

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Date: 31st July 2020

Subject: Age-friendly and Equalities Portfolio Governance, including the establishment of an Independent Inequalities Commission

Report of: Brenda Warrington, Portfolio Leader for Age-friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities, and Pam Smith, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Age-friendly Greater Manchester

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide an understanding of the equalities issues arising from, or exacerbated by Covid, and to propose the establishment of an Independent Inequalities Commission, to respond to long term systemic inequality issues present in Greater Manchester. The paper also proposes networked portfolio governance structure to provide leadership, structure and coherence around all the work underway and planned in responding to equalities issues for the Age-friendly and Equalities Portfolio.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note, comment on, and endorse the establishment of the Independent Inequalities Commission;
2. Note, comment on, and endorse the establishment of partnership governance arrangements for the strategic coordination of equalities activities, under the Leadership of the Age Friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities Portfolio;
3. Note and comment on work already underway to deliver timely and targeted support and responses to inequalities arising from Covid.

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Equalities Implications:

The proposals in this paper seek to establish mechanisms to respond to equalities issues present in Greater Manchester. The proposals in the paper seek to develop leadership, coherence and greater impact of actions being taken in response to equalities implications and systemic inequalities.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures:

The establishment of the proposed portfolio governance will enable the view and representations of members of GM society into the design and delivery of policy and activity, including access to green spaces, sustainable transport options, alternative working models and maintaining and supporting ongoing environmental improvements.

Risk Management:

N/A

Legal Considerations:

The establishment of the proposed portfolio governance will support the GMCA in fulfilling, and going beyond the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital:

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: N/A

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		Yes
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 There is now a substantive body of evidence that the worst effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have traced and amplified pre-existing patterns of inequality in our communities. As Greater Manchester moves into recovery and renewal, that recovery must ensure that it is inclusive and aims to address structural inequalities, limits the long term negative effects of the pandemic and strengthens the resilience of GM. This goes beyond the equalities agenda as set out in the Equality Act, and should include groups of citizens now facing poverty, poor health and wellbeing, and struggling to retain or secure employment, for example. Local evidence, intelligence and research analysis undertaken has substantiated the national report published by Public Health England in its [Disparities Review](#).

1.2 Disadvantaged communities and individuals across the country are experiencing a higher exposure to Covid-19, and as many already with existing health conditions, they are at increased risk of more severe outcomes if they contract the virus. Deprivation is not the only factor however, links to ethnicity, age and disability for example are all now being evidenced, and of course key to note that the intersectionality of these factors.

1.3 Consequences of actions put into place in response to the virus, while designed to support and help many, have the potential over time to increase inequality and exacerbate health, wealth and societal inequalities. For example, minor operations have had to be postponed, and there has been a reported increase in domestic violence during lockdown.

1.4 Inequality within in our communities has demonstrably influenced the level and nature of impact of Covid-19 in Greater Manchester, and we can now see the evolution of a new pattern of inequality in our city region.

1.5 This paper sets out:

- Proposition for the establishment of a GM Independent Inequalities Commission;
- Proposition for the development and establishment of partnership governance structures and activities relating to the Age Friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities Portfolio;
- High level summary of work already underway in this area.

2. GREATER MANCHESTER INDEPENDENT INEQUALITIES COMMISSION

2.1 A Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission is proposed to support and influence the Covid recovery work across Greater Manchester and to shape and inform the city-regions renewal following the pandemic. The Commission will be a catalyst for transformation, helping to develop responses and actions arising, providing expert opinion, evidence and guidance as Greater Manchester's economy and society reshapes due to Covid. The Commission will provide expertise, challenge, and support for Greater Manchester to lead the way, nationally and internationally, in recognising and responding to the new inequalities emerging from the pandemic.

2.2 The mission of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission is to better understand the existing and emerging inequalities, consider how tackling these inequalities should feature in a refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy, and outline the route towards achieving the outcomes of this Strategy.

2.3 The Commission will aim to:

- Provide independent, respected and policy-relevant analysis and recommendations
- Provide a non-political and informal platform for dialogue, challenge and advice
- Consider inequalities across economy and society in Greater Manchester; including, but also looking beyond those people in society who have protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, and to consider all forms of equality / inequality.
- Act as a 'bridge' or interface between renowned international, national and regional experts, policy-makers and those with lived experience in order to promote institutional linkages and knowledge-transfer.

2.4 Commission objectives and activities:

- To consider an evidence base covering inequalities in GM. This will include both a substantive existing evidence base and the commissioning of further insight on established and newly emerging equalities issues arising from the pandemic
- To generate a deep understanding of the current equalities issues, causes and responses as they exist in GM. This will come from analysis carried out by the GMCA research team and moderated by the Commission through discussion at its meetings.
- To provide expert advice, opinion and evidence based recommendations. This will be drawn from the discussions and enable GM to respond to in the design and delivery of recovery actions and beyond, including the 2021 refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy
- To draw out evidence and best practice examples for dissemination and further discussion in localities across Greater Manchester
- To provide interim and final recommendations The final product will include a final report being developed from the discussions (similar to Independent Prosperity Review or Co-op Commission) and a series of topic based / thematic papers are developed from the discussions at the Commission meetings.

2.5 Accountability:

2.5.1 The Commission will be directly accountable to Mayor of Greater Manchester and Leaders of the 10 local authorities in GM. It will sit independently of all decision-making structures, and act in an independent, advisory capacity.

2.6 The Commission will be guided by a series of core values:

- Integrity, Independence and Impartiality – in order to have impact, the Commission's work must be respected and credible.

- Impact – everything the Commission does will be premised on generating impact, on supporting and strengthening policy-making.
- Innovation - the Commission will aim to be ‘ahead of the curve’ in responding strategically to inequalities issues and be innovative in the way in which it delivers its outputs.
- Inclusivity – the Commission will aim to engage all relevant stakeholders in its work. It will promote cross-regionalism and gender and ethnic balance in everything it does.
- Integration – the Commission’s work will be premised on contributing to, supporting and improving existing structures and strategies across GM.

2.7 The Membership of the Commission will include leading national / international experts in their fields, including population health experts, academics, economists, social policy experts and business leaders.

2.8 A process has been agreed with the Mayor and Portfolio Lead for Equalities approaching possible Chairperson. The Chair of the Commission will play a key role in steering the discussion at meetings, and also act as the public face of the Commission in media and other publicity. Having a commitment to tackling inequalities, their role will be as a facilitator, drawing on the professional and subject-specific input from other members of the Commission. It is proposed that an initial approach be made on the basis of the Chair being an honorary role.

2.9 Once appointed, the Commission Chair will then be involved in recruitment of other members of the Commission.

2.10 How the Commission will operate:

2.10.1 Recognising the urgent and pressing need to respond to the rising inequalities in Greater Manchester, the Commission needs to be established as quickly as possible, seeking to ensure its role and influence in Greater Manchester’s recovery and renewal, and setting foundations for the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy to be undertaken next year.

2.10.2 The initial work of the Commission will be informed by an evidence ‘stock take’ from across Greater Manchester. This will involve the bringing together of existing evidence and data to inform the ‘baseline’ position.

2.10.3 The Commission will be able to call evidence hearings, commission specific evidence and research work and will have to consider how these can be achieved whilst adhering to social distancing requirements. Wherever possible the Commission should draw on existing and established networks and communication routes, enabling access to communities and organisations.

2.10.4 It will be for the Commission to agree key lines of enquiry for discussion in the engagement exercise, which will be discussed in a range of fora. The engagement infrastructure which supports the Commission might include:

- GMCA Equalities Advisory Panels and Advisers (LGBTQ+, Disabled People, Youth Combined Authority, Women and Girls' Equality Panel, Race Equality Panel (once established))
- GM programmes (Ageing Hub / Older People's Network)
- Subject specific groups (TfGM Disability Design Reference Group)
- VCSE Equalities groups (VCSE Equalities Alliance, GM BAME Leaders' Network)
- VCSE-led 'lived experience' (GM Poverty Action, Poverty Truth Commissions, GM CABs, Church Action on Poverty, VCSE Homeless Network – and many more)
- Other relevant GM bodies – GM Co-operative Commission, VCSE Leadership Group, GM Social Enterprise Advisory group, GM Social Value Network, GM Public Sector EDI Professionals Group

2.11 Commission timescales:

2.11.1 The following timescales are being used for initial planning purposes, but may be subject to some change as a more detailed programme is developed:

August 2020:

- Pull together existing evidence on inequalities in GM and draw recommendations about potential scope and priorities for the Commission to consider (GMCA Strategy and Research Team)
- Recruit Chair and Commission members (GMCA Strategy and Research Team)
- Review 'lived experience' engagement structures and put in place additional mechanisms as required from which to gather intelligence (GMCA Engagement Team)

September 2020:

- First Commission meeting – Commission members meet each other, agree the mission, scope and product of their work, considering the evidence which has been made available them.
- After first Commission meeting, commission and undertake additional research and evidence gathering (GMCA Strategy and Research Team)
- Develop programme for the research and meetings of the Commission

January 2020:

- Second Commission meeting – Commission members consider and discuss the evidence which has been presented to them, drawing conclusions and forming recommendations.
- One or more further Commission meetings may be required as determined by the scope of work agreed by the Commission.
- Develop first draft of the final report – summarising the evidence gathered, and articulating the conclusions and recommendations drawn by the Commission (GMCA Strategy and Research Team)

March 2021:

- Final Commission meeting – Commission members meet to review and agree their final report.
- Report published late March 2021

3. ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE FOR EQUALITIES

3.1 The Age Friendly GM and Equalities portfolio was set up to reflect the final priority of the Greater Manchester Strategy in its life course format and to give due importance to the cross cutting theme of equalities and diversity. However, in practice the portfolio has taken an opportunist approach to its delivery, notably taking advantage of involvement of GMCA in the 10-year, Lottery-funded Age Friendly Greater Manchester work in partnership with Age UK, MACC and GMCVO. This partnership has enabled a huge amount of progress to be made through the portfolio for older people in GM.

3.2 It is clear that this portfolio has gained greater importance and significance through the coronavirus pandemic. However, there is no clear avenue to influence system change as a result of the intelligence and insight which is being collected from different communities of identity. Equalities is seen as 'cross cutting' to all other portfolios, but currently has no mechanism for challenge.

3.3 The need to tackle the growing inequalities which exist in our society will be an integral part of building back better, but GM needs arrangements to ensure that this happens. The Independent Inequalities Commission will highlight the issues, help us to understand them and map out what needs to be done. But we also need a mechanism to enable change to happen.

3.4 At present, each of the engagement structures operate independently, an issue which has to some extent been addressed in recent months through the facilitation of better linkages between the organisations which support the groups and advisers.

3.5 There is a great deal of complexity around the operation of the various Panels and Advisory Groups, as they work in different ways. However, it is clear that they would all benefit from some consistency around standards of operation, expectations, ability to influence and accountability, for example. Importantly there is a need for the Portfolio leads to have sufficient and appropriate support to enable them to take strategic oversight of the different portfolio areas and priorities.

3.6 Suggested actions to achieve impact and for better coordination of the Age Friendly and Equalities Portfolio:

3.6.1 ***Establish a strategic partnership board at a GM level which focusses on tackling inequality***

3.6.2 Figure 1 below provides a high level overview of a proposal for distributive leadership around tackling inequalities at a GM level. It should be noted that this would sit outside of the formal decision-making of the CA, but would instead bring a range of stakeholders together to advance equality and to tackle inequality. It is critically important that GM is able to join up conversations at a strategic level around tackling inequality, and this new Board would provide a forum for doing so.

3.6.3 The Board would directly feed into the work of the Growth and Reform Boards, and be chaired by the portfolio lead for Equalities, but also include the Mayor of Greater Manchester (in his role as portfolio lead for Reform) and the portfolio Lead for Economy. Other GM Portfolio Leads might be invited to attend where the topics for

discussion are most relevant. In a similar manner to the Growth and Reform Board, the Tackling Inequalities Board would bring a range of stakeholders together, and focus on bringing challenge the economic and public service system around tackling inequalities. The Board will also take account of activity underway in the localities, ensuring the GM activity is complementary and adding value to this.

3.6.4 The Board will also act as the system lead for ensuring that the intelligence gathered through the Independent Inequalities Commission, and the recommendations made through that process are acted upon. Finally, this new Board would be visible to communities of identity and be seen to be actively advancing equalities.

3.6.5 ***Establish an Equalities Executive Group:***

3.6.6 It is suggested that in addition to the new Board, an officer Executive Group is established. This would support the Tackling Inequalities Board, but also co-ordinate the work within GMCA, the GM H&SCP and their GM partners through this portfolio. It is proposed that the Group meets on a monthly basis and is Co-Chaired by the portfolio Chief Executive and the Chief Officer of the GM Health and Social Care Partnership. The Co-Chairs will then provide a briefing to the portfolio Lead Member. This meeting would also provide a co-ordinating role for the work programmes of all the various Panels, Boards and Advisers relating to the portfolio, an overview of all relevant activity (including where the Mayor of Greater Manchester is approached directly in relation to equalities issues) and provide a planning function to support the portfolio leads manage priorities and for papers to be brought through GMCA and H&SCP governance.

3.6.7 ***Equalities Panels Co-ordinating Group:***

3.6.8 Following a number of informal meetings involving officers from within GMCA and staff from the VCSE organisations which support advisory panels and groups around equalities, GMCA now convenes a meeting of equalities panel leads. Originally on a bi-monthly basis, this meeting is now held virtually, every 2 weeks.

3.6.9 Benefits of this meeting include building mutual understanding, recognition and respect for each other's work, facilitating joint discussion between Panels about the key issues to ensure that the Panels are not cutting across each other's work.

3.6.10 This engagement is at an early stage and consideration will need to be given to build this infrastructure to ensure the coordination group is working with and connecting to the Executive Group. It may be helpful to involve the officers from the VCSE organisations which convene the Advisory panels, in the Equalities Executive Group, along with the Local Authority Equality Leads, ensuring work undertaken at Greater Manchester level enables and enhances district work.

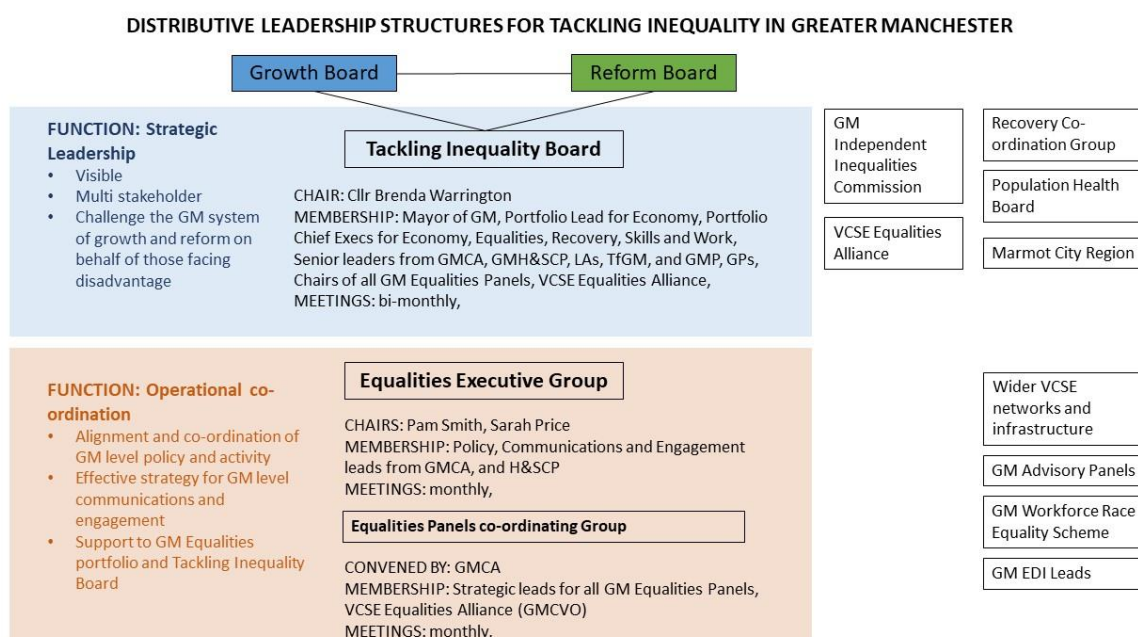
3.6.11 ***Introduce a set of principles for operation of advisory panels and groups***

3.6.12 A separate piece of internal review work has begun to examine the operation of all engagement and advisory groups to the Mayor of Greater Manchester, GMCA and the portfolio leads. This has drawn a number of conclusions in terms of achieving better consistency of practice, whilst ensuring that each group or panel can work effectively and efficiently within the context of its operation and how they link to relevant portfolios and the wider GMCA. This work will also ensure the proposed governance works with the evidence and lived experience in an open and transparent way,

ensuring work is undertaken in service of the agenda, rather than those things of personal interest.

3.6.13 These recommendations cover:

- Consistent language - achieving a clear definition of the terms ‘commissioner’ ‘adviser’ ‘advisory panel’ etc when applied in this context:
- Principles of operation - putting in place agreed principles for all Advisers, Panels and Groups around:
 - Purpose and delivery of GMS
 - Representation
 - Operational standards and expectations
 - Achieving consensus Governance and Accountability
 - Terms of office and timescales for establishment / operation
 - Scope, powers and ability to influence
 - Remuneration
- Accountability and governance - ensuring clear lines of accountability and engagement to the formal governance arrangements of the GMCA. Also ensuring clarity around how each of the advisory bodies link to similar structures operating at a local authority level in GM and achieving effective linkages in to the GMCA Scrutiny process
- Co-ordination and support - recognising GMCA link officers acting as account managers for each of the Advisers, Panels and Groups



4. Work currently underway

4.1 As Covid has led to widening inequalities across our communities, it is clear that urgent action need to be taken to better understand and address issues such as the accessibility of support services and clarity of communication within communities of identity. Work is ongoing via the established engagement structures already within this portfolio; LGBT

Advisor and Panel, Disabled People's Panel, GM Ageing Hub, and aligned with the Youth Combined Authority (under Young People Portfolio).

Following agreement at the last GMCA meeting, work has been accelerated towards the creation of the following **additional** advisory groups in this portfolio:

- A Women's Equality Panel – open recruitment process now underway, with first meeting planned for September 2020
- A GM Race Equality Panel – engagement is ongoing with Race Groups about the purpose and structure for this, with an aim of launching in early Autumn 2020

Furthermore, work is in train to establish a group to formalise the GM Older People's Network following the completion of the GM Ambition for Ageing programme, and to establish a Faith Advisory Panel later in 2020.

4.2 In addition to the activity around specific engagement networks and panels, substantive analytical work is also underway across many of GM agencies. An evidence stock take led by the Health & Social Care Partnership has drawn together our collective local evidence base and intelligence around current activities framed around the PHE Disparities Review. This work has culminated in the identification of a series of immediate actions GM should now take in response to the evidence and the report findings. The ownership and accountability for the maintenance of that evidence base and the delivery of the identified actions will sit with the proposed portfolio governance.

4.3 Additionally a comprehensive research compilation piece has been undertaken by GMCA Research Team, which provides a single repository for all core datasets which can be drawn on for equalities evidence, analysis and policy development. This dataset is available to be interrogated by policy theme or by the Equalities Act Protected Characteristics. Importantly, this work also enables a look across the datasets taking account of the intersectionality of issues, and with, other evidence and data piece be provided as foundation evidence sources to the Independent Inequalities Commission.

4.3 It should be noted that the rapid development of activities under this portfolio are all being developed recognising the need for coordination of activity, reducing duplication and maximizing impacts in response to the issues. The propose portfolio governance provides the framework for the established work and also for the immediate delivery actions outlined above. These actions are being designed and delivered within the proposed governance context and will 'hook into' the governance once established, ensuring coherence and reducing silo working.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

5.1 Recommendations appear at the front of this report.