

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH FEBRUARY 2020 AT GMCA - GMCA BOARDROOM**

PRESENT:

Councillor John Walsh (Chair)	Bolton
Councillor Barbara Brownridge	Oldham
Councillor Linda Robinson	Rochdale
Councillor Janet Mobbs	Stockport
Councillor Mike Glover	Tameside
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan
Councillor Sharmina August	Salford
Councillor Liam Billington	Tameside
Councillor Martin Hayes	Bury
Councillor Adrian Pearce	Tameside
Councillor Stephen Gribbon	Stockport

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Morgan	GMCA
Steve Fyfe	GMCA
Joanne Heron	GMCA
Julie Connor	GMCA
Matt Berry	GMCA
Sam Evans	GMCA
David Hodcroft	GMCA

HPE 182/20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin, Councillor Amy Whyte, and Councillor Dorothy Gunther

HPE 183/20 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

RESOLVED/-

To note there were no announcements.

HPE 184/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED/-

To note there were no declarations received.

HPE 185/20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD 14 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED/-

That the Minutes of 14th November 2019 be agreed as an accurate record.

HPE 186/20 GM TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

Anne Morgan, Head of Planning Strategy GMCA delivered a presentation on the Town Centre Challenge initiative which served as an update to this item being discussed by this Committee in November 2019. It was noted that developing/improving town centres had been on The Mayor's manifesto pledge, and that the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) had also shaped this work. Members were invited to add their thoughts and comments in order to assist in shaping future policy for this work and for the GMSF.

Members were given context around town centres which were noted as typically being already well connected transport wise, and surrounded by an abundance of brownfield land with existing leisure and retail development. The need to build more urban housing in this area was stated to match housing demand, and also reflect how retail behaviour trends had changed. It was updated that urban housing developments had previously predominantly been in inner city Manchester and Salford as the market outside of the City Centre had previously not supported development. It was reported that current work was aimed to make town centres more attractive as places to both live and work.

Members heard that GM initiatives around town centres were in place, such as using funding from surpluses from the GM Evergreen fund towards GM local authorities to develop district level town centre plans. It was also highlighted that the Planning Delivery Fund had been used to support districts to develop town centre strategies.

The Mayors Town Centre Challenge was also highlighted to Members, which was noted as an initiative extended to districts to use a model of support from the Mayor and Combined Authority to assist with focused town centre development, such as granting powers to acquire land. The Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation was highlighted as the most advanced example in Greater Manchester to date.

Members heard that a number of Government initiatives were in place where Greater Manchester towns had been successful in securing funding, such as the Future High Street Fund with seven successful Greater Manchester bids, and the Town Deals (aka Stronger Towns Fund) with three Greater Manchester towns successful.

The Challenges to this work were highlighted as being around viability of development in town centres, resource and expertise both across districts and centrally, the length of time to deliver Town Centre Challenge and the uneven pattern of funding.

Members were asked for their input and it was highlighted where they could potentially add the most value to this process. These were noted as:

- Sharing experience of district activity with examples of what had worked
- Engagement at a district level to identify opportunities for development in town centres
- Monitoring activity in Town Centre Challenge centres
- Raising awareness of Greater Manchester funding opportunities
- Shaping town centre policy in the GMSF

Members requested an update on the work undertaken by Manchester School of Architecture with the Heritage Action Zone, and it was clarified that this funding had been recent, so reporting of outcomes would likely be available from the district local authority in the near future.

Following Members questions in relation to funding and resourcing to the Mayors Town Centre Challenge, it was updated that the GMCA do not hold any central pots of funding and that support was provided in the form of powers and staffing resources and expertise. It was noted that signposting to existing funding streams had been done where eligibility had been met, and the vast majority of funding resources had been provided by the district itself.

Members commented on the challenges that some of the boroughs had faced around developing an understanding of Town Centre Challenge, and allocating staff resources to put planning frameworks in place especially in the smaller districts which had a large number of towns. Following Members welcoming the GMCA to meeting with their district officers/ senior members to share experience and best practice such as where resources need to be allocated, it was stated that GMCA officers would be in touch to arrange this.

Regarding the GMSF, Members commented that they would welcome any GMCA guidance in projecting town centre development and how to support development of cultural centres. It was also enquired as to when the final GMSF plan would likely be agreed as this would assist development of local district plans which would speed up delivery. It was clarified that the GMSF was due to go for public consultation between June/July to September 2020 with submission of all responses by late 2020/ the beginning 2021 for examination by Government. It was stated that this should then be the final version of the plan and it would then begin to impact upon planning decisions. Adoption of the final plan was expected by the end of 2021.

Following Member queries regarding what 'competitive socialising' may be referring to in the context of Intu tackling the challenges that shopping centres face around changing consumer practices, GMCA Officers would come back if able to find out more information.

Members commented that the economic climate should also be considered when planning for changing consumer practices away from using shopping centres. It was clarified that new developments were not the only focus, and that making places better to live, with a sense of civic pride, and having more people living in the locality would give a greater resilience. It was acknowledged that even affluent town centres had struggled where the economy had shrunk, and avoiding an over-reliance on one sector was key.

Members highlighted the challenges of developments requiring approval in their districts that were generally not in-line with the general strategy of town centre development.

Members wished to feedback concerns around maintaining disability access in shopping centres such as the Manchester Arndale centre

RESOLVED/-

That Scrutiny note and comment on the report and request further updates as appropriate.

HPE 187/20 GM HOUSING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Steve Fyfe, Head Housing Strategy GMCA, provided Members with an update on progress in implementing the GM Housing Strategy. Members heard that the Housing Strategy was approved in June 2019 with this being the first update since implementation. It was stated that both the Housing Strategy and Implementation Strategy had taken a focussed approach where value could be added on

a GM collaboration level, but that it was not intended to cover all aspects or the strategies and activities in the GM districts.

Members heard that this work also incorporates aspects such as supporting older households and the new-build agenda, and that the Implementation Plan would be publically available to provide an update on progress. It was highlighted that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was being developed with housing providers and the GM Health and Social Care Partnership which upon completion, would be taken back to this committee at a future date as well as future funding from Government,

Following Members requesting an update on progress of the Rogue landlord hub, it was clarified that funding from MHCLG had been secured in the last 18 months with some initial work completed and the appointment of a specific officer to focus on private rented issues. This was with a view to potentially assist the GM local authorities with cases where standards had not been met and civil penalties had applied. It was also clarified that the Good Landlord Scheme had been focussed on the private rented sector, rather than social rents. Members heard that standards and interventions for public sector renting can be applied via other means such as within MOUs and including within discussions and writing social objectives into strategies.

Members enquired around the limited capacity to take forward the required programme work in relation to Priority A3 Healthy Homes. It was clarified that this was in relation to staffing changes and that this was a delay rather than a blockage.

Members raised concerns around sub-standard housing with density issues which were not suitable for retrofitting. It was noted that Government assistance for large scale clearance which had been a previous strategy was unlikely to be an option. It was stated that significant progress in retrofitting properties was needed to improve standards and fulfil carbon reduction targets.

In relation to the zero carbon agenda and the need to decrease petrol car sales, Members enquired whether charging points could be included in retrofitting of existing properties and also into new build properties. It was clarified that there were opportunities in relation to this, but ultimately the scope would be determined by business models and any available funding, along with working around inconsistencies at properties such as lack of drive space.

In relation to the 6 month reporting cycle, Members requested that challenges relating to the housing agenda be brought forward as soon as they are picked up.

RESOLVED/-

That Scrutiny note and comment on the report and request further updates as appropriate.

HPE 187/20 FIVE YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN FOR GREATER MANCHESTER

Sam Evans Head of Environment Policy, GMCA delivered a presentation to update Members on progress of the Five Year Environment Plan for GM. The presentation gave a recap of the contents of the 5 Year Plan, the approach to implementation and the challenge groups and key initiatives.

The plan was highlighted as setting out 5 key challenges that need to be tackled in order to realise the clean, green, carbon-neutral resilient city region, with a thriving natural environment and zero-waste

economy. A top priority was highlighted as contributing a fair and equitable share of tackling global climate change and adapting the GM City Region to climate change impacts.

