

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY HELD WEDNESDAY, 23RD JULY 2025 AT
THE TOOTAL BUILDINGS - BROADHURST HOUSE, 1ST FLOOR, 56 OXFORD
STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 6EU**

PRESENT:

Councillor John Walsh	Bolton Council
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council
Councillor Russell Bernstein	Bury Council
Councillor Imran Rizvi	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor John Leech	Manchester City Council
Councillor Olusegun Ogunbambo	Manchester City Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Terry Smith	Rochdale Council
Councillor Dylan Williams	Rochdale Council
Councillor Tony Davies	Salford City Council
Councillor Lewis Nelson	Salford City Council
Councillor Helen Hibbert	Stockport Council
Councillor Sangita Patel	Tameside Council
Councillor David Sweeton	Tameside Council
Councillor Jill Axford	Trafford Council
Councillor Shaun Ennis	Trafford Council
Councillor Will Jones	Trafford Council
Councillor Samantha Brown	Wigan Council
Councillor Debra Wailes	Wigan Council

ALSO PRESENT:

Vernon Everitt	Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester
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Kate Green

Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Karen Chambers	GMCA
Dominic Coleman	GMCA
Gillian Duckworth	GMCA
Carol Judge Campbell	GMCA
Caroline Simpson	GMCA
Nicola Ward	GMCA
Martin Lax	Transport for Greater Manchester
Steve Warrener	Transport for Greater Manchester

ANNUAL MEETING BUSINESS

O&SC 01/25

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin (Manchester), Cllr Ken Rustidge (Oldham) and Cllr Mary Callaghan (Wigan).

O&SC 02/25

APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR

Gillian Duckworth, Monitoring Officer, GMCA opened the meeting and invited nominations for the appointment of Chair.

Councillor John Walsh and Councillor John Leech were put forward as Chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Following a vote, the decision to appoint Councillor John Walsh was passed.

RESOLVED /-

That Councillor John Walsh be appointed as the Chair of the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

O&SC 03/25 MEMBERSHIP OF THE GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2025/26

The Committee was requested to note the membership of the Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year as below –

Members:

Bolton	John Walsh (Con)
	Peter Wright (Independent)
Bury	Russell Bernstein (Con)
	Imran Rizvi (Lab)
Manchester	John Leech (Lib Dem)
	Mandie Shilton-Godwin (Lab)
	Basil Curley (Lab)
Oldham	Colin McLaren (Lab)
	Ken Rustidge (Lab)
Rochdale	Terry Smith (Lab)
	Dylan Williams (Lab)
Salford	Lewis Nelson (Lab)
	Tony Davies (Lab)
Stockport	Helen Hibbert (Lab)
Tameside	Sangita Patel (Lab)
	David Sweeton (Lab)
Trafford	Shaun Ennis (Lib Dem)
	Will Jones (Lab)
Wigan	Samantha Brown (Lab)

	Mary Callaghan (Lab)
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Substitutes:

Bolton	Nadim Muslim (Con)
	Mohammed Ayub (Lab)
Bury	Martin Hayes (Lab)
	Gavin McGill (Lab)
Manchester	Alan Good (Lib Dem)
	Olusegun Ogunbambo (Lab)
	Basat Sheik (Lab)
Oldham	Louie Hamblett (Lib Dem)
	Graham Shuttleworth (Lab)
Rochdale	Aiza Rashid (Lab)
	Mohammad Arshad (Lab)
Salford	Maria Brabiner (Lab)
	Neil Reynolds (Lab)
Stockport	Rachel Wise (Lab)
Tameside	Michael Smith (Lab)
	Christine Beardmore (Lab)
Trafford	Nathan Evans (Con)
	Jill Axford (Lab)
Wigan	Debra Wailes (Lab)
	Fred Walker (Lab)

RESOLVED /-

That the membership of the Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year be noted.

O&SC 04/25

**MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT AND ANNUAL
DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM**

Members were reminded of their obligations under the GMCA Members' Code of Conduct and were requested to complete an annual declaration of interest form, which had been emailed to them by the Governance & Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the GMCA's Member Code of Conduct be noted.
2. That members as per their obligation stated in the Code of Conduct would complete their Annual Declaration of Interest form and return it to the Governance & Scrutiny Officer.

O&SC 05/245

TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED /-

That the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

O&SC 06/25

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

RESOLVED /-

No announcements or urgent business were noted.

O&SC 07/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED /-

No declarations were received in relation to any item on the agenda.

Members expressed concern over recent media reports on water pollution and the potential rise in charges for Greater Manchester (GM) residents and requested a briefing on the wider implications.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 June 2025 be approved as a correct and accurate record.
2. That a briefing on the wider implications of recent media reports concerning water pollution and the potential rise in charges for GM residents be arranged.

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the work that the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee had undertaken over the past municipal year.

Members commented that the report contained good examples that the Committee was holding the GM Mayor and Portfolio Leads to account and showed signs of significant improvements to build on.

Members formally thanked the previous Chair of the Committee, Councillor Nadim Muslim, for his fair chairing skills which enabled the work of the Committee to be undertaken effectively.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the annual report be noted.

