

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD WEDNESDAY, 26
FEBRUARY 2025 AT THE TOOTAL BUILDINGS - BROADHURST HOUSE, 1ST
FLOOR, 56 OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 6EU**

PRESENT:

Councillor Nadim Muslim	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council
Councillor Imran Rizvi	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor John Leech	Manchester City Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton – Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Ashley Dearnley	Rochdale Council
Councillor Terry Smith	Rochdale Council
Councillor Sameena Zaheer	Rochdale Council
Councillor Rachel Wise	Stockport Council
Councillor David Sweeton	Tameside Council
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Ged Carter	Trafford Council
Councillor Shaun Ennis	Trafford Council
Councillor Mary Callaghan	Wigan Council
Councillor Joanne Marshall	Wigan Council
Councillor Debra Wailes	Wigan Council
Councillor Fred Walker	Wigan Council

ALSO PRESENT:

Andy Burnham	Mayor of Greater Manchester
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Karen Chambers	GMCA
Joe Donohue	GMCA
Melinda Edwards	GMCA
Caroline Simpson	GMCA
James Walker	GMCA
Nicola Ward	GMCA
Steve Wilson	GMCA

O&SC 70/25

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Russell Bernstein (Bury), Councillor Dylan Williams (Rochdale), Councillor Tony Davies (Salford), Councillor Lewis Nelson (Salford) and Councillor Brenda Warrington (Tameside).

Apologies were also received from Mayor Paul Dennett (Portfolio Lead for Housing, Homelessness, and Infrastructure) and Gillian Duckworth, Monitoring Officer, GMCA.

O&SC 71/25

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair reminded members to keep questions to a maximum of 1 or 2 per agenda item, to ensure there was time for everyone to ask a question.

The Chair reminded members that that an Information Briefing on the #BeeWell survey of young people's wellbeing was taking place on Thursday 6 March at 12.30pm.

RESOLVED /-

That the Chair's announcements be noted.

O&SC 72/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rachel Wise declared a personal interest in relation to item 5 on the agenda.

RESOLVED /-

That the above declaration be noted.

O&SC 73/25

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 5 FEBRUARY 2025

RESOLVED /-

That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 February 2025 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

O&SC 74/25

GMCA HOMELESSNESS AND A BED EVERY NIGHT

The GM Mayor introduced the report that provided the Committee with an update on homelessness services and support and the latest figures for rough sleepers in Greater Manchester, noting that that national figures were due to be published the next day.

The GM Mayor referred to the homelessness situation when he first took office in 2017 when rough sleeping figures peaked at 285 which had risen from around 100 in 2010. A Bed Every Night (ABEN) was launched in the winter of 2018 to provide accommodation for every night the temperature was below zero. Members were advised that since 2020 the scheme had provided 550 beds per night, most of which were in single bed accommodation. The GM Mayor advised that the pandemic gave rise to wider problems, including family homelessness, which caused the need for temporary accommodation to rise, with 6,500 children now in temporary accommodation. The GM Mayor stated that GM was still facing a net deficit in the

number of homes available for social rent. Despite efforts, GM continued to lose more homes than was built, which was preventing the social rented stock from expanding.

The GM Mayor advised that in December 2024, the Government announced a £1billion funding package for Local Authorities to tackle and prevent homelessness in 2025/26. This provided stability for one year whilst the government prepared for and implemented a multi-year funding settlement which was set to be announced in the Spring Comprehensive Spending Review. This announcement was broadly very favourable to GM and provided welcome funding certainty to Local Authorities and their providers, which would otherwise facing a funding cliff edge on 31 March 2025.

The GM Mayor advised that GM had received a funding allocation under the (then) Rough Sleeping Initiative since 2019, in addition to Local Authority allocations, that provided for joint activity and system capacity building. That allocation was now the Rough sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPRG) and that funding would be used to fund services that add greatest value to the rough sleeping workforce and in particular means that GM was able to sustain ABEN services with an ambition to increase the offer to 600 beds per night to meet the rising demand. Members were advised that GM had seen two successive years of increasing rough sleeping, representing a return to pre-pandemic levels of street homelessness, but nevertheless 45% lower than at the peak in 2017. A further fall in the number of rough sleepers was anticipated in the latest official figures for 2024.

The GM Mayor stated that the RSPRG funding would also support Housing First services which had so far supported over 400 people experiencing repeat homelessness into accommodation, with tenancy sustainment rates over 70%.

The GM Mayor advised that in 2021 the GM Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder was introduced to provide genuinely upstream homelessness prevention support to young people. The programme identified young people who were at risk, but not in crisis, through engagement with DWP, higher education, local authorities, and other supporting agencies, worked with them to prevent the need for statutory

support. It was reported that to date, the programme had successfully supported over 2,000 young people, with a 70% homelessness prevention rate. In addition, the programme had supported many young people into employment, training and education and improved peoples' financial sustainability and emotional wellbeing.

The GM Mayor acknowledged the contributions of GM's partners, such as the GM NHS, GMP and GM Probation Services and advised that he was confident that GM would continue to enhance the services available in order to support our most vulnerable residents.

Members provided an overview of their experience with ABEN and advised that it was incredibly frustrating to be in a situation where beds were consistently full. There was also a specific shortage of vacancies for women and members asked if the current provisions could be reviewed. It was noted that there were some good initiatives, such as working with Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH), to find short-term accommodation for women who can't find housing, but there was a need for more specialist provision. The GM Mayor stated that addressing family homelessness was a priority and an area that GM needed to try move forward as part of the spending review. It was important for GM to get the right package of support from the Government in relation to potential land that could be used and true devolution of the affordable homes programme to stack up an approach to building more houses under council control that would help reduce the annual £75m bill and achieve significant goals, such as ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. A GM-specific solution was needed, and further discussions and lobbying would be necessary to address the issue of full beds and lack of space for non-priority individuals. The GM Mayor advised that he would update the Committee once the outcome of the spending review was known. The GM Mayor recognised the difficulty relating to finding a places for women. He added that although there were provisions for women only in GM, these needed to be available in each district. Officers added that when looking at the data, less than 10% of people sleeping rough were women but on occasion when the overall number was ever larger than 10% that would be a challenge. Officers commented that women's experiences of rough sleeping were often hidden and not well understood, that lack of knowledge

created a cycle where services were not commissioned due to the lack of understanding, meaning that appropriate services were not provided. However, in the last 18 months, knowledge about women sleeping rough had been more informed due to an annual women's rough sleeping census conducted every September. By taking a census approach rather than a snapshot approach to estimating how many women were sleeping rough and by physically going into the spaces to ask about their experiences it was found that 175 women had slept rough in the previous three months which was much higher than the rough sleeping snapshot single night data over that same period (which was less than 10). Officers added that the data had begun informing changes to service approaches. Consideration was being given to how GM could not only create more women-only and gender appropriate spaces but also review the overall strategy to ensure the needs of the population were being met as effectively as intended. Officers advised that consideration was also being given to what the move-on pathway looked like. There were excellent services for women commissioned by local authorities, such as the Peony Project in Manchester and the ABEN services in Rochdale. In Manchester, a specific rough sleeping implementation programme and the Safe Homes programme were being mobilised. These aimed to create move-on pathways for those transitioning from rough sleeping. GM was slowly and iteratively building up pathways collectively with local authorities, understanding what worked and further embedding that into the programme. Officers added that 2025/2026 presented a significant opportunity to cultivate all the learning developed since 2017. This included looking into the spending review and considering how GM might deliver services and respond as effectively as possible.

Members were encouraged to see a commitment to dual diagnosis support services. It was noted that many people experiencing homelessness have both substance abuse and mental health issues, often compensating for one another. It was increasingly recognised that homeless individuals frequently had some form of brain injury, which affects their behaviour and increases the likelihood of substance abuse problems, therefore preserving dual diagnosis services was crucial. However, it was found that many people who would benefit from community treatment and regular contact with a community psychiatric nurse, rather than hospitalisation, were being

forced to live in shared accommodation, and were often told it's that or nothing. That lack of control could lead to intentional homelessness, and the council may then refuse to help further. While there was a focus on increasing council housing for families, it was acknowledged that there was a real shortage of one-bedroom accommodation for those who needed it. It was stated that some individuals cannot share and need their own space with a lockable front door, along with occasional check-ins to ensure their well-being. Providing this could help them start the process of recovery through initiatives like the Housing First model, which emphasises stable housing as a foundation for well-being. There was a significant need for more of this type of provision. The GM Mayor advised that the learning from the Housing First approach had greatly influenced the reforms highlighted in the paper, particularly in improving specialist services for people with dual diagnoses. It was important to recognise that many individuals might have acquired brain injuries, adverse childhood experiences, or post-traumatic stress disorder built up over many years. This points to the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses a range of needs. As mentioned, some people require their own lockable space, which was absolutely necessary. However, others might need a sense of community around them. Therefore, a mix of provisions was essential, and that's what GM were aiming to achieve, though there was still much work to be done. A new scheme in Manchester City Centre, the Embassy Scheme, focused on individual living spaces within a community setting, which was quite innovative. Ensuring a variety of provisions would help people find the most sustainable option for their needs. Officers advised that within the dual diagnosis service offer there was a specific neuropsychologist that worked with people who experienced neurological issues and acquired brain injuries, although it was a small resource it was already proving beneficial.

Members asked if there was any data for individuals accessing dual diagnosis support. The GM Mayor stated that this programme was currently available in Bolton, Bury, Stockport and Trafford. Officers advised that the programme was a currently a small resource which demanded a level of triage in order to identify people with issues that required specialist support from psychologists, and in some cases a specialist psychologist. It was noted that there was a balance to strike the between

providing specialist services for people in need and ensuring that people were able to navigate the wider mental health service which was increasingly stretched and challenged. Officers advised that they provide members with data regarding people supported through the dual diagnosis programme.

Members asked if more of the funding for ABEN could be spent on prevention. The GM Mayor stated that ABEN was a form of prevention. He stated that a better night was a consistent night, which would explain some of the challenges in finding vacancies and added that the scheme allowed people to stay in their current position because it fostered recovery. This was a key learning from the Housing First approach, when people had a stable place to stay every night with their basic needs met, they began to recover. He added that if GM could achieve a net surplus position in social rented housing in the city region, it would provide more options for people to move forward from the various provisions. This would allow GM to use the budget built up over the years more preventatively.

Members asked what was in place for refugees and prison leavers to help them find accommodation. The GM Mayor advised that he had asked the Group Chief Executive to consider how the Live Well initiative could provide housing support workers for all people seeking council support and also those in private rented accommodation who were struggling. He added that housing issues manifested in various ways and presented different challenges. He stated that he believed GM could and should apply Housing First approaches to start thinking about what true prevention looked like. That approach might look different in a context of a net surplus of social homes compared to the current situation of a net deficit.

Members raised concerns in relation to support for refugees and asked if the refugee homelessness prevention programme provided realistic housing advice to individuals. Additionally, the number of people with irregular immigration status was expected to rise as the Home Office accelerates decisions on lower-priority cases. This raised concerns about the impact on people living in the city without a stable starting point for their lives. The GM Mayor advised that support for refugees did depend on an individual's status, the abrupt termination of support under the

previous asylum system had left people unable to make transitional arrangements. Initially, there was a 28-day termination period, which was later extended to 56 days. The extension provided more time to manage the transition into private rented sector accommodation. However, for people without status, the situation remained significantly more challenging. The GM Mayor's Charity does support people in this situation supported by other charities. The GM Mayor added that more people come to the city looking for help and if every city region in the UK provided the level of support that GM did, the situation would have been much more manageable.

Members provided an example of a young person who had tried to get help via the local authority Out of Hours Service who had not been successful until the elected member intervened. Members asked the GM Mayor how satisfied he was that the right advice was being given to vulnerable young people and whether there was any due diligence in place to check advice being given out was up to standard and whether a crib sheet for staff would be beneficial. The GM Mayor stated that the level of advice that young person had received was clearly unacceptable. Officers advised that during the early stages of ABEN, GM saw an increase in young people coming to the service for support. Therefore, the GM Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder was created. The pathfinder operated from 2021 as an experimental programme designed to provide genuinely upstream homelessness prevention support to young people before they met the statutory threshold for support under the Homelessness Reduction Act. In practice, this meant identifying young people who were at risk, but not in crisis, through engagement with DWP, higher education, Local Authorities, and other supporting agencies and working with them to prevent the need for statutory support. The pathfinder had supported 2000 young people on the past three years. The GM Mayor advised the member that the team would look into the circumstances of their experience and asked officers to examine the concept of a crib sheet for local authority colleagues.

Members asked if the Combined Authority discussed with the Government how legislative changes impacted the provision of services, for instance, how did changes in funding for mental health support or addiction services affect GM's ability to provide those services. The GM Mayor confirmed that he did speak with Ministers

regularly about how policy decisions in one department can cause real issues in another, leading to unintended consequences. He advised that the current model was stretched and not truly meeting needs.

Members raised concerns that the services provided were at the back end of prevention and there was a danger that other people in housing need were being impacted and therefore they remained homeless. The GM Mayor advised that there was a need to build more move-on accommodation, particularly single-room or one-bedroom units, to help people progress from temporary accommodation to the next stage of their recovery journey. This would allow them to access local housing allowances. The lack of such accommodation had led to many of the wider issues GM was facing.

Members noted that some individuals do choose to refuse support and asked if there was any data available on this. The GM Mayor acknowledged that there were a small number of people who had not been able to sustain tenancies, for a number of reasons, such as people who have been sleeping outside for a long time or have a distrust of institutions. It might be that the support offered at the time did not suit them. GM did have more varied provisions available now and therefore that support available now might be more suitable and GM should continue to engage with those people.

Members were concerned by the tents that had been in St Peters Square for some time and asked if support had been offered. The GM Mayor advised that support had been offered but added that it was a challenging situation, which had to be balanced with public safety in mind.

Members asked what support was in place for volunteer groups, such as soup kitchens, which provide support for rough sleepers. The GM Mayor highlighted the importance of GM's extensive network of volunteer groups, which were crucial to the GM support system. Consideration was needed to how GM could better support these groups to ensure their sustainability, allowing GM to continue benefiting from their invaluable contributions.

Members asked what more could be done to increase one bedroom accommodation, particularly for older people. The GM Mayor advised that more work was needed to ensure that older people were downsized into more appropriately sized and affordable homes.

Members asked whether the GM Mayor was confident that people would get the support they need to help them into employment and training. The GM Mayor stated that the idea behind the Live Well initiative was to ensure that people get the help they need by integrating various support services such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and primary care services to help move people towards employment. Additionally, he had asked the Group Chief Executive to explore how housing support could be included in this service. He advised that for the majority of people that struggled to maintain employment, housing issues were a significant factor. Addressing these issues was crucial to helping them succeed.

Members advised the GM Mayor of a situation in Oldham, where people were sleeping in tents in the centre, it was believed that those people had been offered accommodation but had refused. It was noted that this was occurring in other districts. The GM Mayor was asked what should happen if an individual refused what was offered to them in the hope of getting something better. The GM Mayor acknowledged that the situation mentioned in Oldham was indeed replicated across the region. It was important to note that the tents in the city centre previously discussed were partly a form of protest, and the individuals involved had been offered accommodation. There was a specific reason behind that protest, but it was hoped that if people were offered accommodation, they would accept it. He added that whilst temporary encampments might be tolerated for a short period, they were not acceptable on an ongoing basis due to public safety concerns. Therefore, GM's approach would continue to be to offer people help and alternative accommodation.

Members commented that the lack of one, two, and three-bedroom houses was not solely due to large corporations land banking and noted that local authorities could do more to bring forward more sites. It was noted that on occasion local authorities were not processing asset disposal panels quickly enough to transfer properties to

registered providers (RPs) for development. Members stated that it was important to ensure that RPs had the sites they needed to offer all the specialist provisions. It was noted that Homes England would be releasing the allocated funds in April, and they would be looking for ready-to-go schemes with available sites. The GM Mayor agreed and advised that a GM Land Commission had been established to challenge other Whitehall departments to give up their land and local authorities needed to be encouraged to make council land available, as it had been done in Stockport and Salford. The GM Mayor added that he would be asking large scale public organisations, such as NHS and the prison service for land as part of the spending review. He added that he had begun to refer to council homes, he stated that the phrase implied control which was needed to reduce the £75m and added that if GM built more social homes and disapplied the right to buy which was something GM had encouraged the Government to agree to, there was a need for more control over those locations to address family homelessness and reduce the associated costs.

Members stated that not all individuals who appeared as homeless were not homeless but chose that lifestyle and discussed the public perception of that. The GM Mayor agreed that this concerning and advised that this was starting to be addressed by GMP's street engagement activity.

Members advised that they would be keen to learn how employment, mental health and addiction recovery support could be expanded. Members also commented that assistance to claim welfare benefits was important and should be included in that support. Officers advised that this speaks to the Live Well offer which was to look at what a person needed at that time. Public services often categorised needs into specific boxes, but housing insecurity had required the needs of each individual to be considered at that moment in time in order to for their housing issues to be resolved. Officers provided an example from the pathfinder programme which illustrated besides providing support, the programme also offered personalised assistance, whether it was securing a flat or providing financial help. This was a young man who was sofa surfing and staying with friends. He was a qualified barber but needed £50 to rent a chair. Providing that £50 helped him secure employment within weeks, giving him a stable income. Members added that there was a similar scheme in

place, the Manchester Rising Stars Fund, which provided support to young people in Manchester.

Members asked what could be put in place to regulate the amount of rent charged by private landlords and what could be done to ensure that developers retain properties on new developments for social rent. The GM Mayor advised that it would be beneficial to explore the conditionality of the Good Landlord Charter, which was due to go live in May, to be more active in calling out landlords that were not treating people ethically or maintaining their properties. Although the Charter would need time to embed and the issue was complex, it was hoped that with the support of Members and the local authorities, it would be possible to identify those landlords, and those issues could start to be addressed.

Members stated that Move On accommodation was very important and advised that Trafford Council were due to complete Move On Accommodation scheme in Flixton in the next ten weeks. Members invited the GM Mayor and officers to visit the scheme. The GM Mayor advised that it would be beneficial to share what Trafford Council had done with other authorities to see if this could be replicated.

Members provided an overview of the fantastic work The Brick were doing for Wigan communities and sought assistance for the Queens Hall, which was in need of new accommodation. Officers advised that they would assist Members to consider alternative locations.

Members asked what support was in place for people experiencing homelessness during the daytime, especially those who are disabled or older. The GM Mayor advised that this was an important point to raise. He advised that although there was a number of daytime provisions in central Manchester, it was less available in the districts. He advised that the Live Well approach would be able to identify these gaps in provision.

Members asked whether brownfield sites could be allocated to developers with conditions attached to provide move on accommodation. The Group Chief Executive

advised that this was a complex issue which depended on the supply of housing and the numbers that could be built within the timeframes set and added that GM needed to ensure that every bit public land was being used effectively. Tightening up the planning framework would enable GM to hold developers accountable more effectively and it was noted that there was a national review of planning framework underway. It was stated that viability continued to be an issue, even in city centre locations, there were still challenges in providing truly affordable housing and that the issue ties back to the provision of affordable housing, which often did not align with local housing allowances. GMCA were actively engaging in conversations with the Government across multiple departments and the key issue of viability was central to those discussions, which involves determining the necessary levels of grants, particularly in the short term, to transition GM's housing market whilst also discussing increasing brownfield grant funding to address the viability gap. The GM Mayor added that these were important conversations and added that GM needed to set a date for net surplus coming out of the spending review in order to prevent being in the same position next year. Getting to net surplus would be challenging but was necessary. The GM Mayor advised that he would provide the Committee with an update at a future meeting. The GM Mayor added that the Embassy Move On scheme was part funded with GMCA brownfield funding and advised members to take a look at this as an example of what could be achieved.

Members asked how ABEN supported transwomen and whether there was a specific scheme in place. The GM Mayor advised that there was a specific gender informed ABEN provision in Audenshaw which was commissioned for the LGBTQ+ community.

Members praised the GM Mayor and officers for the difference their work had made in GM. The GM Mayor thanked Members for their comments and reflected that the success was also owed to their predecessors and colleagues in local authorities. It was noted that thousands of people had been supported through this initiative, many of whom found themselves in significantly better situations than when they first sought help. He added that GM goes above and beyond its statutory duty, reflecting

the city's commitment to its residents. He acknowledged the gaps that had been identified and assured the committee of his commitment to respond to them.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the comments of the GM Overview and Scrutiny Committee on homelessness and the A Bed Every Night scheme be received and noted.
2. That an update would be brought to a future Committee meeting regarding the outcome of the spending review in relation to funding for homelessness support.
3. That officers would investigate the circumstances surrounding the example of sourcing support for a young person given by a Trafford member.
4. That officers would consider creating a crib sheet for homelessness support workers to use when providing advice and assistance.
5. That officers provide members with data regarding people supported through the dual diagnosis programme.
6. That Members invited the GM Mayor and officers to visit the Flixton Move On Accommodation scheme and that information regarding the scheme be shared with other authorities to see if this could be replicated in other areas.
7. That officers would assist Members to provide support in relation to Queens Hall.
8. That a target date for net surplus homes position in GM be set and an update on this be provided at a future Committee meeting.

The GM Mayor introduced the report which provided the Committee with a summary of the process for the appointment of Mayoral Advisors.

The GM Mayor advised that Mayoral Advisors were appointed to bring specific expertise and value that might not pre-exist within the GM system. They had played, and continue to play, a pivotal role in advancing the work on priority agendas.

The GM Mayor advised that Chris Boardman was first appointed as Cycling and Walking Commissioner in 2017 and he was key in developing the original vision for the Bee Network. He added that there were currently two Mayoral Advisors, Vernon Everitt, the Transport Commissioner and Dame Sarah Storey, the Active Travel Commissioner. Both were initially appointed in March 2022. In July 2024, the contracts for both were further extended until 30th April 2028, in line with the end of the current Mayoral term.

The GM Mayor advised that the Active Travel Commissioner's role followed on from Chris Boardman's work; working with communities to build their aspirations; working with partners to build public support for active travel, with a focus on schools and school streets and there were plentiful examples of the work that she had done.

The GM Mayor advised that Transport Commissioner's role was to have oversight of the whole travel system. Bringing in his knowledge from Transport for London (TfL). The GM Mayor advised that when he recruited Transport Commissioner, he had just made the decision regarding deregulation of buses and was focused on a London style transport system for GM and that needed TfL experience which was not available in GM.

The GM Mayor advised that remuneration for the Transport Commissioner and the Active Travel Commissioner could be found in the report.

The GM Mayor advised the Committee that the Nighttime Economy Advisor, Sacha Lord, had tendered his resignation in January after seven years. The GM Mayor advised that the Nighttime Economy Advisor took no remuneration from the GMCA. He stated that even though the role was not paid, it was still subject to GMCA policies and procedures as stated in the report. During those seven years the Nighttime Economy Advisor had made a huge contribution to a sector which previously had no voice in GM. His work was very effective during the pandemic, he was, and still is, a voice for the local and national nighttime economy.

The GM Mayor stated that Members would be aware of the situation regarding a grant given by the Arts Council to Primary Event Solutions (which Mr Lord was a Director of) during the pandemic and advised that their investigation on the use of that grant did not find that any misuse of public funds, but that the issue was discrepancies in the application for the for the grant. He stated that the arrangement was between Primary Events Solutions and the Arts Council and that the GMCA had not been party to this grant decision.

Members asked how the role of the Transport Commissioner might change now that the Bee Network had been delivered and asked if he would attend a future meeting to discuss his role. The GM Mayor advised that the future of advisor roles needed to be kept fluid, as they were brought in for expertise, so this would be reviewed from time to time. The GM Mayor stated that the Bee Network was very much still in development, with the next stage being the integration of rail. He added that he expected the Transport Commissioner to play a prominent role in negotiating the integration of rail into the Bee Network which was expected to be completed by 2028. The GM Mayor advised that any Mayoral Advisor would attend a future meeting to discuss their role if invited to do so by the Committee.

Members asked if the Active Travel Commissioner's role was to advise on the design of schemes. The GM Mayor advised that the Walking and Cycling Commissioner was very much involved in the development of a design guide for walking and cycling schemes for the ten districts to continue using. The Active Travel Commissioner would become involved if there were complaints from communities about a particular

design and would mediate. He advised that at times the role did require a considerable degree of involvement in relation to school streets as there might be residents requiring reassurance about access during school times.

Members stated that all advisor roles should be remunerated and if not taken, payment should be given to charity. The GM Mayor advised that this was a reasonable point and stated that a degree of standardisation was not something he would resist. He advised that when he was elected, he wanted to make an impact on active travel, supporting the night-time economy, and addressing homelessness. Whilst he did take a different approach with homelessness, GM has the Homelessness Action Network, Reverend Ian Rutherford was never a mayoral adviser, but he provided significant capacity to help convene efforts. Depending on the issue, GM had developed various arrangements to bring in the necessary expertise and capacity. The GM Mayor stated that he was open to accepting more structure as a sensible direction based on these experiences. The GM Mayor stated that the White Paper on English Devolution acknowledges that and sets out how the roles could be formalised. The decision to appoint a new Nighttime Economy Advisor is one that would be taken to the Resources Committee.

Members asked what governance was in place in relation to the Nighttime Economy Advisor regarding the use of grant funding and was it possible to share the details of the investigation with the Committee. The GM Mayor advised that he was open to taking recommendations from the Committee to see how the governance could be strengthened. He suggested that any future advisor roles would be discussed by the Resources Committee. The GM Mayor advised that the GMCA were not party to the process for grants being awarded by the Arts Council and in fact the GMCA was still not party to that material. He advised that the GMCA fact finding exercise examined the extent of its involvement in that matter. It also looked at the provisions made during the pandemic and the resulting outcomes, many aspects were confidential and protected under GDPR. Unfortunately, this meant they could not be included in this report. The GMCA has published the results of that fact finding exercise and the link to this would be shared with the Committee after the meeting.

Members asked whether there was a protocol for suspending advisors. The GM Mayor advised that suspending without prejudice was within his capacity as Mayor. In this instance he advised that he did not have any information to support a suspension. He advised that he was in favour of a more regulated set of arrangements be put in place going forward.

Members updated the GM Mayor on the work that the Task and Finish Group was involved in (safety of women and girls on public transport) and enquired as to whether consideration could be given to a Commissioner to provide a gender based lens, looking at different approaches to the design and commissioning of systems within GM. The GM Mayor encouraged the Committee to consider the established Equality Panels which brings external expertise and challenge into GM's work and further emphasised that was incredibly important for all GM residents to see their voice represented.

Members stated that the work of the Active Travel Commissioner was essential to help people make the shift onto public transport, walking and cycling. The GM Mayor thanked Members for their support. He updated the Committee on Vision Zero, which was a campaign to have zero fatalities linked to the transport network and there had been some very positive results following the work completed in the districts on segregated space for cyclists, more attention to road layout and low traffic neighbourhoods. Those schemes were often controversial and required compromise. He advised that the Active Travel Commissioner recently attended a meeting with himself and the food delivery companies to discuss an in-principle agreement for a new charter around food deliveries in GM, particularly deliveries made by active travel, which was expected to be published next month.

Members asked if the GM Mayor was confident that the GMCA had the right structure in place for their fact finding exercise and suggested that the direction and focus seemed to change. The Group Chief Executive advised that all Mayoral Advisors were required to follow the core policy and procedures as mentioned in the report and advised that the fact-finding exercise completed by the GMCA was done in accordance with those policies and procedures and was not aware of any change

of scope. The GM Mayor reiterated that the GMCA were not party to the information of the Arts Council investigation and the GMCA fact finding exercise was completed independently without his involvement. He advised the Committee that he would ask those involved to write to the Chair of the Committee to provide further information.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the link to the results of the GMCA fact finding investigation be shared with the Committee.
2. That those involved in the GMCA fact finding exercise would write to the Chair of the Committee to provide further information.

O&SC 76/25

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME &
FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

RESOLVED /-

1. That the proposed Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for February 2025 to April 2025 be noted.
2. That Members use the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify any potential areas for further scrutiny.

O&SC 77/25

FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

That the following dates for the rest of the municipal year be noted:

- 26 March 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 9 April 2025 – 1pm to 3.30pm
- 25 June 2025 - 1pm to 3.30pm