MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GMCA CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY 19 DECEMBER 6.00PM, CHURCHGATE HOUSE, MANCHESTER

PRESENT

Councillor Nathan Evans  Trafford Council (Chair)
Councillor Tim Pickstone  Bury Council
Councillor Stella Smith  Bury Council
Councillor Luke Raikes  Manchester Council
Councillor Ateeque Ur Rehman  Oldham Council
Councillor Neil Butterworth  Rochdale Council
Councillor Peter Malcolm  Rochdale Council (Substitute)
Councillor David Jolley  Salford City Council
Councillor Yvonne Guariento  Stockport Council
Councillor John McGahan  Stockport Council
Councillor John Bell  Tameside Council
Councillor Leanne Feeley  Tameside Council
Councillor Michael Winstanley  Wigan Council (Substitute)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

OFFICERS

Richard Paver  Treasurer, GMCA
Andrew Lightfoot  Deputy Chief Executive, GMCA
Gwynne Williams  Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA
Emma Stonier  Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA
Dawn Docx  Deputy County Fire Officer, GMFRS
Tony Hunter  Interim Assistant County Fire Officer, GMFRS
Paul Argyle  GMCA
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Zahra Alijah (Manchester City Council), Colin McLaren (Oldham), and Pamela Stewart (Wigan Council).

CI/23/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Councillor Peter Malcolm declared an interest as he is in receipt of a Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) pension.

CI/24/17 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 21 NOVEMBER 2017
The Minutes of the meeting held 21 November 2017 were submitted for consideration.

Resolved/-: That the minutes of the meeting held 21 November 2017 be approved as an accurate record.

CI/25/17 URGENT BUSINESS
There were no Chair’s announcements or urgent business.

CI/26/17 PRESENTATION ON THE BUDGET 2018/19
Consideration was given to a report of Richard Paver, GMCA Treasurer, which provided an update on the forecast outturn position for 2017/18 and the 2018/19 budget process.

Key items highlighted were:

- Government has rejected the representation for recouping the cost of the Mayoral elections and therefore this cost had been paid by Combined Authority;
- In the budget announcement the Secretary of State had not set out any rules or guidelines in relation to the setting of the Mayoral General Precept;
- A £12m Mayoral Capacity Fund had been announced for Combined Authorities in the budget but no announcements had been made regarding how funding would be distributed or what this funding could be used for. Members were informed that a conversation was due to take place imminently with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) regarding this;
- Greater Manchester was unique in that the Mayor has responsibility for both policing and fire services, which no other Combined Authority has;
- The firefighters interim pay award of 1% had now been agreed;
- The Mayor has announced that the Fire Service will be providing overtime for 6 months as an interim measure to redress vacancies. This meant the predicted
underspend outlined in the paper would be reduced. Recruitment to vacancies will also be expedited;

- The savings targets identified in the Integrated Risk Management Plan will not be delivered in the 2018/19 financial year and savings will need to be made in the 2019/20 financial year. This will provide the Fire Service with more time to develop the Integrated Risk Management Plan and provide the Mayor with more information;
- A special meeting of the Combined Authority to agree the overall precepts has been arranged for the 20 February;
- Work was underway by the Combined Authority to ensure that resources were aligned to the recently agreed Greater Manchester Strategy priorities; and
- That the budgetary implications of the recent Local Government Pay Award being replicated in the fire service and TfGM were being reviewed.

Members asked whether any consideration had been given to the presentation of the Budget and precepts to members of the public and whether the figure would be presented as an overall GMCA figure or separated into its various components. Members were informed that the figures would be presented separately, as funding was received from different sources. Conversations were taking place with districts regarding the presentation of the figures, for policing, fire and the Mayoral precept within Council Tax bills and additionally about the inclusion of supplementary information explaining the changes which had taken place in Greater Manchester. Members felt that this was a good opportunity to communicate more widely the existence and role of the Combined Authority.

A Member highlighted the timetable for budget setting and queried whether the Combined Authority budget should be submitted to the district council meetings, prior to Council Leaders voting on this, for democratic reasons.

Members requested more clarity around the Mayoral Budget Precept. It was confirmed that it was not anticipated that DCLG would issue a figure for these but that performance of the Combined Authorities would be monitored by DCLG. It was stressed that the responsibilities and remits of all Combined Authorities differed and that Mayoral powers in Greater Manchester would also be changing over the next couple of years.

A Member asked for more information about the Earnback policy and the uncertainties associated with this. Earnback was part of the original devolution deals, where a funding stream of £30m over 30 years had been agreed. The funding was guaranteed for the first 5 years, after which a review process will take place to establish whether the funding will be released for the following 5 years. This review was due to take place in 2019 and would assess progress against what Greater Manchester had outlined they would achieve. In Greater Manchester Earnback has been used to assist in funding the SEMMMS Highway Scheme and in the extension of the Metrolink to Trafford Park. It was confirmed that Earnback would appear in the Budget but that this funding had largely been committed to funding these long-term projects. Members were also informed that the Combined Authority had agreed to fund concessions for a limited number of women affected by state pension increases (WASPIs) which would be funded by underspend from Earnback.
An update was requested regarding the 2% business rates supplement. Members were informed that the supplement was 2p within the £1 (4%) and if implemented would generate over £40m for Greater Manchester. This had been included in the Local Government Finance Bill which had fallen at the General Election. It was confirmed this was going to be re-introduced as a power made available to the West Midlands Combined Authority; however a referendum was required to enable the use of this power. It was also highlighted that it was for the Mayor and the GMCA to decide whether they wished to take forward a discussion with government about this power in future.

Members asked how the figures outlined in the report related to capital/revenue split. It was noted that this report focused on revenue and that information regarding the capital budget and resources would be included in the Budget Report submitted to the January meeting.

A Member queried why the cost of a Mayoral election on its own was £4m versus a £3m cost when it was held at the same time as a local election. Members were informed that the figures had taken into account advice received from the Electoral Commission and it was highlighted that associated savings from holding these elections on the same day was not significant. The Mayoral election also incurred additional costs such as those arising from the production of the candidate booklets.

Members asked what the retention figures and outcomes for districts had been under the business rates pilot in Greater Manchester. It was confirmed that some of the benefits would accrue at the centre and the rest would be accrued by the districts which had generated growth; in the 2016/17 pilot 5 out of 10 districts had generated growth. The figures produced for a 100% retention of business rates suggested that all districts would be beneficiaries but that not all would benefit equally.

A Member noted interest rates were likely to rise and questioned whether consideration had been given to moving borrowing/debts onto fixed interest rates. Members were informed that 5 year investment rates were estimated at 1.2% which was still relatively low. Additionally the Combined Authorities Treasury Strategy would be submitted to the Audit Committee in January which will set out in detail intended future borrowing plans.

A Member asked what the reasoning behind the Mayor and Deputy Mayor delaying savings made from the GMFRS’s Integrated Risk Management Plan and whether it was intended that these savings would definitely be made in future. It was explained that the decision had been made to defer the savings for a year, whilst the plan from where these would be delivered from was revisited.

Resolved/-

1. To note the AGMA revenue outturn position for 2017/18 which is showing an overspend of £0.2 million;

2. To note the Economic Development and Regeneration revenue outturn position for 2017/18 which is showing an underspend of £0.331 million against budget;

3. To note the transport revenue outturn position for 2017/18 which is in line with budget after transfers to earmarked reserves;
4. To note the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue outturn position for 2017/18 which is showing an underspend of £5.5 million; prior to discussions taken by the Mayor in relation to increased overtime payments to cover for current vacancies;

5. To note the progress on the 2018/19 budget setting process; and

6. That an update regarding the capital budget was included in the Budget Report to the January meeting; and

7. That the Committee received updates regarding the Budget prior to the next meeting as and when these became available.

**CI/27/17 GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (GMFRS) PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND RESPONSE RISKS**

Consideration was given to a report of Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer GMFRS, which provided information regarding the risks facing GMFRS within its prevention and protection services. Prevention was noted as being one of the primary services which the fire service delivers and GMFRS had seen a reduction in dwelling fires by 16% and in overall fires by 21% since 2011/12. The fire service has moved from providing Home Safety Checks to Safe and Well Checks; especially to vulnerable residents. Funding was highlighted as being a potential risk to the maintenance of the prevention agenda in future.

Members noted the success of the fire service in relation to working in partnership and the prevention agenda. The fire services work related to Emergency Medical Response (EMR) was also highlighted and it was asked what the current situation was in relation to this. This had been part of a national pilot and it was confirmed that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) had withdrawn from this. It was highlighted that the Mayor was currently discussing EMR with the FBU and, furthermore, that national negotiations regarding pay needed to be completed before any decision was made.

Members noted that all local authorities in Greater Manchester should have representation from the fire service on their Health and Wellbeing Boards and that in some areas this was not the case. It was confirmed that this would be picked up outside this meeting.

Members expressed support for the fire services success at fire prevention and its work with vulnerable residents.

A Member asked whether alternative funding sources had been considered for prevention and work with vulnerable residents and communities. Members were informed that initial discussions had taken place about the fire service becoming a commissioned service but to date these had not progressed.

A Member queried whether there was any studies/evidence of impact from fire services who had moved from a prevention, protection and response model back to a response only model. GMFRS highlighted that there were more studies that recognised the success
of fire services prevention work in the UK and that globally services in the UK were looked at, as to how they had been successful at this. They were not aware of any fire and rescue service which had gone from response and protection and then returned to a response only service.

Resolved/

1. To note the content of the report; and

2. To raise the matter of Fire Service representation on Health and Wellbeing Boards with districts.

CI/28/17 GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (GMFRS)
ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of Down Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer GMFRS, which provided an update regarding the GMFRS Annual Report for 2016/17. GMFRS has a statutory duty to produce a Corporate Plan (Integrated Risk Management Plan). The current plan runs from 2016-2020. The annual report assessed how GMFRS were performing against the plan; the report highlighted progress against the main aims of prevention, protection, response, public value, financial information and people. Key achievements were outlined in section 4.4 of the report.

Resolved/-

1. To note the content of the Annual Report 2016/17;

CI/29/17 GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE AND RESCURE SERVICE (GMFRS)
GOVERNANCE UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of Liz Treacy, GMCA Monitoring Officer, which provided information to Members regarding the Fire Committee and its relation with the Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was explained that the Corporate Issues and Reform Scrutiny Committee was the body which has a statutory responsibility for scrutinising decisions relating to GMFRS.

Section 4.4 highlighted areas the Committee may wish to scrutinise when holding the Mayor to account in relation to his fire functions. These were financial performance and service performance and it was suggested that the Committee received a quarterly update report related to these areas.

Members noted that it appeared that this Committee had more responsibilities than the Fire Committee and requested that the Terms of Reference for the Fire Committee were circulated to this Committee once available. Members also queried whether the number of times the Fire Committee met a year was adequate for overseeing the running of GMFRS and noted that it would be helpful to have an indication of future plans for the fire service. The fact that these were new governance arrangements to those in place previously was stressed to Members, as was the fact that a similar transition had happened previously in the police force. The Fire Committee’s new role was highlighted as being to support the Mayor in the execution of his functions. It was also confirmed that
the Mayor would be happy to attend meetings of this Committee to ensure that they can exercise their duties and to share his future plans.

Members emphasised the importance of the Mayor attending meetings on at least an annual basis so that the Committee could effectively discharge their duties. It was also requested that the Mayor outlined his strategic plans and ambitions for the fire service, in the wider context of devolution, to the Committee and was held accountable for these also.

Members noted that they felt sections 4.3 and 4.4 provided a good outline of what the Committee should be scrutinising.

GMFRS highlighted to Members that it was also their role to show the Committee what the fire service looked like and to inform them about their work. It was suggested that visits to the fire service were arranged to support this work and GMFRS were asked to circulate potential dates to Members. A Member also suggested that a Committee meeting could be held in the new Bury Training Centre when Fire was on the agenda.

Resolved/-

1. To note the contents of the report;

2. To receive the Terms of Reference for the Fire Committee once available;

3. That the work programmes of this Committee and the Fire Committee were aligned; and

4. That visits to the Fire Service were arranged for Committee Members and potential dates circulated.

CI/30/17 WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Committee received an updated work programme following comments and suggestions made at the last meeting.

At the last meeting it had been agreed that a School Readiness Task and Finish Group would be established. Councillors Alijah, Smith and Guariento have nominated themselves to sit on this group. It was also confirmed that Members from other Scrutiny Committees would sit on this group.

The Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group on Fire. Councillors Bell, John McCann and Peter Malcolm nominated themselves to sit on this group. The Chair requested that an email was circulated to Members by Officers to request further nominations. Members also requested that consideration was given to gender balance on task and finish groups.

Members discussed the work programme for January and it was suggested that Homelessness was considered by the Planning and Housing Committee as this area fell more within their remit. A Member noted that they also felt this Committee should consider Homelessness as it was an area which fell under the wider public service reform agenda.
The Committee agreed that the work programme for January would consider the GMCA Budget as a standalone item. The Chair also agreed to raise the consideration of Homelessness by the Corporate Issues and Reform Committee to a meeting of the Combined Chairs and a decision would be made as to whether it would also be considered by this Committee at a later date.

Members requested that Councillor Angeliki Stogia was invited to the February meeting of the Committee for the GMCA Communications update item. The importance of communications and ensuring the public are aware of the Combined Authority and its work were highlighted by Members.

Members were asked to consider the transition of the Waste Authority to the Combined Authority at the March meeting of the Committee and agreed to this request.

Following the updates received regarding the Committee’s responsibilities for Fire it was agreed that a Fire update would also be added to the work programme for March.

The Chair confirmed that the April work programme would be finalised at a later date.

Resolved/-

1. That the Committee’s Work Programme for the 2017/18 be updated accordingly and considered at the next meeting of the Committee.