

**GREATER MANCHESTER HOUSING PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY HELD  
ON 9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020, AT 18:00 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor John Walsh (Chair)	Bolton
Councillor Martin Hayes	Bury
Councillor Paul Cropper	Bury
Councillor Jill Lovecy	Manchester
Councillor Linda Robinson	Rochdale
Councillor Mike Glover	Tameside
Councillor Sharmina August	Salford
Councillor Liam Billington	Tameside
Councillor Kevin Procter	Trafford
Councillor Amy Whyte	Trafford
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Julie Connor	GMCA
Simon Nokes	GMCA
Molly Bishop	GMCA
Matt Berry	GMCA
Joanne Heron	GMCA
Megan Rogers	GMCA

**HPE 203/20 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Janet Mobbs (Stockport), Councillor Charles Gibson (Stockport) and Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin (Manchester).

**HPE 204/20 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair wished to extend a formal welcome to the new Councillors that were appointed to this Scrutiny Committee at the GMCA meeting in June, Councillor Jill Lovecy from Manchester, and Councillor Paul Cropper from Bury.

**RESOLVED/-**

That the item be noted.

## **HPE 205/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Sharmina August declared an Interest in Item HPE 208/20, as she was employed by Manchester City Council where she had a role within the Homelessness team.

### **RESOLVED/-**

That Member Declarations of Interest be noted

## **HPE 206/20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD 11 JUNE 2020**

### **RESOLVED/-**

That the minutes of the meeting held 11 June 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

## **HPE 207/20 COVID-19 VERBAL UPDATE**

Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Strategy and Policy GMCA gave Members a verbal update on development of the initial one year 'Living with Covid' recovery plan in Greater Manchester which was noted as being aimed to be rolled out early September. It was highlighted that the Plan was focused on learning key lessons from Covid response and recovery, as well as identifying key aspects to enable GM to achieve more, reduce risks, increase resilience and ultimately build back better. It was confirmed that this document would bridge the gap between the current GM strategy and the new strategy due to be introduced in the middle of 2021.

It was stated that three phases of recovery from Covid had been identified although there may be an overlap between timescales and phases, those were noted as: 1. Release of lockdown, 2. Living with Covid and 3. Building back better. In terms of areas for inclusion in the Initial One Year Plan, it was stated that a number of stresses/issues had been identified. Members heard that the deliverables identified would help to build the resilience of Greater Manchester and support the ongoing progress towards the achievement of Greater Manchester Strategy ambitions. The areas identified were noted as: Community support and infrastructure, Labour market and Jobs, Redressing inequalities, Climate change and Securing funding and investment.

Following Member questions surrounding long-term issues resulting from Covid-19 and prolonged lock down such as highlighting the demand on mental health services, it was clarified that this issue had been recognised and would be addressed in the initial One Year Plan.

Following questions around the use of language and including specifics, Members were reassured that the final one year 'Living with Covid' recovery plan would be comprehensive with the inclusion of more specific detail and that delivery models would be inclusive of all GM boroughs with both local and central delivery models.

## **RESOLVED/-**

That Members receive an update on the development of the initial one year 'Living with Covid' GM Recovery Plan, which was noted as being a living document with further updates brought back to this Scrutiny Committee at future meetings.

## **HPE 208/20 EVERYBODY IN / A BED EVERY NIGHT- COVID-19 UPDATE**

Molly Bishop, Strategic Lead Homelessness, GMCA provided Members with an update on the Greater Manchester response to COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. Members were updated on the progress to move people on from Covid emergency accommodation or secure it for longer, as well as opportunities to increase supply for long term, settled accommodation for this cohort.

Members heard that GM had been well positioned to adhere to the Government's Everyone In policy due to the supportive processes to enable Bed Every Night programme already in place prior to Covid-19. It was highlighted that a decant process was still required to adhere to social distancing which had been challenging with a vast array of accommodation being stood up. It was stated that this process had required collaborative work with Public Health England and the GM Health and Social Care Partnership to ensure correct processes were being followed and messaging by teams on the ground were consistent throughout this period. It was noted that to date, the response had moved on considerably from the onset of the pandemic in terms of emergency response to Covid accommodation as some lock down arrangements had been gradually lifted.

Members heard that as government funding had been due to close, other arrangements had been put in place to pick up this support. It was stated that the arrangements during lockdown and its gradual release had not resulted in a major increase in a shift to the streets. It was highlighted that there were currently around 600 individuals across the city region accessing support. Members heard that local authorities had been given a huge amount of support across all sectors, and that infection control mobilisation and fatalities had been low in the homeless population which had been in contrast to other places around the world most likely because of that approach.

It was stated that trying to estimate the true scale of the homelessness issue had been a major challenge. Members heard that when the crisis initially hit, it had been estimated that 1000 places for emergency accommodation would be needed, however throughout the crisis, 1900 places had been provided. It was acknowledged that only a portion of rough sleepers were likely to be visible at one time, and that some individuals move through the system quickly, and fall out of support arrangements. The example of female sex workers becoming increasingly visible during Covid-19 lockdown was given, due to the specific impact that had on this cohort.

Members wished to acknowledge that there had been some very positive outcomes from this work, and that GM's pre-existing work with rough sleepers had given a head-start in being able to adapt and respond to the needs of Covid lockdown.

Following Member questions on provisions for individuals at high risk, it was clarified that due to the requirement of speed to get individuals isolated, it had not always been possible to provide individuals with support and provisions such as individual bathroom arrangements with the

resources that were available, although it was stated that this did not apply to those that were rated as medically at high risk. It was noted that mental health commissioners and provider's had sped up processes to access resources which had been put into effect quickly. It was acknowledged that the pandemic had presented major challenges in terms of staff capacity and working conditions which meant that there were limitations to offering mental health support.

Following questions regarding evictions and abandonment of individuals, it was stated that homelessness teams had been working hard to maintain safe working environment for all, which had resulted in that outcome on some occasions. Members were informed that Manchester City Council had put in place a system of re-entry identifying reasons for eviction on a rolling basis which was highlighted as having had some success of individuals re accessing accommodation.

It was noted that should there be a second wave of Covid-19 Members second wave, GM would be in a more advantageous position to respond as there would not be a move from shared accommodation as per when the pandemic started, which was noted as taking up a large portion of spaces. It was highlighted that if similar circumstances were required again, and with access to some additional resources, it would be hoped that more specialist accommodation for those with complex needs could be set up. Members heard that planning work was being undertaken in the event that resources are required to be stood up again, such as for a second wave of the infection.

Members commented that the homelessness issue was linked to a need in GM for more social housing, and that the strategy will likely be less easy to achieve without addressing both problems. It was also noted that the lack of social housing would likely come under strain moving forwards with a potential recession following Covid-19. Members heard that although there had not been a funding offer for social housing offered by Government, there had been an offer of revenue support for rough sleeping settled / permanent accommodation which GM will lobby to get access to.

Members welcomed the investment into the Everybody In scheme by Government during Covid-19. Following the suggestion that the GM Pensions Fund (GMPF) could be an investor in social housing as a stable investment to achieve a degree of self-funding, it was clarified that the GMPF was already a significant investor and loan function for the Housing Infrastructure Fund which was contributing to the 50,000 affordable homes target for 2030.

Members noted that there had been a dispersal of individuals begging from the city centre to other district town centres and asked what the response was to this. It was clarified that in terms of the city centre, there had been a street engagement collaborative service run by voluntary sector organisations working with GMP and funded by Manchester City Council tackling this issue by providing a supportive means to provide people with other options. In terms of rolling out this approach to other GM districts, it was suggested that a partnership collaborative model in other boroughs of this model could be considered. It was stated that there had been a push in public messaging to get people to help this cause via donating to the Big Change. Members heard that there were complications in making assumptions around the linkage between begging and rough sleeping/homelessness, and other related issues.

**RESOLVED/-**

That Members receive an update on the response to COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping, and it be understood that an update on this area will be provided to Members at a future meeting of this Committee.

**HPE/180/19 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS**

Available online at the GMCA Site:

<https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=386&MId=4064&Ver=4>

**RESOLVED/-**

That the register be noted.

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 10th September 2020, 18:00. Microsoft Teams Live