Members heard that the plan sought wider economic and social benefits for people, such as improving health and quality of life, places such as building vibrant, resilient, sustainable neighbourhoods and homes, and also the economy such as increases prosperity and productivity.

The 5 Year Plan was noted as having a key part for delivering the Greater Manchester Strategy's vision, and that the aims of the 5 Year Environment Plan should be embedded within plans such as the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, and the Local Industrial Strategy.

It was updated that there was a need for significant upscaling of local renewable electricity generation, with currently half of the UK's average (generation per person) in GM. Members heard that there was a shortfall in achieving carbon reduction targets which would require innovation and scale up of delivery by doing things differently. It was highlighted that the plan would only deliver if the full cross-section of society were engaged and took action.

It was highlighted that a natural capital account had been developed for the Greater Manchester 10 districts which aimed to capture the current baseline of what GM's existing natural environments were performing in terms of the ecosystem services they were providing. It was noted that each year, GM received nearly £900m of benefits from its existing natural capital.

Members heard that this update had provided a broad overview of a large area and that specific aspects from the environment agenda would come to this committee in the future in 'bite sized chunks'. Members requested that future meetings focus on areas where Members can influence and add the most value to specific aspects of the environmental agenda. It was acknowledged that public communications and getting community influential figures fully engaged was key in achieving the targets of this agenda. It was clarified to Members that the likely areas where they could assist would be the phasing to carbon neutral methods for home heating, retrofitting and electric vehicles. It was also clarified in relation to Brexit that the EU funding highlighted for task and finish groups had already been secured or would be honoured by the Treasury.

It was highlighted that supporting a GM wide scheme for solar roofing panels had been in response to problems encountered by residents using individual traders that had since gone out of business. It was acknowledged that regarding the phasing-out of gas boilers, affordability was key, and that low income households should not be disadvantaged during this transition.

Members highlighted that there were sites with scheduled development within the GMSF that currently feature peat bogs which had been acknowledged as storing carbon and having beneficial environmental impacts. It was clarified that the GMCA were aware of these issues, and that a small number of sites that featuring peat bogs were in the process of being analysed with environment colleagues assessing these, which will be reflected in the GMSF that goes for consultation in 2020.

Members felt that recent proposals to remove free electric vehicle charging points in GM were not in line with the aspirations within the Five Year Environment Plan to shift GM to the electrification of vehicles. It was clarified that principles within the GMSF require electric vehicle charging to be considered within any new developments, and that officers from TfGM would be better placed to fully address this point. Members also felt that having a single universal charging format for electric vehicles would be beneficial and encouraged the GM Mayor to lobby government for a universal format.

Members also heard that there were proposals within the GMSF around biodiversity net-gain which would provide for habitat loss through development, either provided onsite or offsite. It was affirmed that protecting habitats was a key aspiration of the GMSF.

Regarding improving air quality, Members enquired around the level of interaction that GM had held with neighbouring authorities as this was noted as being an issue larger than the GM City Region. It was clarified that TfGM had worked with Highways England, as well as neighbouring northern city regions that were noted as developing similar proposals to GM.

Members requested that any papers or presentations for discussion items of this Committee be submitted with a minimum of seven days' notice to give adequate time for Members to review content. It was also requested that if any members had any relevant discussion items that they wished to raise, that these be sent to Matt Berry, Governance and Scrutiny Officer, GMCA.

RESOLVED/-

That Scrutiny note and comment on the presentation received

HPE 188/20 WORK PROGRAMME

Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, Governance & Scrutiny Team, GMCA updated Members of upcoming items on the HPE OS Scrutiny Work Programme. It was heard that the GMSF item currently planned for the March 2020 would be brought to a later meeting.

RESOLVED/-

That Scrutiny note and comment on the report and request further updates as appropriate.

HPE 189/20 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

<https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=386&MId=2830&Ver=4>

RESOLVED/-

That the Register of Key Decisions be noted

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 19th March 2020 18:00, GMCA Boardroom, Churchgate House

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