

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 26 May 2023

Subject: GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Report on Integrated Water Management

Report of: Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin, Chair of the Task and Finish Group and Councillor John Walsh, Chair of the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose of Report

To inform the Combined Authority of the recent task and finish exercise undertaken by the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee in relation to Integrated Water Management, its key recommendations and next steps.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Endorse the recommendations within the report.
2. Seek opportunities where the GMCA can support the delivery of the recommendations, specifically -
 - a. To continue to lobby for adequate national resources to support effective water management across GM (Recommendation 4),
 - b. To request that Government seeks guidance from GM Local Authorities as to how best to review current planning policy to ensure that integrated water management is a predominant consideration for all new planning developments (Recommendation 6) and
 - c. To request that DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 in line with the outcome of the consultation to ensure effective delivery with an appropriate level of central government funding provided to enable the work to be resourced at a regional level (Recommendation 6).

3. Note that this report will now be shared with GM Local Authority Councillors, Planning Committees, Scrutiny Committees and MPs for their information and appropriate action.
4. Note that at the following meeting the GMCA will receive the GM Integrated Water Management Plan which will also pick up a number of the recommendations in the report.

Contact Officers

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Number of attachments to the report: 1

1. Background

Flooding is an issue that many of our communities in Greater Manchester face, and therefore members of the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee selected it as an area for more detailed scrutiny through a task and finish exercise.

However, it soon became apparent that flooding was just one outcome of poor integrated water management and therefore it should not be looked at in isolation. The review highlighted that the scale of the issue is immense and with precipitation levels expected to rise significantly over the next 25 years, action is needed now to minimise further impact to local residents and businesses. Solutions need to be innovative, sustainable and predominately nature-based with the supporting planning regulations and guidelines to offer the best chance in mitigating the future effects of flooding and drought.

Over a six-month period, a group of seven elected members met with expert witnesses in order to seek information to inform their review. Appended is their final report and a small number of tangible recommendations as extracted below.

2. Recommendations

Recommendation One – Increase awareness

Use the roundtable discussions with the GM Mayor and other key partners to highlight the scale of the problem ahead publicising the projected scale of increased rainfall on Greater Manchester and the impact it will have on residents and communities if no action is taken.

Share this report with Local Scrutiny Committees to ensure they are aware of its findings and can make recommendations to their Local Authority as appropriate.

Agree how GMCA Overview & Scrutiny will monitor the implementation of the recommendations of this review in future.

Recommendation Two – A clear co-owned plan

Co-create a GM Integrated Water Management Plan with all responsible partner agencies, establishing a set of shared objectives, agreed outcomes against metrics, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

Recommendation Three – Strong governance framework

Ensure that there are clear lines of accountability at GM level through an improved governance framework that actively engages with the relevant GMCA Portfolio Leads and ultimately reports to the GMCA.

Create a specific thematic board to oversee integrated water management, recognising its significance, building on from round table discussions and creating a mechanism to ensure that the objectives of the Integrated Water Management Plan are delivered.

Recommendation Four – Effective use of knowledge, skills and resources

Continue to lobby for adequate additional national resources to support Local Authorities to manage and mitigate the issues arising as a result of a poor legacy of integrated water management and to develop and strengthen the resources available at GM level to offer Local Authorities support, additional specialised advice and guidance and provide capacity for better collaboration to enable the effective delivery of projects.

Recommendation Five – Ensuring social justice is at the heart of action

Ensure that the co-owned strategy provides clear guidance to all partner organisations that all GM schemes must be viewed through the lens of social justice.

Recommendation Six – Influencing planning laws and guidance

Request that DLUHC seeks guidance from GM Local Authorities as to how best to review current planning policy to ensure that integrated water management is a predominant consideration for all new planning developments.

Request that DLUHC implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 in line with the outcome of the consultation to ensure effective delivery with an appropriate level of central government resource devolved.

Recommendation Seven– Improving advice and information

Provide briefings, supported by a portal of information for all GM councillors, MPs, Council Leaders, portfolio holders, and planning committees.

Raise citizen awareness of the situation, and the role that everyone can play to manage water, by launching a calendar of campaign messages as part of the Integrated Water Management Plan.

Recommendation Eight – Effective measures

Introduce more effective ways of measuring the impact of improved integrated water management with a focus on wider benefits such as carbon sequestration or improved biodiversity over the number of homes at risk of flooding.

Develop mechanisms by which these and others can be used as a more appropriate metric to measure progress towards the successful delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

Recommendation Nine – Learn from others

Seeking the experience of other areas of the UK will expand the awareness of good practice and collaboration in Greater Manchester. Developing relationships with Greater London Authority (and other highlighted examples) in order to share best practice, innovation and common messaging is recommended.

Recommendation Ten – Further areas for scrutiny review

Consider how the issue of water quality objectives from the North West River Basin Management Plan are integrated into future work plans for the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee.