

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY
ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY 9 OCTOBER 2020 AT 10.30 AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS LIVE EVENT**

Present:

Rochdale:	Councillor Michael Holly (in the Chair)
Bolton:	Councillor Samantha Connor
	Councillor Susan Haworth
Bury:	Councillor Mary Whitby
Manchester:	Councillor Basat Sheikh
Oldham:	Councillor George Hulme
	Councillor Sam Al-Hamdani (Substitute)
Rochdale	Councillor Daniel Meredith
Salford:	Councillor Jim King
Trafford:	Councillor Barry Brotherton
Wigan:	Councillor Charles Rigby
	Councillor Michael Winstanley

In attendance:

Stockport:	Councillor Elise Wilson, Portfolio Lead for Economy
The Growth Company:	Mark Hughes, Chief Executive
Marketing Manchester:	Sheona Southern, Managing Director
Midas:	Tim Newns, Chief Executive
GMCA:	Amy Foots, Strategy, GMCA
	Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
	Jenny Hollamby, Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer
	John Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, Research & Economy

E32/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ray Dutton (Substitute Rochdale), Karen Garrido (Salford), Hazel Gloster (Substitute Oldham), Stephen Homer (Tameside), Becky Senior (Stockport), Patricia Sullivan (Substitute Rochdale), Greg Stanton (Manchester) and Kerry Watters (Stockport).

A further apology was received from Simon Nokes (GMCA).

E33/20 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business reported.

E34/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

E35/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record subject to several minor typographical errors being corrected.

RESOLVED/-

That the minutes of meeting of the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 11 September 2020 be approved as a correct record subject to several minor typographical errors being corrected.

The Vice-Chair took over as Chair, whilst the Chair's audio problem was addressed.

It was suggested and Members agreed to rearrange the agenda to allow presenting Officers more time to access the meeting due to technical issues.

**E36/20 GREATER MANCHESTER'S AUTUMN SUBMISSION: COMPREHENSIVE
SPENDING REVIEW AND LOCAL RECOVERY & ENGLISH DEVOLUTION
WHITE PAPER**

The GMCA's Director of Strategy, Research & Economy, presented a report that provided an overview of Greater Manchester's submission to Government for the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and Local Recovery and English Devolution White Paper (Devolution White Paper).

The Chair rejoined the meeting at this point. The Portfolio Lead for Economy, Cllr Elise Wilson, joined the meeting to set the scene and answer Members questions.

The main points referred:

- A Member asked about the timeline for levelling up in Greater Manchester. It was reported that as soon as Government had made a decision, a plan and timeline would be developed. It was envisaged that the spending review would take place in mid-November 2020, which would allow Greater Manchester to respond and set its timeline.
- A discussion took place about research and development and the levelling up agenda. It was explained that Local Government, Government and universities needed to work together to develop ideas and take them to market.
- Another Member asked if Greater Manchester was capitalising on institutions such as the Graphene. Again, this was about working in partnership to create the right conditions to develop ideas and get them to market. This remained a frontier sector and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was also very keen to see this happen. The Independent Prosperity Review highlighted the importance of this work.

- A question was raised about Manchester Airport and the plans to link up HS2. Could a London style transport system could be delivered without an underground system? It was explained that the Manchester Airport crisis was unique to the moment and whilst aviation would recover in the long term, Government would need to think about support. More confidence was needed around HS2 and when it would happen. An integrated transport system in Greater Manchester was needed urgently to link up to HS2. If and when HS2 was delivered then an underground system would be explored.
- A Member asked if wind energy should be included in the programme Build Back Better. Greater Manchester was ambitious about being greener as it was a frontier sector for the economy and would provide jobs for the future. It was about making Greater Manchester better in terms of people's lives, education, skills options, life-long learning, making sure people were resilient and fundamentally to protect the planet.
- Members discussed small local communities often on the edge of towns with poor bus or rail links. Bus reform was the quickest and most affordable way to deliver better public transport and connectivity between different boroughs. However, more would be needed and this came back to the GMSF and the need to ensure sufficient reach across the City Region. Levelling up and investment would need to reach all corners of Greater Manchester.
- A discussion took place about Greater Manchester having a centre for research and excellence and if this was challenged enough in the submission. A concern was raised about expenditure in research and development being focused in the same regions. Greater Manchester had excellent Universities and research. Further work with businesses would help to develop ideas and take these forward. This would result in Greater Manchester bringing back investment and making the UK a strong international partner. The Chair suggested that tax incentives for companies could be the way forward. Greater Manchester was the only City Region outside the golden triangle that could deliver investment.
- The Chair asked for more detail about the relationship with Government. It was about working in partnership with Government, Local Government, businesses and universities not just in research and development but in creating sustainable quality jobs. There was a responsibility on all politicians to represent the people and find a way to deliver, support and make sure they were set up for success.

