solar panels and public sector decarbonisation grants. Another area for development was how heat waste from data centres could be used to provide energy for leisure centres. Officers advised that there were 2700 public buildings in GM, and 10% have been decarbonised in the last 5 years. Devolution will allow us to do more in this space. In November 2023, GM were successful in a bid to receive £7m Net Zero Accelerator funding which provided 2 years revenue funding to bring investable projects to the market.

Members raised concerns in relation to costs residents may incur to fund the aims of the plan and specifically our ambitions around clean air, officers advised that the GM Mayor was leading the way in talks with Government about an investment led approach to the Clean Air Plan, so residents were not expected to be charged. A national incentive scheme would be welcomed to help larger vehicles make a change to cleaner emissions. In GM, incentives were being investigated in order to increase the use of electric vehicles.

Members enquired what plans were in place to manage that change to EV buses and asked if the possibility of having an EV car club for people to use to take short journeys could be explored. In relation to zero emission buses, officers reassured the Committee that the modelling work around the depot electrification and hence how to



deploy the fleet onto the routes was being completed. Officers also confirmed that they would further investigate future plans for EV car clubs.

Officers confirmed that the plan and the metrics do make some assumptions about the devolution deal and funding the GM will receive from the Government. What was not included in the plan was the national measures the Government were starting to announce as they have not quantified these measures as yet. This information will be added to the plan before November if we can get a better understanding from Government of what the devolution deal might include.

The Committee were keen to highlight aim 6 as of significance as the need for adaptation and resilience had increased due to more incidences of extreme weather.

#### **RESOLVED /-**

1. That the development process and next steps for the new 5 Year Environment Plan be noted.
2. That it be noted that a sustainability and equality assessment will be conducted on the final draft document.
3. That the comments and feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered when further developing the new 5 Year Environment Plan.
4. That an information briefing be arranged to enable the behavioural insights data to be shared with members of the Committee.

**O&SC 29/24**

**RAIL INTEGRATION AND REFORM PROGRAMME:  
EMERGING RAIL REFORM POLICY POSITION & NEXT  
STEPS**

The Chair invited GM Mayor, Andy Burnham, and TfGM Managing Director, Steve Warrener to present this item.

The report provided Members with an update on progress of the emerging Rail Integration and Reform proposition ahead of consideration by the Bee Network Committee and GMCA.

The GM Mayor advised that the next phase of the Bee Network was to bring rail into the system and apply Bee Network standards. The Committee were advised that the new Government have stated that as part of their rail reform legislation, Regional Mayor's and Combined Authorities will be able to specify service standards which would relate to access and frequency of services. It was reported that engagement with the new Government was going well; Sir Peter Hendy, a previous member of Network Rail, was now in a Ministerial position which was having a positive impact on talks. Work was on track to have an integrated bus and tram system by 5 January 2025, with the Paygo system coming into place mid-March to give Greater Manchester a London style transport system for bus and tram travel.

The GM Mayor advised that the aim was to increase the frequency on the eight rail lines as identified in the report and have a Metrolink style service; an example given was improvements the Airport line which would in turn improve the visitor offer to GM. There were many other opportunities to improve services outside our borders such as Glossop and Buxton, therefore, GM were making a case as part of the spending review to support this. The current Government subsidy for the eight rail lines was £100m as some of the eight rail lines were very underused. Although some lines are operating at 90%, there were other lines such as Glossop which had patronage of 46% to 56%, therefore once the technology and payment structure was in place patronage would likely increase. Improving these lines had wider benefits such as access to employment and unlock greater investment into rail assets. More work was needed to look at how the GM cap could be applied for these journeys.

The GM Mayor advised that the GM Land Commission had now been set up and its objective was to free up public land for housing growth. Members were advised that

the Commission was currently looking at issues such as how land owned by Network Rail at Castleton could be released to provide housing. The GM Mayor advised that this would improve regeneration opportunities and breathe more life into these areas. Other potential localities for development were Stalybridge and Golborne. The GM Mayor commented that local authorities need to start to think about the opportunities this plan could bring.

The GM Mayor advised that the plan would be submitted to Government in January. Financing the plan was critical, and our starting point was that we would bid for the same funding as London and that we should be afforded an ongoing revenue stream that London has benefited from for many years.

Members enquired how this plan would work with the renationalised rail service as Northern Rail would be one of the first services to come under the nationalised rail system. The GM Mayor advised that our intention was to offer up a vision to the Government as to how we think it would work. The key was to isolate the lines that were commuter lines first, noting to the potential to add more as we progress.. The GM Mayor advised that initially we would envisage there being a joint board, and we would work in partnership to manage these lines and stations with the national board but there were opportunities to shape this governance proposal ahead of the submission to Government in January.

Members asked when an indication of long term transport funding would be available. The GM Mayor advised that in part, we would find out more on 30 October 2024 and this spending review would deal with the immediate issues relating to bus funding. It was essential that GM gets a good deal for buses. From there, colleagues at TfGM would start work on what the fare structure and cap would be. Officers confirmed that the detail on the fare structure was to follow but a broad outline was in a report going to the Combined Authority meeting later this week.

