

DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024-25

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Annual Governance Statement sets out how the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) meets its governance standards detailed in the Code of Corporate Governance. It also describes how it meets the requirements of regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Annual Accounts. It is a document which looks back retrospectively over the past year and identifies where the GMCA has demonstrated good governance and looks forward as to areas where focus should be given in relation to governance over the coming year. The GMCA's corporate governance framework is structured around the seven good governance principles set out in the 2016 CIPFA guidance (see fig.1):

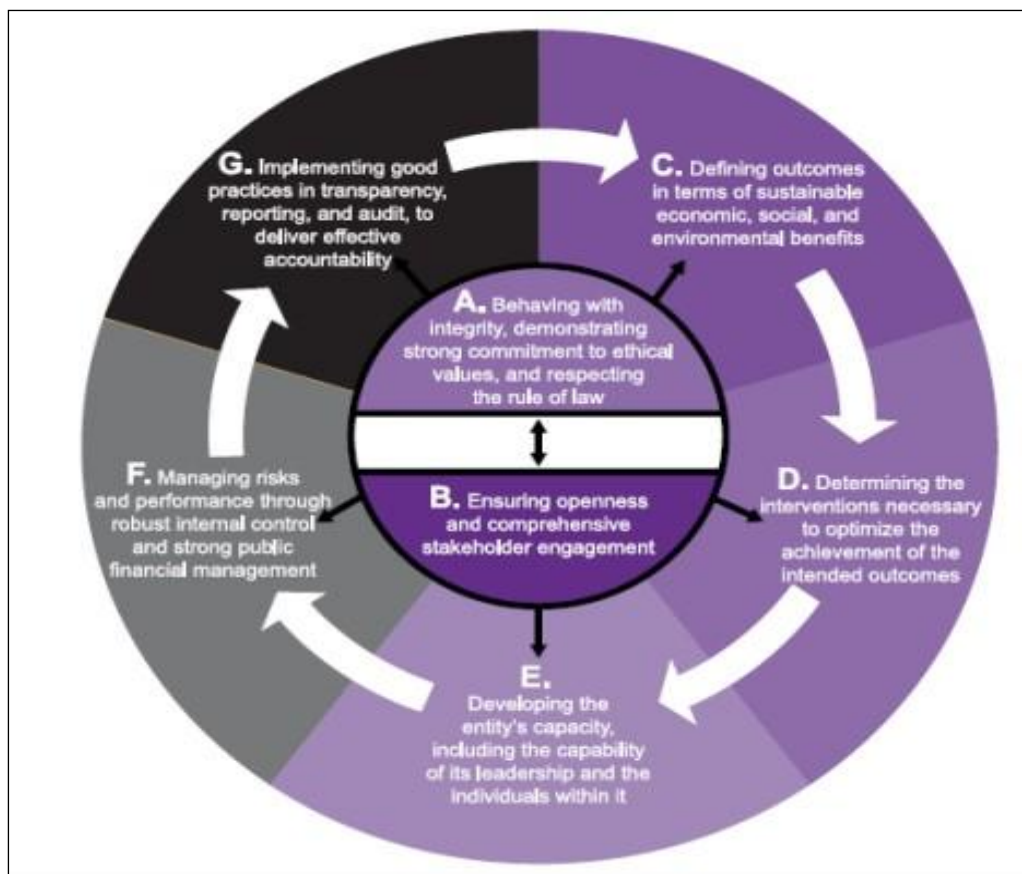


Fig.1 Seven Principles of Good Governance

LEGISLATIVE, STRATEGIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 The GMCA was established on 1 April 2011 by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Order 2011 and comprised of ten members, being the Leaders of the constituent councils. The Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham was re-elected on 4th May 2024 for a term of four years. The Mayor is the chair and 11th member of the GMCA. The Mayor also appoints the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime who has substantial delegated authority covering policing and crime. Additionally, the Mayor must also appoint a member of the GMCA to act as a Deputy Mayor and a Vice-Chair of the GMCA (currently City Mayor Paul Dennett).

2.2 Kate Green was appointed to the role of Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime on 9th January 2023 and following the mayoral election a proposal was received from Mayor Andy Burnham that Kate resume the role. This proposal was unanimously ratified at a meeting of the Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel on 14th May 2024.

2.3 All members have clear portfolio responsibilities. Listed below is the current leadership structure in Greater Manchester as of June 2025:

Member	Representing	Portfolio Responsibility
Mayor Andy Burnham	GM Mayor	Policy, Reform Transport & Health
Kate Green	Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire & Crime	Safer & Stronger Communities
Cllr Nicholas Peel	Bolton	Digital City Region
Cllr Eamonn O'Brien	Bury	Technical Education Skills & Clean Air
Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester	Economy, Business & Inclusive Growth
Cllr Arooj Shah	Oldham	Equalities & Communities

Cllr Neil Emmott	Rochdale	Culture
City Mayor Paul Dennett	Salford	Housing First (+ Deputy Mayor of the GMCA)
Cllr Mark Roberts (From May 2025) Previously Cllr Mark Hunter	Stockport	Children & Young People
Cllr Eleanor Wills (from October 2024) Previously Cllr Gerald Cooney	Tameside	Pension & Pension Fund Investments
Cllr Tom Ross	Trafford	Green City Region & Waste
Cllr David Molyneux	Wigan	Resources & Investment

2.4 Each GMCA member appointed by a constituent council appoints a substitute deputy who holds full voting rights in their absence. A request is made to each authority to appoint a member of the opposite gender where possible to help in retaining a gender balance.

2.5 On public service issues the GMCA members and the Mayor each have one vote, and generally questions are decided by a majority vote. Questions on matters requiring a vote of more than a simple majority are set out in the 2011 Order. The Mayor is required to consult members of the GMCA on his strategies. The GMCA also examines the Mayor's (non-Police and Crime) spending plans and is able to amend those plans if two-thirds of members agree to do so.

2.6 The Greater Manchester Business Board is now fully established with a remit to be as ambitious as possible, maintaining a strong business voice at the heart of city region and maximising economic growth across Greater Manchester. The Board works to a framework of GMS priorities including Innovation; Net Zero; Real Living Wage; Economic Resilience; Marketing and

International; Business Support; Investment Finance; Addressing Inequalities; and Skills.

2.7 The GMCA and the Constituent Councils are members of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). They have entered into joint arrangements, including an Operating Agreement, and the establishment of a joint committee called the AGMA Executive Board, which oversees the work and strategic direction of AGMA, leads on policy, and has delegated decision-making powers from the 10 Greater Manchester councils. AGMA has the same membership at the GMCA.

2.8 A range of statutory and non-statutory member-led committees and boards sit below the GMCA, with responsibility for overseeing work in relation to the various portfolios. The Scrutiny Function has 20 members (with 20 additional members in a substitute pool) and responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the performance of the Mayor and GMCA, and the way they work with their partners to deliver for local people, contributing to policy development in respect of high profile, complex issues affecting the whole of Greater Manchester, and investigating more complex cross-cutting issues, with a particular focus on the GMCA's forthcoming responsibilities in respect of the trailblazer, single settlement and regional devolution.

2.9 The GMCA Audit Committee, as a statutory body, plays a key role in overseeing risk management, governance systems and financial management. The Committee is represented by 4 elected members and 4 independent members to ensure an appropriate level of oversight.

2.10 A Greater Manchester Joint Audit Panel is also in place to ensure that sufficient focus is given to the resources allocated to policing, and provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes in operation within the Chief Constable's Corporation Sole and the functions of the GMCA responsible for administering the Police Fund (income, expenditure, assets, liabilities).

2.11 The GM Transport Committee was replaced in 2023/24 by the Bee Network Committee that holds an important role in developing transport policy, and advising and supporting the Constituent Councils, the GMCA and Mayor on specific transport issues. This is a strategic body, leading transport decision-making at the city regional level, and having responsibility for monitoring the performance of Greater Manchester's transport network, and the performance of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), the local government body responsible for delivering Greater Manchester's transport strategy and commitments.

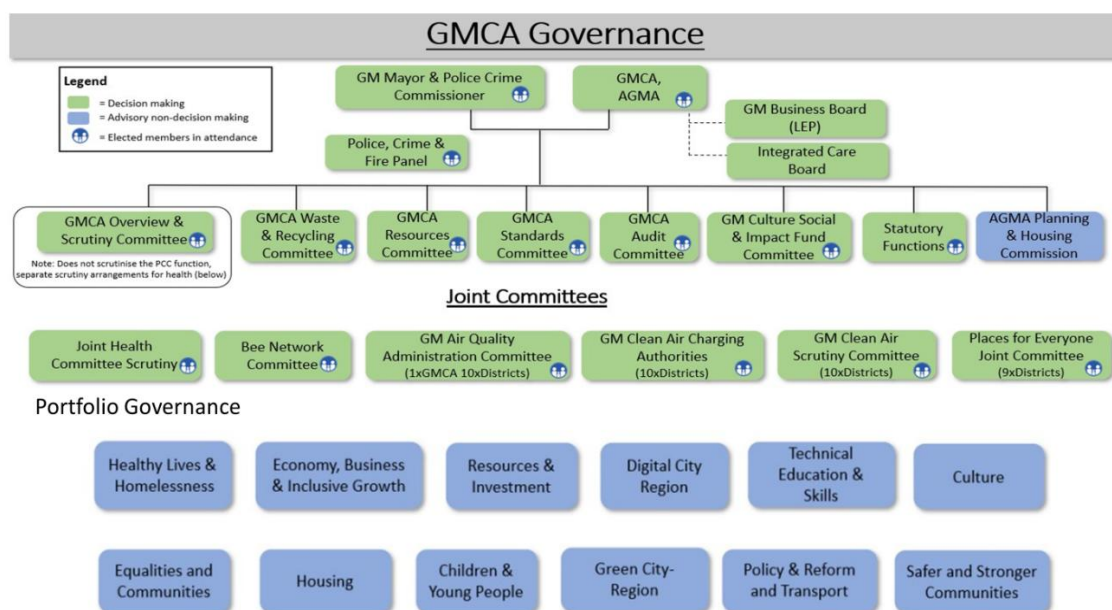


Fig.2 Governance Structure

NEW GMCA GROUP MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 In October 2024 and February 2025, the GMCA Resources Committee was presented with papers detailing the proposed revision of the GMCA Group Management Structure. The report detailed that the GCMA Group CEO, Caroline Simpson, upon taking up the role in June 2024, had undertaken engagement with Government, Local Authorities and other stakeholders which had highlighted that there was support for more integrated working across GMCA, TfGM, Local Authorities and our partners that would enable leveraging of collective skills, resources and experience to achieve more for GM and to contribute to local and national growth.
- 3.2 There was clear scope for more collaboration, alignment and efficiency across the Group that would in turn better enable coordinated engagement and collaboration with the ten local authorities, with partners in Health and with Greater Manchester Police (GMP). The scope of the GMCA Group is changing, and this was a unique moment and a timely opportunity to do things differently. The new arrangements allow for greater influence and flexibility over crucial policy areas including: transport, housing and regeneration, adult skills, employment support, the environment, economic growth, culture, data, digital, resilience and public services.
- 3.3 These changes will support enhanced governance and accountability at the GM system level by building upon close links with the Integrated Care Partnership and GMP where there are many opportunities for closer working and work already underway in terms of safety on public transport and estates planning.
- 3.4 These changes are equally relevant at the GMCA Group level, with teams across three distinct but aligned organisations, with strong commitment across teams already exploring the potential for closer working. GMCA and GMFRS operate together, sharing corporate services, systems and people. There are already a number of functions across the group (with TfGM) that operate as either a shared service, have shared resources or shared

leadership. These include Information Governance, Audit, Risk and Assurance and Strategic Communications. However, there is scope and ambition for much more to drive better outcomes for residents, communities and businesses and to gain efficiencies in the way we work.

3.5 Finally, this allows for more integration with the ten GM authorities –to truly build an integrated regional and local government structure that follows the principles of devolution and makes best use of collective expertise. Work is underway with Local Authority Chief Executives to identify how best to achieve this, particularly with regards to the current demand pressures in local services, the potential to assist in invest to save propositions, and to ensure all the GMCA Group are operating as efficiently and supportively as possible.

HMICFRS POSITION UPDATE (GMP & GMFRS)

4.1 Following removed from special measures in September 2022, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) continues to provide regular quarterly performance updates to the GM Police, Fire & Crime Panel for scrutiny. The Force also ensures accountability and ongoing reassurance to the Deputy Mayor on actions taken in response to HMICFRS reports and inspection findings by submitting regular update reports to the Deputy Mayor's Executive which receives governance support through the GMCA. During 2023/24 the Force had been subject to The PEEL Assessment 2023-2025, which found further significant improvements had been made, but that there were areas that still required further work.

4.2 Since September 2023, Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) had undergone two significant inspections conducted by HMICFRS. A periodic round 3 inspection and a thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct. The subsequent reports and feedback provided an external assessment of the progress made since the last HMICFRS inspection in 2021, as well as the cultural improvements implemented since the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer in September 2020. GMFRS's progress against previous

inspections makes it the most improved service and one of the best performing in England

4.3 To ensure that this trajectory of improvement in both services continues through appropriate local governance – the Police, Fire and Crime Panel (PFCP) continues to hold the Deputy Mayor, Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to account on all elements of performance at GMP and GMFRS. The PFCP is now established as a bi-monthly meeting (from a previous quarterly arrangement) to ensure that it has the scope to scrutinise all issues raised through its work programme, and has recently, with agreement from the Home Office, expanded its membership to incorporate a third independent member who brings further specific areas of expertise to the Panel. Additionally, the PFCP is also supported by a bi-monthly Steering Group to pick up on deep dive issues that do not fit within the Panel's work programme.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 The GMCA's Code of Corporate Governance sets out how the GMCA operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Code of Corporate Governance can be found in Part 7 (Section E) of the GMCA Constitution.¹

5.2 The Annual Governance Statement demonstrates how the GMCA is delivering its services in the right way in a timely, inclusive and accountable manner and will be certified by the GMCA Group Chief Executive and the Mayor, after consideration of the draft by the GMCA Audit Committee. GMCA's external auditor reviews the Annual Governance Statement as part of the assessment of their value for money responsibilities.

¹ [GMCAConstitution2023Final.docx.pdf \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

5.3 The GMCA's governance framework comprises the legislative requirements, principles, management systems and processes – including the GMCA's Constitution, Operating Agreement and Protocols – and cultures and values through which the Authority exercises its leadership, fulfils its functions, and by which it is held accountable for its decisions and activities.

5.4 The appendices of this document describe how the GMCA fulfils the requirements set out in the seven principles of good governance.

AUDIT & STANDARDS ACTIVITY 2024/25

GMCA Audit Committee and Joint Audit Panel (Police and Crime)

6.1 The GMCA Audit Committee is responsible for overseeing the effective operation of the systems of governance including risk management, internal control, and treasury management. It is a legal requirement for the GMCA to have an Audit Committee as this also ensures a high standard of openness and transparency. The Committee met four times during 2024/25. Meetings covered a variety of matters in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference.

6.2 The GMCA Audit Committee oversees all aspects of the GMCA including Mayoral functions. In line with the Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice, the Mayor has also established a Greater Manchester Joint Audit Panel (Police and Crime) which oversees the control environment of the Chief Constable and the GMCA (Police and Crime) functions, performing the functionality of an Audit Committee. The Panel assists the Mayor in discharging his statutory responsibilities to hold the Chief Constable to account and to help deliver an effective policing service. To minimise duplication and bureaucracy and to maximise value for money shared internal audit arrangements are in place to support the Mayor and the Chief Constable. The GMCA Audit Committee receives the minutes of the Joint Audit Panel as part of its agenda and receives the

annual report of the Chair of the Joint Audit Panel. These arrangements were reviewed in 2023/24 and the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference were reviewed to ensure that the responsibilities for the two Committees are clear.

