

**GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA)
CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 6.00PM AT GMCA OFFICES**

Present:	Councillor Tim Pickstone (Bury) (in the Chair)
Bury:	Councillor Stella Smith
Manchester:	Councillor Ben Clay
Manchester:	Councillor Greg Stanton (Substitute)
Oldham:	Councillor Colin McLaren
Salford:	Councillor David Jolley
Salford:	Councillor Tanya Burch
Stockport:	Councillor John McGahan
Tameside:	Councillor Teresa Smith
Trafford:	Councillor Anne Duffield
Trafford:	Councillor Dave Morgan
Wigan:	Councillor Joanne Marshall

In attendance

GMFRS	Jim Wallace, Chief Fire Officer Tony Hunter, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Jenny Seex, Head of Protection
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GMCA	Andrew Lightfoot, Deputy Chief Executive Richard Paver, Treasurer Steve Wilson, Treasurer Paul Morgan, Commercial Manager Jane Forrest, Assistant Director, Reform Miriam Loxham, School Readiness Project Manager Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer Jamie Fallon, Governance and Scrutiny Officer
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NORTHWARDS HOUSING	Robin Lawler, Chief Executive
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SALFORD CC	City Mayor Paul Dennett
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CI31/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robert Allen (Bolton), Chris Goodwin (Oldham), Kallum Nolan (Rochdale), Dena Ryness (Stockport).

CI32/19

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair extended thanks to substitute member Councillor Greg Stanton, for his attendance at the meeting.

It was agreed that the December 2019 Committee meeting would be cancelled, given its proximity to the election, and no essential business which couldn't be deferred to the January 2020 meeting.

The Committee were advised that future meetings would include an informal Members discussion, which would be held at 5.30pm, in preparation for the formal Committee meeting at 6pm. The Chair welcomed Members attendance where possible.

Members were informed that Officers would seek to identify a further date, for a GMFRS briefing Session, to be held in early February 2020. The session would focus on the challenges faced by the fire service, so that Members were better prepared to scrutinise, and support the identification of potential deep dive themes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the meeting due to be held on 10 December 2019 be cancelled, and the business deferred until January 2020.
2. That Officers consult with Members and Officers on developing a GMFRS briefing session in early February 2020.

CI33/19

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

CI34/19

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 be agreed.

CI35/19

HIGH RISE TASK FORCE

City Mayor Paul Dennett, Portfolio Leader for Housing, Homelessness and Infrastructure, introduced a report, which outlined the progress of the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force (GMHRTF), and the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service High Rise Team (GMFRSHRT), in regard to high rise residential buildings in Greater Manchester (GM), and its contribution nationally in this area.

Also in attendance was Jim Wallace, Chief Fire Officer, Tony Hunter, Director of Protection and SPPCI, Jenni Seex, Head of Protection, and Robin Lawler, Chief Executive of Northwards Housing, and Chair of the GM Fire Safety Technical Group.

The following key points were highlighted:

- The GMHRTF had been set up following the Mayoral Summit on the 25 June 2017, with the purpose of overseeing the GM response to the fire at Grenfell Tower.
- The ultimate priority for the GMHRTF, was to provide reassurance on GM fire safety, and to ensure buildings were safe, and that GM could respond effectively to a major high rise incident.
- A survey of residents living in high rise buildings was undertaken over the summer, and utilised as part of the GMHRTF response, to the Governments consultation on 'Building a Safer Future'. The survey was subsequently extended until the start of September 2019 and a final report was being prepared.
- Following the publication of the Hackitt Report, MHCLG working with NFCC and Local Authority Building Control (LABC) had created a series of working groups to consider what work was necessary to develop and deliver a Joint Competent Authority (JCA) arrangement.
- The significantly positive work undertaken by the GMHRTF and the GMFRS High Rise Team in GM, and on the national stage, had been recognised nationally, with GMFRS invited to be a member of the new Protection Board.
- The Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 report has been published, and included a number of recommendations, which were carefully being considered by the GMHRTF, GMFRS, and partners.
- The GMHRTF currently meet every six weeks, and is attended by GMFRS, representatives of local authorities, housing providers, universities, utility companies, and representatives of managing agents for privately owned blocks of flats.
- The GMHRTF had developed a number of task groups/cells to carry out focused work, and the majority of these were led by GMFRS.
- The current number of blocks where interim measures are required was currently 79. The definition of high rise, was currently buildings which were more than 18 metres in height.
- A major element of the work to ensure operational readiness, was the development of guidance, for the role of operational crews in supporting and ensuring the evacuation of residents at an incident, in buildings, where an evacuation strategy has been implemented. The fire incident at the Cube, in Bolton, on Friday, had tested this response.
- The Operational Assurance team had implemented smoke curtains on all appliances, supported by operational guidance, to support the effective escape of residents, in the event of a fire.
- The main concern was the number of buildings, which still had unsafe cladding on the outside of them, and the associated costs (some in the range of £40,000), which had fallen upon many residents to make their homes safe, as the developers, building owners, and free holders were refusing to take responsibility. This issue continues to be raised with Government on behalf of residents.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- A Member from Salford, highlighted the challenges they had faced in identifying an appropriate solution to the cladding issues, and the difficulties in accessing funding to

remediate buildings owned by Private Finance Investments (PFI). How were the GMHRTF supporting localities to implement cladding solutions, which were future proofed?

The City Mayor advised that the Government had produced advice note 14, which clearly articulated what solutions were permissible. The Committee were informed that in December 2018, the Government, made an amendment to Building Regulations, to prohibit the use of 'combustible cladding' on buildings over 18 metres, making it simpler to work through the technical solutions available. The complexities in identifying the right cladding for individual buildings were noted, given that a number of factors were at play, which included, weight and wind load.

- A Member asked whether the same requirements to remove and replace cladding applied to buildings, which had cladding on one wall, or on the top floor.

Jenni Seex, advised that there were complexities to consider, but all buildings with category 2/3 Aluminum Composite Material (ACM) on, should be remediated. Cladding which was on the top floors did however, present as lower risk, as the highest risk was regards to a fire spreading horizontally. It was confirmed that elements such as the type and position of cladding, contributed to whether interim measures were adopted in terms of building the evacuation strategy. Robin Lawler, added that housing providers were dealing with buildings on a portfolio basis, with category 2/3 ACM affected, being remediated on a risk based approach. It was noted that Private Finance Initiative (PFI) owned buildings were particularly complex, as Government did not class them as public or private, so funding could not be accessed.

- Had GMHRTF submitted recommendations to Government, which could feed into future regulations? Clarification was requested in relation to whether the aim was to move away from the use of cladding entirely.

It was confirmed that MHCLG attended regular meetings with the HRTF, so were fully sighted on the frustrations and challenges, such as, the requirement to pay VAT, on the removal and replacement of cladding.

The City Mayor confirmed that GM were also lobbying for an emergency fund which went beyond ACM, and felt that it was clear from the phase 1 report, and the Government's Independent Review of Building Regulations, and Fire Safety, that the current regulatory system was not fit for purpose.

It was envisaged that the publication of the Phase 2 report, could prompt Government to implement the fundamental changes required to building regulations, which were required.

Tony Hunter, noted that the tragic incident, at the Cube in Bolton on Friday, involved cladding with high-pressure laminate (HPL), which only emphasised the need for a complete system overhaul. A risk stratified approach to building safety was needed, that was person centric, and prioritised vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, and students.

The Committee were informed that the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) had recommended to Government that sprinklers become a requirement in all high rise residential structures above 30 metres in height.

Members were advised that following the amendment to building regulations in December 2018, there were now tighter controls in place, regarding the types of products which can be used. It was noted that glazing systems were currently popular, noting that all buildings over 30 metres were required to have sprinklers, notwithstanding, GMHRTF was lobbying for a lower height threshold.

- The City Mayor referred to the austerity faced by GMFRS, and the requirement to reduce their budget by £12.8m over the next three years. Post Grenfell, Government must acknowledge that further cuts were not acceptable, as resources are needed to focus on protecting public safety.
- Clarity was sought in relation to the number of buildings in special measures. It was confirmed that 80 buildings over 18 metres were in special measures currently, albeit, buildings below 18 metres were potentially affected. The Northern Quarter was highlighted, as an example of where there were a number of multi floor buildings in close proximity, and explored what level of risk these posed.

The complexities were discussed, noting that the aim was to manage those risks by implementing effective evacuation strategies, such as implementing a 'waking watch' or improving the quality of fire alarms, which were installed. Members were informed that an awareness event was held in October 2019, attended by 53 people from across the 1200 blocks in GM. Universities had also been engaged to review their fire safety arrangements.