RESOLVED/-

That Members noted and commented on (minute E36/20 refers) the report.

E37/20 GROWTH COMPANY BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTIVITY

The Growth Company's Chief Executive supported by Marketing Manchester's Managing Director, presented a report that provided an update on the Growth Company's business support activity in response to Covid-19.

The main points referred:

- A Member referred to the hospitality sector and the rumours that it would be closed down on 19 October 2020 and asked what support would be put in place for the industry. Whilst Government schemes were still available, the Chancellor was currently outlining further furlough type support for those sectors which had been closed down in restricted areas.
- The Member asked a further question around small sports clubs and what support was available in Greater Manchester. It was reported that a direct support package had not been developed, however, owners and managers could access mainstream support and were encouraged to speak to The Growth Company.
- A discussion took place around Greater Manchester's diverse company base and how The Growth Company had organised itself compared to other Cities. Members questioned where Covid-19 had been harder on some sectors, had resources been rearranged to do the extra work or had The Growth Company undergone more extensive change? The main change to the company, had been about understanding what businesses needed and flexing services to their needs. There was a substantial amount of work taking place within Local Authority business support Officers, backfilling capacity. Social media and digital outreach activity and had been massively increased as this was the new way of working.
- A Member enquired about European Regional Development (ERDF) funding and if this would be replaced following Brexit. It was confirmed that funding would end in June 2021 but there was an opportunity to secure a further 24 months of funding beyond that. However, match funding would be required and further discussions were taking place within GMCA. Subsequent to that, the major expectation was around the growth fund announced by Government but as yet, little detail was available. Support in business support was also part of the GMCA's CSR submission. An announcement from Government on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was awaited. This was intended to replace European structural funds and Northern local growth funding and had been included in the submission emphasising its necessity in supporting a wide range of programmes in Greater Manchester and for driving local growth.
- Reference was made to the commercially available business information provided by Redflag/Begbies. The insolvency risk data highlighted that 15% of firms were reported as having one or more red flags and signs of financial stress compared to an average of 13% in the UK and 14% in the North West. Members questioned why the figure was higher in Greater Manchester and were informed that given that the percentages were so close, there was not a specific answer. Considering the interaction of the sectors and the types of businesses that had been adversely affected by Covid-19, it was suggested there was a greater marginal incidence of those in Greater Manchester.
- The Chair provided feedback from the Rochdale Development Agency and Rochdale Council's Economic Directorate about how The Growth Company had been helpful in terms of advising businesses and providing the Council with expert and detailed knowledge and identifying companies to speak to about discretionary expenditure. It was acknowledged that the work with Local Authorities was excellent and the Chair thanked The Growth Company.

- A discussion took place about the long term future of businesses that had been affected by changing consumer preferences and Government decisions. Members questioned if the areas identified for support were the correct ones and if banks were being helpful to the companies experiencing cash flow difficulties? Bank feedback was about bounce bank loans and the larger loan to deal with cash flow problems. There was a lot of investment and it was suggested the North West was getting its share. Banks were very nervous about the exercise even though the loans were backed by Government. Banks were withdrawing from the market and only five remained active in the bounce bank area. Banks had also stopped registering new businesses. The Growth Company offered a service to guide a business through the process. It was suggested that Government should have put more effort into developing more specific schemes that supported the growth agenda and were more compensatory for the activities Government was closing down.
- Start-up companies and the support available was discussed. The GMCA had commissioned additional start-up support and representations were being made to Government. An open letter had been penned as a collective and had been issued to Government setting out key points around the compensatory measures, working from home, Covid-19 secure office environments paying particular attention to the aviation and hospitality sectors. It was agreed that the letter would be shared with the Committee.
- Members referred to banks and their reluctance to lend and the articles in the media relating to fraudulent claims. It was suggested that 25% of claims were fraudulent or not paid back and Government had missed the opportunity earlier in the year to change its approach to try and curtail the extent. The Growth Company, with backing from the GMCA, would soon be able to offer a bounce back loan, specifically targeting businesses who were not able to get a loan from the banks because they were closing down entry to the scheme. The Growth Company had extensive checks and balances and felt they were not experiencing fraudulent attempts or an extensive level of defaults. Robust process and checks to combat fraud could also adversely affect the legitimate claimant.

RESOLVED/-

That the report be received and noted.

E38/20 UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREATER MANCHESTER WOMEN & GIRL'S EQUALITY PANEL

Members considered a report that provided an update on the establishment of Greater Manchester Women and Girls' Equality Panel and provided the findings of research undertaken by ComRes research on the attitudes and experiences of Greater Manchester women during the coronavirus pandemic.

The main points referred:

- A discussion took place about digital exclusion and how that could distort the data. The company used to undertake the research did everything it could to ensure accessibility and that the people interviewed and the information received was balanced and reflective of the community. The survey, under the circumstances, was a fair representation of that moment

in time. Hopefully, a different approach would be used next time. Digital accessibility was raised within the survey results, which would be fed into the wider Greater Manchester approach around digital exclusion. Members suggested alternative options such as telephone calls and post.

- A Member requested that the Committee had site of Quality Impact Assessment and the digital strategy to ensure access was given to all residents.
- It was recognised that Male buy in was also important. A Member welcomed contributory speeches from men on these issues, such as the fact that most care workers were women and access to products women need. Men needed to be on board to achieve ambitions on justice and equality matters. This was about a positive improvement and ensuring all people had an opportunity.
- Regarding wellbeing and mental health services, it was asked if these services were available to young women and girls. It was important for the research to connect with what was already in place and plug into the infrastructure. This included young women and older women as issues occurred. It was important for evidence to influence mainstream thinking.
- The ability to compare the issues with same issues within the general population would have been beneficial. The survey was specifically designed for women and could not be transferred. Members were reassured that the panel would identify gender disparities and address them in the wider context.
- Women in lower paid jobs and levelling up was discussed. It was suggested that this was a reflection of personal and household wealth and not necessarily a gender factor; it was a much wider issue.
- The data sets that sat behind the summary slide deck, particularly around domestic abuse would be shared with the Committee.

Resolved/-

1. That the Committee considered and commented on (minute E38/20 refers) the establishment of early priorities for the Greater Manchester and Women and Girl's Equality Panel.
2. The findings of the research undertaken of the experience of Greater Manchester women during the coronavirus pandemic was received and noted.

E39/20 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

Members considered the register of GMCA Key Decisions for the period 1 September 2020 to 30 November 2020 that was published on 24 September 2020.

RESOLVED/-

That the register of GMCA Key Decisions be noted.

E40/20 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

Members considered the draft Committee Work Programme for 2020/21 which set out those topics and items that would provide a focus of the Committee's work for the 2020/2021 municipal year.

The main points referred:

- It was agreed that the culture recovery plan item would be brought forward before it was considered by the GMCA.
- It was suggested that Credit Unions, interest free loans and joint work on welfare were added to the Work Programme. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer would check if this was within the Committee's remit.
- A Member asked if the Good Employer Charter could be considered at a local level rather than a GM level.

RESOLVED/-

That Committee Work Programme and comments made by Members, be actioned and noted.

E41/20 PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future meetings were presented to Members. It was noted that all meetings would commence at 10.30 am and would be held via Microsoft Teams Live Events unless otherwise stated.

- Friday 13 November 2020
- Friday 4 December 2020
- Friday 15 January 2021
- Friday 5 February 2021
- Friday 12 March 2021

RESOLVED/-

That the dates and times of future meetings be noted.