

**MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA)
ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND
SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY 12 JUNE AT 10.15 AM VIA WEBCAST**

Present: Councillor Michael Holly (in the Chair)

Bolton: Councillor Samantha Connor
Councillor Susan Haworth

Bury: Councillor Mary Whitby

Manchester: Councillor Greg Stanton

Oldham: Councillor George Hulme

Salford: Councillor Jim King

Stockport: Councillor Becky Senior

Trafford: Councillor Barry Brotherton

Wigan: Councillor Charles Rigby
Councillor Michael Winstanley

In attendance

Oldham Cllr Sean Fielding, GMCA Portfolio Lead for Employment, Skills & Digital
GMCA Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
GMCA Gemma Marsh, Director of Skills (Policy, Strategy & Delivery)
GMCA Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Policy and Research
GMCA Lee Teasdale, Governance & Scrutiny Officer

E01/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Stephen Homer (Tameside) and Cllr Daniel Meredith (Rochdale).

E02/20 NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Nominations were invited for the position of Chair of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year. Councillor Susan Haworth proposed Councillor Michael Holly and Councillor Barry Brotherton seconded the proposal. The Committee agreed that Councillor Michael Holly be appointed.

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year. Councillor Michael Holly proposed Councillor Michael Winstanley and Councillor Charles Rigby seconded the proposal. The Committee agreed that Councillor Michael Winstanley be appointed.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor Michael Holly be appointed as Chair of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year.
2. That Councillor Michael Winstanley be appointed as Vice-Chair of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year.

E03/20 MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020/21

The Committee was asked to note its Membership for the 2020/21 Municipal Year:

Members
Councillor Samantha Connor, Bolton, CON
Councillor Susan Haworth, Bolton, LAB
Councillor Mary Whitby, Bury, LAB
Councillor Basat Sheikh, Manchester, LAB*
Councillor Greg Stanton, Manchester, LAB*
Councillor George Hulme, Oldham, LAB
Councillor Daniel Meredith, Rochdale, LAB
Councillor Michael Holly, Rochdale, CON
Councillor Jim King, Salford, LAB
Councillor Kerry Waters, Stockport, LAB
Councillor Becky Senior, Stockport, LIB DEM
Councillor Stephen Homer, Tameside, LAB
Councillor Barry Brotherton, Trafford, LAB
Councillor Charles Rigby, Wigan, LAB
Councillor Michael Winstanley, Wigan, CON

The Councillors marked with an asterisk are to be formally appointed at the June meeting of the GMCA

RESOLVED:

1. That the membership of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year be noted.

E04/20 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT AND ANNUAL DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Consideration was given to a report that reminded Members that the GMCA's Member Code of Conduct (Appendix 1 of the report) set out high expectations with regard to Members' conduct. As Members of the GMCA's overview and scrutiny committees are co-opted onto a GMCA Committee the GMCA's code applied to them when they were acting in this capacity. Members were also reminded that they were required to complete an annual declaration of interest form, which would be published on the GMCA's website.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members noted the report and the GMCA's Code of Conduct and agreed to complete an annual register of interest form.

E05/20 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were provided with the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

E06/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

E07/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2019 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED:

1. That the minutes of the last meeting held on 8th November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

It was requested that agenda item 8 (Stockport MBC Business Plan) be moved to the end of the agenda to allow for consideration of confidential elements. The Committee agreed to move to Item 9 on the agenda.

E08/20 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND COMMISSIONING ACTIVITIES

Gemma Marsh, Director of Skills (Policy, Strategy & Delivery), introduced a report providing members with an update on Greater Manchester's European Social Fund (ESF) allocation within the ESIF 2014–2020 programme and how delivery activity, where possible, was being shaped to respond to challenges presented by COVID-19.

Key areas highlighted included:

- GM was approaching full commitment of its £162.8m ESF allocation. The ESF Managing Authority (DWP) required all of its ESF contracts to be in place by December 2020. Contracted activity was able to continue until December 2023 under the HM Treasury Guarantee.
- As a result of COVID-19, The ESF Managing Authority was seeking agreement with the EC on structural flexibilities, in particular, match funding requirements, to support the

ESF programme. Some practical steps had already been applied to ensure ESF delivery could continue during lockdown, e.g. use of e-signatures.