- A Member referred to media reports regarding the use of cladding in other parts of the buildings, such as internal insulation fillers. Had these wider issues been addressed?

The HRTF were engaging with developers, and consistently reiterating that the focus on ACM was too narrow. Following the initial inspections, it was quickly identified that the issues were complex, and a dedicated team was needed, in order to identify and assess the risks posed, on an ongoing basis. There was an increasing need for blocks to change their evacuations strategy as more information was becoming available. It was noted that converted buildings (from commercial to residential), were being asked to have compartmentation surveys conducted.

The Committee were informed that four buildings had been deemed prohibited, noting the challenges this posed, and impact on peoples lives. A block in Salford, which was affected by internal compartmentation, was quoted costs of more than half its value to correct the issue.

Robin Lawler, added that in the social housing sector, level 3 & 4 risk assessments had been commissioned to check compartmentation. The outcomes of these assessments were generally shared with GMFRS, so that remediation factors could be agreed. It was acknowledged that the costs had impacted on a providers ability to address legacy issues, and make further investments.

- A Member referred to GMFRS's decision to change their policy on Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA's) and explored whether this was still deemed appropriate.

Tony Hunter, reported that they were six months into a 12 month pilot. Within quarter 1, 2000 AFA's had been received, noting that eight incidents attended, requiring only the use of

a fan, to blow the smoke out of the buildings. It was noted that crews had taken these opportunities to familiarise themselves with the buildings, and update their records. Members were informed that AFA's were not factored into how GMFRS determine resource requirements.

- Were residents able to access the assessments conducted by property owners/landlords? The GMHRTF had recommended that this information should be made accessible, and summaries should be produced. The potential impacts on GMFRS in terms of Freedom of Information (FOI's) were noted.
- A Member explored whether newly approved developments were using materials which were future proofed, and would not be affected by future regulations (i.e. deemed unsafe at a later date).

Full assurance could not be given at this stage, however, the Building Research Establishment, were testing cladding systems, and making those outcomes public; to support the Government to provide clarification as to what was permissible.

The City Mayor emphasised the importance that clarification was received, if GM was to meet the local housing needs over the next 20 years, which was to provide 201,000 homes. Localities also had to demonstrate a 5 year land supply, so that valuable green space was protected. GM was continuing to engage with Government within the timescales set.

Members were informed that following the Hackett Review, an Industry Safety Steering Group had been developed, which included 12 working groups, tasked with looking at the competences requirements of different trade associations. In addition, insurers were taking a much more rigid approach, with a number of inspectors unable to renew their insurance, due to the tighter scrutiny, driven by the risks of litigation. This was the biggest driver in terms of improving standards, and ensuring that builds were developed properly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted and the comments of this Committee be taken into account in developing ongoing work.
2. That a further update be arranged in the next municipal year as appropriate.

CI36/19 SCHOOL READINESS UPDATE

Jane Forrest, Assistant Director Reform, introduced a report which provided an update on the School Readiness programme, in light of the recent approval of £2.1m investment, from the Health and Social Care Partnership (H&SCP), to accelerate progress.

Members were informed that the challenges to improving school readiness outcomes at a locality and GM level, had been considered by the Committee's School Readiness Task and Finish group, and their findings had subsequently been used to inform the GM programme of work as detailed at paragraph 1.4 within the report.

The Task Group's findings were tabled at the meeting, and presented by Councillors Stella Smith and Colin McLaren. It was acknowledged that the findings demonstrated the value of task groups in deep diving into issues in more detail.

The following key points were highlighted:

- Rates of child poverty were important to bear in mind when contextualising GM's GLD results; the proportion of children living in income-deprived households is higher in GM than the national average.
- There had been a positive improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged children and outcomes for pupils eligible for Free School Meals. This had improved by 4 percentage points since 2015, and provisional DfE data showed that we had now closed the gap between the GM and England GLD average, for pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Although the gap between GM and national performance has narrowed slightly in recent years, the trend towards a plateau in performance was a feature of the national trend data as well as the GM data. There was an ambitious objective for GM to reach the national level for GLD within 2 years.
- Performance across GM varied, but results in Tameside and Oldham had improved by 1% and 4% respectively. Over the last 3 years, the proportion of 5 years olds reaching GLD in Oldham had increased by over 7 percentage points, and they were the most improved local authority in the North West, and one of the most improved in the country. Oldham had benefited from additional investment as a DfE funded, Opportunity Area; early years initiatives funded as part of this programme would inform further improvement work across GM.
- Work to embed best practice pathways, had included the recent soft launched 'Tiny, Happy, People website across GM' by the BBC; the website provides resources that can be used by parents and front line professionals to help improve a child's speech, language and communication. GMCA has worked closely with the BBC to develop resources and provided marketing materials, which were being given out by Midwives and Health Visitors to raise awareness with parents.
- GM had been recognised nationally for its work to develop a GM pathway for antenatal parenting support, aligned to the wider work taking place to implement the perinatal and infant mental health (PIMH) strategy across GM. Work was underway with CCG's to ensure that the pathway was embedded within future commissioning plans.
- A roundtable event had taken place (in November 2019), with potential investors and delivery partners, to support the development of the GM Early Years Workforce Academy. The Academy would aim to take a regional approach to enhance the practice, knowledge and skills of the diverse range of professionals, working in early years services and the wider professionals within place-based teams.
- The recent mobilisation of the new phase of work for the GM School Readiness Programme, and the additional transformation funding from the H&SCP, would seek to address remaining gaps and challenges that had been identified by localities as barriers to improving early years outcomes. A structured 24 month GM programme of work was now progressing at pace.
- Additional performance data, and GM level data tools were supporting the development of evidence informed strategies and the identification of best practice, to scale and spread across GM.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Members welcomed the update and explored why there was an apparent mismatch between the Ofsted ratings and actual GLD scores for children.

Jane Forrest advised that GM was progressing well in terms of the number of education settings, which were rated 'good' or 'outstanding' within GM. It was noted that there was clear evidence to suggest, that a child who goes to a high quality education setting was more likely to do better in school. There are wider family factors to consider, with the home learning environment important.

- A Member explored whether there were any lessons which could be taken from the number of children from poorer backgrounds who actually achieved better grades, because they worked extra hard to get out of their environment. Also, multi lingual children who tended to speak later.

It was advised that there were some really high performing groups/ communities, and the development of the data dashboard, providing data at a granular level, was supporting the identification of those examples, so that the right questions were being asked in the right places. For many children, entering reception class, is the first time they have spoken English, but they still perform well. The importance of defining the measurements were noted in effectively predicting future attainment.

The robust analytical tools, enabled GLD data, to be disaggregated by demographic cohort, and recent results indicated that there had been some successes in GM. Bury had demonstrated strong examples, of how the home learning environment, and working holistically with families could improve outcomes, noting that GM was looking to learn from these examples.

- A Member requested further information regarding the role out of the Early Years Digital Record.

It was confirmed that phase one, would provide Health Visitors and parents with a digital platform to complete the Ages and Stages assessments in stages 2 and 5, using the Wellcomm tool. It was envisaged that digitisation would provide health visitors with additional time to support families. The resource was being rolled out in a phased way (starting with early adopters), to ensure that the right support was in place. Discussions had taken place with Health Visitor leads, in order to identify the teams who were in the right place to adopt, and those with a significant deficit in skills, which needed to be addressed. In the longer term, digital would be embedded within the Workforce Academy models, and discussions were taking place with universities and training providers regarding their pre-qualifying training programmes. Work was also ongoing with the Work and Skills Team within the GMCA.

- A Member explored whether there were early messages identified through the ward level analysis, in relation to what was and was not working.

It was confirmed that initial discussions had taken place, noting that the Early Years Leads within localities, were best placed to understand, the locality factors at play, which were influencing the results, such as cultural capital, or children's centre offer within the area. It was envisaged that more robust evidence would be defined in 2020.

- A Member explored whether ‘predicted grades’ had a negative impact on children’s progress. It was confirmed that the predictive analytics aimed to support early identification, so that the right support and resource could be put in place to support the child.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That a further update be arranged in the next municipal year as appropriate.

CI37/19 WASTE BUDGET AND LEVY REPORT

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

CI38/19 WORK PROGRAMME

Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, introduced the 2019/20 work programme for Members to review, develop and agree.

The Committee’s focus in January and February 2020, would be to scrutinise the budget process.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

CI39/19 GREATER MANCHESTER STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

CI40/19 GREATER MANCHESTER BREXIT PREPARATIONS REPORT

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

CI41/19 GMCA REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

That the Register of Key Decisions be noted.

CI30/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 21 January 2020, at 6pm, GMCA Offices.