

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2025 IN EXCHANGE ROOMS 8-10,
MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONVENTION COMPLEX

PRESENT:

Councillor Janet Emsley	Rochdale Council (Chair)
Councillor Rabiya Jiva	Bolton Council
Councillor Robin Garrido	Bolton Council
Councillor Richard Gold	Bury Council
Councillor Garry Bridges	Manchester City Council
Councillor Angela Smith	Rochdale Council
Councillor Barbara Bentham	Salford Council
Councillor Jake Austin	Stockport Council
Councillor Rosemary Barratt	Stockport Council
Councillor Stephen Homer	Tameside Council
Councillor Rose Thompson	Trafford Council
Councillor Dane Anderton	Wigan Council
Stephen Williams	Independent Member
Tony Gordon	Independent Member

Also in attendance:

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
Kate Green	GM Deputy Mayor

Officers Present:

CC Stephen Watson	GMP
Ian Cosh	Chief Finance Officer, GMP
Lee Rawlinson	Chief Resources Officer, GMP
Chief Supt. Nicola Spragg	GMP
DCFO Ben Norman	GMFRS
Jeanette Staley	Advisor to Panel & Head of Community Safety, Salford City Council
Neil Evans	Director of Police, Crime, Fire & Criminal Justice, GMCA
Vicky Sugars	Assistant Director of Police, Crime, Fire & Criminal Justice, GMCA

Lynne Ridsdale

Bury Council

Lee Teasdale

Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer,
Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA

Sarah Bennett

Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA

Steve Wilson

Treasurer, GMCA

PFCP/01/25 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Sandra Walmsley (Bury), Councillor Peter Dean (Oldham) and Councillor David Lancaster (Salford).

PFCP/02/25 CHAIRS ANNOUCEMENTS & URGENT BUSINESS

Jeanette Staley, Advisor to the Panel, provided Members with an update on the current status of co-opting a third independent member to the Panel. The Home Office had now acknowledged receipt of the application for a third independent member of the Panel and had requested further details on the submission which was subsequently provided to them. It was hoped that the application would be resolved ahead of the next meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the update on the application to the Home Office for a third independent panel member be received.

PFCP/03/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were received.

PFCP/04/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 18TH NOVEMBER 2024

Members considered the minutes of the previous meeting.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.

**PFCP/05/25 2025/26 PCC BUDGET AND PCC COMPONENT OF THE
MAYORAL PRECEPT**

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, presented a report notifying Panel Members of the proposed PCC budget for 2025/26 including the latest expected budget numbers for Greater Manchester Police and to seek a report on the Mayor's proposals for the PCC component of the Mayoral precept for 2025/26. The Mayor highlighted the following points:

- The proposed increase was for £14 per annum for a band D property, but this would equate to a £10.89 per annum increase for the vast majority of residents in the region with 80% living in property bands A-C. However, the proposal was not made lightly in a time when it was known residents still had tightening budgets and had to be fully justified.
- It was advised that even with the increased precept, there would still be a £22m shortfall within the GMP budget going into the next financial year. Police forces across England and Wales were facing a similar level of financial pressure and it was expected that pretty much every other area across the country would also be seeking to implement the full £14 increase in the precept.
- It was vital to continue to maintain the improvements seen at GMP since it came out of special measures in 2021. The evidence base was clearer than ever before that the force was now a clearly different place to that which had entered the HMICFRS special measures.
- The GM Mayor highlighted that there were now 8,076 police officers in GM, a close to 2,000 uplift in officers since he had taken the role in 2017.
- It was acknowledged that public confidence in GMP remained quite low, but it was rising as the measures taken started to filter down into public perception and the police became increasingly visible in the public.
- Reference was made to a 14% increase in knife crime highlighted in the report. This increase had largely been driven by people in possession of a knife being apprehended. Whilst on paper this appeared concerning, there could be some confidence taken in that GMP were actively finding those in possession of such

weapons. This was corroborated by the fact that there had not been a rise in hospitalisations due to wounding by sharp instruments. However there was absolutely no complacency about tackling this issue and taking more weapons off the streets of Greater Manchester.