- GMCA had received a Memorandum of Understanding for its £42m ESF GM Skills for Growth Programme. Market engagement and initial procurement activity was underway taking account of likely COVID-19 recovery requirements. The programme would look to support over 25,000 GM residents and 2,750 businesses and be complementary to the devolved Adult Education Budget and other ESF programmes.
- Prior to COVID-19 delivery and performance on live GM ESF contracts had been relatively strong, however with some underperformance on Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) contracts which may be impacted further by the Department's response to COVID-19.

Councillor Sean Fielding, GMCA Portfolio Lead for Employment, Skills & Digital, expressed his support for the programme.

Comments and Questions

Members noted that GM continued to have a higher proportion of NEETs compared to national and regional averages – asking for more detail on the reasoning behind this.

It was advised that a significant amount of work had been undertaken with NEETS across GM pre-Covid19 and that figures had begun to fall more in line with averages. The region had a number of demographics with a high proportion of NEETS and targeted regional work had been taking place to address this. The issue faced now was that the near future was unpredictable – Gemma Marsh would seek to procure a more up to date figure on NEETS to circulate to the Committee, together with comparison figures.

Members referenced the allocations of the finance that fell under the control of GM. It was asked whether the current level of split was considered appropriate within the current context.

It was advised that when the splits had been initially agreed they were fundamentally right – and there was an element of merging between each area. Within the new context – parts such as the Skills for Growth programme could be used to support those coming back into the jobs market, after they may have been furloughed for a period.

Members asked about the support being provided to those who were still feeling the impacts of previous recessions. Such as the over 50's population that had previously suffered from recessions in the early 1990s and late 2000s.

It was stated that a lot of the extant programmes within the system were centred on the over 50's – close work also took place with the Aging Hub. The Skills for Growth programme would pick up on elements such as technology skills for older employees. The system had been developed to ensure that it did not put too much focus on one cohort to the detriment of others. There was funding available within the current ESF programme and the figures on these would be provided.

Members enquired about how sub-regional variances were being approached. It was advised that the ESF programme allowed an absolute ability to work on a sub-regional basis, allowing for targeted and varying work where needed.

Members asked about 'Our Pass' being used to record cultural activities. Usually schools were asked to help authorities with tracking such information that could not be done in the same way at present – with that in mind, could Our Pass be used for such tracking of where young people were engaging in cultural activities.

Gemma Marsh and Cllr Sean Fielding were now members of the Our Pass Board – and it was recognised that the Pass provided a critical source of intelligence in regard to understanding the activities being accessed. This will in turn help in informing the development of the Young Persons Guarantee. It was clear that 'Our Pass' was now more important than ever before in helping young people to access the opportunities they will need to help recover as quickly as possible from the crisis.

RESOLVED:

1. That progress in committing Greater Manchester's ESF allocation and attempts to repurpose and apply flexibilities in response to challenges presented by COVID-19 be noted.
2. That the intention to proceed to procurement with the GM Skills for Growth ESF programme be noted.
3. That the status of the final CFO application for Youth Opportunity Programme – at appraisal stage with the ESF MA at present - and delegate authority to the GMCA Chief Executive and Treasurer of GMCA for design sign off following development in conjunction with areas/partners be noted.
4. That up-to-date figures on the number of NEETs in GM, together with relevant comparison data – be circulated to the Committee.

E09/20 ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Policy and Research, was invited to provide the Committee with an update on the initial steps being taken towards economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.

The situation was rapidly evolving, and further updates would be brought to the committee as it developed – this would likely include the development of a Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) One Year Plan designed to complement the existing GMS. The full economic implications of the crisis would be extensive, however, a huge number of preparations were underway to seek to mitigate the worst outcomes on the labour market. Some businesses were growing within the current market still, and a lot of movement would be seen within the labour market.

The pandemic had created an unusual scenario whereby the crisis response phase still had to be led in conjunction with the recovery phase – rather than two clearly defined periods.

The recovery period had been broken down into three phases:

- Leaving lockdown phase (0-2 months)
- Living with Covid-19 phase (0-12 months)
- Building Back Better phase (2-3 years)

These phases were all underway already so that immediate response could sit alongside longer term thinking about how to take advantage of climate improvement possibilities and chances to reduce inequalities.

Comments and Questions

Members referenced fiscal interventions from government – could there be mini-budgets taking place that would present GM with an opportunity to make formal submissions on the specific needs of the region?

It was only known at present that a form of ‘fiscal event’ was due to take place in July, however, government had indicated at present that this would not take the form of a mini-budget – it was felt that labour market interventions may well be the focus of the event. A formal letter had been received from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government that had asked for information on ‘shovel ready’ projects that could be started and completed within an 18-month window.

