

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2022
AT THE GMCA OFFICES, TOOTAL BUILDINGS, OXFORD STREET,
MANCHESTER**

PRESENT:

Bolton	John Walsh (Chair)
Bolton	Hamid Khurram
Bolton	Champak Mistry
Bury	Nathan Boroda
Manchester	Greg Stanton
Manchester	Mandie Shilton Godwin
Manchester	John Leech
Oldham	Colin McLaren
Rochdale	Ashley Dearnley
Rochdale	Tom Besford
Salford	John Mullen
Salford	Jim King
Salford	Alex Warren
Stockport	Elise Wilson
Stockport	Amanda Peers
Trafford	Barry Brotherton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

GM Mayor	Andy Burnham
GMCA Portfolio Lead for Equalities, Cohesion and Inclusion	Amanda Chadderton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

GMCA	Eamonn Boylan
GMCA	Adrian Bates
GMCA	John Wrathmell
GMCA	Dave Kelly
GMCA	Nicola Ward
GMCA	Ninoshka Martins
GMCA	Alison Gordon

O&SC 20 /22

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mike Hurleston (Stockport), Kath Houlton (Wigan), Joanne Marshall (Wigan), Naila Sharif (Tameside) and Umar Nasheen (Oldham).

O&SC 21/22

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Chair's announcements or urgent business.

O&SC 22/22

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

O&SC 23/22

COST OF LIVING AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN GREATER MANCHESTER

The GM Mayor, Andy Burnham introduced the report that updated members on the cost-of-living pressures on residents and businesses in Greater Manchester and advised on some of the measures that have been put in place by the GMCA and partners in an effort to respond to the current crises.

Members welcomed the report and suggested that it would be useful for the cost-of-living economic dashboard to be shared across LAs to ensure that districts have access to the latest statistics.

The introduction of capped bus fares in the current economic climate was welcomed and the benefit to residents was noted, however, a question was raised whether there were any plans to lower the price of weekly/monthly tickets. The Mayor explained that this measure was focused on targeting the most expensive tickets initially however, in recognising the current cost of living rises and in anticipation of greater control over the bus network, further discussions were underway with operators, looking at developing further affordable and flexible ticketing models.

With regards to bus patronage, it was noted that this could be increased through the introduction of socially viable routes however members reported on recent instances where services have either been reduced or withdrawn. Whilst it was noted that having a greater degree of overall control would allow GM to reshape the network, nonetheless, the Mayor suggested that TfGM consider recently removed bus routes that may be socially necessary, and whether there was any potential to re-instate them.

It was agreed that the Committee would receive performance data in relation to the capped bus fares initiative at their meeting in October and would be used as active stakeholders in the annual review process of the initiative. The GM Mayor welcomed the Committee's suggestions as to how to improve the dashboard.

Concerns were raised around the lack of clarity for residents on the recent energy cap, including the need for targeted support for residents living on prepayment meters with unmanageable debts. It was suggested that the Mayor and Cllr Chadderton as Portfolio Lead for Equalities, Cohesion and Inclusion should hold discussions with energy providers to agree a way forward. The Mayor welcomed the recommendation and advised of the Helping Hands website that had been launched to support residents, where further guidance on the energy cap would be added including

information relating to the Data Banks and Food Security initiatives so that it could be used as a point of reference for residents

In discussing the figures on A Bed Every Night (ABEN), members sought to understand the reason for the increased take up by employed individuals. In response, the Mayor commissioned officers to seek further information as to why the number of employed people using ABEN had increased so significantly.

It was felt that GM needed to be creative in providing immediate support to residents and look to developing a sustainable plan of long term support to residents such as initiatives like the implementation of the Real Living Wage. The Mayor requested the Chief Executive to look at GMCA or partner assets as potential 'warm banks' within communities and commissioned officers to look at whether there could be further incentives to introduce the Real Living Wage initiatives earlier across GM Local Authorities. The Mayor requested the Chief Executive to use current arrangements to look for ways we can increase informal daily support for residents across GM before the demand on front line services became overpowering.

The overall view of the Committee was that the Mayor should raise these issues at the forthcoming meeting of the GMCA, including reference to the fact that Government's mini budget has further exasperated unfunded pressures for Local Authorities and overall provides little help for residents in GM. However, it was suggested that GM should make the case to Government for a targeted support package for those that would be impacted the most.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the latest assessment and emerging responses be noted.
2. That officers be asked to review the current arrangements to increase informal daily support for residents across GM before the demand on front line services becomes overpowering.

3. That officers ensure that the Helping Hands website has clear guidance for residents as to how to understand the increase on their energy bills and also includes information relating to the Data Banks and Food Security initiatives so that it can be used as a central place to refer residents.
4. That the Mayor and GMCA Portfolio Lead for Equalities, Inclusion and Cohesion hold a round table with energy providers to assess what more can be done to support residents.
5. That officers seek further information as to why the number of employed people using ABEN has increased so significantly.
6. That the cost-of-living economic dashboard be shared across LAs to ensure that all have access to the latest statistics.
7. That TfGM consider recently removed bus routes that may be socially necessary, and whether there was any potential to re-instate them.
8. That the Committee receive performance data in relation to the capped bus fares initiative at their October meeting and be used as active stakeholders in the annual review process.
9. That officers look at whether there could be further incentives to introduce the Real Living Wage initiatives earlier across all GM Local Authorities.
10. That GMCA make a case to Government for a targeted support package for those that would be impacted the most by the cost-of-living crises.
11. That the Chair should raise these recommendations on behalf of the Committee at the forthcoming meeting of the GMCA.

Alison Gordon, Assistant Director of Place, GMCA introduced the report and informed the Committee that the UKSPF Investment Plan had been submitted, and that GM was expecting to receive a response from Government in October 2022 with the intention to implement the schemes from November 2022.

The Committee were advised on the incremental approach to the implementation of the UKSPF in GM. It was reported that the focus of activity in 2022/3 would primarily be related to Communities and Place investment, with additional activity relating to SME workspace and a small allocation for local business. The latter reflected the fact that ERDF funded business support activity would still be delivered in 2022/23. It was anticipated that a proposal for the £15m SME Workspace Fund and another for the £0.5m 2022/3 element of E23 would go to the GM UKSPF Local Partnership Board in October to allow the Board to make recommendations for the GMCA meeting at the end of October.

In 2023/24, Communities and Place investment would continue alongside delivery of Local Business Investment priority activity. It would not be until 2024/25 that the People and Skills Investment Priority activity would begin.

As the Lead Authority for UKSPF, GMCA had been allocated a 4% administration fee for the management of the GM UKSPF allocation. A fraction of the core management fee would be reallocated to Local Authorities. It was clarified that the admin fee was not comparable to that associated with European Funding as the monitoring and performance management of schemes had previously been overseen by Government.

It was noted that funding for the majority of the Communities and Place Investment priority had been delegated to Local Authorities and therefore the need for local and Combined Authority level scrutiny was essential to ensure outputs were being delivered.

In discussing other European Union funding streams available to Local Authorities, officers explained that these funds were capital focused unlike UKSPF which allowed significant flexibilities, therefore Local Authorities have been asked to utilise UKSPF funding where they were not able to use other funding streams.

It was noted that the risk of uneven impact as a result of UKSPF was dependent largely on prioritisation decisions which would be taken within individual local authorities and therefore there was a need for decisions to be balanced locally.

The absence of skills funding until 2024 was highlighted as a major concern as members felt that funding could be well utilised to develop retrofitting skills which could offer a relief in the current economic climate. Officers noted the challenges and reaffirmed the commitment to continue to lobby Government for more flexibility across other skills funding streams to mitigate any impact in the absence of UKSPF skills funding.

Members also sought to understand the approach to tackling carbon emissions through UKSPF whether GM was to take a 'net zero' or a 'zero carbon' approach. Officers advised that clarity would be provided to Councillor Shilton Godwin after the meeting.

In discussing the spend profile of the projects, officers clarified that as GM was able to demonstrate commitment to spending, funding could be rolled over to the following year and as long as all monies were spent by March 2025.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the GMCA scrutiny committee note the latest assessment and emerging response and the next steps.
2. That officers continue to provide Scrutiny members oversight of the planned programme of activity for UKSPF.

3. That clarity be provided to Councillor Shilton Godwin on GM's approach on tackling carbon emissions as part of UKSPF.
4. That the GMCA be requested to continue to lobby Government for more flexibility across other skills funding streams to mitigate any impact in the absence of UKSPF funding until 2024.

**O&SC 25/22 GREATER MANCHESTER STRATEGY – INEQUALITIES
FOCUS**

Cllr Amanda Chadderton, Portfolio Lead for Equalities, Cohesion and Inclusion introduced the report and provided an overview of the Equalities, Inclusion and Cohesion Portfolio including the work that was being undertaken to drive forward the Greater Manchester Strategy ambition of 'A Greater Manchester of vibrant communities, a great place to grow up, get on and grow old with inequalities reduced in all aspects of life'.

Councillor Amanda Chadderton's attendance at this Committee meeting as the portfolio lead and the utilisation of the assessment tool in projecting the wider socio-economic impact was welcomed by members. However, in discussing the criteria for the RAG assessment, it was clarified that this reflected the portfolios impact and was not indicative of progress on Tackling Inequalities as a whole.

It was felt that there was a need for more long-term strategies to ensure sustainable change within GM's most deprived communities. Therefore, the GMCA was requested to continue to lobby Government for more medium to long term funding streams to enable effective service planning at a local and GM level.

Geographical isolation, nationality as well social class were highlighted as key factors that GM should take into consideration when developing strategies to tackle inequalities and that as an active stakeholder the Committee will continue to have an oversight role in ensuring all initiatives proactively improve equalities.

It was commented that the equality panels could play a wider role in influencing pieces of strategy. Officers noted the comments and recommended the utilisation of equality panels lived experiences to inform the Committees Task and Finish Exercises where appropriate.

In discussing how GM could address inequalities in education settings, it was felt that an intervention was needed in early years to ensure educational attainment and pupil wellbeing. It was therefore recommended that a Task and Finish exercise would be welcomed looking into the current levels of school readiness across GM.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the role of the Equalities, Inclusion and Cohesion Portfolio in tackling inequalities be noted.
2. That the Committee would continue to have an oversight role in ensuring all initiatives proactively improve equalities.
3. That the Committee would use the Equalities Panels lived experiences to inform their task and finish exercises where appropriate.
4. That 'School Readiness' be considered as a future Task and Finish exercise to look into the current levels of school readiness in GM.
5. That the GMCA be requested to continue to lobby Government for more medium to long term funding streams to enable active service planning at a GM and local level.

O&SC 26/22

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming three months be noted.
2. That members continue to utilise the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify any potential areas for further scrutiny.

O&SC 27/22

FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

That the following dates for the rest of the municipal year be noted:

- Wednesday 23 Nov 1-3pm
- Wednesday 14 Dec 1-3pm
- Wednesday 25 Jan 1-3pm
- Wednesday 22 Feb 1-3pm
- Wednesday 29 Mar 1-3pm