

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD WEDNESDAY, 27
NOVEMBER 2024 AT THE TOOTAL BUILDINGS - BROADHURST HOUSE, 1ST
FLOOR, 56 OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 6EU**

PRESENT:

Councillor Nadim Muslim	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council
Councillor John Leech	Manchester City Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton – Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Ashley Dearnley	Rochdale Council
Councillor Terry Smith	Rochdale Council
Councillor Dylan Williams	Rochdale Council
Councillor Sameena Zaheer	Rochdale Council
Councillor Tony Davies	Salford City Council
Councillor Lewis Nelson	Salford City Council
Councillor Rachel Wise	Stockport Council
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Ged Carter	Trafford Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council
Councillor Debra Wailes	Wigan Council

ALSO PRESENT:

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
Councillor Eamonn O'Brien	Portfolio Lead for Technical Education, Work & Skills

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Karen Chambers	GMCA
Gillian Duckworth	GMCA

Jane Forrest	GMCA
Gemma Marsh	GMCA
Nicola Ward	GMCA

O&SC 40/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Russell Bernstein (Bury), Councillor Imran Rizvi (Bury), Councillor Basil Curley (Manchester), Councillor Claire Reid (Tameside), Councillor Naila Sharif (Tameside), Councillor Shaun Ennis (Trafford), Councillor Fred Walker (Wigan)

Apologies were also received from Caroline Simpson, Group Chief Executive and Steve Wilson, Treasurer GMCA.

O&SC 41/24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

Members were reminded of their obligations under the GMCA Members' Code of Conduct and were requested to complete an annual declaration of interest form, which had been emailed to them by the Governance & Scrutiny Officer.

Members were advised that the date for the budget meeting in February has been confirmed as 5 February 2025. It was confirmed that an updated meeting invite had been sent.

Ahead of the budget meeting on 5 February, an online information briefing session had been arranged for all members and substitute members on Thursday 12 December at 11am to 12noon. All members should have received the invitation for this session and were asked to prioritise attending.

The Chair reminded members to keep questions to a maximum of 1 or 2 per agenda item, to ensure there was time for everyone to ask a question.

Concerns were raised regarding a recent announcement on the proposed Post Office closures in GM and it was requested that an impact report be brought to the Committee.

The Chair advised that it was not appropriate for the Committee to take a report on this matter as it was a Local Authority issue, and the request should be made to their local scrutiny committee.

RESOLVED /-

1. That members as per their obligation stated in the Code of Conduct would complete their Annual Declaration of Interest form and return it to the Governance & Scrutiny Officer.
2. That members note the confirmed date for the budget meeting, which was scheduled for 5 February 2025.
3. That members note the details of the budget information briefing session taking place on Thursday 12 December 2024.
4. That members would limit their questions to a maximum of 1 or 2, to ensure there is time for everyone to ask a question.
5. That it was not appropriate for a report regarding the proposed Post Office closures to be brought to the Committee.

O&SC 42/24

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED /-

No declarations were received in relation to any item on the agenda.

RESOLVED /-

That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 October 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

O&SC 44/24**OVERVIEW OF GM LIVE WELL**

The Chair invited GM Mayor, Andy Burnham, GMCA Director of Public Sector Reform, Jane Forrest to present this item.

The GM Mayor introduced the report that provided the Committee with an introductory overview of the 'GM Live Well' ambition which formed the basis of one of the core interconnected commitments in the Mayoral manifesto. The purpose of the report was to set out the ambition and provide committee members an opportunity for early engagement. It was anticipated that further reports would be provided to the committee at a future date.

The GM Mayor shared his view that over the past 14 years GM had seen the emergence of a voluntary welfare state across all ten boroughs of GM. The GM model has reached such a degree of sophistication that now was the time to consider GM's most ambitious piece of public service reform yet. He added it was time to think differently about supporting residents with social interventions as opposed to the more expensive interventions, such as health or medical interventions. In an era of constrained resources GM needed to look at how pressure could be taken off public services to help support residents but at the same time provide more preventative everyday support so that people could have a good standard of living.

GM was aiming to provide services in a way that helped residents move forward but also created a more sustainable basis for councils and partners such as GMP and

the GM NHS. GM Live Well needed to work alongside the Housing First ambition; as coming out of the pandemic it was clear that many of our residents had a housing situation which was actively preventing them from living well, causing them concern and potentially physical harm in terms of the condition of the property. Giving people access to good housing was essential, providing a foundation that from there GM could provide the practical support to enable residents to sustain themselves in a better position.

The GM Mayor briefed the Committee on the concept and the objectives of Live Well. He advised that GM had been in discussions with the Secretary of State about widening GM's ambitions and the success of the GM Working Well Programme. The Working Well programme was aimed at people longest out of the labour market and GM was able to achieve much better results than the national work programme achieved by providing much more personal support with much greater focus on mental health, without the same deadlines and sanctions-based approach as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The GM Mayor advised that following those discussions GM had been announced as an Inactivity Pilot and given £10m to support the delivery of Working Well approach. He advised that this was an opportunity to rethink the delivery of support, recognising that the one size fits all approach does not leave GM residents feeling empowered.

The aim was to route employment support through the community and voluntary organisations in GM to create the infrastructure of a Live Well service then start bringing in health services. The GM Mayor stated that he had met with the Health Secretary and advised that GM was keen to become a prevention demonstrator and bring primary care closer. He advised that around a third of phone calls to GP surgeries related to social needs rather than medical needs, but it was often perceived that the only option available to get support was contacting the GP. By providing additional support for those people, rather than them going to their GP, GM could take pressure off overstretched services and get people the support needed more quickly.

The Committee welcomed the report and the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Live Well framework.

Members advised that they would be keen to see more mention of preventative social measures, such as activity, built into framework along with the importance of access to good food due to the impact of obesity. Mental Health and investing in our young people to build resilience could also be beneficial to capture. The GM Mayor agreed, and stated that activity, nutrition and mental health were core components of Live Well. In terms of activity, constructing something that people could do jointly also addresses isolation. The GM Mayor advised that the Age Friendly team and GM Moving Team were working together under the umbrella of Live Well to look at how they could structure activity in a joint way. In terms of nutrition, there were some organisations that provide an enhanced food pantry service, providing cookery lessons, these were examples of community services that could be expanded. In terms of mental health, this was often linked to a lack of connection or activity, therefore the aim was to provide those connections for people in their communities, but not to replace statutory services.

It was noted that it was important to build on and continue to support services already in place in communities.

Members asked for reassurance that consideration was given to localities needs and that areas that were lacking in voluntary or community sector infrastructure would be given the support they needed and that is relevant to that community. The GM Mayor advised that his vision was to use existing buildings to be Live Well Centres, and to ensure that everyone had access to a Live Well Centre for example there were many NHS centres that are underutilised which could be considered. Some authorities have purpose-built facilities, such as Gorton Hub, which was an excellent example of a Live Well Centre, including co-location of health and voluntary sector support. GM also needed to potentially consider rebranding Job Centre Plus, to ensure that the community and voluntary sector could be able to provide support in the same space.

It was noted that data sharing was holding back this work. The GM Mayor advised that data sharing with the DWP and NHS would be required to identify residents who we would want to target, those who were long term out of work and heavy users of GP and hospital services.

Members asked if there would be any consideration given to alternative or holistic health services, as these services were often only available for those who could afford to pay for them. The GM Mayor advised that the GM aim was to start with the core services to the offer, therefore it would be up to localities to design and provide enhanced services they felt would be of value to the community.

It was noted that there may be some stigma attached to a “Live Well” centre and that some residents may prefer these services in a GP setting. The GM Mayor hoped that this would not be the case, as we all, at some stage, may need some support to help us live well.

Members observed that the model was similar to Sure Start centres. The GM Mayor agreed. Sure Start was an excellent idea but it was almost a self-selective service, that we can learn from.

Officers advised that it was our ambition to have Live Well Centres in all 10 local authorities and recognised that we would want to see other Live Well spaces and offers. It was envisaged that a codesign phase with partners would be required, with the design being community led, using data available to understand what the needs and assets were. An example was given around the Live Well offer for people living with dementia and those in later life. Engagement had started to see what a Live Well offer would look and feel like for that cohort, considering what was already in place and what else our communities might tell us was needed. It was important to ensure this was fully networked across public services in all neighbourhoods, and included the voluntary sector, to help build sustainable support for communities. It was also important to recognise that we had lots of evidence from previous programmes, such as school readiness and Housing First, which could help design this going forward. The GM Mayor added that he would also like Housing First to be

part of the Live Well core offer so that people had support to address housing issues, such as enforcement of housing standards.

Members asked what support was in place for the voluntary sector for preventative intervention and how would the data support this, as this can at times be complex. The GM Mayor stated that the existence of a referral route, being able to direct someone to a service, would assist with this. Whilst it may be hard to provide data at the start, the fact that there was a service to refer people to, would have an impact. Officers confirmed that evaluation would be part of the design, and measurable impact would be tracked through the budget and use that to look at return on investment and pivot resources into prevention.

Members commented that the current model of job centres does not always work, particularly for those with a hidden disability. How could we ensure that staff in the job centres were appropriately trained and were empathetic and able to get people back into work. The GM Mayor advised that often the system the staff had to work with within the DWP might prevent them from appearing empathetic. If we approached that at a local level, to empower and support people, changing the culture and delivery of the service, it would make a difference, although this would take time. Officers advised that alongside the £10m the CA had received, there was additional Government funding for a number of different programmes which was flexible, that would create one pot to add to the £10m. That additional funding and flexibility would enable GM to go as far possible with the resources we have, and through our evaluation make a case to Government in terms of future spending rounds, especially in relation to current DWP services.

Members commented that the £10m was very welcome and asked whether it was enough. The GM Mayor advised that although the £10m is linked to what the DWP had received in the budget, GM were planning to create an integrated approach, starting with services in spring 2025, with the incapacity pilot, this was expected to build through the years so by the end of 2029 we would hope to have a fully integrated Live Well programme. Officers added that ability for front line services to have trusted relationships to have conversations with people, is at the heart of Live

Well, and it was recognised that the voluntary sector are very good at these interactions. Alongside this GM have a VCSFE Accord, that really sets out the intent around funding and how to effectively work with the sector, GM were also starting to look at the role of infrastructure organisations and how they can start being supported to support some of the grass roots organisations.

Members asked if there were concerns about the capacity in the voluntary sector organisations to lead on this work, how would we ensure consistency and connectivity to communities, especially diverse communities. The GM Mayor advised that there was a risk there, but if core funding was strengthened then that would ensure that organisations could worry less about fundraising to concentrate on what they did best. He advised that GM were trying to divert current funding streams into the voluntary sector, which would take pressure off local authority services by having a stronger local infrastructure.

Members commented that they had seen some fantastic examples of place-based working and advised how the input of a housing officer had made a difference in the uptake of engagement.

Members stated that the value of volunteering could really make a difference so they would like to see this incorporated into the Live Well ambitions. The GM Mayor agreed that volunteering was very valuable and could often be the step into work, as it helped with confidence building, but unfortunately it was not available in the current system. By changing that and working with voluntary organisations, it was expected that this could create an increase in volunteers and capacity in the system.

Members noted that volunteers would need training and resources to develop the programme, and assistance to link with other organisations. The GM Mayor advised that there would be a need for a Live Well coordinator role and training would be needed to ensure that they have the knowledge to deal with referrals.

Members asked if services would be affordable and accessible as this could be a barrier, especially for those in receipt of benefits. It was noted that services also

needed to be culturally appropriate. The GM Mayor advised that services did have to be affordable and culturally appropriate, but this needed to be built from the bottom up. Members added that often the people in the community understood their needs the most, how could GM ensure that that consideration was given to the people in the community in terms of employment opportunities. The GM Mayor agreed, Live Well was about building up from the organisations already there and empowering them to do more. It must be community owned and driven.

Members welcomed localised services but advised that they had concerns regarding availability of affordable spaces for use, and buildings such as health centres being demolished. In relation to premises, the GM Mayor stated that he would look at the health centre mentioned. He would like public organisations to identify building themselves, such as health centres. He also asked Members to consider what might work in their areas.

The GM Mayor thanked the Committee for their encouragement, positive and productive comments and suggestions.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Overview of Live Well be noted.
2. That information regarding the Health Centre being demolished in Horwich be investigated by Officers.

O&SC 45/24

TECHNICAL EDUCATION, WORK AND SKILLS UPDATE

The Chair invited Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Portfolio Lead for Technical Education, Work & Skills and Gemma Marsh, Director of Education, Work & Skills, GMCA, to present this item.

