

**Minutes of the meeting of the Bee Network Committee
held on Thursday, 26th June, 2025 at GMCA Offices, Tootal Buildings, 56 Oxford
Street, Manchester M1 6EU**

PRESENT:

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien (in the Chair)	GMCA
Councillor Hamid Khurram	Bolton Council
Councillor Toby Hewitt	Bolton Council
Councillor Alan Quinn	Bury Council
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester
Councillor Joshua Charters	Oldham
Councillor Phil Burke	Rochdale
Councillor Mike McCusker	Salford
Councillor Grace Baynham	Stockport
Councillor Jacqueline Owen	Tameside
Councillor Aidan Williams	Trafford
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Dame Sarah Storey	GM Active Travel Commissioner
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Barnes	TfGM
Gillian Duckworth	GMCA
Nick Fairclough	TfGM
Martin Lax	TfGM
Peter Boulton	TfGM
Alison Chew	TfGM
Stephen Rhodes	TfGM
Lee Teasdale	TfGM
Steve Warrener	TfGM
Fran Wilkinson	TfGM

BNC/33/25 Membership for the 2025/26 Municipal Year

1. That members noted the following local authority appointments for the municipal year 2025/26:

District	Member	Substitute
Bolton	Hamid Khurram (Lab)	Sean Fielding (Lab)
Bury	Alan Quinn (Lab)	Gareth Staples-Jones (Lab)
Manchester	Tracey Rawlins (Lab)	TBC
Oldham	Josh Charters (Lab)	Chris Goodwin (Lab)
Rochdale	Phil Burke (Lab)	Aasim Rashid (Lab)
Salford	Paul Dennett (Lab)	Mike McCusker (Lab)
Stockport	Grace Baynham (Lib Dem)	Michaela Meikle (Lib Dem)
Tameside	Stephen Homer (Lab)	Jacqueline Owen (Lab)
Trafford	Aidan Williams (Lab)	Stephen Adshead (Lab)
Wigan	Paul Prescott (Lab)	John Vickers (Lab)

2. That members noted that the Mayoral Appointments for 2025/26 will be confirmed at the July meeting of the Committee which will be the AGM.
3. That thanks be expressed to Councillor Toby Hewitt and Councillor David Meller for their terms as Mayoral Appointments to the Panel.

BNC/34/25 Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were received and noted from Mayor Andy Burnham, City Mayor Paul Dennett, Councillor Howard Sykes, Councillor Stephen Homer, Vernon Everitt & Caroline Simpson.

BNC/35/25 Declarations of Interest

1. That Councillor Phil Burke declared a standing interest as an employee of Keolis Amey Metrolink Ltd.

2. That Councillor Tracey Rawlins and Councillor Phil Burke declared their board membership of GMATL.

BNC/36/25 Chair's Announcements and Urgent Business

The Chair expressed the Committee's congratulations to the staff and leadership at TfGM following the Bee Network winning the award for the most improved large employer at the recent Good Employment Awards. This reflected well upon the organisation considering the significant levels of additional pressure placed upon them with bus franchising.

Steve Warrener, Managing Director TfGM, was invited to provide the latest update on employee relations. Pay conditions continued to be negotiated through the Passenger Transport Forum, made up of Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and West Midlands combined authorities. In March 2025 the staff side of the forum submitted a pay claim for 2025/26 which consisted of a number of elements such as a single year pay deal, a raise of 5% + RPI (currently at 3.6%) for all staff, and the introduction of a four-day week with a proportionate reduction in working hours without any loss of pay. The employer side has offered an increase of 3.2% in terms of the pay deal, mirroring the offer made by the Local Government Association to the National Joint Council staff side. There had also been an agreement to look at allowances locally and to consider introducing an electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme. The unions had now begun a consultative process on the 3.2% offer. It was understood that the unions were recommending to members that they reject the current offer.

Members enquired about resilience work taking place such as risk analysis should strike action commence later in the year. It was advised that considerable work had been undertaken in the previous year in anticipation of any days of industrial action – this work was being frequently reviewed, and more detail could be brought to the Committee at the appropriate time.

Members enquired as to why new bus drivers had to be employed for 12 months before moving onto the full rate of pay. It was advised that the Mayor had established a Transport Workforce Engagement Board, and that one of the considerations arising

from the Board was to look at recruitment and retention of new bus drivers and this issue would form part of the discussions. The Committee would be informed of any resolution in this matter.

Steve Warrener provided an update on the Government Spending Review that had recently taken place. In the week prior to the Spending Review, the Chancellor had made the city region funding announcement which included £2.5bn for Greater Manchester, more than any other Mayoral Combined Authority. That funding would run from March 2027 to March 2032. Helpfully the funding would allow for a degree of flexibility never previously available. The Spending Review had also seen the announcement of an extension of the national £3 bus fare cap which had been due to end in December 2025 but would now continue until at least March 2027. On rail, references were made to national powerhouse rail and that further information would be made available in the coming weeks.

The Chair expressed congratulations to TfGM for the very strong case that they had made to secure the £2.5bn in city region transport funding.

Members enquired as to when a decision was due to be taken on the local maintaining of the £2 fare cap, and the potential financial implications of the decision if taken. It was advised that a proposal around the £2 cap was expected to be made later in the summer. More understanding would be required on the detail around the announcements on the bus revenue settlement and the BSIP funding before any decisions could be made. Members would be kept fully informed of this review.

Members enquired about review work for further expansion of the Metrolink Network now that the government had indicated support for the Stockport expansion. It was advised that various options were being considered via the Rapid Transport Strategy on which the Committee would be kept regularly updated.

RESOLVED/-

1. That TfGM be congratulated on their recent good employment award.
2. That the update on the current position of TfGM pay discussions be received

3. That an update on contingency planning for any strike action will be made available as and when appropriate.
4. That any outcome on discussions with operators to improve the recruitment and retention of new bus drives will be made available to the Committee
5. That the update on the recent government spending review be received
6. That Transport for Greater Manchester be congratulated for their strong business case to secure £2.5bn of funding from the government.
7. That an update on the next stage of the Rapid Transport Strategy will be brought to the Committee when available.

BNC/37/25 Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th May 2025

RESOLVED/-

1. That the minutes of the meeting of 29 May 2025 be agreed as a true and correct record.

BNC/38/25 Network Development Principles and Connectivity Assessment

Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus and Alison Chew, Deputy Director of Bus TfGM, presented a report that provided an update on the approach to developing Greater Manchester's bus network, with the adoption of a set of Network Development principles, as well as the findings of a recently completed Connectivity Assessment.

Some of the good work that franchising had now enabled was highlighted – this included making changes to around 75 routes to date and increasing the frequency of a number of services. Whilst the forthcoming network reviews would be important, TfGM was doing what it could within the legal framework to make day to day changes to services in a way that could not have been done prior to franchising.

Comments and Questions

Members noted that Stockport was currently the lowest ranked area for meeting the bus strategy target, and despite this no areas in Stockport had been earmarked for

urgent review – could this be explained? It was advised that initial prioritisation had been through areas of highest population density aligned with demographic data. Within this prioritisation criteria no areas within Stockport were highlighted as most requiring of an urgent review. Officers stated that they would of course be happy to discuss any areas in Stockport that it was felt could meet this criteria.

Members noted that for some districts network reviews would not be taking place until 2027 and expressed concern about this and sought clarification on when the full network reviews for tranche one areas would be going to consultation. It was advised that the specific timelines were now being put in place, with the tranche one review process expected to commence in autumn 2025. Members highlighted the need for good communications to members on the review timelines.

Members expressed the importance of ensuring that rural and relatively low-density areas of the region were not considered secondary in the review work taking place.

Members sought to understand the layers of connectivity in region – expressing the importance of the connectivity assessment in terms of what residents were being connected to, such as the health estate and leisure opportunities. Officers advised that ensuring connectivity with key sites was an overriding ambition for the Bee Network, and there was an ambition for a full thematic review focussed upon health sites connectivity.

In proceeding to the recommendations, Councillor Grace Baynham and Councillor Phil Burke asked that it be recorded that they felt they could not endorse the recommendations at the current time due to concerns about services in Stockport and Rochdale. The recommendations were carried by a majority of Committee Members, but it was agreed that an additional recommendation would be made for a further report to be submitted, which would highlight what could be done to address connectivity issues elsewhere than specifically highlighted within the report.

RESOLVED/-

1. That endorsement be given to the proposed Network Development Principles to underpin the future growth of the bus network, to ensure a consistent approach to delivering an accessible, effective and sustainable network.
2. That endorsement be given to the baseline criteria on performance, access and frequency set out in section 3 which will inform how we prioritise changes made to the network.
3. That endorsement be given to the findings of the Connectivity Assessment to measure access to and through the Greater Manchester network and identify where there are currently gaps which should be prioritised for action.
4. That it be noted that a further report will be submitted to this committee in the summer with details of upcoming network improvements.
5. That it be noted that a further report will be submitted highlighting what can be done to address connectivity issues elsewhere than specifically highlighted within the report.

BNC/39/25 Neighbourhood Transport Review

Stephen Rhodes, Director of Bus, TfGM outlined the work to be undertaken to align transport provision with the public service reform and Live Well agendas; and to seek efficiencies across Demand Responsive Transport services that share a common objective - to be known as Bee Network Neighbourhood Transport.

The services referenced in the report were vital services providing crucial support links for residents to get around who might be otherwise unable to access the transport system. Until now these services had not been formally incorporated into the Bee Network despite the recognition of their importance. This report was not simply just to incorporate these services but also to undertake a full formal review that viewed them within the context of GM's Live Well agenda, and addressing any issues within their current working models. The work would be brought back to the Committee following the completion of the first phase of the review process.

Reference was also made to the Schools Transport Review and SEND travel arrangements. All districts were currently facing quite acute issues with SEND travel

and the needs and expectations around these. These were complex interrelated and sensitive issues and officers were approaching these reviews with completely open minds as to the best future approach.

Comments and Questions

Members referenced how imperative this review was to ensure that the region stuck to its commitment to be the most inclusive and accessible network possible.

Members highlighted the importance of the review considering all journeys within their real-world context and not just in the hypothetical 'as the crow flies' sense of the distance undertaken.

RESOLVED/-

1. That endorsement be given to the Strategic Review to be undertaken to review the long-term operating model for Demand Responsive Transport in Greater Manchester.
2. That it be noted how the proposals align with work being undertaken on SEND transport provision with local authorities and the School Travel Strategy.

BNC/40/25 Delivering Better Bus Services

Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, & Nick Fairclough, Acting Head of Police, Insight & Public Affairs, TfGM, presented a summary of what Greater Manchester set out to achieve for its bus services through the process of bus reform, activities delivered so far in relation to bus franchising and related bus investments, achievements to date, and some of the ambitions for the future.

Comments and Questions

Members asked if breakdowns of patronage by district were available. It was advised that it would be difficult to disaggregate the numbers at the district level, but tranche

level breakdowns were available. Officers would speak directly to Councillor Burke regarding any routes that he had a particular interest in.

Members noted that £6m of 'efficiencies' were being found and asked for clarity as to what these entailed. It was expected that a considerable amount of the efficiencies resulted from the shift towards electric buses and the assumed savings through lower fuel costs, but this would be double checked for members.

Members stated that there were a number of myths currently around newer buses being brought into the Bee Network. Namely that the buses broke down frequently, that electric buses took a considerable amount of time out of service being charged, and that buses were not being cleaned adequately. It was advised that electric and newer buses were more reliable than the old fleet, and the new fleet continued to be rolled out. In terms of cleanliness, it was recognised that this could be variable, due to the varying quality of the bus washing equipment inherited in each depot, however a replacement progress was being undertaken to bring them all up to date. Charging was monitored in real time by the operators, and more equipment was being installed for charging to meet the increasing demands for these, with a broad principle to charge overnight when out of service.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the contents of the report and the publication of the attached report be noted.
2. That officers will provide clarity on the £6m efficiencies highlighted within the report.

BNC/41/25 Vision Zero Strategy

Peter Boulton, Network Director Highways, TfGM, providing an update on progress of the Vision Zero Action Plan and provisional road casualty data for 2024.

Reference was made to the provisional DfT data for 2024. These provisional figures included a 13.3% increase in fatalities and a 26.4% rise in Killed and Seriously Injured

(KSI) figures compared to 2023. However, these still represented a reduction on pre-pandemic numbers as part of the wider downward trend.

The Vision Zero Strategy and Action Plan continued to be addressed, and the report provided details on the progress to date. One of the actions completed was the establishment of a Fatal Review Panel upon the advice of GMP and following best practice elsewhere. This allows for timely and active discussions with partners following a road fatality.

The Vision Zero Innovation Fund had funded work with 12 different GM partners, and a further education focussed fund would be made available later in the year.

It was advised that a local GM speed camera criteria was being prepared following a meeting between the Chair of the Committee and the Chief Constable of GMP, resulting from the Committee being minded to consider the current national criteria too strict to see the placement of cameras in all vital hotspots.

Comments and Questions

The Chair welcomed the success of the Vision Zero Summit that had taken place the previous day, with a number of moving personal stories highlighted throughout the day.

Members welcomed the establishment of a local criteria for speed cameras stating that this would result in saved lives but also noted that the design of streets to 'engineer out' speeding was also proven to be successful. Officers agreed stating that this engineering out speed approach was sought before having to resort to cameras, as too frequent installation of cameras could potentially lead to public backlash and distrust of the motives behind their placement.

Members asked if financial support would be provided to smaller districts to help fund the installation of further speed cameras. It was advised that at the present time a central pot of funding was not available. Work was taking place through various means to seek further funding to support Vision Zero.

Members asked if it would be possible to improve the recording of road users to incorporate the use of e-bikes and e-scooters and accurately demonstrate the relative safety of their usage. It was advised that these were currently captured under a blanket 'other' designation at the present time, however improved crash reporting was coming into place, and specifics by districts could be made available on request.

The Chair stated his hope that funding for Vision Zero would feed into discussions about capital funding pots, and become a high priority area for investment.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the requirement to re-baseline the interim Vision Zero target, subject to discussion with Department for Transport (DfT) be noted.
2. That the content of the report, including progress against the Vision Zero Action Plan be noted.
3. That the revised safety camera criteria be noted.

BNC/42/25 CRSTS Reprioritisation

Chris Barnes, Network Director Infrastructure, TfGM, presented a report proposing the reprioritisation of CRSTS1 funding to unlock and deliver growth, following its inclusion in the GM Integrated Settlement.

Following extensive discussions with local authority partners a series of proposals was being put to the GMCA for the allocation of remaining headroom funding. These were summarised within the supporting report.

Comments and Questions

The Chair welcomed the extra £10m made available in the first phase for highways investment. The state of the roads was a real issue and a safe well maintained road

network was vital for all. There would also be benefits in looking at how to boost walking and improve the quality of pavements and public rights of way.

Members continued to express their concerns about utility company works causing damage and hold up to the region's roads. The Chair advised that a working group was to be set up to consider this issue, to look at how to improve the oversight and management of highways in terms of roadworks and utility works, and that all are held to account where appropriate.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the current position in relation to the transport infrastructure pipeline be noted.
2. That it be noted that the following proposals which will be considered by GMCA:
 - Reprioritisation of CRSTS1 capital funding as detailed within Section 3 of the report;
 - Allocation of CRSTS1 revenue funding for 2025/26 as set out in section 3 of the report;
 - Additional Highways Maintenance funding, as set out in Section 4 of the report;
 - Proposal to review arrangements for Highways Network Management, as set out in Section 4 of the report;
 - List of prioritised schemes to support the delivery of the Integrated Pipeline detailed in Section 5 and Appendix 1 of the report;
 - List of prioritised schemes for the receipt of funding to support the delivery of the Bee Network detailed in Section 6 and Appendix 2 of the report;
 - Outline proposals for the funding to support the delivery of Active Travel improvements set out in Section 7 of the report; and request that detailed proposals in relation to the prioritisation of these allocations be brought back to the Combined Authority at its next meeting;
 - Allocation of the of the additional CRSTS1 revenue funding set out in Section 9 of the report;
 - Potential Capital to Revenue 'switch 'as set out in Section 8 of the report;

- Allocation of the additional CRSTS1 revenue funding set out in Section 9 of the report; and
 - Next steps as set out in Section 10 of the report.
3. That the Committee notes plans around a working group focussed upon the management of the region's highways, and that they be asked to feed any comments for the working group to consider through Cllr O'Brien as Chair or relevant district Leaders.

BNC/43/25 Transport Infrastructure Pipeline Report

Chris Barnes, Network Director Infrastructure, TfGM, presented an update on progress delivering a pipeline of transport infrastructure investment and improvements to support the operation of the Bee Network. The report made a number of recommendations for members to support the continued development and delivery of the pipeline programme.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the current position, recent progress and key milestones on the transport infrastructure pipeline be noted.
2. That the submission of GM's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Annual Report 2024/25 to the Department for Transport (DfT) be noted.
3. That the drawdown of Integrated Settlement funding and associated scheme progression be approved as follows:
 - Improving Journeys: Wigan – Leigh Hindley Town Centre ('Bird l'th Hand junction'); £0.724m and Full Business Case;
 - Bus Depot Infrastructure and Engineering Renewals: £6.41m; and
 - Metrolink Ashton Line Capacity Options: £0.342m;
4. That, subject to GMCA approval of the proposed CRSTS1 Reprioritisation allocations at the meeting to be held on 27 June 2025, approval be given

to the drawdown of CRSTS1 and associated Highways Maintenance funding as follows in order to expedite delivery:

- 15% of all Integrated Pipeline schemes detailed in Appendix One of the attached GMCA report, totalling £13.35m (ie 15% of £89m);
- 15% of all Bee Network schemes detailed in Appendix Two of the attached GMCA report, totalling £2.91m (ie 15% of £19.4m); and
- Highways Maintenance allocations for individual Local Authorities, as set out in Section 4 of this report.

BNC/44/25 Date of Next Meeting

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Thursday 24th July 2025.