

**MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY  
(GMCA) ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW  
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, HELD ON FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2020  
AT 10.30 AM VIA WEBCAST**

**Present:**

Bolton: Councillor Samantha Connor  
Councillor Susan Haworth  
Manchester: Councillor Basat Sheikh  
Councillor Greg Stanton  
Oldham: Councillor George Hulme  
Councillor Sam Al-Hamdani (Substitute)  
Rochdale Councillor Michael Holly (in the Chair)  
Salford: Councillor Jim King  
Stockport: Councillor Becky Senior  
Trafford: Councillor Barry Brotherton  
Wigan: Councillor Charles Rigby  
Councillor Michael Winstanley

**In attendance :-**

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester  
Councillor David Greenhalgh, GMCA Portfolio Lead for  
Culture and Leader of Bolton Council.  
GMCA Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer  
GMCA Alison Gordon, Assistant Director of Business, Innovation and  
Enterprise  
GMCA John Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, GMCA  
GMCA Marie-Claire Daly Principal Culture and Creative Policy  
GMCA Paul Harris, Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer

**E42/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Councillors Stephen Horner (Tameside), Daniel Meredith (Rochdale), Kerry Waters (Stockport), Mary Whitby (Bury).

Alison McKenzie-Folan, Chief Executive, Wigan Council and GM Lead Chief Executive for Culture, Simon Nokes, Executive Director of Policy and Research.

**E43/20 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business reported.

**E44/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Sam Al-Hamdani and Jim King each declared a personal interest in item 5, Cultural Recovery in Greater Manchester.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

A Member highlighted that in regard to the discussion Growth Company Business Support Activity (minute E37/20 refers), the request for information on support for Credit Unions was to be provided was not referenced in the Minutes. In response, officers noted that the role of Credit Unions will be included in a wider paper regarding Business Support to be presented at a future meeting of this Committee.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the minutes of meeting of the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020 be approved as a correct record, subject to noting the inclusion of the Member request for further information on the support available and the response from officers outlined in the preamble above.

**Note: Councillors Sam Al-Hamdani and Jim King each declared a personal interest in this item.**

Councillor David Greenhalgh, GM Lead Member for Culture, introduced a report which provided Members with an overview of GM activity to support culture in the region and set out the national response to Cultural Recovery. A draft GM Cultural Recovery Plan was appended to the report which outlined how GMCA will prioritise existing Culture Portfolio resources to support the culture sector where possible.

Members noted that the scale of impact to the culture sector in Greater Manchester is beyond the resources of GMCA to resolve and provide cultural opportunities for Greater Manchester residents to the end of the financial year.

Points made: -

- Greater Manchester has the largest level of cultural activity outside of London and the impact of Covid has presented challenges to the culture and hospitality sector in the city region.
- The sector employs a large number of freelance and self-employed individuals.
- Live venues and other parts of the cultural sector were the first to close under Government restrictions and would likely be amongst the last to reopen.

Questions and comments raised: -

- A Member commented that the 10:00pm curfew arrangements had impacted on the night-time economy. He asked if there had been any indication from Government that this curfew may be reviewed. In response, the challenge the 10:00pm curfew presents to the culture and hospitality sector was acknowledged and it was noted that the lobbying of Government to review this curfew, post lockdown was continuing.

- A Member highlighted how wellbeing can be enhanced by cultural activity. He noted the link strong cultural activity has with the economic prosperity.
- A Member referenced the national research undertaken by the Oxford Economic Forum which indicated an economic drop of £74billion.
- In reference to section 1.5 to the report which noted the absence of any local level data on the impact to the culture sector in Greater Manchester, a Member enquired if any work was to take place to research the impact of Covid on the GM Culture sector. In response, officers explained that across Greater Manchester there are in excess of 700 different cultural organisations and it would be challenging to ask all of these organisations to comply with providing data without additional GMCA resource. Members also noted that the Oxford survey undertaken as a sample but did not look at the impact to the supply chain which supports the cultural sector. Officers undertook to speak to the Arts Council England to understand the type of data that they are collecting in relation to Greater Manchester. In addition, it was also highlighted that work was taking place with the Music Venues Trust to signpost support.
- A Member commented that the report identified the financial challenges to organisations and noted that the use of reserves by larger organisations to mitigate operating costs for this financial year was possible however, smaller organisations may be over-stretched financially. The Member noted that this position will be impacted further following the introduction of the second lockdown and the loss of pre-Christmas culture activities. In response, officers noted that discussions were ongoing with organisations in need of support.
- A Member noted the financial support provided to the culture sector. He highlighted the existing financial challenges local authorities are experiencing and highlighted the importance of ensuring that any financial support and grants are to the right areas.
- A Member commented on the number of both professional and voluntary cultural organisations across Greater Manchester. The member sought clarification on how such voluntary organisations may be supported, as they will continue to generate operating costs whilst being unable to generate income. In response officers highlighted that larger culture sector organisations have been offering support to other members of the Greater Manchester culture community.
- A Member noted that local and voluntary cultural organisation provide the basis for individuals to develop their talent. The Member noted that the lack of important pre-Christmas activities will impact up on revenue for these organisations.
- A Member referenced the role of community and local radio to the cultural sector. In response, it was noted that radio was one medium which was able to continue during the current lockdown and allowed residents to access culture. The ability for local and community radio to develop talent was acknowledged.

#### **RESOLVED/-**

That the update on the Culture Recovery Plan in Greater Manchester be received with thanks and noted.

## **E47/20      LABOUR MARKET & BUSINESS IMPACTS OF COVID-19 AND DEVELOPING A GM RESPONSE**

Jon Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, GMCA introduced a presentation which provided the Committee with an overview of the impact of Covid 19 to business and the labour market. The presentation identified the work taking place to develop a Greater Manchester response to this impact.

The presentation also provided a summary of claimant counts, business confidence in relation to the pandemic and Brexit, support provided, projected unemployment levels, the requirement for large scale support from Central Government and GM targeted support approach for business, unemployed and those individuals missed by national support packages.

Andy Burnham, GM Mayor was also in attendance to discuss GM's response, highlight risks and outline recovery plans.

Points made:-

- The number of people claiming unemployment benefits has continued to plateau. It was noted that new Government support measures, such as the extension of the furlough scheme have been introduced and slowed claimant numbers. However, unemployment levels are significantly higher than those reported before the crisis.
- Many people, such as self-employed and furloughed are in a vulnerable position. A link to the economy dashboard which provides a district breakdown on unemployment figures was shared with Members.
- Work is continuing to take place across the GMCA work and skills and economy teams to support individuals with retraining, reskilling and to tackle economic inequalities.
- The Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Plan has been launched earlier this week.
- The Mayor highlighted the current lockdown position and the uncertainty on what will happen when the national lockdown is released on 2 December 2020. There would be significant economic risk if GM returns to Tier 3 restriction post lockdown.
- The recent reduction in Covid cases within districts will not ease the pressures on GM hospitals. It was noted that an increase in hospital admissions will peak in the upcoming weeks.
- National schemes including 80% furlough and support for the self-employed have been extended until March 2021 and the support grants for businesses that have had to close were welcomed.
- The Mayor noted that the Government is providing £60 million for local discretionary to support businesses in Greater Manchester. The Government has indicated that no further funding will be available to Councils this financial year and concern has been raised by Greater Manchester Leaders that should Greater Manchester re-enter Tier 3 restrictions when lockdown is released, the level of funding provided would not be sufficient.
- The Mayor explained that discussions are needed with Government in relation to Tier structures to allow the economy to work, without adding to the spread of the virus. It was also suggested that the current 10:00pm curfew be removed.

- The Mayor highlighted the strong representation from Headteachers and College Principals that the usual exam system will not provide a fair system for Greater Manchester students when compared to pupils in other areas of the country that are continuing to work under fewer restrictions. He suggested that cross-party concerns be raised with the Government on this matter. A proposal for Government was to be developed.
- Manchester Airport was highlighted as a further risk to the GM economy. Furlough support for employees has provided some benefit, however, a number of redundancies have recently been made. For this reason, any recovery by the Airport may be slowed and further support from the Government is needed to support recovery. The role Manchester Airport has in providing employment locally and in supporting the GM visitor economy was reiterated.
- In terms of recovery, the Mayor explained that GM needs to emerge from the crisis with clarity. He suggested that the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) will help recovery and identify opportunities for investment. The GMSF will provide a framework to direct investment and regeneration to those areas in Greater Manchester that needs it most.

Comments and questions raised: -

- A Member highlighted changes to the self-employed income support scheme and the difficulties self-employed workers will have in qualifying for support. The Member asked what help can be provided to this sector. In response, it was suggested that a lack of Government support for the self-employed sector will deter entrepreneurialism. The Mayor highlighted that in Greater Manchester, around one hundred and fifty thousand newly self-employed and company directors are unable to access any support. National level support for these individuals is needed, particularly from HMRC.
- In respect to Manchester Airport, a Member highlighted that HS2 will provide a boost to the region and enquired if HS2 will still be going ahead. In response, the Mayor noted that Greater Manchester and Northern Powerhouse Rail have argued in favour of the delivery of HS2. The Mayor also noted that significant investment for an east–west high-speed railway should be prioritised but also supported HS2 to provide high speed north-south connectivity. It was suggested that the design of the Manchester Piccadilly terminus required a tunnel approach to allow for optimisation of the railway and regeneration of the surrounding area.
- In relation to the £60 million discretionary fund, a Member asked if there was an indication of what gaps in support may be addressed by this fund. In response, officers noted that the extension of the furlough scheme had now addressed some gaps. Other areas to provide support would include the self-employed, individuals at the end of the furlough scheme and infrastructure & innovation programmes, which will require significant funding and will be dependent on decisions made within the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.
- With regard to Manchester Airport, a Member suggested that a call to Government is needed for the introduction of rapid testing and to the track and trace regime, to help with the economic recovery of the Airport, the city region and to project jobs. In response, the Mayor highlighted the lack of urgency from Government to support testing regimes when compared to testing activity in other countries. The complexity of the national test and trace system was

highlighted and the need for a more localised system was noted. A complete reset is required.

- In relation to regional restrictions, a Member highlighted that if Greater Manchester is released from Lockdown into Tier 3 it would be disastrous for the GM economy. He asked if should Tier 3 restrictions were imposed, would a localised approach to releasing such restrictions supported in areas or districts with lower Covid rates. The Mayor noted that a regionalised approach presented some ambiguity in messaging to residents, as one region knocks on to others. He highlighted that advice received from Government during earlier lockdown discussions noted that Tier 2 & 3 restrictions were uncertain to work without significant closures of businesses. He explained that the implementation of these restrictions provide uncertain outcomes in health and certain damage to the economy. There is no evidence that a regional approach provides successful results and therefore he questioned why would such an approach be supported. A suggestion was made that the Government develops a plan for 2021 for periodic national circuit breaks, linked to school holidays. Areas with higher risk should be placed in Tier 2 restrictions as a maximum, with summary closure powers of problematic businesses being introduced.
- With regard to Manchester Airport, a Member raised car parking drop off and pick up charges and the impact that this will have on people that drive for a living. She suggested that the matter be raised with the Airport Board. In response, the Mayor noted that the operation of the Airport is outside his remit. He acknowledged the challenges in the operation of the Airport with a lack of Government support and understood why these charges had been introduced, although accepting that these charges are particularly high.
- In terms of education, a Member sought further details on how disadvantaged young people can be supported and what changes would be needed to the exam system to reflect this inequality. The Mayor suggested that an education recovery plan was to be explored. The GM Living with Covid Plan outlines education catch-up provision and digital support packages. A cross-party approach to lobbying Government is needed to seek consideration of a fair exam system for young people and students in the north west. It was also suggested that Ofsted be contacted to pause inspections whilst the crisis is on-going.
- A Member highlighted that the Business Support Formula of £20 per resident does not reflect the number of businesses in some areas and asked if this was to be reviewed to reflect business need. He also asked if there is any funding to support councils that have lost revenue. In response, the Mayor noted that the Business Support Formula appeared to be Government policy. He agreed that the funding formula needed to be linked to business density and also deprivation. He added that no further funding is currently being available.
- The Chair commented that discretionary panels are being established locally to provide funding to local businesses in need of support. He enquired if the £60million funding will be directed to local authorities. The Mayor noted that every local authority will receive £20 per head irrespective if that area is in Tier 1,2 or 3. He noted that a population based formula is unfair to those business that has suffered higher Tier restrictions for a number of months where business disruption has occurred. A formula based on business density, linked to deprivation is a fairer approach.

The Chair, in summing up, welcomed the Mayor's suggested prioritisation of a cross-Pennine high speed rail line. The Chair also welcomed the Build Back Better approach. He recognised that the Plan provides detail on medium and longer-term measures and asked if there is enough focus on shorter-term activities to support business, education and well-being. In response, the Mayor noted that a balance approach was needed. The plan needs to be able to provide support to people and aid recovery.

**RESOLVED/-**

1. That the Mayor be thanked for his attendance and helpful input at the meeting.
2. That the Labour Market & Business Impacts of Covid-19 and Developing a GM Response presentation and subsequent discussion be noted.

**E48/20 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members considered the register of GMCA Key Decisions for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020 that was published on 26 October 2020.

**RESOLVED/-**

That the register of GMCA Key Decisions for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2020, be noted.

**E49/20 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.

It was noted that a request had been received for the December meeting to now receive an update on the Young Person's Guarantee.

The Chair also referred to previous discussion regarding Credit Unions. It was suggested that officers would explore this matter and the future pipeline of items with the Chair and provide an update to the next meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED/-**

1. That Committee Work Programme be noted.
2. That the update on the Young Person's Guarantee be included on the work plan for the Committee on 4 December, be agreed.
3. That it be noted that officers, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair will undertake a review of the work programme and provide an update to the next meeting of the Committee.

**E50/20 PROGRAMME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members considered a programme of future meeting date for the Committee for 2020/2021.

**RESOLVED/-**

1. That the following meeting dates for the Committee be noted:-
  - Friday 4 December 2020;
  - Friday 15 January 2021;
  - Friday 5 February 2021;
  - Friday 12 March 2021.
  
2. To note that meetings will commence at 10.30 am and will be held via video conference unless advised otherwise.