Members asked if there was a danger that the £100m Government subsidy would be withdrawn or reduced, and if our success improving services, increasing patronage

and revenue, would mean we would receive less funding. The GM Mayor stated it would be unacceptable to take a cut in subsidies and, if needed, other options, may need to be considered, but this would only be pursued if there were no other ways to raise the funding needed for the Bee Network vision.

Members advised that with regards to disability access at stations, Levenshulme station had been identified as needing improvements, and asked if there was a danger that once we take control that there would not be Government funding for this. Officers advised that this station was part of an Access for All Bid, but disappointingly, the funding was not awarded to this station. It was expected that once this line was part of the Bee Network, there would be an increase in patronage and any revenue could then be reinvested into improving the accessibility of the station. It was important to ensure that all our stations meet Bee Network standards.

The GM Mayor confirmed that he had met with Nathaniel Yates to discuss station accessibility, and he will endeavour to keep him, and the Disabled Peoples Panel engaged in discussion as this work develops.

In relation to capital funding, officers advised that GM has had an indicative that the CRSTS 2 allocation will be £1.5b with a further £900m following the cancellation of HS2 totalling £2.4b. This figure was not confirmed and was unlikely to be confirmed before the March statement. However, we have had confirmation of the CRSTS1 allocation which is up until to March 2027.

Members enquired as to how the regeneration work taking place at Old Trafford might impact on the ambitions for GM rail. The GM Mayor confirmed that there were opportunities to change the two freight terminals located there. These lines currently go through stations such as Stockport and Piccadilly and were contributors to the high levels of congestion on the Castlefield Corridor. There was potential to change the location of the two freight terminals and this could enhance our ambitions around frequency in this area. There was a proposal to have a terminal at Parkside (ILP North), in St Helens, near Wigan, which would present huge opportunities for growth

for Wigan. There was also a potential site at Port Salford, which has huge potential to take traffic from Liverpool off the road.

Caroline Simpson, who was a member of the Old Trafford Regeneration Task Force, stated that the task force was looking at how they could optimise the huge private investment into the new stadium and the economic and regeneration benefit of this for Old Trafford and beyond. In relation to freight growth, this was an opportunity not only to allow freight to move more easily but to also increase capacity on the rail lines as a benefit to the whole of the Northwest economy. The GM Mayor advised that the disused station at Old Trafford would be developed and this line was possibly something that could be looked at in phase 2 jointly with the Liverpool/Manchester Partnership Board.

Members asked for clarification regarding ticketing in relation to boundary issues and lines that were outside the Bee Network and officers confirmed that there would be a significant amount of communication to mitigate any confusion. Officers also advised that the Paygo payments would be rolled out to the rest of the network by 2030. Transport for London have had similar issues in relation to cross boundaries and the GM Mayor confirmed that we would look to their experience and other learning to address this.

Members advised that the north of the conurbation (areas such as Moston) would benefit from a more reliable service and the electrification of the rail line to Leeds would also be beneficial. Officers advised that the rail industry was now beginning to work with GM on this and that they would be happy to meet with members outside of the meeting to discuss frequency at specific localities further.

Members commented that travel in both directions and not just to journey into Manchester should be considered so that all ten districts benefit from these rail ambitions. The GM Mayor advised that the stations on these lines have the potential to become even better places to live and we need to look at the regeneration possibilities which in turn would help provide revenue for the improvement and accessibility of stations. The success of the city is opening out opportunities to other

areas that will be on the Bee Network lines. Members were urged to consider which areas around these stations in their localities could benefit from further regeneration.

The GM Mayor stated that all this work would lead to GM having a London style public transport system by the end of this decade.

## **RESOLVED /-**

1. That the comments and feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Government's plans for rail reform and ongoing GM engagement with Shadow Great British Railways be noted.
2. That the comments and feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposal for further engagement with Government, rail partners and others to explore and influence legislative and structural options that would achieve GM ambitions be noted.
3. That Members are given the opportunity to meet with Officers in relation to specific rail frequency issues in the north of the conurbation.

**O&SC 30/24**

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME & FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Chair advised the Committee that due to time constraints, this item could not be discussed, therefore this item will be put to a vote electronically.

The possible areas for future Task and Finish approach were;

- Social cohesion
- Homelessness
- Safety of Women and Girls and the extent to which this is considered in GM policy design and implementation

- The development of Co-operatives
- The regeneration of Greater Manchester's high streets
- The influence on GM schools especially regarding SEND provision
- Digital inclusion
- Communication/interaction between GMCA and LAs at a councillor and resident level and how this might change with the single settlement, looking at issues we could centralise, how LAs maintain their own autonomy while working closely with GMCA, so we can work together and make the best use of our resources
- Review the recommendations made by the School readiness Task & Finish in 2022

The Chair confirmed that Governance and Scrutiny Officers would email the Committee on this matter.

#### **RESOLVED /-**

1. That the proposed Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for September to November 2024 be noted.
2. That Members use the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify any potential areas for further scrutiny.
3. That members note the areas of interest highlighted by members of the Committee for inclusion in the Work Programme for 2024-25.
4. That members consider which area would be best suited to a task and finish review and respond to the communication from Governance and Scrutiny Officers that will be sent out.

**O&SC 31/24**

**FUTURE MEETING DATES**

**RESOLVED /-**

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

- 23 October 2024 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 27 November 2024 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 11 December 2024 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 29 January 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 5 or 12 February 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 26 February 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 26 March 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm