

GM HOUSING, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 8th March 2022

Subject: Response to Flood Risk Management and Memorandum of Understanding between the GMCA, United Utilities and the Environment Agency.

Report of: Mayor Dennett, Portfolio Lead for Housing, Homelessness and Infrastructure and Steve Rumbelow Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Housing, Homelessness, and Infrastructure

Purpose of Report

To seek comments from scrutiny members on two reports approved by the GMCA on 10 September and 24 September 2021. The reports are (a) the response to flood risk and (b) the memorandum of understanding between the GMCA, United Utilities and the Environment Agency

Recommendations

Members are invited to consider and comment on the two reports to the GMCA on 10 September and 24 September 2022 and on the progress made over the past 5 months.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) received two reports last September outlining (1) [issues and proposed response to flood risk and water management in Greater Manchester](#) (including a debrief from Storm Christophe), and (2) [an agreement to enter a memorandum of understanding \(MOU\) with the Environment Agency and United Utilities](#).
- 1.2 As previously reported, flood risk management is a cross portfolio issue. It cuts across duties, responsibilities, and agencies. It involves planning, research, preparation, engagement, investment, partnerships, responding to events and recovery. Despite being one of the greatest risks identified on the Greater Manchester Community Risk Register¹ we don't at present view and approach the issue through a single co-ordinated and strategic lens. A strategic approach needs to be adopted where risk and water management issues impact across districts within Greater Manchester or from outside of the Greater Manchester boundary.
- 1.3 It was agreed at the GMCA meetings last September that the GMCA will receive an annual report on progress, success, and any issues/barriers to delivery. This report summarizes the actions that have been undertaken to date and represents a 5-month progress report as requested by Scrutiny.

2. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY SINCE SEPTEMBER 2021

- 2.1 The GMCA agreed five short-term recommendations for flood risk management complemented by the MOU with the Environment Agency and United Utilities and an update is provided below.
- 2.2 **Recommendation 1 - Actively lobby for resources into Greater Manchester and communicating our challenges to national Government with a view to influencing national policy direction.**

¹ See: [GM Prepared - Community Risk Register \(gmemergencyplanning.org.uk\)](https://gmemergencyplanning.org.uk)

- 2.3 A GMCA officer attended a round table with the Defra Floods Minister Rebecca Pow MP last September. Mayor Burnham wrote to the Minister reiterating the issues raised by the GMCA. The minister has responded to encourage a catchment-based approach and to work with the GMCA to explore options to join up flood resilience with other responsibilities held by Mayors or Combined Authorities. This included a follow up meeting with the Defra Director General and senior representatives from the Environment Agency and United Utilities on the 31 January 2022. Later this year the Environment Agency will also be planning a Mersey Partnership event for MPs, Metro Mayors and Council Leaders to focus on flood risk, resilience, and wider environmental, social, and economic opportunities that partnership working will bring.
- 2.4 The Greater Manchester Mayor and GMCA officers have met with the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) to inform 2nd National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA). As announced at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, the NIC has been given a 4th objective to support climate resilience and the UK's transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. GMCA has seconded an officer part time to the NIC to support the work on flood risk management and inform its local engagement on this issue. The GMCA submitted a response to the NICs call for evidence on surface water on 20 December 2021 and responded to the NIA 2 call for evidence on the 4 February 2022 and will be engaging with Commission over the summer². To date no further resources have been secured from government save for that coming through the tripartite agreement provided by UU and EA.
- 2.5 **Recommendation 2 - work with utilities to identify opportunities for partnership contributions and Recommendation 3 - Work with UU / EA to assess the catchment areas that impact Greater Manchester and identify projects that will benefit multiple downstream Local Authorities.**

² See: [Second National Infrastructure Assessment: Baseline Report - NIC](#)

- 2.6 The GMCA agreed to enter a memorandum of understanding with United Utilities and the Environment Agency on the 24 September with further detail on outcomes and measures of success.
- 2.7 Due to resources constraints, shared outcomes for place and climate resilience are being prioritized, focused on the Upper Mersey Catchment and the flood risk management programme (a programme of activity relating to biodiversity net gain is being led by the GMCA Natural Capital Group). The Environment Agency are providing additional project management capacity (1 FTE) which is being matched by UU (1 FTE). GMCA resources remain unchanged.
- 2.8 As part of the climate resilience work an action plan has been developed with a focus in the short term of better understanding collective risk and delivering SuDS. The outputs from the [IGNITION](#) project is being reviewed to better inform future co-investment in SuDS and feed into the action plan.
- 2.9 Following engagement with districts, a lack of guidance has been identified as a barrier to increasing SuDS delivery across the highway network. GMCA officers have worked with TfGM to include reference to SuDs within the [Streets for All Strategy](#).
- 2.10 GMCA officers have engaged with the Environment Agency to review the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) business plan which now includes several relevant strategic aims for working in partnership. Following a series of workshops (attended by GMCA officers) during December 2021 and January 2022 £1.5M Local Level funding has been allocated to take forward actions identified as part of the 2022/23 work programme.
- 2.11 The RFCC Business Plan work programme consists of 5 key themes: Accessing investment and funding, building community resilience, managing water at catchment scale, achieving climate resilient planning/development, and increasing Risk

Management Authority (RMA) capacity³. Greater Manchester is the lead partnership on the investment and funding theme, which will map investment programmes and collaborative opportunities including green finance mechanisms, identify tangible values to wider benefits and deliver a pilot project on a collaborative approach to asset management.

- 2.12 On the 16 December United Utilities hosted a workshop with stakeholders from across the upper Mersey catchments. The outputs from this are now being utilized to inform the water industry price review 2024, [Water Industry Environment Programme \(WINEP\)](#) and [Drainage and Waste Water Management Plan \(DWMP\)](#) required through the Environment Act 2021.
- 2.13 The Environment Agency also engaged with districts and United Utilities on several strategic flood risk projects to identify objectives and help shape wider environmental outcomes. This included projects such as Timperley Brook, Rochdale and Littleborough, South Manchester and Leigh East.
- 2.14 **Recommendation 4 - Review projects that have funding awarded and confirm the position on partnership contributions and opportunities for third party contributions to those projects and Recommendation 5 Identify a pipeline of strategic projects that could be brought forward to bid for future funding opportunities.**
- 2.15 The Comprehensive spending review 2021 confirmed the £5.2bn allocated to flood defences from 2021 – 2027. A list of projects was included in Appendix A of the September report to the GMCA. The GMCA has commissioned external consultancy to help officers amalgamate data on existing surface water risk and working with UU and EA to understand spatial areas of ‘combined flood risk’ and to help identify where projects should be generated.

³ Risk Management Authorities are: The Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authorities, Internal Drainage Board, Water and Sewerage Companies and Highways Authorities.

- 2.16 The Environment Agency is currently undertaking its annual refresh of the investment programme where new information can be used to update project information. This will be shared with the GMCA once it has been approved via the North West RFCC.
- 2.17 To readily share information on the investment programme the GMCA met with the Environment Agency to agree on a process for sharing data under a data sharing protocol and monthly updates will now be provided to the GMCA Flood Risk Manager for reporting purposes.
- 2.18 The Environment Agency has presented to Greater Manchester Directors of Place (district directors) and to the GMCA Planning and Housing Commission (December 2021) to provide an overview of capital grant claiming process for DEFRA Grant in Aid allocations. Across the North West and nationally there is a significant underspend on money allocated to flood risk projects owing to a range of issues including COVID recovery, resources, and current assurance processes. As a result, there is significant pressure to deliver projects that have currently stalled as spend can be re-allocated within the 6 Years programme if not claimed. To mitigate this risk, several actions have been identified:
- Further targeted engagement with Councils making claims to remind them how the claims process works.
 - Identifying “blockers” to allow claims to be submitted and looking for opportunities to accelerate delivery and reduce the gap between budget and forecast.
 - Additional sites visit by the Environment Agency to monitor progress and checking works are completed.
- 2.19 LLFA’s will be asked to complete project delivery proformas for all LA led projects, which will help facilitate monitoring of delivery and identify specific local issues around underspend and delay in projects in the 6-year programme. How these issues will be addressed and managed locally will be discussed with the LLFA’s, EA Capital Advisors and the GM Flood and Water Management Programme Manager. Where further

support from the CA is required to resolve any blockers, the issues will be raised at Directors of Place.

2.20 Identifying key flood risk locations and translating this into a pipeline of projects requires analysis of flood risk data from the Environment Agency, United Utilities and Local Authorities. Work is currently ongoing to collect all relevant data which will be used to create heat maps and create a first pass to identify priority risk clusters. This will initially help facilitate discussion with districts as to how these sites can progress and will also help demonstrate where additional resource is required to take projects forward. The Critical Drainage Area work will also identify possible priority risk locations with opportunity for collaboration in funding and delivery of measures and will feed into the blue infrastructure mapping process.

2.21 The 6-year FCERM programme is currently being reviewed to provide a better understanding of gap funding and projects that have been in the system for a long time that are either low in Partnership Funding Score ⁴ or just not viable. This will also identify projects that require further support to districts to move to business case. This information should be available by the end of February 2022 and the EA and CA will meet to review and make recommendations mid-March 2022.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- a. Consider and comment on the two reports to the GMCA on 10 September and 24 September 2022 and comment on progress made over the past 5 months.

⁴ See: [Partnership funding calculator 2020 for FCERM grant-in-aid \(GIA\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnership-funding-calculator-2020-for-fcerm-grant-in-aid-gia)