

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED
AUTHORITY CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 4.30 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT:

Councillor Tim Pickstone	Bury (Chair)
Councillor Sam Al-Hamdani	Oldham
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham
Councillor Kallum Nolan	Rochdale
Councillor Tanya Burch	Salford
Councillor David Jolley	Salford
Councillor John McGahan	Stockport
Councillor Dena Reyness	Stockport
Councillor Teresa Smith	Tameside
Councillor Sean Anstee	Trafford
Councillor Karina Carter	Trafford
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Burnham	GM Mayor
Steve Wilson	Treasurer, GMCA
Joanne Heron	Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Matt Berry	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA
Jenny Hollamby	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA

CI&R/13/21 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all those present.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Leech (Manchester), Hazel Gloster (Oldham), Ray Dutton (Rochdale), Patricia Sullivan (Rochdale), Dave Morgan (Trafford) and Karen Garrido (Salford).

An apology for absence had also been received from Kevin Lee (GMCA).

CI&R/14/21 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

Whilst there was no urgent business, the Chair explained that supplementary agendas were published and circulated to Members on 2 and 3 February 2021, which contained the budget reports.

CI&R/15/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

CI&R/16/21

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2021**

RESOLVED/-

That the minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 19 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

CI&R/17/21

BUDGET 2021/22

The Chair welcomed the GM Mayor to the meeting and asked for an overview of the broad elements of the budget. The GM Mayor explained that decisions had been taken to minimise the impact on residents and in-light-of District's financial positions. In different ways, everybody was feeling the financial pressure in January 2021 caused by the pandemic. The GM Mayor took the decision late last year to freeze the mayoral precept, recognising there were on-going priorities that needed to be funded from the mayoral general precept. There was funding to continue A Bed Every Night (ABEN), which had supported 520 people. Government had provided funding for rough sleeper work, but this did not provide the level of funding needed in terms of the number of people requiring help. The eviction ban was potentially coming to an end, which would present significant challenges. There were almost 400 people in Everyone In accommodation from the first lockdown and thousands more in temporary accommodation. Currently, the housing situation across Greater Manchester was precarious. There was also funding for Our Pass; Leaders had agreed to extend the pilot to support young people coming out of the pandemic. The pilot period would now run until the summer of 2022, which would be followed by an evaluation period.

In terms of public transport and bus reform, it was envisaged that a decision on the future of buses would be made later this year. However, there was uncertainty in the budget and the Committee would consider the implications at a future meeting. At the present time, the consultation was being evaluated.

Regarding the fire budget, the GM Mayor informed Members that the fire service and its sustainability had been under scrutiny for the last two years. The Programme for Change had helped understand the finances of the fire service. There were healthy reserves, therefore there was no need to increase the precept to support ambitions. Following events in late 2019 at the Cube in Bolton, safe levels of fire cover had been reconsidered. The commitment in this budget was to keep levels at 50 pumps with five crew on single pump stations and four on two pump stations; this level could be sustained on the mayoral general budget precept for next year and future years. The Programme for Change savings that had been identified and could be realised in future, but the GM Mayor would prefer not to have to go back to those savings. A new Chief Fire Officer was in post and work would take place with him to support the front line.

The GM Mayor advised that over all the precept was £90.95 for a band D property. There was pressure on Districts and council tax across the borough; there was also pressure to freeze the precept. A vast amount of work had taken place by the GMCA's Treasurer to reduce the burden on Districts and to minimise costs this year.

The GMCA's Treasurer reported that the Police and Crime Panel last week confirmed the proposal to increase the police precept by £10 for a band D property. This was the only precept that was changing for 2021/22.

Members scrutinised the budget reports, which were due for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021. The budget reports were presented by the GMCA's Treasurer. The GM Mayor presented his mayoral budget report.

The budget reports set out the detailed proposals for each budget area including:

- The GM Mayor's final proposal for his general budget, consistent with a precept of £90.95 and the detailed budget and statutory calculations following receipt of final information from Districts.
- Contributions from Districts in relation to the transport levy, waste levy and GMCA costs

The main points referred:

- The Chair enquired about transport and budget risks around Metrolink, subsidised buses and post pandemic patronage. The GM Mayor confirmed that there was risk in-light-of the Government renewing the Metrolink funding deal a few months at a time. Currently, costs would be funded by Government until the end of the financial year, but this remained an on-going concern. About patronage, it was assumed that social distancing on public transport would remain in place for a good part of this year. Thought should also be given to the relaxation of restrictions and how this did not guarantee the return of passengers because people's working patterns had changed with more people working from home. It was envisaged that the return of passenger numbers would be slow. Regarding the bus network, Government was funding the bus operators. They were being asked if they could reduce costs by reducing the network coverage; so far, the loss of services had not been noticeable. Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) had asked operators to consider frequency rather than the loss of routes. Some risks had been absorbed and there was a small amount of funding due to underspends in the concessionary budget that could be potentially helpful, but it was an on-going challenge. The GM Mayor saw this as an opportunity to reform public transport.
- A Member thanked the GM Mayor for his work over the past 12 months under such difficult circumstances specifically in terms of help for the homeless, the extension of Our Pass and the continuation of the bus reform. Youths and children in the Members ward would appreciate the support as they had also suffered during the pandemic. The GM Mayor explained that he was keen for Leaders to agree to extend the Our Pass pilot because this would benefit year 11 pupils now who had been severely disrupted during the pandemic. It was hoped this would allow young people to attend the colleges of their choice. The pass had also been extended to care leavers in Greater Manchester from the age of 21 as they faced numerous pressures and challenges. The ambition around the Greater Manchester network similar to that of the London style transport system remained in place and as part of that there would be a number of capital improvements to the infrastructure in Greater Manchester. The message to Government was that levelling up needed to form part of the recovery.

- Linked to the GM Mayor's point about levelling up, a Member asked about Greater Manchester's position and the clarity of its asks. Reference was made to the £200k to be spent on lobbying around the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The GM Mayor was asked for his view on the receptiveness on Government departments to align with Greater Manchester's policy positions and what else could be done to support some of Greater Manchester's ambitions. The GM Mayor explained that the damage to Greater Manchester's economy through the pandemic had been profound and the furlough scheme could be masking a redundancy situation. Greater Manchester needed to build on the success of the vaccine programme and plan a roadmap out of the pandemic using every part of the capacity in the system to start levelling up and making it real for people; this was the GM Mayor's message to Government. Recovery would require all parts of the UK, national Government, and local Government to work together to face the challenge. The GM Mayor drew attention to the work of the city region to set a course towards 2038 for carbon neutrality. There were detailed plans that underpinned that ambition. To reach that target, retrofitting had to take place in every property in Greater Manchester by 2038 and that could potentially create thousands of quality jobs for young people. Work would need to take place with colleges to support the development of that workforce. All this needed to be joined together and co-ordinated, which could not be carried out by Government and was a perfect opportunity for levelling up. Reference was also made to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, later this year; the GM Mayor suggested that Greater Manchester was well placed to be put in the spotlight by Government at that event and to bring forward the investable opportunities to build a green economy. Discussions were taking place with Government on this basis. In terms of the CSR and lobbying, this work had been put back and a short-term budget was being considered in early March 2021. There had been no news from Government about the funds being unlocked to get recovery moving. Clarity about recovery was crucial.
- In relation to bus franchising, a Member commented that it was sensible to await the outcome of the consultation evaluation and analysis on patronage post pandemic before making any decisions. The GM Mayor was asked to share the latest analysis about what the potential costs could be in the future and what the impacts on the mayoral precept might be. The GM Mayor advised that it was dependent on the Government's decision regarding revenue funding. The GM Mayor was making the argument that the Government should leave in some revenue subsidy in the Greater Manchester public transport system as the way London had benefitted for many years. If there was no support, then there would be an impact on the precept, but this was all dependent on how much the Government supported Greater Manchester. Constructive discussions were taking place and it was hoped Government would be persuaded to put in place support. The Government was talking about recovery partnerships across the country with all the urban and suburban areas, where bus revenue funding was in place. There was also an intention to move all public transport into a reformed place as part of this either as a partnership or a franchising arrangement. Reform to the rail system was starting to happen. There was certainly an intention to reform all public transport coming out of the pandemic. The implications for the mayoral precept would be dictated by the extent to which Greater Manchester could persuade Government to leave funding in. If that was not possible, then there would be implications, but they were manageable.

- In terms of the temporary support mentioned by the GM Mayor especially around transport such as reimbursement for concessionary agreements, a Member asked if the temporary support was no longer available from March 2021, how long would it be before the impact was felt on travel in Greater Manchester. The GM Mayor was asked for the latest information on Government thinking in terms of the Metrolink and bus support beyond March 2021. The GM Mayor agreed that should support not be received then there would be serious implications for public transport. There was a worrying time earlier in the pandemic when funding for the Metrolink took time to come through. The GM Mayor highlighted that Greater Manchester had never been helped, in the way London had been helped. If passenger revenue declined, then there was a problem. Never having investment was an issue for Government and Greater Manchester needed relieving of the borrowing costs. This was a product of how transport outside London was funded. Government had understood this and was working with Greater Manchester but at the present time there was no long-term certainty.
- A Member asked about the long-term sustainability of crewing levels, use of reserves and council tax freezes. The GM Mayor explained that this was an exceptional year in terms of the incomes of residents in Greater Manchester and that council tax was a regressive tax. It was not ideal, but it was borne out of the necessity of the time. That said, increases had been given over recent years. There was a £2m underspend in the budget for 2020/21 so there was some headroom; the proposal was sustainable for now. The Programme for Change had anticipated further cuts from the central Government grant and the need to look at further reductions. Thought would be given to this next year. In-light-of the experience at the Cube in Bolton, the GM Mayor did not want to drop below 50 pumps across Greater Manchester.

The GMCA's Treasurer added, that the fire service was in a strong position because the precept was increased in 2020/21 and reserves remained unused and reserves had not been used to balance the books this year. The budget set for next year also did not draw down reserves. There had been some savings delivered outside of the role of the fire fighter work so that meant the budget set did not require reserves in 2021/22. The fire service would be in a reasonably strong position going into 2022/23. The decision to forego an increase 2021/22, could be dealt with on a recurrent basis. Further thought would be given to these areas moving forward. The big issue for 2022/23 was around funding received annually without any long-term commitment for pension costs, which was about £5m. Funding was available for 2021/22 but it was difficult to plan-ahead. A long-term settlement around pensions was needed.

- A Member enquired about the Greater Manchester Strategy and performance monitoring. The GM Mayor explained that the work of the GMCA had been realigned due to the pandemic and agreed to raise performance monitoring with Officers outside of the meeting and report back to the Committee. Individual schemes could account for all the funding and its achievements.
- A Member drew attention to the GM Mayor's attendance at a full Council meeting in Trafford to discuss policing in-light-of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) being put into special measures and asked that the GM Mayor attend a similar meeting in Stockport. The GM Mayor agreed to the request. In terms of the police precept, it was explained that a decision had been taken to allow increase front line numbers by 325 this year and hopefully this would repair some of the damage to front line

services and address the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMIC) report. Having considered GMP over the last decade, the GM Mayor believed that cuts had damaged the force but so had the forces' implementation of the cuts leading to today's current position. There was an opportunity to hear views from all levels and to open-up a new era for GMP.

- There would be a £10 increase in the police precept and £7.25m would be put into reserves, taking reserves up to £92.6m. A Member suggested it was a vast amount of money to be set aside and potentially not be used. The GM Mayor explained that when the Government announced its funding plan, this was the first year there had been a significant uplift in the Government grant to GMP to pay for extra officers. It was assumed the precept would be £15. However, most but not all authorities had done that. When the public was consulted, there was a strong message about challenge and using resources effectively. Hence, the precept was agreed at £10, which would deliver 325 extra officers this year. Combined with the 670 officers that had come into post since 2017, there would be, by the end of the next financial year 1k officers back from the 2k officers lost in 2010. Regarding the reserves, this was contingency funding for the on-going programmes round the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOP) report and to improve the reporting of crime. The GMCA's Treasurer explained the £7m was a net draw down from reserves in 2021/22. The biggest issue around that was when the settlement came in from last year the Home Office front loaded some of the funding for the infrastructure to support police recruitment, which had been spread over several years. There would also be other one-off costs to support recruitment such as extra computer equipment and cars. The net movement in 2021/22 was a draw down from reserves that was previously set aside for recruitment to the new officer numbers. There were also several other movements from reserves that reflected other factors. There was a Covid reserve that had been put aside to cover potential on-going costs of the pandemic moving forward. It was a net figure that covered movements in and out of reserves.

- A Member raised the issue of anti-social behaviour and engagement with young people. It was suggested that young people were provided with opportunities to deter them from anti-social behaviour and petty crime. The Member asked if there were strategies in place with GMP to work with partners to provide opportunities and could importance be placed on engagement with young people to make streets safer. The GM Mayor said this was about making neighbourhood policing as strong as possible. There was a commitment for a named contactable PC and PCSO in every ward to make the connection between the police and communities stronger. There was also a plan, which had received some criticism, for school-based police officers within the budget. This was not about enforcement in schools but connecting young people and pathways to opportunities. There was Home Office funding to look at serious youth crime and community led pilots were being considered to support young people at risk of being drawn into crime or being a victim of crime. How to empower local community organisations and the voluntary sector was being given serious thought. In terms of opportunities for young people, the GM Mayor raised Our Pass and how this supported young people with the ability to travel to get to the opportunities that they wanted. The GM Mayor informed Members about the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship & Careers Service (GMACS), which was a single portal for all apprenticeships and career opportunities in Greater Manchester, which was now in place. Also picked up was a strong core for mental health support through the pandemic and new digital mental health services for young people were now available and been widely used.

Improved support for young people was a challenging picture. As part of the GMCA's life ready work a survey had been carried out with Year 10 pupils; the results were challenging in terms of young people reporting the loss of hope for the future, the disruption of plans, problems with mental health and wellbeing. An urgent response was needed.

- The Committee thanked the GM Mayor for the hard work and support received from the GMCA's Treasurer and team throughout the year, which was very much appreciated.

CI&R/18/21 GMCA BUDGET OVERVIEW

The report presented an overview of the proposed GMCA budgets for 2021/22. It summarised the position on the mayoral general budget and precept proposals, the GMCA general budget, GMCA transport budgets including transport levy and statutory charge and the GM waste services levy.

The report set out the implications of the proposed budgets and the resultant charges on Districts and the mayoral precept.

RESOLVED/-

Members endorsed the report for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021.

CI&R/19/21 MAYORAL GENERAL BUDGET AND PRECEPT PROPOSALS

The report set out the GM Mayor's proposals for the mayoral general budget (including fire and rescue) and sought approval for the mayoral general precept for 2021/22.

The report recommended the setting of the revenue budget for 2021/22 as required under Section 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (updated in the Localism Act 2011) and the precepts and relevant levels of Council Tax required under sections 40, 42B and 47 of the Act.

RESOLVED/-

Members endorsed the report for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021.

CI&R/20/21 GMCA TRANSPORT REVENUE BUDGET

The report set out the transport related GMCA budget for 2021/22. The proposed transport levy to be approved for 2021/22 was included within the report together with the consequent allocations to Districts.

RESOLVED/-

Members endorsed the report for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021.

CI&R/21/21 GMCA GENERAL REVENUE BUDGET

The report set out the GMCA general budget for 2021/22. The proposed District contributions to be approved for 2021/22 of £8.603m were included within the report together with the consequent allocations to Districts. This was a reduction of £437k on the contribution for 2020/21.

RESOLVED/-

Members endorsed the report for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021.

CI&R/22/21 GM WASTE BUDGET

This report sought Member's comment on the budget and levy for 2021/22 and on the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) for the three-year period to 2024/25. Those plans were delivered by:

1. A total levy requirement for 2021/22 of £162.4m, which represented an average 2.9% decrease over 2020/21.
2. The MTFP then proposed levy charges of £163.1m in 2022/23, £164.8m in 2023/24 and £167.6m in 2024/25.

RESOLVED/-

Members endorsed the report for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021.

CI&R/23/21 GMCA CAPITAL BUDGET

The report presented an update in relation to the GMCA's capital expenditure programme for transport and economic and regeneration functions.

RESOLVED/-

Members endorsed the report for consideration by the GMCA on 12 February 2021.

CI&R/24/21 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The work programme for the 2020/21 Municipal Year was presented to Members for population for future meetings.

At the next meeting the Chair advised that work force issues and working from home during the pandemic and the return to work and to review of the scrutiny process that would potentially take place in the next Municipal Year.

RESOLVED/-

That the work programme be updated following the meeting.

CI&R/25/21

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 16 March 2021 at 4.00 pm via Microsoft Live virtual event.