

GMCA Audit Committee

Date: 27th July 2022

Subject: Independent Review of the GMCA Scrutiny Function

Report of: Steve Wilson, GMCA Treasurer

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the audit committee on the independent review of the GMCA scrutiny functions carried on by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).

The report together with recommendations were received by the GMCA on 24th June 2022.

Recommendations:

Members are recommended

1. Note the contents of the independent review
2. Note the recommendations made and approved at the GMCA Meeting

Contact Officers





Steve Wilson – GMCA Treasurer

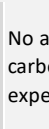




Julie Connor – Assistant Director, Governance and Scrutiny.

Julie.connor@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Nancy Evans – GMCA Governance & Scrutiny

Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

Impacts Questionnaire			
Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	
Equality and Inclusion	G	The new approach to scrutiny should strengthen the identification of and development of proposals concerning equality and inclusion.	
Health			
Resilience and Adaptation			
Housing			
Economy			
Mobility and Connectivity			
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	The new approach to scrutiny should strengthen the identification of and development of proposals in relation reducing carbon emissions in GM.	
Consumption and Production			
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target			
Further Assessment(s):	N/A		
 Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	 Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	 Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	 Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential	N/A			
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A			
New Build Commercial/Industrial	N/A			
Transport				
Active travel and public transport	N/A			
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A			
Access to amenities	N/A			
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
Land use	N/A			
 No associated carbon impacts expected.	 High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	 Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	 Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	 Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

Legal advice has been taken on the proposals contained within the report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

A decision to pay members allowances for the scrutiny committee will require budget to be identified.

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report?

Appendix 1: Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, Greater Manchester Combined Authority: Scrutiny Evaluation

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2022, the Combined Authority commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to review the current scrutiny function. A members' task group (across all political parties) was established from existing GMCA scrutiny members which was Chaired by Clive Memmott OBE, Chief Executive of GM Chamber of Commerce and supported by Ed Hammond, Deputy Chief Executive, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and Officers from the Combined Authority.

2. Main Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations to the GMCA

- 2.1 A copy of the full report is attached which sets out the review process, methodology, findings and recommendations. In summary the findings were:
- GMCA scrutiny faces many of the same challenges that face the scrutiny functions of other Combined Authorities, it does however, benefit from a better history of joint working between its constituent councils, more mature officer support arrangements and, most importantly, the ambition for scrutiny to be better, which was shared by all those to who contributed to the review.
 - A significant amount of time and effort had been used on making scrutiny as good as it can be, although, particularly latterly, too much officer time had been spent on the administrative needs of ensuring meeting quoracy, which remains high at two thirds of membership.
 - It was agreed there were opportunities for GMCA to do things differently, capturing the principle that “less is more” and that a more discriminating and self-critical approach, looking at fewer things but conducting scrutiny on those things in a more forensic and exacting way would improve outcomes.
- 2.2 The review identified three main areas where scrutiny could, by focusing on the right things at the right time, ensure that resources expended were commensurate with outcomes and impact. These were:

- Performance issues – for example, review and oversight of the authority’s performance against key indicators in the Greater Manchester Strategy.
 - Policy development issues – It was important that scrutiny involvement in decision making came earlier for this to be effective.
 - Cross-cutting issues – there will be issues which cut across a range of portfolios and across the CA and other organisation’s’ responsibilities.
- 2.3 Dealing with high profile, relevant topics in a compelling and relevant way would provide one way to engage, and keep engaged, scrutiny members. In addition to the above, acting on remuneration recognising members’ commitment of time and effort was an important part of making it clear that scrutiny was an important function of the CA, which needed to be taken seriously.
- 2.4 The task group concluded that the best way to bring about change was for scrutiny at GM to move to a “single committee” model for scrutiny, a reduction from the current three scrutiny committees.
- 2.5 Under this model some meetings would be designated to focus on budget development and the formal legal budget scrutiny requirements. The single committee would commission task and finish groups to work on policy development matters, and would meet frequently to consider ongoing performance, finance and risk issues emerging from the delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS).
- 2.6 The single committee model would provide the flexibility and resilience necessary for scrutiny to work effectively. A single committee structure would be well-attuned to the cross-cutting nature of CA business, which the current three-committee model struggled to deal with.
- 2.7 The following recommendations were made to the GMCA:
1. To consider and comment on the findings set out in the independent evaluation report produced by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.
 2. To approve the establishment of 1 single overview and scrutiny committee with 20 members and 20 additional members in a substitute pool as

recommended by the Review and to disestablish the existing 3 overview and scrutiny committees.

3. To note that in accordance with legislation the Committee Chair and Vice Chair, will be members of an opposition party to the GM Mayor noting that the review report includes a role description for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.
4. To endorse that Members should be nominated to the scrutiny committee and pool by districts based on their interests and skills, and with reference to the role description as appended to the Review report. Also noting that the role description should set out clear accountabilities to both the GMCA and to the nominating district, and that the length of term should be for 2 years (where possible) to ensure continuity.
5. To give approval for Scrutiny's role to be strengthened and recognised as threefold –
 - to review and evaluate the performance of the Mayor and GMCA, and the way they works with its partners to deliver for local people,
 - to contribute to policy development in respect of high profile, complex issues affecting the whole of Greater Manchester,
 - to investigate more complex cross-cutting issues, with a particular focus on the GMCA's forthcoming responsibilities in respect of the "missions" in the Levelling Up Bill
6. To agree that training and support should be provided to scrutiny councillors and officers to strengthen their existing skills, covering the fundamentals of scrutiny as well as some of the substantive policy issues for which GMCA holds responsibility. This should be based on the new chair, vice chair and member role descriptions.
7. To note that the full package of measures detailed in the Independent Review when taken together aim to achieve a strengthened and more effective scrutiny function, recognising that there will need to be a transitional period of implementation in the first year and that this will be

monitored by the scrutiny function itself supported by the independent review group and reported back to the CA at an appropriate time.

8. To agree in principle that scrutiny committee members should be remunerated for their work and to request that the CA Independent Remuneration Panel be convened to consider the new approach including scrutiny member role description and to determine an appropriate level of allowance. Once the Panel has made its recommendation, officers will bring back options for how such an allowance can be paid, including back dating and any budget implications.
9. To amend the GMCA constitution as necessary to reflect the above recommendations.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendations are set out at the beginning of the report.

APPENDIX 1



Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY: SCRUTINY EVALUATION

REPORT

Final June 2022

Introduction

This is a paper setting out findings from CfGS's work on the evaluation of the GM scrutiny function.

At its meeting on 17 February the working group reviewed and agreed a plan from CfGS for how this work would be supported. This set out a number of objectives for scrutiny at GMCA which CfGS saw as presenting a guide for the development of actions. These objectives were that scrutiny should be:

- Robust and flexible enough to cope with a dynamic devolution environment, where the Mayor's powers, priorities and partnerships are likely to change;
- Highly focused;
- Central to the business of the authority;
- Reflective of members' needs, and informed by their interests and priorities;
- Manageable within a tight resource envelope.

This paper seeks to engage directly with these objectives, and the actions proposed are intended to support their delivery.

Method

The paper is based on the following evidence:

- A series of 28 interviews carried out between Clive Memmott (chair of the working group) Andy Fry and Ed Hammond over the course of February, March and April 2022. Those interviewed included the CA Mayor, members of the GMCA, GMCA scrutiny councillors (cross-party), chief executives and senior GMCA officers;
- A survey of all GMCA scrutiny councillors, which received 16 responses (13 Labour, 2 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat);
- A detailed desktop analysis, which involved:
- Review of agendas, minutes and reports of GMCA scrutiny committees going back around 15 months. Observation of a selection of scrutiny committee meetings was also carried out;
- Review of corporate GMCA paperwork, including paperwork relating to GMCA meetings and forward plans;

- Review of strategic documents, particularly the Greater Manchester Strategy, and the performance management and oversight systems associated with those documents;
- Review of priorities and core business undertaken by the scrutiny functions of the CA's constituent authorities.

Membership and dates of meetings of the working group

Membership

Clive Memmott – Independent Chair
 Councillor Barry Brotherton (Trafford, Labour)
 Councillor Barbara Brownridge (Oldham, Labour)
 Councillor Mike Glover (Tameside, Labour)
 Councillor Susan Haworth (Bolton, Labour)
 Councillor Michael Holly (Rochdale, Conservative)
 Councillor Jim King (Salford, Labour)
 Councillor Joanne Marshall (Wigan, Labour)
 Councillor John McGahan (Stockport, Conservative)
 Councillor Tom McGee (Stockport, Labour)
 Councillor Kallum Nolan (Rochdale, Labour)
 Councillor Tim Pickstone (Bury, Liberal Democrat)
 Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin (Manchester, Labour)
 Councillor Lisa Smart (Stockport, Liberal Democrat)
 Councillor John Walsh (Bolton, Conservative)

Meeting dates

17 February 2022
 22 March 2022
 08 April 2022
 20 May 2022

Support to the Working Group

Andy Fry, Ed Hammond, Meg Ingle: Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
 Julie Connor, Joanne Heron & Nancy Evans: GMCA Governance & Scrutiny

This paper provides an executive summary, which includes detail of the actions we propose. It then sets out findings in more detail, providing contextual information and evidence to support actions.

Main findings and recommendations

- GMCA scrutiny faces many of the same challenges that face the scrutiny functions of other CAs;
- GMCA scrutiny does however benefit from a better history of joint working between its constituent councils, more mature (and arguably, more effective) officer support arrangements and, most importantly, the ambition for scrutiny to be better;
- Many people have quite a clear sense about where the shortcomings and challenges lie – the difficulty lies in identifying solutions.
 10. There is real officer commitment to make things work.

There are opportunities for GMCA to do things differently. These boil down to the principle that “less is more” – that a more discriminating and self-critical approach, looking at fewer things but conducting scrutiny on those things in a more forensic and exacting way will yield dividends. The selection of the right topics, undertaken in the right way and at the right time, can only happen with a different approach to the sharing and use of information by members sitting on committee.

As things stand, the outcomes from the scrutiny process are not commensurate with the resource put in – this is not just a matter of efficiency, but about ensuring that a key element of the governance framework for the CA works as effectively as it should.

There are three main areas where scrutiny can, by focusing on the right things at the right time, ensure that resources expended are commensurate with outcomes and impact:

11. Performance issues;
12. Policy development issues (some months before decisions come to be made);
13. Cross-cutting issues.

A refocusing along these lines will support GM scrutiny to engage productively with some of the challenges and opportunities arising from the Government’s “levelling-up” agenda. Taken together the full package of recommendations should strengthen and increase the overall effectiveness of the scrutiny function to ensure better outcomes for GM residents.

We consider that a refocusing and redirection of member and officers resources on these core tasks will make greater demands on members – hence, we are also recommending that GM work with districts to bring forward plans for scrutiny committee members to be remunerated.

The principle that “less is more” should also directly influence the CA’s chosen structural model for scrutiny committees. Having considered a number of options, on balance we consider that a single-committee model holds the best opportunity for long-term success. The transition period for change is important and allowing sufficient time, monitoring and feedback is vital to ensuring longer term success for a better quality scrutiny function. The transition should be monitored and evaluated by scrutiny members and potentially independently.

The table below sets out a summary of the key recommendations

Recommendations

- (1) The number of scrutiny committees should be reduced to one.

(2) The scrutiny committee should have 20 members. 20 additional members should be nominated to serve as substitutes. This additional “pool” would be able to take part in task and finish groups alongside ordinary committee members. The Committee should have a Chair and Vice Chair, from an opposition party to the GM Mayor. The Chair’s role could potentially be rotated between the 2 main opposition parties in GM. There should be a clear role description for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

(3) Members should be nominated to committees by districts based on their interests and skills, and with reference to a clear role description for scrutiny members (see proposal appended to the report). The role description should set out clear accountabilities to both the GMCA and to the nominating district, and there should be appropriate remuneration for the role. Length of term should be for 2 years (where possible) to ensure continuity.

(4) The practice of bringing decisions to scrutiny shortly before they are submitted to the Mayor/GMCA should be avoided (while recognising that there may be a need for urgent exceptions, which will need to be agreed with the scrutiny chair).

(5) Scrutiny’s role should be strengthened and recognised as threefold –

- to review and evaluate the performance of the Mayor and GMCA, and the way it works with its partners to deliver for local people,
- to contribute to policy development in respect of high profile, complex issues affecting the whole of Greater Manchester,
- to investigate more complex cross-cutting issues, with a particular focus on the GMCA’s forthcoming responsibilities in respect of the “missions” in the Levelling Up Bill.

(6) This new approach should be complemented by new rules about how information will be shared with members between meetings, informed by members’ existing rights of access to information, with an initial focus on performance against the GMS.

(7) Where conducted, task and finish working should result in a small number of focused, high impact recommendations, where implementation is then monitored.

(8) Discussion and debate in committee should be focused on delivering specific outcomes and therefore operate more effectively.

(9) Districts and the GMCA should bring forward proposals, during 2022/23, for the introduction of a proportionate package of remuneration for Chairs and members of GM’s overview and scrutiny committee, and their substitutes.

(10) Meetings where it is proposed to invite the Mayor need to be more rigorously planned by scrutiny members to ensure focused and effective sessions.

(11) Scrutiny members should be tasked (individually) to keep a watching brief on portfolio business to assist with performance monitoring and policy development.

(12) Scrutiny members should come together regularly, remotely and informally, to provide leadership and direction to the function and to direct and their own the ongoing scrutiny work programme.

(13) Scrutiny members and the scrutiny functions of the districts should work together to limit risks that work will duplicate effort.

- (14) Ongoing scrutiny improvement should be based on a better sense of where scrutiny’s strengths lie now, and where they will develop in the future, in part through the use of post-committee “washup” sessions.
- (15) Training and support should be provided to senior officers on scrutiny and its roles.
- (16) Training and support should be provided to scrutiny councillors to strengthen their existing skills, covering the fundamentals of scrutiny as well as some of the substantive policy issues for which GMCA holds responsibility. This should be based on new chair, vice chair and member role profiles.
- (17) Senior officers should feed back on where formal and informal interventions by scrutiny have led to changes in approach at the CA.
- (18) The scrutiny function itself should take the lead on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of new systems as they are introduced. It should be recognised that transition to the new arrangements will take time to properly implement and embed the changes outlined in the report.

Implementation plan

What and when	Timing
<p>A paper circulated to the meeting of the CA in June highlighting this shift in approach, accompanied by a formal proposal to change the committee structure and a commitment to focusing scrutiny on the three core areas set out in this paper.</p> <p>This paper would also contain a proposal that districts and the CA begin conversations on a possible approach to remuneration for the committee.</p>	(June and July 2022,
<p>A paper circulated to the first meeting of the new committee or committees, setting out resolutions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements for the regular sharing of information (including what information, and how frequently); • Proposals to stop automatically bringing decisions to scrutiny shortly before they come to be made, to include future criteria to determine when and how such items may be brought. The scrutiny committee may wish to adopt a planned approach to the reduction in these items throughout 2022/23 rather than seeking to change working patterns and arrangements immediately; • Assignment of members to individually keep a watching brief on the transaction of business by portfolio holders (to be accompanied by agreements on how these arrangements would be supported). 	(July 2022)
<p>Following the first formal meeting of the committee, an informal meeting with senior officers to begin developing the work programme, and to agree practical arrangements for the sharing of information further to the committee’s earlier resolution. This informal meeting would also provide a washup opportunity from the first committee meeting, a practice to continue thereafter.</p>	(July into August 2022)

<p>Initial contact with districts, to share work programme priorities in draft and invite comment.</p> <p>Work programme development to be complete during July, and to include agreement on the number and topics of task and finish groups, and the scope and timetable for budget scrutiny task group working, with work on all of these activities to begin substantively in September. The work programme should also identify those subjects where members think debate would be assisted by the Mayor's involvement.</p>	
<p>Monthly, informal business planning meetings to begin. The first to cover and agree training and development arrangements (see below).</p>	<p>(September 2022)</p>
<p>Development and improvement plan for the scrutiny committee, and for scrutiny members and CA officers, to be developed, focusing on impact in committee and at task and finish groups.</p>	<p>(Beginning early autumn)</p>

Detailed findings

Structural change

1. The findings of the Review as set out in this paper lead to the conclusion that the interests of scrutiny of the Mayor and GMCA will be best served by the adoption of a structure involving **a single committee, supported by regularly convened task and finish groups (Action 1)**.
2. Structural change is necessary to release resource to carry out more effective scrutiny work in different ways and strengthen the quality of outcomes. As things stand, too much resource is being expended on a three-committee structure which is difficult to sustain – practically, because of quoracy arrangements, and more generally because it creates an industry of “activity”, rather than carrying out work of value. The amount of resource expended on scrutiny is not commensurate with its impact; change is necessary.
3. As part of this process the working group gave serious consideration to the appointment of an independent chair, who would lead the function for an initial period of two years. However, a consensus was reached that this would not be appropriate.
4. A single committee, meeting during the day, will ensure that only those members able to commit to playing an active part in the scrutiny function are involved in this way.
5. A single committee model would have the following features:

An ordinary membership of 20;

A substitute membership of a further 20. This would provide resilience in the face of ongoing quoracy requirements, and a pool of additional members to take part in task and finish groups;

Regular meetings set aside for ongoing scrutiny of the subject, supported by task and finish working on this subject;

A regular programme of task and finish groups to play an active part in policy development, especially on cross-cutting issues;

Role profiles for the chair and members, which will allow districts to nominate members in a way better reflective of necessary skills, expertise and capacity.

6. The format of task and finish working would need further clarity and focus under any model.
7. Task and finish groups provide an opportunity for a wider pool of members to be involved in scrutiny without sitting on a scrutiny committee; work programming will need to have regard to the interest and priorities of members more broadly. There are certain topics that will lend themselves best to deliberation in task and finish groups, which will be focused on teasing out new policy directions both to challenge and support the Mayor and CA, and some which are likely to be more appropriate to consider in the more formal environment of committee, where activity is likely to be focused more on holding the Mayor and CA to account.
8. Some overall principles for the operation of task and finish working (other than the selection of topics, which we talk about in more detail in the sections below) would cover:
 - Agreed approaches to evidence gathering. Task and finish working is often most valuable when it brings together stakeholders to discuss and debate complex topics. For some topics, scrutiny members might benefit from officers carrying out background research, from the advice of independent experts or technical advisers, or from site visits, or from broader public consultation – but this will have to be carefully balanced against the resourcing available to carry out scrutiny work more generally;
 - Ensuring that task and finish groups convene for only a handful of focused meetings before recommendations are prepared. Decision-making can be fast moving, and in order to be relevant task and finish groups may have to operate to short timescales. A group meeting three or four times over a two month period may be a sensible model for the bulk of work;
 - The extent to which meetings will be held in public. Meetings can be held remotely as they are not formal meetings, but could still be broadcast to maintain public confidence and provide transparency. Meetings held in public do require more resource to support;
 - The production of a small number of clear recommendations, to which the GMCA then responds. As a matter of course task group recommendations would be reported to the scrutiny committee and then on to the GMCA itself.

Relationships with other bodies

11. There are other formal bodies which play a role in providing member oversight. In particular, these include:
 - Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee;
 - Greater Manchester Transport Committee;
 - Greater Manchester Waste and Recycling Committee.
 - Greater Manchester Audit Committee
 - Greater Manchester Police, Crime & Fire Panel

12. These formal bodies have terms of reference and work programmes which could cut across the regular business of scrutiny committees. At the moment, there does not seem to be close alignment between the work of these bodies and the work of scrutiny committees, although overt duplication does seem to have been avoided. The scrutiny committee could see that it has a role in working alongside, and complementing the work of, these committees. New arrangements for work programming will need to take account of the terms of reference of these bodies, and the nature of business that they carry out, and what scrutiny can do to add value to that work and provide a whole system approach to accountability.

Member leadership

13. Member ownership and buy-in to scrutiny is not strong (this is not specific to a particular political party). Members need to take a stronger ownership of scrutiny – its role, priorities and activities. We think that sitting on scrutiny should be a responsibility for which there is positive competition in districts.
14. A small core of members have the skills and capacity to engage effectively with the operation of scrutiny, but across the three committees the CA struggles to consistently engage its wider scrutiny members. There are a number of reasons for this:
- A lack of priority – overwhelmingly, and understandably, members are focused on their duties in their districts. While they do not see their duties at the CA as unimportant they are low down on the list of priorities;
 - A perception that scrutiny is quite officer led – that councillors have little say in what issues come to committee, and how and why they are discussed;
 - A limited sense of team working, because members come together periodically for meetings and beyond committee have limited interactions;
 - Disengagement born of a lack of impact – some members have fallen out of regular involvement because they have grown dispirited in the face of the sense that scrutiny has little impact;
 - A perception that scrutiny is low profile – there is a sense that the CA does not take scrutiny especially seriously, and that scrutiny’s work is essentially invisible to the public. CA scrutiny’s work is not especially visible in GM’s districts – this risks overlap in work, and unnecessary duplication;
 - Weight of expected work – agendas are heavy, and often dense. Councillors have little time to stay abreast of CA business. Agendas are not always developed in a way that captures members’ interest. The current focus on “pre-decision” scrutiny is central to this challenge;
 - The overall calibre of scrutiny members. There are a large number of spaces on scrutiny committees that need to be filled. This results in some members being appointed who lack the skills, or interest, to be able to engage productively in CA scrutiny business.
15. Together, these issues are self-reinforcing. Members losing interest in scrutiny leads to difficulties building a function that is member-led, which leads to further disengagement. Despite the fact that scrutiny shadows CA decision-making quite closely (as we note below) the function feels semi-detached from the work of the CA and the lives of local people.
16. These issues also lead to problems with quoracy. Like other combined authorities GMCA operates under rules which require that two-thirds of the membership of a

scrutiny committee must be present in order for that meeting to be quorate. GMCA experiences ongoing problems in ensuring that meetings are quorate, despite significant effort being put in by officers to overcome this issue. An environment where many members are not especially engaged with scrutiny is one where these quoracy issues will continue, and possibly worsen.

Scrutiny's impact

17. Overall scrutiny itself, where of sufficient quality, serves to improve the effectiveness of the CA – although it is difficult to draw a consistent causal link between scrutiny's work and impact "on the ground". We have been told by some officers that scrutiny's input does lead to changes – and frequently. However, this view is not universal. Where it does exist it is premised on the view that bringing decisions into the public domain, and subjecting them to rigorous questioning, can lead overall to a tightening up of decision-making processes. It is difficult to evidence that this happens. There are certainly no consistent arrangements in place to actively monitor the implementation of scrutiny's recommendations, when they are made.

The work programme

23. Scrutiny's work programme feels quite officer led, driven as it is by the tempo of "pre-decision" scrutiny at the authority. This is also in part caused by the lack of member ownership – because members have not been able to clearly articulate what their collective priorities are, and the ways in which they see scrutiny as making a distinctive and relevant contribution to the life of the CA.
24. It is not entirely unproductive - evidence from observation demonstrates that members do use this form of scrutiny to ask probing questions. Discussion on pre-decision matters in committee often feels forensic, and brings interesting matters into the public domain which might not otherwise benefit from this form of transparency. But while interesting it does not deliver tangible impact, certainly not to the lives of local people. Furthermore, the significant resource expended on this way of working is not sustainable.
25. At the moment, scrutiny committee agendas feel traditional, and "heavy". A high volume of material is shared with members in this way. This is driven by officers' tendency to want to keep members informed and members' tendency to want to feel informed, but its unsystematic nature leads to too much, or too much irrelevant, information being shared.
26. While a lot of scrutiny work feels uncoordinated, there are examples of scrutiny being able to ask interesting and perceptive questions, which dig under issues. However, some members – particularly in the survey – highlighted worries that they were not sufficiently familiar with the core business of the CA to play an active part in scrutiny.
27. The fact that things are not working is generally understood but it has been difficult to chart a path forward. A lack of buy-in and engagement with scrutiny on the part of many members means a lack of serious thought about what scrutiny is "for", and what good scrutiny looks like – in particular, how CA scrutiny and district scrutiny need to operate differently from each other, and how they can complement each other. We have noted elsewhere in this paper that "less is more" – which is a mindset to which members need to shift swiftly – but this needs to be underpinned by a clearer sense of what the key focus areas ought to be.

28. We have concluded that the current way of doing things – pre-decision scrutiny on the bulk of decisions being brought to the Mayor and CA for decision-making – should end. There will still be a need for the scrutiny committee to review some decisions this way – high profile, complex decisions for example. Part of new arrangements for work programming will need to determine where decisions will demand this form of scrutiny – recognising that it is likely to be necessary for a minority of decisions in the future.

New focus areas

29. A shift away from pre-decision scrutiny in its current form demands a new focus. We have concluded that there should be three main areas of focus:
- Taking a more active role in the review of performance against key indicators in the Greater Manchester Strategy. While monitoring systems do exist, giving scrutiny a member-led role in performance management, in public, would provide more visible accountability for the CA as a whole. This might also provide the opportunity for more focused and robust accountability of the Mayor. ***Is there an ongoing performance issue which the Mayor and CA have not been able to resolve, or which is high profile and causing local contention?***
 - Action on policy development. This would see scrutiny taking a more active role earlier in the policy development process, in respect of a smaller range of higher profile issues. This could, potentially, provide a way to develop political debate on matters which are complex and important. The Mayor, others on the executive side of the CA and scrutiny members have all been keen to explore this. Scrutiny could, for example, play an active role in considering the implications of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill – considering the “missions” set out in the Bill and helping the CA to reflect on how those missions are likely to affect the plans in the Greater Manchester Strategy, and other plans for growth across GM. ***Is this a developing policy where scrutiny can contribute in a defined way – by collecting evidence which the CA does not already hold or by drawing out unique or distinctive perspectives on emerging issues?***
 - Proactively investigating issues of a cross-cutting nature which affect the whole of GM (which may well intersect with work on the levelling up “missions” as described above). Scrutiny has a unique ability to frame the study of topics as it wishes – the creative use of task and finish groups could lead to work looking holistically at issues such as (for example) climate change, or equalities – breaking down silos between the CA and its partners. ***Is this a cross-cutting issue whose boundaries are difficult to define, and/or where existing lines of accountability are unclear? Is this a cross-cutting area that demands action because of local need, and/or does it relate to GM’s ability to tackle one or more of the levelling-up “missions”?***
30. A longer horizon for determining when, where and how scrutiny work should be carried out (ie being able to do so several months in advance in some cases) will provide the opportunity to timetable meaningful, long term policy work, interspersed with more immediate interventions on performance issues – lending the work programme flexibility and variety. It will also result in work which dovetails better with ongoing executive activity.

31. Decisions on the work programme should be made by regular, but short, and informal meetings of the committee, or by a smaller subset of committee members. These meetings would provide an opportunity to review some of the information available to scrutiny about work being carried out by the CA, to reflect on the impact of recent work, and to look ahead to see what that meant for the work programme for the next few meetings.

Access to and use of information

32. Work programming would need to be supported with a rigorous approach to member access to information. It should be possible for topic selection to be taken forward by key members coming together periodically, to note where information and evidence suggests pressures and opportunities lie around the GMCA's plans for the coming months, and to consider where and how scrutiny should feed in. At the moment the management and use of information is scattergun – we have already noted the volume of material submitted for members to look at. Information is not used to prioritise and direct the work programme.
33. The primary way that members currently receive information is in the form of officer reports. The quality and detail of officer reports vary. Officers' approach to information provision to members is framed around safety – a tendency to want to share more rather than less, for fear of members missing important issues. It results in circumstances whereby some issues are considered, arguably unnecessarily, by all three committees. We have seen little evidence of chairs or ordinary members seeking to direct in detail what reports should contain.
34. With committee being the only place where information is shared, councillors have nothing to contextualise the reports they see – there is little hinterland of knowledge and experience which they can use to query what reports tell them.
35. The model we have outlined above – where the work programme is developed on the basis of information and evidence – is not possible to bring about without a significant overhaul in how information is shared and managed.

36. We consider that this would be best supported through two main measures:

Individual committee members taking responsibility for maintaining a watching brief over individual CA portfolios. Such arrangements would however need to be proportionate, and not impose an unrealistic burden on councillors selected to carry out this role.

Information brought regularly to scrutiny members outside committee. The exact way in which information is shared is moot – a regularly-produced digest of information provides one potential model. This could focus on the key performance indicators attached to the Greater Manchester Strategy, financial plans associated with performance and delivery, and possibly business cases / options appraisals for major forthcoming decisions.

37. Taken alongside the CA's key decision register, this would give the scrutiny committee enough insight into ongoing CA business to determine how the work programme should be framed.

Relationships with the GMCA and political accountability

38. As things stand the Mayor attends two meetings a year of each of the 3 scrutiny committees. These sessions can be quite wide-ranging, and do not come across as especially well planned, although as with committee sessions more generally

members are able to ask nuanced, forensic questions. Although the Mayor advises that he feels challenged by these sessions, on observation by CfGS their variable quality does suggest that improvements can be made to their focus.

39. This quality issue is not down to “poor questioning” per se. But a lack of planning on the part of scrutiny can lead to questioning feeling scattergun, with lines of inquiry not being followed up and members not acting together to tease out details.
40. Sessions with the Mayor could be planned better – by scrutiny members working together to develop lines of questioning, or at least by the chair understanding the issues that members want to address in the meeting, making it easier to manage the flow of conversation.

Remuneration

41. The review findings support Councillors being remunerated for the sacrifice of time that they make in engaging in formal business. Reading through paperwork, travelling to and from and attending meetings are likely to take up more than a day of a councillor’s time. For chairs, the burden will be more significant.
42. The facility does exist to agree a remuneration package for scrutiny members at GM level but it must be agreed by all ten districts. Up until now it has not proven possible to secure this agreement, meaning that scrutiny councillors are not compensated for their contribution.
43. While it is dangerous to see it as a panacea, proper remuneration would provide a clear indication that scrutiny is something that the CA takes seriously, and would recompense councillors for the time and effort expended in engaging with scrutiny. Under this model there could be a remuneration rate of main committee membership, and a different rate for those substitute members who may not ordinarily attend meetings but who may sit on task and finish groups.
44. The exact level of remuneration need not be especially high. The evidence gathered through this review leads to the conclusion that it is a necessary step towards building a scrutiny function which has the vigour and clout that GM requires, particularly in the context of the necessary demands on governance systems as a result of the Government’s “levelling up” agenda.

Ongoing improvement

45. The scrutiny function needs to have in place arrangements for the ongoing evaluation of how new arrangements are bedding in. The transition period in which this happens – which may last for a year or even two – is one during which the committee, and the CA at large, will need to maintain ongoing feedback arrangements to ensure that scrutiny is working effectively.
46. There are several elements to the effective monitoring of the transition, and of the effectiveness of new arrangements:

Providing time and space in informal monthly meetings of the committee to reflect on recent activities and performance;

Putting in place more rigorous arrangements to monitor the implementation of scrutiny recommendations;

Washup meetings after every committee meeting. These would allow for more immediate changes and improvements to be made;

Seeking feedback from officers on where interventions have led to change, even if no formal recommendations have been made.

We think that at least every quarter for the next twelve to eighteen months members should come together – possibly in committee itself – to examine what aggregated data based on the above tells them about the strength of new arrangements. This would also involve taking evidence from officers. The committee could then determine where improvements are needed – and who should own those actions to improve.

47. This does not mean that interventions to improve should not be taken between these quarterly meetings.
48. It should be noted that the appointment of an independent chair for the committee (as provided for in the legislation) was considered as a way to provide additional capacity and expertise in managing the transition. However, this proposal was ultimately rejected by the working group.
49. It should be noted that a structural model of 2 committees was also considered and supported by some members of the working group. However, it was considered that a single committee model supported by task and finish groups would enable a more integrated approach to scrutinising policy and performance and was, on balance, the best way forward. It was further agreed that the matter should be kept under review.

APPENDIX 2: GMCA SCRUTINY MEMBER ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This description provides information about the role and responsibilities of an overview and scrutiny committee member. It should be used by local authorities when deciding which members to nominate to the GMCA's overview and scrutiny committee. The information should also be used by overview and scrutiny committee members to understand their role and the responsibilities that they hold as members of the committee.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Overview and scrutiny committee members and substitute (pool) members should be able to:

Understand Greater Manchester's strategic priorities as set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS).

Think critically about the GMCA's proposed policies and its performance across a variety of measures.

Work constructively with public and/or private sector partners to drive improvement of both policy and performance.

Confidently scrutinise GMCA Members, officers, and the Greater Manchester Mayor.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

Overview and scrutiny committee members and substitute (pool) members are expected to:

Attend any appropriate induction and training sessions for the role, which will develop members' knowledge of Greater Manchester's ambitions as well as the challenges that Greater Manchester faces.

Attend formal scrutiny meetings regularly, which will be held once a month during the day, for a minimum of nine meetings per year. There is also an expectation that members will take part in the work of task and finish groups.

Use their knowledge and experience to constructively scrutinise issues that come before the committee

Collaborate with other members to effectively scrutinise important matters in appropriate depth, including convening task and finish groups to investigate specific areas in more depth.

Engage with their respective local authorities to ensure that information is circulated between the local authorities and the GMCA.

Carry out their duties in accordance with the scrutiny rules of procedure and the members code of conduct as set out in the GMCA Constitution.

Remain a member of the committee for a minimum term of two years (wherever possible) to ensure the continuity of membership and the retention of expertise.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS

The Chair and Vice-Chairs of the committee are expected to take on additional responsibilities, which include:

Working with officers to develop the work programme on behalf of the committee, taking into account the upcoming work of the GMCA and areas where scrutiny must be carried out (i.e. the annual GMCA budget).

Chairing committee meetings effectively so that members can carry out their roles efficiently.

Facilitating strong team-working between committee members during formal meetings, informal meetings and task group meetings.

Monitoring the progression of task and finish groups established by the committee.