Councillor O'Brien introduced the report that advised Members of GM's ambitions to develop an inclusive integrated technical education, skills and work system that connects residents, localities, providers, and businesses to build a strong, resilient, modern Greater Manchester economy that works for everyone is the central ambition of this portfolio area. The report and accompanying slides aimed to provide the Committee with an update on the current priority areas further enabled by the latest devolution deal for GM.

Councillor O'Brien stated that this report related closely to the previous item on the agenda. Work Well was an integral part of the Mayors Live Well ambitions. Good jobs would open up the rest of what a good life looks like for many residents. It was important that when we talk about this, that we are talking about a really clear priority around good quality work. We have already done some great work around this in GM, with the Good Employment Charter underpinning what we believe good work looks like.

The presentation summarised the ambitions of Work Well. At the moment, the system that exists does not work for many people, as the systems are siloed, process heavy and detached from everyday life.

GM's aim was to provide a service that was integrated to bring together all parts of the system, that was person centred and adaptable and closely aligned with employers and the needs of the GM economy and devolution was key to this.

Councillor O'Brien advised that nationally health related barriers to work were increasing, which was recognised in the new Government's agenda for growing the economy and reducing pressure on the NHS. There were many people who would want to work who feel they can't at the moment and there was a relatively small portion of people who were not working that did not want to work, but a one size fits all solution was currently ineffective.

Councillor O'Brien stated that there were a few questions for the Committee to consider regarding what was happening in local areas, as Live Well would only work if it was relevant to communities. Each area would have distinct communities that would need a very different and distinct offer and recognised that GM really needed to hear the voices of Members.

The Chair requested that Members considered the following questions when making their comments.

- **Employment Support:** From your experience locally: How can we reach and engage more people? What do you do now that you could build on? What could you do differently?
- **Greater Manchester Bacallaureate:** How would you like to be kept updated about your areas? Are there priorities in your locality that the Greater Manchester Bacallaureate can help with? What are the opportunities that the Greater Manchester Bacallaureate presents?

Members commented that entrepreneurship and community wealth building needed to be considered in order to drive future ambitions and economic growth. Councillor O'Brien advised that we needed to be aspirational, but we also had to recognise the low base starting point, lower than other parts of the country. We had to ensure our offer was inclusive. In GM, there were 400,000 people economically inactive and over 100,000 with long term health conditions, so to get them actively involved in some part of society would be a significant accomplishment.

Members asked what safeguards were in place for when an apprenticeship ends, as numerous apprenticeships seemed to be ending without a job. Councillor O'Brien advised that in relation to T Levels, although small in numbers at the moment, they were giving good results. However, the majority of apprenticeships was that the majority were being offered at a higher level, meaning the entry level apprenticeships were fewer. He advised that GM needed to work with Government to ensure that entry level and T levels were good quality and provided good outcomes.

Members asked if life skills had been considered as part of the MBacc, to allow students to learn crucial life and soft skills. Councillor O'Brien agreed; college courses should indeed equip students with these skills. If young people could see a value in what they were doing, then they would be engaged in their learning. By giving better and clearer choices to young people they would be more engaged and get better outcomes.

Members welcomed the MBacc as an alternative route to employment and training and asked if an apprenticeship programme could be designed for working class communities to get them out of the cycle of low paid employment and worklessness. Councillor O'Brien stated that GM needed to demonstrate that this was about the needs of the economy and align with what employers were telling us. It was important to demonstrate that this was about equity and fairness and respecting people where they are in life and that there were choices that were open to all. Officers confirmed that all young people needed real high-quality connections to opportunities in their areas.

Officers confirmed that if GM was going play its part in the mission to an 80% employment rate, which is an additional 150,000 people into work, we had to ensure all our young people could see the wealth of jobs that were available in GM. We needed to see more collaboration between employers and the skills system to break down that barrier so residents could see a clear path to good employment. We needed to start to have those conversations with our business boards to ask how they could change their entry requirements so residents can access jobs.

Members asked if the MBacc was transferable outside of GM. Councillor O'Brien stated that fundamentally this was about branding a certain set of choices that create a gateway to good jobs. The MBacc was similar to the EBacc, only it includes a range of technical subjects, it was expected that this would be transferable and that students taking the MBacc could not go onto university.

Members advised that it was important to ensure that employment support was support and not just a box ticking exercise. Councillor O'Brien agreed. We needed to ensure improvements in the system to enable people to trust in the system more. There was challenge there but it was noted that there were areas of good practice that GM could build on.