2. That Members thanks be passed to the previous Chair of the Committee Councillor Nadim Muslim, for his fair chairing skills which enabled the work of the Committee to be undertaken effectively.

O&SC 10/25

**FINAL TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - SAFETY OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Councillor Helen Hibbert, Chair of the GM Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, introduced the final report on the Safety of Women and Girls on Public Transport to the Committee.

Councillor Hibbert advised that the report presented the findings of GM's first cross-committee review which involved thirty expert witnesses, multiple meetings, and site visits. Key areas included crime prevention, city design for women, and community safety initiatives. She urged all members to take ownership of the recommendations and act on them within their local authorities and emphasised that everyone had a role to play in driving change locally.

Councillor Hibbert added that the report stemmed from the 2040 Travel Plan, which lacked specific consideration for the needs of women and girls. Through this committee's structure, a thorough review was conducted, engaging many open and collaborative stakeholders. The process highlighted a strong willingness to improve and be scrutinised, reflecting GM's commitment to inclusive and responsive planning. The openness demonstrated and emphasised the importance of amplifying diverse voices to create a meaningful change.

The Deputy Mayor welcomed the report and highlighted its alignment with GM's Gender-Based Violence Strategy and the importance of safety for women and girls on public transport and other environments. She added that whilst the transport network was generally safe, perceptions of safety, especially at night or during the "last mile" of a journey, remained a concern. It was noted that the report supported broader strategic goals, including economic growth and public transport use.

Importantly, the transport network had been designated as the 11th district, which allowed focused police efforts such as Operation Avro and Operation Vulcan which concentrated on criminality and tackling antisocial behaviour around Piccadilly and Victoria stations, and campaigns such as *Isthisokay?* and bystander awareness, all of which were aimed at improving safety and public confidence.

The Deputy Mayor advised that funding had been secured from the Retained Business Rates Fund, to support the rollout of an 'Ask for Angela' scheme across the public transport network. This would include training for bus and tram staff to help them understand how to support not only women and girls, but all passengers in feeling safe while travelling.

The Deputy Mayor emphasised that the safety of GM's residents, particularly women and girls, was a top priority. She assured the Committee that clear plans were in place to continue addressing the concerns and recommendations outlined in the report.

The Committee thanked the Chair and the members of the Task and Finish Group for their report.

Members reported that a resident with a disability had lost confidence in using public transport at night after encountering unsupportive staff members. As a result, the individual now relied on accessible taxis, though they would prefer to use public transport. The experience highlighted the need for all transport staff to be trained in assisting disabled passengers, especially women at night, to ensure safe and inclusive travel for everyone. The Deputy Mayor acknowledged the situation and added that it was an interesting example of our intersectionality, how multiple characteristics can intersect to intensify exclusion, including from the transport network.

Members asked whether there would be an official response from the Deputy Mayor to the report, and whether any recommendations would be made to Greater Manchester Police (GMP) regarding potential operational changes arising from the

report's findings. They also asked who else the report would be shared with, and whether any other organisations would be issuing formal responses. The Deputy Mayor advised that she would be happy to provide an official response to the Task and Finish report, should the committee request it. It was highlighted that the report's recommendations aligned closely with ongoing joint initiatives between GMP and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), particularly in relation to strategic ambitions around safe travel. The Deputy Mayor emphasised the importance of a combined command approach, making optimal use of the full workforce. That included TravelSafe Officers employed by TfGM and Police Officers and PCSOs employed by GMP. The aim was to deploy the most appropriate personnel swiftly and effectively, based on their respective powers and skills. The Committee was informed that this approach supported the broader goal of ensuring maximum coverage to protect women and girls on the transport network. This approach was being managed in line with established models of risk analysis, hotspot policing, and targeted operations such as Operation Avro and Operation Vulcan. The role of neighbourhood policing was also underlined, particularly in ensuring that responses to safety concerns, especially those raised by women and girls, were prioritised appropriately within GMP's risk assessment framework. The Deputy Mayor emphasised the value of the problem-solving approach, as demonstrated in a previous initiative in Oldham. This involved TfGM, GMP, the Community Safety Partnership, and local educational institutions working together to address safety concerns around transport. The success of that initiative was cited as a model for replication across GM where similar needs arise. The Deputy Mayor added that continuing to raise awareness across GMP regarding gender-based violence in all its forms was important. This included not only serious violence and threats but also harassment, abuse, and anti-social behaviour, which, while sometimes less visible, can be extremely distressing, particularly for women and girls. It was noted that ongoing training and awareness-raising within GMP remained a priority to allow officers to understand the full spectrum of experiences that women and girls face, from everyday harassment to more severe forms of abuse and violence.

Members asked for more detail on the active bystander training, specifically, how it was intended to be delivered, which groups of people it would target, and in what settings or locations it would take place. Officers highlighted a successful Retained Business Rates Fund bid which secured over £300,000 in additional investment for TfGM. This funding would support training for transport network staff to improve their awareness, intervention skills, de-escalation techniques, and ability to provide support in challenging situations. Officers added that whilst the training was not specifically branded as active bystander training, it significantly enhanced the overall training package and contributed to the broader goal of improving safety on the transport network. Additional investment had also been directed to community and volunteer organisations across GM who were working with local communities to develop and deliver bystander training initiatives. A large-scale education programme had been implemented to raise awareness among young boys about the impact of their behaviour on young women. A further Retained Business Rates Fund bid was focused on empowering young women, helping them build confidence and understand how to safely challenge unacceptable behaviour. The Committee were informed that there were multiple strands of work underway to promote active bystander behaviour. Those efforts aimed to raise awareness and build the capability of individuals to intervene safely and effectively, without limiting creativity in how communities choose to respond.

The Transport Commissioner advised the Committee that several significant initiatives were already underway that align with the report's recommendations. A key concern identified was the waiting environment for public transport, which can feel isolating and unsafe, particularly for women and girls. This had been recognised as a major barrier to public transport use. To address this, TfGM had purchased bus shelters across GM and the aim was to invest in making these spaces safer and more welcoming. The Stockport Transport Interchange was cited as an example of good practice. The design incorporated strong lighting, visible staff presence, and accessible support points to enhance safety. Similar safety-focused design principles would be applied to future infrastructure projects, including the Bury Interchange, which was the next major investment. The Transport Commissioner indicated that these tangible improvements could be

reported back to the Committee as evidence of progress in line with the report's aims.

Councillor Hibbert acknowledged the strong engagement received throughout the process, both from Committee members and external contributors, and emphasised the importance of this input in shaping a whole-system approach to change. It was noted that one of the strategic priorities was to be bold in public campaigns, clearly defining acceptable behaviours, not just within GM, but across all levels of governance. Councillor Hibbert touched on the importance of securing additional funding to expand initiatives such as bystander training. While active bystander training was a key component, Councillor Hibbert stressed the need to explore broader funding opportunities to support a wider rollout of related programmes. The development of an inclusive design guide was highlighted as a critical step. This guide would aim to ensure that public spaces were designed with safety in mind, particularly addressing the vulnerability women may feel while waiting for transport. Councillor Hibbert welcomed the earlier point about how feelings of isolation in waiting environments could influence decisions to travel. The importance of visibility, lighting, and the presence of others was emphasised as central to creating a sense of safety. She advised that whilst these initiatives may be led by TfGM, they should be adopted more widely by other authorities and she encouraged a shift in thinking, designing not just for functionality, but with a clear focus on safety outcomes, particularly for women and girls.

Councillor Hibbert referenced the next item on the agenda and stated that the report did not specifically address the needs or experiences of women and girls and emphasised that inclusion of gender-specific considerations should be embedded across all strategic reports and planning documents and stressed the importance of not assuming such inclusion was happening but rather demonstrating it clearly. Councillor Hibbert called for a raised level of debate and visibility around gender inclusion, to ensure that future reports reflected these priorities consistently and transparently.

Members raised concerns about past experiences with the Live Chat function on the Bee Network App, where reports of incidents on buses and trams were sometimes not prioritised by the police, with individuals being redirected back to transport operators. It was felt that this had contributed to a lack of public confidence in the reporting process. It was noted that while Live Chat and other reporting tools were being developed, it was essential that responses were coordinated and taken seriously across agencies. Members emphasised that building public confidence, particularly for women and girls, was critical, and ensuring that reports were acted upon appropriately must remain a top priority. The Deputy Mayor confirmed that the Live Chat function, which had been in place for some time, was being improved and relaunched in October. The relaunch aimed to address concerns about lack of response and coordination between GMP and TfGM, ensuring reports were not dismissed or redirected without action. A new joint command structure would underpin the Live Chat system, enabling a unified response from both GMP and TfGM, whether reports come via chat, phone, or in-person contact. The command centre would be based at TfGM's existing control site, allowing for better deployment of resources, both static and mobile, to improve safety across the transport network, especially for women and girls. The Transport Commissioner added that a key principle of the safety strategy was visibility, ensuring staff were present and accessible across the transport network, he added that whilst technology played an important role, the public valued having real people on the ground. The Transport Commissioner advised that revenue funding was being used to support this, including the deployment of 113 TravelSafe officers who patrol interchanges and travel on buses. Research indicated this visible presence was having a positive impact on public confidence. With the bus network now franchised, revenue remained within the system, allowing continued reinvestment in safety and staffing. The Transport Commissioner referenced a later agenda item on integrating rail into the Bee Network, highlighting significant capital investment by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to improve station infrastructure. Key priorities included better lighting, enhanced accessibility, and thoughtful design, such as the placement of ticket machines, to improve safety and ease of use. It was noted that many stations remain inaccessible from street to train, which was unacceptable. Future upgrades would address this. He added that

whilst funding was limited, there was enough to begin delivering meaningful improvements for residents across GM.

Members asked what funding could be made available to support the initiatives outlined in the report and emphasised that appropriate and sufficient investment was essential to underpin what had been identified as a fundamental issue requiring strategic attention. Members acknowledged the importance of the report and noted that, as each district reviews and evaluates its contents, they would identify issues particularly relevant to their local context, and it was anticipated that resource implications would inevitably emerge in various forms as a result of this evaluation. They added that it was unclear how these resource needs would be addressed and highlighted the importance of recognising and planning for them as part of the ongoing response. The Deputy Mayor welcomed the Retained Business Rates Funding, which would support training, awareness, and culture change, encouraging all transport staff to take shared responsibility for safety. Funding was also being used by Community Safety Partnerships across the local authorities to support local safe travel initiatives, recognising that local areas best understand their specific needs. It was noted that the joint command approach could help increase public transport usage by improving safety and visibility, particularly for women and girls. Increased usage would generate additional revenue, which could be reinvested into further safety improvements. The model draws on experience from Transport for London (TfL) with the ambition to deliver an even more effective approach in GM.

Councillor Hibbert thanked the Committee for their feedback and noted the need for further work around securing local funding to support schemes and initiatives highlighted in the report. It was also acknowledged that while this report focused on one aspect of the gender-based violence strategy, there were several other priorities that warranted attention. Councillor Hibbert suggested that, in future, the Committee could usefully explore these wider areas as part of its ongoing work.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Committee approve the final review for consideration by the GMCA, GM Police, Fire and Crime Panel, GM Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, and wider stakeholders.
2. That the final review be shared with all stakeholders, Chairs of Scrutiny Committees in the Local Authorities, Local Authority Portfolio Leads for Transport and Safer Communities and all GM MPs.
3. That the Deputy Mayor would provide a formal response to the review at the Combined Authority Meeting taking place on Friday 26 September.
4. That consideration would be given to where scrutiny could add value to other areas of the Gender Based Violence Strategy.

O&SC 11/25

DELIVERING THE BEE NETWORK

Vernon Everitt, Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester introduced this item on behalf of the GM Mayor.

Before proceeding to the main agenda item, The Transport Commissioner provided the Committee with an update on the serious collision involving a Bee Network bus on Monday 21 July at Barton Bridge in Eccles. The Committee was informed that investigations were ongoing, with GMP leading the inquiry. Additionally, TfGM was working with Salford City Council and The Peel Group to respond to the incident and all information from the investigation that was underway would be shared with GMP to support their work.

The Committee commended the swift response of the emergency services and acknowledged the deeply distressing nature of the event. Members expressed their thoughts and sympathies for all those affected by the collision, including those who witnessed it, recognising the trauma and fear experienced by everyone involved.

Following a series of site visits, TfGM, Salford City Council, and Peel have agreed on several short-term safety measures to be implemented promptly. These included new and additional warnings and signage near the bridge, some of which were already in place. TfGM had contacted senior leaders at bus operators to seek reassurances on their operating practices, including training and procedures to prevent bridge strikes, and was working with them to share best practice.

TfGM had also written to all ten local authorities and other relevant partners to review and confirm their mitigation measures for low bridges. Where gaps exist, TfGM have asked for corrective action. The work was being coordinated through an existing forum involving TfGM and highways teams across GM. Finally, TfGM were exploring the possibility of rerouting services away from low bridges.

The Transport Commissioner advised that the GM Mayor had asked him to lead the preparation of an urgent report, examining the full circumstances of the Barton Bridge collision and recommending wider safety improvements across the transport network. The GM Mayor had also requested that the Transport Commissioner worked with GMP to ensure those affected and their families received full support.

The Transport Commissioner added that he had heard the community's concerns about repeated incidents at this location over the years, and these would be reflected in the report.

It was noted that earlier this week, a trainee-driven bus was also involved in a separate bridge strike on Ten Acres Lane in Newton Heath and thankfully, no one was injured. The Transport Commissioner advised that this incident would also be included in the investigation.

The Transport Commissioner added that GM's commitment to safe operations was absolute. A key part of that would be the development of a Bee Network Safety Standard, aligned with GM's long-term Vision Zero strategy to eliminate deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

Salford elected members passed their thanks to The Transport Commissioner for his sensitive and professional handling of the situation and added that the community was deeply affected by this horrific incident, and their thoughts were with all those involved and who witnessed it.

Members appreciated the immediate actions taken, especially the added signage, training reviews, and the wider assessment of low bridges across GM.

Members stressed the importance of creating a clear mechanism for local communities to raise serious safety concerns. As noted, this location had seen repeated incidents, and the community felt lessons should be learned and acted on swiftly. Whilst it was reassuring that action was now being taken, there was a sense that it could have come sooner.

Members asked how changes to routes were communicated to drivers, for example, if there were unexpected disruptions like roadworks or a burst pipe requiring a diversion, how would drivers be informed. It was also noted that the bus was on an unspecified route, going forward, how would transport management ensure such changes were properly accounted for and clearly communicated to drivers. The Transport Commissioner advised that there were well-established procedures at local bus depots to inform drivers of planned route changes. In this case, however, the bus was not on its correct route, and the change was not planned. The Transport Commissioner advised that he could not comment further at this stage due to the ongoing police investigation, but his full review would cover all circumstances. He added that for planned changes, such as roadworks, information was communicated clearly at depot level, with updates to rosters and route details. Drivers also performed checks before taking a bus out, including confirming their route via onboard systems.

The Transport Commissioner introduced the substantive report to the Committee and advised that the Bee Network was a key part of the Greater Manchester Strategy which was launched recently. He added that transport was not just about moving people, it was about driving economic growth, improving access to jobs,

education, and housing, and tackling inequality. GM was building a joined-up public transport and active travel network that connects communities and supports these broader goals.

The Transport Commissioner advised that in June, GM published Delivering Better Buses for Greater Manchester, which provided an update on progress since completing bus franchising in January. The report detailed that 1,600 buses and 577 routes were under local control, supporting over 160 million journeys annually. The report also showed a 14% rise in bus use, more than double the national average of 6%. Punctuality had improved across all three franchising phases, moving closer to GM's 80% target (up from 66% pre-franchising). Access had also improved, with 84% of residents now within a five-minute walk of a bus or tram running every 30 minutes, up from 78%. In addition, fares had been kept low, recognising that affordability, alongside safety and accessibility, was key to encouraging public transport use. An integrated ticketing and a tap-and-go system had also been introduced which had now been used over ten million times since its launch last March.

The Transport Commissioner added that GM had introduced cleaner, greener buses, with 25% of the fleet set to be zero-emission by the end of this year. GM was on track for a fully zero-emission fleet by 2030, supported by capital funding. Improvements had been made to over 75 routes by adding buses, adjusting timetables, and creating new services, including 9 extra buses in North Manchester. These improvements had been delivered efficiently, with operating costs now around a third lower than what TfGM previously paid for subsidised services by commercial operators. He added that the early results showed that franchising was the right approach, not just ideologically, but practically. It had enabled integration, allowing GM to control fares and introduce daily caps across bus and tram. It was noted that once rail was included, passengers would benefit from a seamless tap-and-go system across all modes, making travel simpler and more accessible.

The Transport Commissioner advised that GM was prioritising safety and security for women and girls, whilst also working to make the entire transport network more accessible for everyone who lives and works in GM.

The Transport Commissioner outlined three major next steps for the Bee Network:

Rail Integration by 2028

Work was underway to bring commuter rail and 64 stations into the Bee Network in three phases. Whilst full control was not yet possible due to ongoing national rail reform, TfGM was collaborating closely with Great British Railways and other partners. The goal was to introduce integrated pay-as-you-go ticketing across bus, tram, and rail, creating a London-style transport system. TfGM were working with Dame Sarah Storey to ensure walking and cycling infrastructure was fully aligned with public transport. Stockport was given as a model example of this joined-up approach.

Highways Management

Managing GM's roads remained a challenge, especially with overlapping works. TfGM was pushing for more powers to improve coordination, including lane rental schemes and red routes to tackle illegal parking.

Taxi and Private Hire

A consultation had been launched to improve standards and address out-of-area licensing issues.

Members noted that the audio and visual announcements were not always available on all bus services and asked what was being done to resolve this as it was an essential that services were accessible. The Transport Commissioner advised that, to address this, TfGM had developed an Operational Excellence Plan. The Transport Commissioner added that he receives regular updates on system availability, and while improvements were being reported, he encouraged the Committee to report such issues. He added that there was a specific part of the

plan dedicated to resolving problems with audio-visual systems and assured the Committee it was being formally addressed.

Members advised that Middleton did not yet have a strong transport link. While it did have a train station, it was on the edge of town. Members added that trains to Manchester Victoria from Rochdale ran every 5–10 minutes during rush hour, but to Mills Hill it was only every 30 minutes. The 59 bus to the station also runs just once an hour. Members asked for pressure to be put on the Department for Transport to reintegrate Mills Hill into the Clitheroe and Leeds lines. Currently, trains skipped Moston, Mills Hill, and Castleton. Moston has a tram, and Castleton was close to Rochdale, but Middleton had neither. A train to Mills Hill takes just 11 minutes, compared to up to 40 minutes by bus in rush hour. Improving this link would significantly boost access to the city centre and employment opportunities for Middleton residents. Officers advised that the Rapid Transit Strategy report, which was presented to the CA last July, outlined how GM would prioritise around 30 potential transport schemes. They added that Middleton was one of 15 schemes selected for further detailed study. A progress report on this was expected in the coming months. In relation to rail services, it was noted that increasing train service frequency, especially at Mills Hill, where some through services (e.g., Clitheroe to Leeds) currently do not stop, could be addressed through engagement with the Department for Transport. Officers added that the Rail Reform Bill was progressing through Parliament. This would give the GM Mayor more power over local rail franchises, enabling better integration and service improvements. In relation to bus services, as part of the current capital programme, TfGM were working to enhance several key radial bus corridors to improve prioritisation. These upgrades aimed to make bus services more reliable and reduce journey times into central Manchester. Middleton was set to benefit from these improvements as well.

Members noted that the report stated that services are now more punctual than those they replaced and added that this was contrary to what some residents had reported. They added that it would be helpful to see a detailed percentage breakdown across all routes, including cancellations, to allow the Committee to scrutinise the data more effectively and understand the full picture. Officers

acknowledged that the figures provided were aggregate and added that one of TfGM's aims in establishing local Bee Network Committees was to enable more detailed analysis at both the local authority and community levels. Officers advised that they would share reliability data specific to a certain area, and if Members had concerns about particular routes, those could be investigated further.

Members noted that the 2040 goal for zero road deaths or serious injuries was a shared ambition, however the outdated rule requiring two fatalities before a new speed camera could be installed was still in place. Members noted that GM had previously lobbied Government on this and asked if any progress had been made since the change in Government. The Deputy Mayor advised that concerns about road safety and speeding were shared across the districts. She added that a new Greater Manchester Traffic Partnership had been established, chaired by Chief Fire Officer Dave Russell. This structure would allow for more flexible, locally informed solutions and funding approaches. While not all requests could be fulfilled, the new system ensured that local concerns were properly considered, prioritised, and addressed where possible within GM's control. The Deputy Mayor stated that when it come to lobbying national Government, this was one of several transport safety issues being raised. She added that it was important to do so in collaboration with other Police and Crime Commissioners and Deputy Mayors and that discussions were already underway with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Deputy Mayor assured Members that this issue remained on their agenda, and she would continue to advocate for sustained lobbying efforts at the national level.

Members asked if there was any evidence of a modal shift towards public transport, and were any local statistics, such as increases in bus usage, available that could help the committee to better understand the trend. The Transport Commissioner advised that the early signs of modal shift was increased ridership which suggested changing travel behaviours, though it was still early to draw firm conclusions. Officers added that during recent Oasis concerts at Heaton Park, around 50% of attendees travelled without a car, using trams, buses, or walking. This highlighted the potential for sustainable travel when well-planned as the success was due to

strong planning and consistent public transport services, especially buses. It was noted that TfGM were working on measuring the impact of modal shift, including economic benefits. Understanding the purpose of extra journeys (e.g., work, public services) was key to evaluating benefits. Officers advised that capturing formal output data was difficult, especially outside established schemes. It was noted that night bus services had received strong public support. Passengers reported significant cost savings and increased confidence in late-night travel due to more frequent services. It was also noted that ensuring the safety of women and girls was a core part of all planning and service design.

Members asked about the local Bee Network Review for Tranche 2 to enable local communities to be involved in designing the routes. The Transport Commissioner advised that TfGM were aiming to establish Local Bee Network Committees across all areas as franchising progresses and that their commitment was to ensure that, during each network review, starting with the first tranche in Bolton and moving around GM, that officers fully engage with local communities to understand their needs. It was noted that the approach would continue through tranches 2 and 3. The Transport Commissioner assured the Committee that TfGM were committed to giving local communities a real sense of ownership over their bus networks, and the best way to achieve that was through strong local involvement.

Clarification was requested regarding the policy on allowing bikes on trams, as well as the enforcement of low-level antisocial behaviour, such as vaping. Officers advised that TfGM had piloted allowing bikes on trams and were now developing proposals. Whilst tram capacity was a consideration, enabling easier travel across GM was a key goal. Officers added that trams would need modifications and therefore it was important to assess the costs and timelines involved. It was noted that vaping, along with playing loud music on phones and other forms of antisocial behaviour, was a key issue for passengers. Whilst it was not always about crime, people often needed reassurance around these everyday behaviours. TravelSafe Officers, especially around bus interchanges, had been effective in addressing these concerns. According to reports from GM's safety team, vaping consistently

ranked as one of the top antisocial issues. TfGM were committed to maintaining a visible presence to tackle this proactively.

Members asked if TfGM could take a more strategic, needs-based approach to transport investment, using an index to identify underserved areas, rather than relying solely on the strength of individual business cases. Officers advised that TfGM were focused on turning GM's transport strategy into real, on-the-ground improvements. It was noted that the upcoming Local Transport Plan would outline how GM delivers social, environmental, and economic benefits, working closely with districts to align local priorities with strategic goals. Officers advised that the percentage of people with access to a 30-minute bus service had increased from 73% to 83%, with a target of 90%. It was noted that network reviews involved local input to identify key connections and destinations and that technical analysis considered socio-economic factors to improve access and opportunities. The Bee Network and franchising had enabled better integration of bus, Metrolink, and rail services. The Transport Commissioner added that Inter-regional connectivity, including rail and road investment, presented major strategic challenges and offered to return and discuss these issues with the Committee in more detail, as they aligned closely with some of the broader strategic questions asked.

Members noted that the improvements at Simister Island were very welcome, but congestion, especially on the outer ring road, was a major barrier to growth. Areas like the Western Gateway were heavily impacted by bottlenecks on the M6, M602, and asked if GM could work with National Highways to address these issues as part of future planning.

Members noted the 100% zero emission bus fleet by 2030 target and asked what practical and financial challenges needed to be addressed to help GM meet its net zero targets. Officers advised that whilst there were challenges, GM was in a strong position thanks to its franchising experience. Transforming City Regions funding supported fleet upgrades and depot electrification, though securing power supply and capacity remains a key hurdle. TfGM were working closely with operators and utilities and exploring different commercial and financial models to support zero-

emission fleet rollout. Officers added that GM was well placed to deliver the 2030 roadmap, having already tackled many challenges through franchising, experience in a few regions outside London shared. Steve Warrener added that as chair of the Urban Transport Group, he was also working nationally to understand supply chain issues and align efforts with the Department for Transport. It was noted that GM was helping lead the way, alongside partners like TfL.

Members understood that whilst there were challenges, ongoing subsidy would likely remain essential to delivering the transport plan. It was noted that globally, most transport systems received some level of public funding and therefore GM should not be an exception and added that GM should be more open in communicating this, so people better understand the need.

Members noted that TfGM's unified structure had been highly effective in resolving issues quickly, without needing to deal with multiple agencies.

Members stated that reliable transport was vital for some areas where the night-time economy was growing and that whilst some areas were well served others faced limited late-night services. Members stated that local businesses believed that even one additional late-night bus could make a significant difference to them. Officers advised that they would explore this matter further.

Wigan Members expressed their thanks for the planned new transport hub, highlighting its potential to improve safety for women and girls.

Members noted that whilst headline figures were positive, more detail was needed to understand where passenger growth was happening—especially whether lifeline routes were benefiting. Members noted that it would also be useful to explore whether people preferred a short walk to a half-hourly service, or a slightly longer walk to a more frequent one, to ensure the right balance in service planning. Officers advised that whilst data was published in aggregate at this level, they did hold detailed information on route-level usage. For example, the 135 route from Central Manchester to Bury had seen a 15–20% increase in ridership following investment that brought service frequency to around every 12 minutes. Members added that it would be helpful to see a breakdown of the reasons behind the rise in

passenger numbers. For example, how much of the increase was due to the £2 fare offer versus improvements like punctuality or better access to services. They added that whilst the £2 fare was attractive, its long-term sustainability was uncertain. Understanding what was driving growth would support future financial decisions and help prioritise service improvements that retain passengers. The Transport Commissioner advised that subsidy, better framed as investment, was essential for any integrated transport network. UK passengers, especially rail users, often pay more than in other countries. Whilst capital funding through CRSTS provided welcome certainty for long-term planning, revenue funding remained a challenge. Around 25% of bus operating costs were currently covered by BSIP funding, but multi-year commitments were needed to plan services confidently. It was also important to consider the broader benefits of transport investment, not just the costs on local authority balance sheets. Importantly, when GM has integrated the eight rail lines, one of the commitments to the Department for Transport was that this would reduce Northern's reliance on subsidy, due to increased usage driven by simpler, integrated fares. GM also needed to shift the focus from just costs to the wider benefits of transport investment, which often falls outside local authority budgets but were vital for long-term sustainability. Officers advised that there was an ongoing balance between proximity and frequency, whether people preferred a five-minute walk to a 30-minute service or a slightly longer walk to a more frequent one. The 5-minute/30-minute standard was used to maximise Bee Network access, but nearly 47% of Greater Manchester residents now had access to a 12-minute bus or Metrolink service. Officers added that growth was being driven by multiple factors: increased frequency, longer operating hours, new services (including night buses), improved vehicles, and simpler, integrated fares. Officers would continue to assess these trade-offs through network reviews. It was noted that regular customer research covered a wide range of factors such as punctuality, reliability, affordability, integration, accessibility, and fleet quality. Whilst some growth was organic due to service simplification and upgrades, new routes (including night buses) had also contributed. Recent improvements to around 75 services meant people were now making journeys they did not before, reflecting both better access and a more attractive offer. Officers advised that they would aim to provide the Committee with a more disaggregated breakdown at a future meeting. It was noted

that the Delivering Better Bus Services for Greater Manchester report from the Combined Authority meeting in June contained more details and officers would arrange for this to be circulated to the Committee.

Members noted that the headline figure of 1.2 million cycle hire trips was impressive, but it would be useful to understand the cost per journey and the impact of recent service reductions. Had scaling back the number of bike locations improved economic viability or was there still a significant subsidy per trip. It was stated that understanding the financial sustainability of the scheme was key, especially if usage was rising but costs were also increasing. The Transport Commissioner advised that the cycle hire scheme had evolved over time, and whilst detailed analysis was ongoing, cost recovery was currently better than budgeted. Usage was higher than expected, and overall costs were broadly in line with projections. There were still challenges, but the recovery plan was progressing well. It was noted that a more detailed update on the cycle scheme would be brought to a future meeting.

There was agreement from Members that the transport franchise had made significant investments and that there were more buses on the roads, helping people travel to key locations. Members stated that there was a strong need for better hospital transport services, especially important for people who are ill, cannot drive, or cannot afford a car. Officers acknowledged the comments regarding hospital connectivity, which was clearly of significant importance.

Members added that rail electrification and the electrifying of the Leeds line would significantly benefit North Manchester and asked what could be done in the short term while waiting for major investment. Officers advised that in relation to rail electrification, the Transpennine route between Manchester and Leeds was currently undergoing electrification and this was a major and long-term infrastructure project. Officers added that whilst this work was ongoing, service changes were taking place, which were necessary to facilitate the significant investment aimed at improving connectivity between the two cities. In parallel, broader infrastructure proposals were being developed to enhance capacity on the corridor between Manchester and Liverpool, with a particular focus on improving

east–west connectivity across the region. In response to questions about short-term improvements on the existing rail network, Officers advised that efforts were ongoing to engage with the Department for Transport to explore potential service enhancements along key routes. This included reviewing the current use of the route in question and identifying opportunities for improvement. It was highlighted that the route was currently serving as a diversionary line during the TransPennine Route Upgrade works, resulting in a significant increase in train traffic between Manchester and Leeds. This had required careful balancing of operational demands. To help address previous overcrowding issues, TransPennine Express had introduced longer trains on some services. Officers added that whilst these steps represented progress, it was acknowledged that there was still a considerable way to go before services across the region met the desired standard.

Members acknowledged the introduction of more TravelSafe Officers and Police Officers on the Bee Network and asked if any information could be made available regarding what routes were covered and what it meant in practical terms for passengers. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to see if these officers were improving public safety and perceptions of safety. The Transport Commissioner advised that TfGM would endeavour to provide clearer context around the physical presence of TravelSafe Officers and other personnel on the ground and that would be reflected in the upcoming updates, particularly as work planned for the autumn moved into the district-level. He added that TfGM aimed to present this information in more accessible language to ensure its purpose and impact were clearly understood.

Members raised concerns about efficiency improvements often leading to staff reductions, replaced by technology and noted the importance of maintaining physical staff presence. They referenced the recent efforts to retain ticket offices, highlighting their role in both service and safety and asked, in relation to rail integration plans, how many stations would be staffed, and during what hours. The Transport Commissioner agreed that maintaining a physical staff presence on the network was a priority and thanked Members for their support in opposing the recent ticket office closure proposals.

Members stated that it was good to hear that the safety of women and girls was a priority but raised concerns that this was not yet visible in reporting. Members suggested that if work was being done behind the scenes, it should be reflected in reports to help communicate progress to local communities. The Transport Commissioner advised that there would be a dedicated section on the safety of women and girls in the refreshed Local Transport Plan.

Members asked if there was a way bus accessibility could be improved through design, for example, could buses be equipped to lower more effectively when picking up passengers using wheelchairs. This would also benefit others, such as parents with prams, by making it easier to board. It was noted that it was important that drivers were trained and supported to use these features consistently, especially where pavements were low or uneven. The Transport Commissioner confirmed that all modern buses on the network were equipped with the ability to "kneel", allowing the driver to lower the bus to improve access for wheelchair users and others with mobility needs. Additionally, manual ramps were available to assist with boarding and alighting. However, it was acknowledged that these features may not always be consistently used, and that the effectiveness of accessibility could also depend on the design and height of individual bus stops. A programme was currently underway across GM to standardise and improve bus stop infrastructure to support easier access. A clear commitment was made to ensure that accessibility remained a core priority alongside safety and security across the bus network. It was also noted that capital funding was available to support investment in level access at more train stations, further enhancing accessibility across the wider transport system.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the comments of the Committee on the delivery of the Bee Network and how it will help deliver the new Greater Manchester Strategy 2025-2035 be noted.

2. That TfGM Officers would ensure that reliability data be shared with a Trafford Member.
3. That the Deputy Mayor would continue collaborative lobbying efforts with national Government on speed calming measures, working alongside other Police and Crime Commissioners and Deputy Mayors.
4. That TfGM Officers would investigate the potential to increase night time bus services in certain areas of Wigan.
5. That TfGM would provide the Committee with a more disaggregated breakdown of the reasons behind the rise in patronage and a detailed update on the cycle scheme at a future meeting.
6. That the Delivering Better Bus Services for Greater Manchester report from the Combined Authority meeting in June be circulated to the Committee.

O&SC 12/25

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME & FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Officers advised the Committee that the work programme was still being developed and was not fully populated due to pending contributions and added that there were two key items on the August agenda: the revised Greater Manchester Strategy and the Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework. It was noted that these agenda items would help shape the committee's focus for the year ahead.

Officers advised that following the August meeting, members would be invited to complete an online work programming activity to prioritise topics based on local relevance and committee impact.

Members were also reminded of the task and finish group on Early Education and Childcare reform, as agreed at the April meeting and advised that they would endeavour to have one representative from each local authority on the task and

finish group and that it would be a short succinct review, hopefully completed within about three months. Officers advised that members would be contacted about this after this meeting.

Finally, Members were encouraged to attend the information briefing on Monday 28 July regarding the Integrated Pipeline which was a key piece of work for the GMCA.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the proposed Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for July 2025 - September 2025 be noted.
2. That Members note that following an information briefing on an introduction to the Greater Manchester Strategy, members will receive a digital form in which to put forward those items that they would like the Committee to consider.
3. That Members use the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify any potential areas for further scrutiny.
4. That one member from each local authority be asked to nominate themselves to a short task and finish exercise (as agreed by members on the 9 April 2025) which will focus on 'identifying opportunities for longer term reform for the early education and childcare system' which will be asked to report its findings in the Autumn.

O&SC 13/25

FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

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

- Wednesday 20 August 2025

- Wednesday 24 September 2025
- Wednesday 29 October 2025
- Wednesday 26 November 2025
- Wednesday 10 December 2025
- Wednesday 28 January 2026
- Wednesday 11 February 2026
- Wednesday 25 February 2026
- Wednesday 25 March 2026