

**GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA)
CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 6.00PM AT GMCA OFFICES**

Present: Councillor Tim Pickstone (Bury) (in the Chair)
Bolton: Councillor Robert Allen
Bury: Councillor Stella Smith
Manchester: Councillor Greg Stanton (Substitute)
Oldham: Councillor Chris Goodwin
Oldham: Councillor Sam Al-Hamdani (Substitute)
Salford: Councillor David Jolley
Stockport: Councillor John McGahan
Trafford: Councillor Dave Morgan
Tameside: Councillor Teresa Smith
Wigan: Councillor Joanne Marshall

In attendance

GMCA Mayor Andy Burnham
Kevin Lee, Director of Mayor's Office
Jim Wallace, Chief Fire Officer (GMFRS)
Andrew Lightfoot, Deputy Chief Executive
Steve Wilson, Treasurer
Amanda Fox, Group Finance Lead
Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Jamie Fallon, Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer
Lee Teasdale, Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer

CI44/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colin McLaren (Oldham), Kallum Nolan (Rochdale), Tanya Burch (Salford), Dena Ryness (Stockport), Anne Duffield (Trafford).

CI45/19 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair extended thanks to Councillors Greg Stanton, and Sam Al-Hamdani for their attendance at the meeting as a substitute.

Thanks was also extended to GMFRS, for hosting a Briefing session on Thursday 6 February 2020, at the Bury Fire Training Centre. The session focussed on the changing nature of fire risk in GM, so that Members were better prepared to scrutinise, and to support the identification of potential deep dive themes.

The Chair welcomed Mayor Andy Burnham, and GMCA Treasurer Steve Wilson, who were in attendance to present the budget reports.

CI46/19

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

CI47/19

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019 be agreed.

CI48/19

GMCA BUDGETS 2020/21

GM Mayor Andy Burnham introduced the suite of GMCA Budget Reports 2020/21, which would be considered by the GMCA on Friday 14 February 2020.

The Mayor advised that when determining the precept level, he had given careful consideration to the impact to residents, and expressed his concerns regarding the need to use council tax to fund frontline services, which could be seen as regressive taxation, as this was not sustainable.

Whilst additional Government funding had been announced to support the Police Service to recruit additional police officers, it was acknowledged that a fairer settlement was needed for the Fire Service given the increased pressures they face in light of the Grenfell Inquiry and recent incident at 'The Cube' in Bolton.

It was noted that resources were also required to improve the public transport system in GM, in particularly buses. The Board were informed that the 'Our Pass' pilot was intended to boost public transport, and increase patronage on buses, but transformational change would be a challenge without recognition from central government, given the pressures on local councils

The following key points were highlighted:

- The total impact of the proposals for the Mayoral General Budget would mean an increase in the mayoral precept for a Band D property of £7.75 (when combined with the GMFRS proposals the total precept increases by £14 to £90.95 for a Band D property or £10.88 for Band B).
- The increase would deliver the previously agreed continuation of the 'Our Pass' pilot into 2020/21. TfGM were currently undertaking an analysis of the pilot, noting that to date, there were over 38,000 pass holders, who had taken approximately 5.8 million journeys, and accessed over 8000 opportunities linked to the pass. A recent GM FE publication had indicated that the 'Our Pass' was providing greater choice for students.
- It would also provide £2.6 million for mayoral priorities which would contribute to:
 - The continuation of the rough sleeper initiative 'A Bed Every Night' (ABEN) pilot (£1.5 million). It was noted that at last count, there was 111 rough sleepers across GM, a significant reduction from 268 reported in 2017.
 - A proposed care leaver's travel concession (circa £0.55 million).
- It was proposed that the GM Fire and Rescue service budget increases to £110.9 million in 2020/21. The increased budget would fund inflationary and other pressures and reduce the

previously expected saving requirement from the service. These plans consider the preliminary findings in relation to the Grenfell inquiry, and the incident at 'The Cube' in Bolton. In light of these incidents, previous savings relating to the reduction of the number of 'pumps' from 50 to 48, and changes to the crewing ratios, and non-shift duty system have been removed from the 2020/21 budgets, pending further review.

- The required increased budget would be funded by a precept increase equal to £6.25 for a Band D property, with central Government funding increasing by 1.6%. The Mayor advised that following the Grenfell Inquiry there was a greater role in fire safety and prevention, and it was therefore important to ensure there were the required levels of available frontline staff. It was confirmed that the GMCA would be campaigning Government for a fairer settlement.
- It was reported that the Police and Crime Panel had unanimously approved the proposal to increase the Police and Crime Mayoral Precept by £10 for a Band D property at their meeting on the 31 January 2020. The additional funding raised by the precept, together with national funding from central government would support investment in frontline policing, including the recruitment of 347 more officers in 2020/21. It would also enable a significant number of improvements to be introduced which would include:
 - The recruitment of named neighbourhood beat officers / community support officers in every ward in GM.
 - The recruitment of school based police officers, for those schools most in greatest need, following a call from the Head teachers.
 - Improvements to the 101 service, which would include maintaining the recruitment of 40 extra call handlers.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- What were the ambitions for phase 3 of ABEN? The Mayor advised that over time, ABEN had continued to evolve, but there was a need for additional mental health, and drug and alcohol support, which would developed within the next phase. It was acknowledged that ABEN reflected the amazing commitment of the 10 GM councils, and key partners including health, and the voluntary sector. The Board were informed that official figures due to be published in two weeks' time, indicated that there had been a 30% reduction in rough sleepers year on year, and it was hoped that these results would encourage the Government to provide funding to enable the good work to continue. Following a clarification request, it was confirmed that the Housing First pilot, had supported 79 people to secure permanent accommodation.
- A Member commented that some boroughs would be disproportionately effected by the precept increase. The Mayor acknowledged that he did not believe that essential services should be funded through council tax, and recognised the challenge this posed for residents, however, this could not be avoided in the current climate. There was a need to find ways of investing in key services, such as the declining bus service, to position GM to effectively lobby Government for additional support.
- What was the expected revenue from the introduction of the administration charge for the concessionary tram and train pass for older people. It was confirmed that the bus pass for older people was still free, and there was only a charge for the addition of tram and train concessionary pass. To date, 108,000 older people had accessed the pass, with a total of £125,000 expected. The revenue was ring fenced to contribute towards the reform of bus services. The Mayor commented that to ensure greater consistency with other concessionary schemes it was only fair to introduce the £10 annual fee.

- A Member requested further information regarding the bus reform proposals, and the proposed contributions from councils. It was confirmed that TfGM had conducted a full assessment of how the GMCA could afford to make and operate a proposed franchising scheme (without government support), should this decision be taken. As part of this assessment the 10 councils agreed to ring fence £17.8 million (from Waste reserves passed back to districts) pending a Mayoral decision. The Mayor confirmed that the responses to the bus consultation (which ended in January 2020) were currently being analysed, with a view to a decision being taken as soon as possible. It was noted that whichever route GM decided to take was likely to require annual investment.
- How many responses had the bus consultation received? It was confirmed that approximately 9000 responses had been received, with around 80% in support of franchising. It was noted that bus operators had provided substantial responses, with some proposing a partnership approach for consideration.
- A Member referred to the recent government announcement regarding HS2, and explored whether the timeframes could potentially impact on GM's economic competitiveness. The Mayor welcomed the announcement but confirmed that he would be pressing the Government for a clear timetable. The Mayor advised that the promises on future infrastructure must not distract from the need to urgently upgrade the current railway, noting that the creation of two new platforms at Manchester Piccadilly Train Station was a shovel ready project that would benefit the whole North.
- A Member requested further information regarding the Mayor's Direct costs which had increased by 50%. Steve Wilson, GMCA Treasurer, confirmed that this did not relate to additional staff, but the costs were associated with inflation, and relevant recharges which had been applied to the Mayor's Office. Following discussion, it was agreed that a further breakdown of staffing costs (including consultancy and agency costs) should be considered by the Committee in the next municipal year.
- A Stockport Member recorded his thanks to the GM Mayor, for the support in developing the Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC). The Mayor advised that what was taking place in Stockport was a template for the boroughs, and called for councils to consider this approach. The MDC was helping to redefine Stockport and had changed the approach to the long-term future of town centres and brownfield regeneration for years to come. The Mayor added that he hoped that this use of his powers, would encourage the Government to invest in town centre regeneration.

Members received a presentation from Steve Wilson, GMCA Treasurer, which provided an overview of the suite of six budget reports which would be considered by the GMCA:

- GMCA Revenue and Capital Budgets 2020/21 – Overview
- Mayoral General Budget and Precept Proposals
- GMCA Transport Revenue Budget 2020/21
- GMCA Revenue General Budget 2020/21
- GM Waste Budget and Levy 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2023/24
- GMCA Capital Programme 2019/20

Members highlighted the following questions:

- Given the extent of the GMCA's capital programme, it was agreed that Members would reconsider the GMCA's Capital Programme 2019/20 within the next municipal year.

- It was reported that a full ‘bottom up’ and strategic review of transport budgets would be undertaken for the 2021/22 budget setting process and beyond.
- Members explored whether the GMFRS holding position outlined was sustainable, should a fairer settlement not be received from Government in 2021/22. The significant challenges faced by the Fire Service were considered, and it was acknowledged that should government not announce further funding to support the service, further consideration would be given to whether further savings could be made, or whether it was appropriate to raise additional revenue from the Precept.
- Jim Wallace, Chief Fire Officer, GMFRS, advised that there was still a considerable degree of uncertainty for the Fire Service, in particularly given, the next phase of the Grenfell Inquiry had just begun. The Government had however, made a commitment to provide one off funding (of £10 million) to support the implementation of the Grenfell recommendations.
- It was noted that the fire at ‘The Cube’ in Bolton posed a new challenge for the service as it was below 18 metres (not classed as high rise). There was approximately 12,000 buildings of this nature within GM, significantly more than the 700 high rise buildings (approximately).
- A Member queried whether there were costs associated with the Commissioners appointed by the Mayor. It was confirmed that apart from the Cycling and Walking Commissioner, all other Mayoral appointments were not remunerated.
- Following a clarification request, it was reported that all capital borrowing was now undertaken directly by the GMCA.
- A Member requested further information regarding the planned Metrolink spend. It was confirmed this figure included the completion of the Trafford Park extension, tram renewal programme (27 new trams) and significant line maintenance which was required.

RESOLVED:

1. That the reports be noted.
2. That an update on the GMCA’s Capital Budget be included within the work programme for consideration within the next municipal year.
3. That a breakdown of the GMCA’s staffing costs be included within the work programme for consideration within the next municipal year.

CI49/19

WORK PROGRAMME

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

Consideration was given to the March work programme, and it was proposed that following the GMFRS briefing session, the Committee should consider the results of the High Rise Residents Survey. Given this, it was proposed that Care Leavers Charter update be deferred until June 2020.

The Committee considered the June 2020 work programme, and what items should be considered to inform the development of the work programme for 2020/21. The Chair proposed that it would be beneficial to consider the expected announcements from Government regarding the Spending Review and Devolution White Paper.

RESOLVED:

1. That the work programme be agreed.
2. That the results of the latest High Rise Residents Survey be considered by the Committee in March 2020.
3. That the Care Leavers Charter be deferred until June 2020.
4. That the expected Government announcements relating to the Spending Review and Devolution White Paper be considered by the Committee in June 2020.

CI50/19 GMCA REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

That the Register of Key Decisions be noted.

CI51/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17 March 2020, at 6pm, GMCA Offices.