- Shoplifting crime remained a huge concern, with a 20% increase seen in the last year, reflecting the picture also seen nationally. The relevant retail trade unions were in frequent contact about tackling this issue. The same approach taken in tackling other areas should now be taken to combat this increasing issue.
- Operation Vulcan continued to be a success with significant decreases in crime in the areas where it was operational.
- Looking forward, discussions were taking place around an increased GMP presence on the transport networks. The arrival of the Bee Network has resulted in significant surveying of residents on their usage of the transport network and safety was clearly highlighted. The establishment of the Bee Network could now lead to a more coordinated approach to this. The precept would allow for the launch of a TravelSafe Live Chat App operated by GMP.

Deputy Mayor Kate Green was then invited to address the Panel with further detail on the pressures faced. Points highlighted included:

- Members were reminded that when the government announce the national police funding settlement figures, there is a built-in assumption that PCCs and Mayors will take full advantage of the precept flexibility available to them. Due to this, all government targets were set based on an assumption that there will have been a precept increase of £14.
- However, this amount would still not be requested unless the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had received absolute assurance that every pound of funding would be used well and in the service of the public of Greater Manchester.
- The Deputy Mayor was in the process of vigorous line-by-line scrutiny of GMP's expenditure as part of 'Operation Rydal' which sought to address the financial pressures of the remaining £22m shortfall by seeking efficiencies, to reduce costs and to increase income for the police force.
- As part of the consultation process for the new 4 year Standing Together Police & Crime Plan. Significant consultation work had taken place with residents and

partner organisations. The Plan was developed based on what these groups considered to be the key priorities for GMP to address.

- A steer had been received from residents and partner organisations that they wanted to see equity and equality running right through the heart of the Police & Crime Plan. The Plan now highlighted 20 specific equality actions.
- There was also a heavy focus on racial disproportionality within the Plan. Support had been received from the GM Race Equality Panel in preparing the equality actions to address race and ethnic disproportionality, and support had also been received from the national police race action plan in setting out the commitments made.

Chief Constable Stephen Watson was then invited to provide some further emphasis to the issues raised through the Mayor and Deputy Mayor:

- The importance of using taxpayers' money wisely was reemphasised, and that GMP working to the notion that they were using money that was earned by others. The responsibility to the public was taken very seriously and accordingly self-governance took place to ensure that every pound spent resulted in an outcome for the public good.
- Assurance was provided that officer misconduct continued to be treated with the highest level of importance. Over 160 officers had been dismissed in the past 12 months for a range of offences recent and historic. Wherever misconduct continues and officers do not uphold the values of the organisation, they are being dismissed with greater efficiency than ever seen before.

Comments and Questions

The Chair then invited Members of the Panel to address their comments and questions to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

- Members enquired as to why it had taken the implementation of the Bee Network to start to incorporate further safety measures, such as the proposed live chat function, on public transport. It was advised that having taken full control of the bus network meant that the GMCA and TfGM could now implement requirements that could not have been previously. Under the previous deregulated system, the bus

networks could not have been ordered to incorporate these measures, and indeed previously the networks did not even share their data on safety issues with TfGM.