Members asked about such projects – was it being ensured that the projects being chosen would bring benefits to the whole of the GM economy. In addition, was long-term thinking taking place around the recovery of the aviation market – particularly in relation to the importance of Manchester Airport to the GM economy?

It was advised that the request had only just been received from the Secretary of State and it had included some specific criteria that needed to be assessed against the projects planned for the region. It was also key to note that this was a small initial fiscal event, and there would be far greater ones later in the year that would require significant input. Longer-term thinking had begun to take place, and the CA was working closely with the GM Local Enterprise Partnership on this. A regular dialogue was in place with colleagues at the airport to address the issues going forward.

Members enquired about the key sectors within GM that had particular concerns for recovery in the near term.

It was stated that different effects would likely have impacts on sectors over time. There was significant concerns about the hospitality, retail and tourism sectors in particular. It was difficult to see how some businesses were able to be profitable with social distancing measures in place. There would also be significant impacts in relation to office space, as demand for this was likely to fall given new ways of working being implemented on a potentially permanent basis.

A question was raised about how green growth could still be ensured in the wake of Covid-19. It was advised that substantial falls had been seen in carbon emissions during lockdown – and as

part of Building Back Better the opportunity had be taken towards looking at how to build back a more sustainable long-term environmental situation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update on economic recovery be received.
2. That regular updates on economic recovery be brought to the Committee.

E10/20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair advised that Committee Members feedback to the Chair/Vice-Chair and supporting officers on any particular areas of concern that they would like to see form part of the year's work programme. The Chair, in conjunction with the Vice-Chair and supporting officers would then consider the submissions and draft a work programme for the Committee's consideration and approval.

The Chair noted a submission already received from Cllr Whitby, requesting that Women's Employability be re-added to the work programme.

RESOLVED:

1. That, following Committee submissions, permission be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair to prepare a draft Work Programme for 2020/21.

E11/20 NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chair suggested that 10:30am start times be adopted going forward – it was asked that any comments suggesting alternatives be emailed to the Chair, Vice-Chair and supporting officers.

E12/20 STOCKPORT MDC BUSINESS PLAN

Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Policy and Research, provided the Committee with an update and briefing on the Stockport MDC Business Plan. It was noted for transparency that Simon Nokes sits on the Stockport MDC Board.

In September 2018, the GMCA had agreed to support in principle, the creation of a Mayoral Development Corporation in Stockport to help in securing the regeneration of the Town Centre West area of Stockport. January 2019 had seen the agreement of a draft set of principles for the Corporation. The Stockport Corporation was then established in September 2019 as the first in GM area. An Interim Strategic Business Plan was agreed by the GMCA in September 2019 and Stockport Council in November 2019.

Since then, the MDC had established itself as an effective regeneration delivery vehicle and was now in a position to set out a more comprehensive long-term plan for bringing about the regeneration of Stockport Town Centre West over the period 2020 to 2025. The new draft

Strategic Business Plan was approved by the MDC Board at its meeting on May 7th 2020 and would be submitted to GMCA for approval at its meeting on 26th June 2020.

Comments and Questions

Members asked about the economic risks to the CA and how this would be scrutinised. It was advised that the CA was not investing any money in the MDC body itself, which would be entirely funded by Stockport Council. If the CA was to be involved in specific MDC projects, these would come through the normal CA investment channels, including scrutiny by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

Members asked if the MDC would be looking at developments to support the economy in the widest sense – including the night-time economy.

It was advised that a Strategic Regeneration Framework had been developed for the MDC and this would guide all economic regeneration decisions. There had been a lot of discussion about how best to create a sustainable community within Stockport Town Centre West, within its role of the wider Stockport Town Centre, and attempts to bring a night-time economy back into this as a whole piece.

Members asked for further detail on the thinking around the local energy market. It was advised that this would form part of the green agenda pursued by the MDC. If over 3.5k houses were being developed – how could these be heated in an environmentally sustainable way going forward? This was part of the overall plan around environmentally sustainable developments.

The public section of the meeting then concluded to allow for questions related to Appendix B of the item which was restricted by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the Stockport Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation's Strategic Business Plan May 2020 – March 2025 be noted.
2. That the contents of the Stockport Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation's Action Plan May 2020 – March 2021 be noted.
3. That comments made by the Committee be noted ahead of the Report being submitted for approval at the CA.