

**Minutes of the meeting of the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee
held on Wednesday 21 February 2024
at the Tootal Buildings, Broadhurst House, 1st floor,
56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU**

Present:

Councillor Nadim Muslim	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Russell Bernstein	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor Patricia Dale	Rochdale Council
Councillor Shaun Ennis	Trafford Council
Councillor Nathan Evans	Trafford Council
Councillor Holly Harrison	Oldham Council
Councillor Helen Hibbert	Stockport Council
Councillor John Leech	Manchester City Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Lewis Nelson	Salford City Council
Councillor Imran Rizvi	Bury Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Debra Wailes	Wigan Council
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan Council
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council

Also in attendance:

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
Councillor Ged Cooney	Portfolio Lead for Housing

Officers in attendance:

Eamonn Boylan	GMCA
Nicola Ward	GMCA
Helen Davies	GMCA

Melinda Edwards	GMCA
Steve Fyfe	GMCA
Alex Maynard	GMCA
Steve Warrener	Transport for Greater Manchester
Anne Marie Purcell	Transport for Greater Manchester
Matt Bull	Transport for Greater Manchester
Richard Barnes	Ernest Young

O&SC 81/23 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Besford (Rochdale Council), Councillor Joshua Brooks (Salford City Council), Councillor Jenny Harrison (Oldham Council) and Councillor Naila Sharif (Tameside).

O&SC 82/23 Chair’s Announcements and Urgent Business

The Chair announced that the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting scheduled for the 20 March 2024 had been extended by 30 minutes to ensure the Task and Finish draft report on Affordable Housing could be given thorough consideration by this Committee.

O&SC 83/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received in relation to any item on the agenda.

O&SC 84/23 Minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2024

Resolved/-

That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

O&SC 85/23 Housing Portfolio Overview

The Chair invited Councillor Ged Cooney, Portfolio Holder for Housing, to present the Housing Portfolio Update; the Committee was advised of the GMCA’s recognition of the importance of a safe and secure home for residents across Greater Manchester that would help to make a real difference to their lives. Locally progress was being

made with recognition that some issues could only be tackled from a regional position. The Committee noted that the draft Good Landlord Charter had launched recently and whilst there were current required standards set by law, this was a new voluntary scheme that enabled city region landlords the opportunity to commit to higher standards, making positive improvements and a level of assurance for those renting. The GM housing priority was to deliver more of the right type of homes in the right places that were affordable. The Devolution Trailblazer deal further built on this aspiration for homes to be delivered to a Future Homes Standard or above.

Steve Fyfe, Head of Housing Strategy noted the work being undertaken by the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Task and Finish Group for Affordable Housing and the key recommendations that would bring with focus on achievable outcomes at a GM level.

The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on the paper, there was some discussion that included:

- Clarity that the Good Landlord Charter did not replace any statutory responsibilities held by Local Authorities but was accreditation to give a level of confidence to the landlord and a standard for tenants to actively look for.
- Clarity that the number of Affordable Homes within a scheme was determined by Local Authorities and not imposed by the Combined Authority. With respect to the Brownfields Land Programme, the reason there were no Affordable Homes noted in the table within the report was, because to access Brownfield funding, the scheme needed to be in a deficit, these schemes did not work with Section 106 funding as the calculations were made between the deficit gap and the break-even cost. By overprogramming this would build the case for viability of projects and attract more grant funding, however land with positive value attached to it would not be eligible for Brownfields Land funding.
- The GM Good Landlord Charter was open to all landlords, and GMCA was working with the districts to carry out more enforcement to expose non-compliant landlords. Further work was also underway to illustrate the benefits for joining the scheme with the ultimate aspiration that its objectives could lever into Government legislation.

- The Committee requested further information on the partnership working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to make landlords accountable and asked for further information on this.
- The £15million with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for the social housing programme would need to be spent by the 31 March 2024, but a full evaluation would capture lessons learnt and shape future programmes regarding homes standards.
- That whilst 79% of projects were projected to reach Future Homes Standards or above, the rest of the projects would be met through the Brownfields Land Programme, and all schemes continually pushed to meet the standards.
- The Committee acknowledged the work being done linking in with colleges for the promotion of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) that provided training for new skills within the industry to address the current skills gap.
- The Committee acknowledged the difficulties working with Brownfield Land, it was often highly polluted and needed to be decontaminated to bring it back into use. By ensuring potential Brownfields projects were ready-to-go put GM in a strong position and enabled short-notice funding to be allocated to these schemes.
- The Committee raised the point that a Section 21 notice (of the Housing Act 1988) meant landlords could begin the process of taking possession of a property let on an assured shorthold tenancy without providing any reason. This meant families could be homeless within 2-months. The Committee asked for consideration to the Charter to ask landlords not to use a Section 21 notice, instead using a Section 8 notice instead (where a landlord must first serve notice of intention to bring proceedings on the tenant). Officers advised that whilst that could be added it was non-enforceable and would need a change of law to remove the notice altogether.
- The Committee urged for more co-commissioning and sharing of resources across GM to address gaps i.e. workforce for supported housing.
- It was recognised that by securing the Living Wage across GM, work could be done to ensure careers and roles within the housing sector were attractive and rewarding to add value to the market.

- The Committee noted that the Good Landlord Charter was open to every landlord in GM, including private and social landlords and providers of specialist housing and that GMCA was confident that a large proportion of GM social landlords would take part in the charter due to the participation of Greater Manchester Homes Partnership (GMHP) in its development. The Committee requested detail on:
 - a) the engagement by Manchester housing authorities to date; and
 - b) the amount of spend by Manchester housing authorities from the £15million capital funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) to tackle damp and mould health hazards in social housing.
- The Committee noted the aspiration target of 30k for TANZ homes and queried why the completion date was within the 2030's. It was clarified that whilst the 30k was ambitious, building net zero homes cost more money and that further devolution would give greater control over GM housing budgets.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be received and noted.
2. That further information on the work being carried out with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to make landlords more accountable be received by the Committee.
3. That further information on the engagement, in respect of the GLC, by Manchester housing authorities be received by the Committee.
4. That further information on the spend to date by Manchester housing authorities from the £15million capital funding from DLUHC be received by the Committee.
5. That further information on the spend by housing associations on damp and mould be received by the Committee.
6. That a revised Brownfield Land Programme be recirculated to this Committee given the omission typo for Oldham.
7. That the latest Housing Investment Fund report be shared with members of the Committee.

O&SC 86/23 Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee considered the Work Programme for March 2024 and Forward Plan of Key Decisions circulated with the agenda pack.

Resolved /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme be received noted; and
2. That the Forward Plan of Key Decisions be used to identify any potential areas for further scrutiny.

**O&SC 87/23 The Greater Manchester Franchising Scheme for Buses
2021-Procurement Update**

The GM Mayor Andy Burnham gave an overview of the process for awarding a bus franchise to a preferred bidder to the Committee noting that Tranche 2 was able to launch in one-month with a high degree of confidence having learned lessons from Tranche 1. It was recognised that the Bee Network was a major change for Greater Manchester however some of the early challenges had largely been dealt with.

Tranche 1 was significantly outperforming the service it replaced with 71% reliability-compared with 64% on the rest of the network and 62% on a comparable date from the previous year, ambition was to get better across the whole network.

There had been lessons learned with driver availability, but the unknown was how many drivers would agree to the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) into the Bee Network. Tranche 1 had experienced some reliance on agency drivers this had held efficiencies back as they were not as familiar with the road network. Tranche 2 had no reliance on agency drivers and was in a stronger position because of this.

The Middleton depot was mobilising to the Bee Network with the same operator, this was the first instance of this happening for the network. Currently electrification was taking place at Oldham, this would provide strength in efficiencies and would help work towards building a new depot.

Data from Tranche 1 and 2 was being used to inform the mobilisation of Tranche 3, geographically this was most of GM, equating to 48% of the GM bus network franchise. Tranche 3 was 9-months from mobilisation, risk assessments were being carried out by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to identify any destabilisation. Work was being carried out to introduce a zero emissions fleet with a significant number of operational net zero buses in the Tranche 3 area already. There had been an issue affecting 50 zero-emission buses planned for tranche 2 due to industrial action within the supply chain; 30 were on schedule to be delivered with a delay to 20.

Operators needed to be procured for Tranche 3 for 5-large networks and 4-small networks which was anticipated to go live on 5 January 2025.

The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification.

- The Committee noted the anecdotal positive impacts reported by those using Tranche 1 in North Manchester, particularly the night buses and the overall clean, punctual services and improved real time bus-tracking. The GM Mayor was confident that the service would be significantly better for GM. The GM Mayor noted that Manchester was a night-time destination city and there should not be a reliance for residents to pay between £30-£40 to get a taxi home. The safety of passengers was a paramount area of monitoring for the night bus services.
- Clarification was given that Tranche 3 did not include school bus services, three were being procured under each area, large, small and schools, however most schools were going into their own package within Tranche 3. The GM Mayor acknowledged the expansion of routes to try and maximise coverage of schools, however school services had grown over time, and there was a need to reduce reliance on certain school services.
- The agency driver issue was noted by the Committee and assurance was sought that this would not be a reoccurring issue at the franchise's renewal period. The GM Mayor acknowledged the importance on reducing the reliance of Tranche 1 agency drivers and noted this had not been an issue moving into Tranche 2 or that it would be an issue affecting Tranche 3. The stability of the

workforce was a key priority and a Consolidated Transport Workforce Board had been launched as a social partnership. The Metrolink and Train services needed representation within the Board and the issue of losing drivers to other services was highlighted. The aim was to implement more structure for transport employment opportunities and eliminate competition across the transport network to ensure that the Bee Network Careers could progress from bus to tram to train with a standardised approach. Hard testing for Tranche 3 was in place to procure fleets and depots but also included staff recruitment and retention.

- The Committee noted the positive ambition to blend local transport services across the network, including the integration of rail. The GM Mayor added that there were some services that operated outside of the GM boundary (such as Southport, Buxton and Glossop) and the ambition was to incorporate those within the Bee Network by 2030. This was in-line with recent announcements by the Mayor of London to incorporate Overground Lines as part of Transport for London (TfL), for GM the same approach would incorporate GM commuter lines into local GM control with further integration into the Bee Network bus services.
- In relation to Tranche 1, members reported the significant difference that a reliable service has made to residents, especially in Leigh and Atherton. However, there remained a high level of dissatisfaction regarding rail services, and it was hoped that issues of punctuality and standards could soon be addressed.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the report and recommendations be commended to the GMCA for consideration at its meeting on the 23 February 2024.
2. That the comments from the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee would also be shared with the GMCA as it considered the report.

O&SC 88/23

Exclusion of the Press and Public

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

O&SC 89/23 Bus Franchising Indicative Preferred Bidder

Anne Marie Purcell, Steve Warrener and Matt Bull from Transport for Greater Manchester and Richard Barnes from Ernest Young attended the meeting to present a briefing to the Committee on the bus franchising indicative preferred bidder process for Tranche 3.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the report and recommendations be commended to the GMCA for consideration at its meeting on the 23 February 2024.
2. That the comments from the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee would also be shared with the GMCA as it considered the report.