

**MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA)  
ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND  
SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 10.30 AM VIA WEBCAST**

Present:	Councillor Michael Holly (in the Chair)
Bolton:	Councillor Samantha Connor Councillor Susan Haworth
Bury:	Councillor Mary Whitby
Manchester:	Councillor Basat Sheikh Councillor Greg Stanton
Oldham:	Councillor George Hulme
Rochdale	Councillor Daniel Meredith
Salford:	Councillor Jim King
Stockport:	Councillor Becky Senior Councillor Kerry Waters
Trafford:	Councillor Barry Brotherton
Wigan:	Councillor Charles Rigby Councillor Michael Winstanley

**In attendance**

	Cllr Sean Fielding, GMCA Portfolio Lead for Education, Skills and Digital.
GMCA	Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
GMCA	Gemma Marsh, Director of Education, Skills & Work (Policy, Strategy & Delivery)
GMCA	Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Policy and Research
GMCA	John Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, GMCA
GMCA	
GMCA	Amy Fooks, Strategy, GMCA
GMCA	Maria Gonzales, Principal - International Strategy, GMCA
GMCA	Rebecca Drakeford, International Strategy, GMCA
GMCA	Paul Harris, Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer

**E22/20            APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stephen Horner. Councillor Raymond Dutton was intending to attend as a substitute member but was unable to access the virtual meeting.

**E23/20            CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business reported.

## **E24/20            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

## **E25/20            MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> JULY 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> Jul 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Chair suggested that an action log be created to support the minutes going forward.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of meeting of the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 be approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Kerry Waters in the list of those members present and the correction of minor typographical errors.

## **E26/20            GREATER MANCHESTER LIVING WITH COVID RESILIENCE PLAN**

The Chair introduced this item and highlighted that the Resilience Plan had been considered by the GM Combined Authority on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Policy and Research, GMCA, provided an overview of the Living with Covid Plan, a one year plan that has been developed in response to the changing requirements of the coronavirus pandemic and sought comments from Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to further shape and inform the development and delivery of the Plan as it evolves.

Members noted that the Plan seeks to capture early issues that have been made apparent because of Covid and identifies a response to build the resilience of the city region over the upcoming 12 months. The Plan also provides a link between the current Greater Manchester Strategy, which was due to finish this year, and the next version which will now be updated in June 2021.

Comments from Members were also sought in relation to the proposed mechanisms to drive system wide change to tackle inequalities highlighted and exacerbated by Covid. Members noted that the successful implementation of this Plan will build resilience to respond to any further outbreaks or emergencies and will provide a foundation for Greater Manchester to build back better.

The report highlighted how the Plan takes account of the Greater Manchester overarching principles which were determined within the early response to the pandemic. It was noted that these principles, namely: Inequalities / poverty, Safe GM / Standards, Co-design, civil society and social infrastructure, Building a confident city-region, Resilient city-region, Recovery in the context of GMS and Behaviour change, continue to shape and guide the development of the Living with Covid Resilience Plan.

Members noted that a further update will be brought to a future meeting which will provide an update on the progress of implementing the above-mentioned deliverables and monitor the Greater Manchester Strategy matrix.

### **Questions and Comments**

A Member enquired if there were any cooperative models of inward investment to support the region's farming economy and in particular, to reduce food waste. In response, Members were advised that the University of Manchester was working to develop a resilient food network. Officers undertook to reflect this work in future updates of the Plan.

A Member asked a question about the roll out of digital high speed broadband across the conurbation. He sought clarification on how connectivity white spots can be progressed. In response, it was noted that in terms of digital exclusions, accessibility and the means to access technology and the broadband network is important. Where there are specific examples of low connectivity this will be raised directly with the broadband provider.

A Member enquired what minimum standards and targets would look like. He requested that any targets be brought to the Committee as they evolve. In response, it was noted that the GM Combined Authority agreed the principle of developing standards and targets in the neighbourhoods of Greater Manchester and work is commencing on this matter in consultation with the respective districts. The Chair suggested that when the matrix has been drafted, this draft should be brought to an appropriate meeting of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A Member suggested that the establishment of regionally based financial institutions will enable regions to retain wealth locally. In response, it was noted that Plan aims to address the creation of an economy that retains wealth through the good employment charter, social value and social value through procurement. Members also noted that there is also a large financial services base within Greater Manchester and the immediate surrounding area. In addition, officers advised Members that the work that has taken place relating to the Cooperative Commission, the recommendations of which will be presented to the next meeting of the GM Combined Authority.

The Chair noted that people now have greater opportunities for flexible and agile working. For this reason, they may choose relocate away from city centres and usual commuter hub towns. He added that GM has strength in digital areas and cyber security and can create wealth in this sector.

A Member sought clarification on the timeline for the quality impact assessment on the digital delivery plan, the deep dive arrangements and if the Committee can view this impact assessment once it has been completed. In response, officers undertook to check the timeline and report back to the Councillor directly.

The Chair highlighted the large amount of activities identified in the report. He suggested that future report should identify key priorities and timelines for such. Opportunities should also be included. In response, officers referenced the 30 deliverables outlined in the plan are the activities to deliver within the next 12 months in order to build resilience. On

all 30 activities, progress must be made in order to build resilience of the city region to respond should a further pandemic or emergency occur.

A Member highlighted that because of Covid, people may change the way people work, move and this needed to be captured in the Greater Manchester Strategy refresh. In addition, clarification was sought on economic assumption modelling in relation to the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and how that will inform policy making. In response, officers noted that any certainty on the full impact of Covid may not be understood for a number of years. New forecasts would not provide clarity on how things may have changed. It was anticipated that some short-term changes will have been seen and longer term ambitions, such as digitalisation, will have been accelerated. In addition, it was noted that Greater Manchester is maintaining a flexible approach for recovery. It was also noted that the impact of Brexit will need to be understood also.

A Member welcomed the Good Employer Charter but noted that this Charter was only as good as its members. He sought information on the take up of businesses in this Charter on a district basis where possible. In response, officers undertook to provide a detailed update on progress. Members noted that in high level terms, 200 employers representing over 200,000 employees had signed up to the Charter as supporters. The details of memberships will be shared.

Following a comment from a Member regarding Greater Manchester's responses to Brexit, the upcoming end of the furlough scheme and the ceasing of no-fault evictions, officers noted that the resilience plan has been written at a time when the emergency was still ongoing and as part of the response mechanism, an economic resilience group has been established to look at key issues. A particular focus of this group is to explore what may happen to the labour market when the furlough scheme ends and when business loans will start to have to be paid to Government. Issues will continue to be monitored and adaptations made where necessary.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the Living with Covid Plan and subsequent comments from Members be noted and that the decision of GMCA on its implementation as a system wide driver for change and improvement be supported.
2. That building on the recommendation above, the proposed development of a mechanism to utilise the established and developing partnership governance for the Age-friendly and Equalities Portfolio to support system wide responses, be noted.
3. To note and support the decision of GMCA of adopting minimum targets or standards for each locality or neighbourhood would support the effective targeting of resources across all GMCA activity. This would ensure that there is an ongoing recognition that address inequalities in all communities is fundamental to the whole of Greater Manchester being able to achieve its collective ambitions.
4. To agree that further iterations of the Plan be brought to an appropriate meeting of the Committee, as the plan evolves.

John Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, Research & Economy, GMCA introduced a report which provided the Committee with a summary on the work undertaken to date on the GM International Strategy and the approach taken to refreshing the document in the context of COVID and our departure from the EU.

Members noted that a first draft of the full strategy was appended at Appendix.1 to the report.

### Questions and Comments

A Member enquired about the absence of Rochdale Council as a strategic partner in the document. In addition, he also sought clarification on how much funding Rochdale was providing Manchester Investment Development Advice Service (MIDAS) and what the benefits to Rochdale are. In response, Members were advised that in relation to strategic partner engagement, all districts were approached for their input. In terms of the financing of MIDAS and Marketing Manchester, it was noted that private funding and GMCA grants also supported this work. Officers committed to respond to the Member and Chair on the issues specific to Rochdale.

A Member commented on the attractiveness of Greater Manchester as a destination to academics and overseas companies. It was suggested that a side effect of home working might be that people living in towns on the longer commuter routes around London see London becoming an attractive work base again. In response, officers noted the difficulties in assessing how working patterns will change in the longer term and the transitional aspects of this. Members also noted that Greater Manchester remains competitive in terms of property prices when compared to the south east of England.

A Member noted that the report identified particular challenges in quantifying results of the International Strategy and enquired if there was any modelling available in the UK that can be applied to do this assessment work. In response, officers advised that one of the challenges of assessing the impact of the Strategy is the diverse approach to its delivery and the priorities of partners. Overseas students and the airports business approaches were highlighted as particular examples.

A Member highlighted the impact the directly appointed Mayor had made on business opportunities in Greater Manchester. He enquired to what digital opportunities can be taken to continue to develop trade relationships with these countries. In response, officers explained that this is being explored and that an update will be provided as and when a solution evolved.

A Member highlighted that the on-shoring approach taken by some countries and enquired if a similar approach should be explored as part of GMs strategy. The Member added that in terms of diplomacy, the use of the existing twin-town arrangements that are in place in most districts may be expanded. In response, officers noted that these matters will be explored further. The Chair recalled the amount of manufacturing business that has been lost in the UK over time and noted the opportunities, such as the potential manufacturing of PPE that can be explored to re-establish a manufacturing

industry. He highlighted in relation to re-shoring, that such measures would take time to establish.

A Member noted current tensions with China, both morally and economically and enquired if these issues are factored in GM plans. In response, it was noted that GM has a strong relationship with China and this will be something that Leaders will look at when they consider the report.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

1. That the update on the GM International Strategy and the comments and observation of Members above, be noted.
2. That a further update be presented at a meeting of the Committee in 12 months' time.

#### **E28/20 WORK AND SKILLS UPDATE**

Councillor Sean Fielding, GMCA Portfolio Lead for Education, Skills and Digital introduced a presentation which updated the Committee on the work and skills activities underway to support young people and the labour market. He highlighted that Covid has had an unprecedented impact on the economy, particularly in the service sector and has triggered and accelerated structural changes in the economy, such as remote working.

Councillor Fielding highlighted that, as the furlough scheme ends, there is a real risk that some jobs may no longer exist. It was noted that, as there is a greater proportion of young people employed in non-essential retail and hospitality, they have been disproportionately affected by the impact of Covid. He added that prior to Covid, work was taking place to address inequality and it was important that this focus is maintained in this challenging time.

Councillor Fielding explained that a plan has been developed to mitigate challenges in GM and provide the right tailored offer for young people. It was noted that the Employment and Skills Advisory Panel enables engagement with employers, training providers and the education sector. The Panel also helps to understand what is happening in the economy, identifies those challenges to young people, apprenticeships and furloughed staff who may or may not return to their jobs.

The Chair welcomed the report and took encouragement in the amount of activities being undertaken to support and address the challenges that the impact of Covid has created. The Chair also wished to record thanks to the Work and Skills Team for the breadth and quality of work within the report.

Gemma Marsh, Director of Education, Skills & Work (Policy, Strategy & Delivery), GMCA took members through the report and provided an overview of the GMCA Recovery Plan. In doing so, she highlighted the partnership approach of the Employment and Skills Advisory Panel and the expertise of its members to help to break down barriers and explore what the skills system and work system can do to support people, particularly those disproportionately disadvantaged. The approach to young people, apprentices, furloughed staff, newly unemployed, long-term unemployed and retraining and reskilling opportunities for these cohorts.

The presentation informed the Committee of details of the work with Government including activities such as Kick Start, Working Well Lite, the adult education budget and apprenticeship grants. The presentation also provided Members with an overview on sectoral growth in GM.

The work around the Young People's Guarantee was highlighted and Members noted that a further update on this Guarantee would be presented at a future meeting of this Committee.

Members noted that funding from Skills Capital Round 3 has resulted in all Greater Manchester colleges receiving funding. Grants have been provided to assist with adaptations in colleges and to provide digital kit and connectivity to students that may need it. Apprenticeships have been targeted to reduce barriers and work was continuing with local authorities to stimulate demand.

Members noted that the Government's Job Plan has been produced and work was taking place to apply this in local areas.

### **Question and Comments**

A Member welcomed the report. He enquired on what can be done to ensure that people in existing roles won't be moved on to apprenticeship schemes and that firing and re-hiring activities do not take place. He sought clarification that with regard to the regional split of GM Sector jobs, if these roles were only for that particular area. He asked about preparedness and capacity in terms of to support job seeker claimants. In response, it was noted that the number job roles in the report refer to Greater Manchester jobs. The data provided a snapshot in time and the work with the good Employer Charter and Kick Start can help to support unintended consequences of some employers.

A Member highlighted the work Kick Start scheme and access to work programme for young people in Oldham and Manchester. The Member enquired if the Greater Manchester focus will now be on job opportunities as a priority and if some of the skills work will be less of a priority. In response, officer explained that the Kick Start programme cannot just be about jobs and that there longer term benefit and support for young person to grow and develop. The Kick Start Board and the intermediary bodies will provide an oversight of this approach in the absence of any devolved responsibilities from Government.

A Member noted that Kick Start programme was to target young people furthest away from employment. He also noted that locally, only 9 people were eligible for the scheme in Wigan. In response, officers highlighted that Job Centre Plus refer young people aged 16- 24 year olds that are on Universal Credit and would expect that the numbers would be higher than purported. Officers undertook to look into the matter and report back.

Councillor Brotherton referred to the scenarios forecasted in the report and sought details of any actual figures for September claimant rates and how do they align with the

forecast. In response, Gemma Marsh undertook to share the actual figures with the group.

In relation to the sectoral analysis in the report, the Chair asked if the information is forecasted or historic. In response, Members were informed that the analysis was based on actual recruitment data from the labour market.

**RESOLVED:-**

1. That Councillor Fielding and Gemma Marsh be thanked for the informative presentation.
2. That the Work and Skills update and comments from Members be noted.

**E29/20 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021**

Members considered the draft Committee Work Programme for 2020/21 which set out those topics and items that would provide a focus of the Committee's work for the 2020/2021 municipal year.

The Chair noted that the report on the outcomes of the Fawcett Society review women's employability will be presented at the October 2020 meeting of the Committee.

A Member asked if the Good Employer Charter can be considered as part of the work programme of the committee. He also asked if an update on the work of MIDAS may also be provided. The Chair explained that he would explore if the work of MIDAS was within the remit of this Committee.

**RESOLVED/-**

That Committee Work Programme be noted.

**E30/20 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members considered the register of GMCA Key Decisions for the period 1 September 2020 to 31 October 2020 that was published on 26 August 2020.

**RESOLVED/-**

That the register of GMCA Key Decisions for the period 1 September 2020 to 31 October 2020 be noted.

**E31/20 PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members considered a programme of future meeting date for the Committee for 2020/2021.

**RESOLVED/-**

1. That the following meeting dates for the Committee be noted:-

- Friday 9 October 2020;
- Friday 13 November 2020;
- Friday 4 December 2020;
- Friday 15 January 2021;
- Friday 5 February 2021;
- Friday 12 March 2021.

2. To note that meetings will commence at 10.30 am and will be held via video conference unless advised otherwise.