- Members asked for further understanding of how the further shortfall that would be created if the precept increase was not agreed might affect the bottom line of policing and the safety of GM's communities. It was stated that if the precept increase was not implemented it would have a direct impact on the ability to fully staff the front line and consequently would result in a deterioration of services. It was clear from the statistics that improvements to front line policing was delivering results to residents, and it was vital that this good work continued. The precept increase would allow GMP to deal with unavoidable costs such as pay awards to staff, but also to deal with unprecedented events, such as the disorders seen in summer 2024.
- Members expressed concerns about the budget shortfall and lack of reserves available to GMP. The Deputy Mayor highlighted that Operation Rydal was being used for the line-by-line scrutiny required for GMP budgets, looking for opportunities within every area of expenditure, to reprofile the spending where required, including the capital programme. Members were assured that front line services would always be prioritised for protection from cuts.
- Members considered the issue around higher policing numbers not necessarily correlating with reductions in crime. Reference was made to a study published last year, was that the issue was bigger than officer numbers and rather was about size, stability, and structure. Members were minded to support the precept on the basis that GMP now had a structure that had accountability within it, and a clear stability of size that the precept would only further support.
- Members sought further information regarding the Equalities Impact Assessment that had been drafted.
- Members noted that the figures for tackling hate crime seemed low. The Deputy Mayor shared the concern and felt that there was still significant underreporting of hate crime incidents in the region, particularly given the national and international events of the previous 18 months. Work was taking place across all 10 districts of the region on publicising all the methods by which hate crimes could be reported, including routes for people who did not wish to do so directly via the police.
- Members welcomed the neighbourhood policing initiatives but queried the reductions in PCSOs. It was advised that it was important to find the right balance between warranted officers and PCSOs. It was now the case that there was a

dedicated PCSO for each ward, but without an overreliance on these officers who did not have the powers of arrest.

- Members expressed their wish to see the national government revising funding across the public sector, taking a longer-term view on funding and allowing bodies such as the police to be able to make longer term projections rather than year on year having to rely on elements such as maximum allowable precept rises.
- Members noted that there was always a 'lag' in terms of public trust increasing in relation to performance improvement and acknowledged that members also had a role to play in improving these perceptions. However, it was also important that members did not allow the improving picture to let complacency set in, and to keep rigorous scrutiny in place at all times.

The Chair thanked all for their contributions and put the Mayor's proposed policing precept increase to the vote. Members subsequently voted to **approve** the proposal with 13 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel notes that the Mayor proposes to increase the police precept by £14 per year for a Band D property (£10.89 for a Band B property) with effect from 1 April 2025 and proposes that the precept level can be issued.
2. That the Panel notes the budget assumptions relating to the budgets for 2025/26.

PFCP/06/25 GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2025/26

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester & Kate Green, Deputy Mayor for Safer & Stronger Communities introduced a report that informed panel members of the proposed budget for Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) for 2025/26 and the updated medium term financial plan. The precept proposals for GMFRS for 2025/26 would form part of the Mayoral general budget and precept proposals report to the GMCA on 7th February 2025. Points highlighted included:

- It was advised that the Mayor would be seeking approval for a £5 per year (for a Band D property, £3.33 for Band A) increase in the Fire Authority budget at the GMCA meeting due to take place on Friday 7th February.
- The fire service had been through a transformation in recent years. This had clearly been required in the aftermath of the Arena tragedy, and under the strong leadership of CFO Dave Russel & DCFO Ben Norman there had been a substantial level of change for the better.
- The Mayor had committed to reversing previous cuts to services and pumps. This commitment had not only been kept to but had now resulted in the addition of a 51st pump coming into service, with plans for a 52nd. GMFRS was the only fire service in the country reversing cuts at present. In a growing city region, this level of service was vital.
- The national fire funding settlement for the year was not as good as had been hoped, making the £5 increase vital to retain levels of service.
- The fire service was only likely to be put under further pressures in the years to come, with responses to climate related issues becoming increasingly common, with the flooding on new year the latest example. There was also a significant role for GMFRS in responding to the recommendations highlighted through the latest iteration of the Grenfell Report.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel notes the following:

- The overall budget proposed for GMFRS.
- The proposed £5 increase in the level of the Mayoral fire precept to fund cost pressures.
- The use of reserves to support the revenue and capital budgets
- The proposed fire service capital programme and proposals for funding
- The medium-term financial position for GMFRS covered by the Mayoral precept

Chief Superintendent Nicola Spragg presented a report providing the Board with an executive summary describing the performance of GMP over the most recent year to December 2024, and how this compares to our performance in the previous year. Members were asked to contact Chief Supt. Spragg with any comments they may wish to directly raise.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the contents of the report be noted.

PFCP 08/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED/-

1. That the next meeting of the Panel would take place on Wednesday 19th March 2025.