Members asked how we could capture feedback from employers about the MBacc. Councillor O'Brien advised that sessions had been taking place with employers who had signed up to technical placements. Some of the employers were recognising the quality and benefits of technical qualifications and were not necessarily looking for university graduates to fill every role in their industry, such as Ernst and Young and some of the digital and creative industries in Media City.

Members commented that a focus on younger children in school, especially those who may be third generation worklessness, was required to create ambition. Councillor O'Brien advised that we did need to speak to the aspirations of all younger people. At the moment, EBacc was only an option for one third of young people in GM so there was a large proportion of young people in GM that we needed to open up an alternative pathway for.

Members raised a question regarding the definition of a good job, and asked who was expected do the bad jobs and how do we get around the stigma of this. They also asked what could be done to look at the concerns that taking time off sick might lead to redundancies.

Councillor O'Brien stated that any job could be a good job, as long as there was decent pay, good terms and conditions, support when sick and that the employees were treated with respect. We need to encourage employers to sign up to the Good Employment Charter as the more employers who are signed up to the standards, the harder it is for the bad jobs to undermine confidence.

It was noted that a huge number of people were excluded from the job market or were doing jobs that were far less than their potential, how do we recognise this, how do we

reach those people to provide opportunities. Councillor O'Brien stated that it was true that there were people who were underemployed, that aren't able realise their potential and one way to address this was to have a really good adult education offer available, such as ESOL courses.

It was noted that we needed to be realistic about the level of resource available to us. There was a need to ensure a real collaborative approach and build on what was already in place. Councillor O'Brien stated that at the moment the model was far too programme led, relying on Government funding. We would like to have more control of what we do how we design these things and have a far more collaborative approach recognising GM could do far more by pooling this with the resources already available in communities.

Members asked if apprenticeships could be available for older people who may want to learn a new trade. Officers confirmed in terms of the over 50's, often they do not want to engage with the job centre, so it is vital to design how we support them around their needs as we have done with ethnic minorities and NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Similarly, it was good to see that 21,000 of people currently supported were over 50 years old. It was important to value older people that bring experience to the sectors. Members asked if there would be targeted support for older people to enable them to get a better job. In Stockport, roadshows had taken place that targeted not only people out of work, but also provided support for people in work to reach income maximisation.

On the question of how to reach and engage more people – an example was given on UA92 in Trafford who tailored their student timetable to AM or PM sessions to allow students with other commitments flexibility to attend. Officers advised that this was something that should be a Work Well ambition; to provide flexibility, as 9 to 5 training doesn't suit everyone, therefore it was important to meet the training needs of the person in a more inclusive and flexible way.

Members stated that there was a perception that skilled manual labour was less valued than a college education. This needed to be addressed at a school level to encourage

participation in these sorts of apprenticeships. Councillor O'Brien advised that we needed to find the balance between technical and academic education and employment. At the moment, that balance was tipped towards academic education, so it was important to tip that balance back so that all young people have good quality choices.

Members commented on employment opportunities in Ecommerce and online companies as an opportunity for young people that may need to work from home due to disabilities etc. Officers confirmed that GM currently have the same flexible approach to this as with the over 50's, we speak with employers and scope out what the programme could look like to support the sector. Councillor O'Brien agreed that internet-based types of job could be more suitable for people with neurodiversity. and explained that GM had found that by focusing in on particular sectors, we could actually reach a far greater range of the population .

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the Technical Education, Work and Skills Update.
2. That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Technical Education, Work and Skills Update be noted.
3. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the following questions and feedback any outstanding comments via the Governance and Scrutiny Officer.
 - Employment Support: From your experience locally: How can we reach and engage more people? What do you do now that you could build on? What could you do differently?
 - Greater Manchester Baccalaureate: How would you like to be kept updated about your areas? Are there priorities in your locality that the

Greater Manchester Bacallaureate can help with? What are the opportunities that the Greater Manchester Bacallaureate presents?

O&SC 46/24

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME &
FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

RESOLVED /-

1. That the proposed Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for November 2024 – January 2025 be noted.
2. That Members use the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify any potential areas for further scrutiny.

O&SC 47/24

FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

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

- 11 December 2024 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 29 January 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 5 February 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 26 February 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 26 March 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm