

Item 4

**DRAFT GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY
HOUSING, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 10:30AM AT THE GMCA OFFICES**

Present:	Councillor Lisa Smart (Stockport) (in the Chair)
Bolton	Councillor Shamim Abdullah Councillor Andrew Morgan
Bury	Councillor Dorothy Gunther Councillor Catherine Preston
Manchester	Councillor James Wilson
Rochdale	Councillor Linda Robinson Councillor Raymond Dutton (Substitute)
Tameside	Councillor Mike Glover
Trafford Wigan	Councillor Bernard Sharpe (Substitute) Councillor Lynne Holland Councillor Fred Walker (Substitute)
In attendance: GMCA Officers	Julie Connor (Assistant Director, Governance and Scrutiny) Jamie Fallon (Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer) Simon Nokes (Executive Director of Policy and Strategy) Anne Morgan (Assistant Director, Planning and Housing) Mark Atherton (Assistant Director, GM Environment Team) Sarah Mellor (Head of Corporate Services, Waste and Resources Team)

M90/HPE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paula Sadler (Manchester), James Larkin (Oldham), Laura Booth (Stockport), Stuart Dickman (Salford), Graham Whitham (Trafford), and Councillor Michael Winstanley (Wigan).

M91/HPE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that the Waste Strategy item had been deferred due to issues beyond the GMCA's control however, an update would be provided as part of the #PlasticFreeGM.

There was no urgent business.

M92/HPE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of interests raised.

The Chair requested that any outstanding Register of Interest Forms be completed as soon as possible and returned to Jamie Fallon.

M93/HPE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD 16 AUGUST 2018

The minutes of the last meeting dated 16 August 2018 were submitted for approval.

The Chair confirmed that the Committee had received a useful briefing explaining the legal difference between a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and a Joint Development Plan Document (Joint DPD) noting that she had however, requested further context relating to the issues referred to 'which have to be checked, considered and, where necessary, resolved before the document can be converted to a SDS'. Anne Morgan, Assistant Director, Planning and Housing Team advised that clarification had been sought from the GMCA solicitor who had confirmed that the issues related to ongoing discussions with MHCLG regarding further amendments which were required to the Spatial Development Strategy Regulations (SDSR), currently before Parliament, which would ensure that if we were to move to an SDS it can lawfully do everything a Joint DPD can do. It was highlighted that the publication of an SDS is a duty imposed on the Mayor and not discretionary and so once the legal issues were resolved an SDS would be adopted. It was agreed that the Committee would receive an updated briefing and a further update would be provided at the November 2018 meeting.

A Member highlighted that the briefing circulated regarding Recycling Rates in Greater Manchester (GM) omitted the statistics for the Wigan Borough and confirmed that the rate was 54%.

The Chair advised that the Committee had requested that Northern and Network Rail provide figures regarding the amount of reinvestment required in improving services since 21 May 2018 as a result of delays and cancellations. It was reported that although some information had been provided, it was not specifically related to the request and a further request had been made.

The Chair reported that a breakdown of costs involved in repairing/replacing the escalator at Bury Interchange near to the Metrolink had not yet been provided by TfGM but would be circulated once received.

RESOLVED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 August 2018 be approved as a correct record
2. That a further updated briefing note be received and a further GMSF update be submitted to the Committee in November 2018.

M94/HPE #PLASTICFREEGM

Sarah Mellor, Head of Corporate Services, Waste and Resources Team advised the Committee that the Waste Strategy proposals had been deferred due to central Government delaying the publication of their strategy to allow the scenarios to be changed, in addition, the road mapping work commissioned through WRAP was not yet complete. It was estimated that the outline proposals would be submitted to the next meeting with a view to releasing the consultation in the New Year or in March 2019 in line with the next Green Summit.

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview of the #PlasticFreeGM campaign and an update on the progress to date and next steps in relation to seeking to eradicate the use of single use plastics in Greater Manchester (GM). It was highlighted that the Mayor's pledge which was agreed and launched at the Green Summit in March 2018 had generated significant interest within the campaign, so momentous that the focus had been had now been extended to cover seven work streams including Local Authorities (LA's), Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) and Businesses within GM.

In discussion, the main areas covered were:

-) A Member highlighted that in Cumbria they had introduced a plastic-based material made from recycled waste into the standard asphalt used in resurfacing roads and queried whether this was an option being considered. It was advised that many options were being trialed and introduced, however, many initiatives were unable to cope with scale of GM's plastic volumes and Government action was required to reduce the amount of polymers included within plastic which would enable technological solutions to be developed.
-) A Member asked that consideration to be given to extending the Plastic Bag Law beyond the top six supermarkets. The GMCA support the campaign to increase the plastic bag charge with a long term objective of eradicating the use of all types of plastic bags (even bag for life) for an environmentally friendly option such as a 'combustible bag' which the Co-op had introduced across their stores.
-) Following discussion, the Committee agreed that a recommendation be submitted to the Waste Committee requesting that they give consideration to the policy on plastic bag usage.

-) Why were paper bags not being adopted as an alternative to plastic? It was acknowledged that paper was a better alternative but was not sustainable for supermarkets.
-) Clarification was sought as to whether consideration was being given to developing alternatives to plastic food packaging. It was advised that WRAP were leading on the conversations with supermarkets seeking to reduce the polymers within the plastic used. It was recognised that there were huge variances in the types of plastics produced, and too often they are produced, used and discarded without capture of the economic benefits of a 'circular' approach and therefore harms the environment. The GMCA took the debate to the Plastic Federation in Brussels and it was confirmed that action was being taken by both the EU and UK. It was reported that along with constantly lobbying with DEFRA for change it was envisaged that the new directive, the end producer responsive, would examine how charges or changes to the tax system could tackle the problems associated with single use plastics.
-) The Chair requested further information on how the GMCA and Waste Committee were working with Local Authorities, noting that like many other councils, Stockport had passed a motion on the use of single use plastics which included the removal of plastic cup use. It was advised that clearly the public sector needs to demonstrate visible leadership if the campaign was to have any scale and two working groups had been introduced; one involving sustainability officers and the other GM Procurement Officers seeking to identify all of the single use products which are purchased under different contracts with a view to developing a Procurement Plan to procure suitable sustainable alternatives. It was noted that by working on a collective basis cost savings could be made.
-) One Member expressed that there was a misconception concerning plastic and polyethylene's, adding that you cannot chemically do anything with plastic, but polyethylene's can be chemically recycled, producing a product which has scrap value. It was suggested that polyethylene's should be considered as an option.
-) Members queried whether the Waste Strategy would encompass developing investment opportunities to enable UK businesses to develop rapid solutions in this area. The Waste Strategy would clearly outline investment as a priority noting that McDonalds had commissioned a company in Wales to develop their paper straw.
-) Public participation was identified by Members as a key factor to ensure the campaign was successful. It was advised that a Communication's Plan was being developed noting that the team also provide an education service to schools and universities focused on raising awareness of recycling.
-) Members agreed that the Chair of the Waste Committee would be invited to the next meeting along with other Waste colleagues as appropriate.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.

2. That the Waste Committee are recommended to consider the extension of the Plastic Bag Law.
3. That the chair of the Waste Committee be invited to attend the next meeting.

M95/HPE NATURAL CAPITAL AND URBAN PIONEER UPDATE

Mark Atherton, Assistant Director, Environment Team provided a presentation on the work of the GM Natural Capital Group and the Defra Urban Pioneer and (EU Life IP funded) Natural Course Project.

The following areas were highlighted:

-) There is a need to ensure that the natural capital (quality of the environment) is sufficient enough to support greater concentrations of people and businesses and enhance the quality of life for residents. To support this, there are a number of exciting initiatives across GM which are applying a natural capital approach.
-) GM is the UK's Urban Pioneer, one of four pioneer areas in the country, testing new tools and methods for investing in and managing the environment for the UK's 25 Year Environment Plan.
-) A natural capital account has been developed for GM and its ten districts using the Mapping GM GIS system, in order to capture the current baseline of what GM's existing natural environments are doing in terms of the ecosystem services they are providing and how we can maintain and enhance it over time.
-) Over successive years the amount of funding for enhancing the natural environment has decreased so the GMCA and Natural Course have commissioned Eftec (and partners Environmental Finance and Countryside) to develop the first Natural Capital Investment Plan for the city region. The teams are working alongside stakeholders to identify priority areas and a pipeline of investment opportunities that will enhance the value of natural capital assets with a focus on local and national socio-economic priorities.
-) Over the last 12 months, there has been a targeted communications campaign 'connecting people with nature' and a new website has been launched which together the key natural environment stakeholders and their initiatives being delivered across GM. Lancashire Wildlife Trust have also launched their new campaign 'My Wild City' in March 2018, aimed at increasing green spaces and enhancing wildlife across GM.

In discussion, the main areas covered were:

-) The Chair explored whether they were working with other relevant teams within the GMCA. It was confirmed that there was work underway with a number of teams but primarily the Planning Team to ensure that the GMSF has a strong Net Gain commitment that can be delivered on the ground. A Net Gain approach will

provide significant benefits for the people of GM, ensuring new developments are having a positive environmental impact and not resulting in net loss of biodiversity (and the ecosystem services that they provide).

-) Members discussed the pressure on local planning departments to build houses and approve planning applications, noting that this was impacting on the amount of small green space in the middle of housing estates. It was recognised that green spaces in urban settings were becoming further away from where people live due to competing pressures on authorities. There is a need for these to be balanced in some way, however, this was ultimately the responsibility of local authorities to decide how they prioritise their land use.
-) A Member requested that consideration be given to the inappropriate planting of trees and the cost implications for councils; in particularly sycamore trees. It was advised that the GMCA were working with City of Trees who had successfully secured funding from the Forestry Commission, Defra and the GMCA Planning and Housing Team to develop a 'Woodland Plan' noting that the plan would give consideration to appropriate planting. The Natural Capital Investment Plan is trying to resolve these challenges so that we can afford to plant and maintain these structures in the future. It was agreed that once the proposals were developed they would be presented at a future meeting.
-) It was reported that people's front and back gardens were an important contributor to bio diversity and the good environmental health of GM, albeit there is tension in relation to the maintenance of such infrastructure.
-) The Chair requested further information relating to how canals (looked after by Canal and River Trust) feature within the plans. It was confirmed that the Canal and River Trust is engaged as part of the Natural Course Project which aims to deliver integrated water management. The project had focused on the River Irwell initially but then expanded across GM. The award winning 'Revealing River Roch' project was highlighted as an excellent example of how councils are embracing the natural environment with Rochdale now 'facing the river not turning its back on it'. It was also noted that Bolton Council were planning to reopen the river Croal along with developing a number of strategic sites to showcase it.
-) Would the title 'Natural Capital and Urban Pioneer' appeal to the public? It was acknowledged that the environment is an asset and the term Natural Capital was adopted to encourage the public to think about the natural environment in a different way. The heading was also strategic, aimed at attracting investors and reflects the link to the National Natural Capital Committee which is chaired by Peter Howell and reports directly to the Government.

-) Is the Natural Capital Group (NCG) an umbrella group? The NCG is GM's Local Nature Partnership and membership includes representatives from environment organisations, academics and the voluntary sector.
-) In relation to case studies, it was agreed that further information would be provided in relation to the project on Howard Street in Salford where a small trial is taking place on street trees which were being scientifically monitored. The trial had successfully proven that the trees acted as a natural system to clean water and reduce the risk of flooding.
-) A member queried whether there were plans to develop a combined policy to eradicate 'hog weed.' It was reported that hog weed does not affect water quality but was a recognised issue which was the responsibility of Catchment Partnerships. Challenges were highlighted in relation to funding and resources to support eradication.
-) The Committee discussed the critical importance of volunteers given the reduction in funding had removed many roles within the sector such as rangers and park keepers.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That further information relating to case studies be circulated to Committee Members
3. That a further update on the Natural Capital Investment Plan be submitted to the Committee once the proposals were developed.

M96/HPE WORK PROGRAMME

A report was presented that set out the Committee's work programme for Members noting that it had been updated following feedback received at the last meeting. Members were encouraged to suggest items for the committee to consider from February 2019.

Members were asked to contact the Statutory Scrutiny Officer with any suggested items for inclusion in the work programme.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That any further suggestions to the work programme be submitted to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

M88/HPE REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS- 31 JULY -30 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Register of Key Decisions was noted.

RESOLVED:

That the Register of Key Decisions be noted.

M89/HPE DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 11 October 2018 at 10.30 am at GMCA offices.