Head of Internal Audit Annual Opinion 2024/25

- 6.3 Based on the work undertaken by Internal Audit in respect of 2024/25, the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit is that **Reasonable Assurance** is provided on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of GMCA's framework of governance, risk management and internal control. This opinion remains unchanged from last year, reflecting that the general control environment remains mostly stable against the backdrop of significant organisational change.
- 6.4 There was no strong evidence of systemic failures or fundamental weaknesses in the core systems of internal control. This opinion is provided based upon the findings of the audit work undertaken during the year and consideration of other reliable sources of assurance received. It is reflective of the evolving maturity of risk management arrangements in place within GMCA.
- 6.5 The opinion needs to be viewed in an organisational context as GMCA goes through a strategic transformation programme and significant changes in terms of how it operates as it responds to Integrated Settlement/Trailblazer devolution and delivering on the ambitions of the Group including GMFRS and TfGM.

Internal Audit Effectiveness and Compliance with Global Internal Audit Standards

- 6.6 The Head of Internal Audit must confirm annually that the internal Audit Service conforms with the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) UK-Public Sector (Previously the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

(PSIAS)). The new standards were published in January 2025 and came into force in April 2025.

- 6.7 In line with the standards, an external quality assessment (EQA) of the Internal Audit Function was last undertaken in 2021/22 which concluded that the service complied with PSIAS with a small number of recommendations for improvement which were built into subsequent Internal Audit Improvement Plans. The next EQA is due to take place in 2026/27.
- 6.8 During 2024/25 and in readiness for the implementation of the GIAS UK - Public Sector, Internal Audit conducted a gap analysis to support the transition to the new standards from April 2025. Whilst these are not fundamental changes, Internal Audit has refreshed its Audit Mandate and Charter which was presented to Audit Committee in March 2025. Further work is underway to produce the Internal Audit Strategy which will set out our vision for the service and to review the audit methodology and levels of client engagement.
- 6.9 A self-assessment of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Function was completed in 2024/25 by the Head of Internal Audit. The assessment considered:
- IA team structure and resourcing.
 - The extent of conformance with the PSIAS in producing quality work.
 - Delivering audit work in the most appropriate areas on a prioritised (risk) basis.
 - Audit Committee reporting.
 - Progress in implementing the actions arising from the EQA.
 - Implementation of Internal Audit recommendations.
- 6.10 The assessment concluded that the internal audit Function is effective and has operated in compliance with PSIAS for 2024/25.

6.11 The GMCA has a Standards Committee to deal with matters of conduct and ethical standards regarding members of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and its committees should they arise. It also provides a reviewing function for key policies in relation to the behaviour and actions of elected members whilst serving in their Greater Manchester capacities. The Committee met in 24/25 to consider refreshes of the Members Code of Conduct and the Gifts & Hospitality register in line with their current work programme.

PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE 2023/24 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Action Identified in 2023/24	Progress Made
Carry out an exercise to demonstrate the organisation's compliance with the Local Government Association's 'Improvement and Assurance Framework for Local Government'. Subsequently developing an action plan to address any gaps in compliance.	A single assurance framework has been developed in 2024/25 in preparation for the Integrated Settlement. This has taken into consideration the Improvement and Assurance Framework and the English Devolution Accountability Framework. At the time of writing, we are awaiting MHCLG approval of the framework and will further develop it as our arrangements for the Integrated Settlement further develop.
Continue to develop robust governance around devolution.	The GM devolution deal emphasises that the GMCA commits to building a culture of greater scrutiny and accountability through a number of proposals, including robust scrutiny, audit and Police, Fire & Crime Panel functions. This culture of scrutiny was further strengthened through the ability to remunerate Overview & Scrutiny members for their work

	following our Independent Review undertaken in 2023. Elements which have already been embedded include the retention of members for more than one year, a full programme of information briefing to support their knowledge base, and opportunities for regular reflection. Learning has also been used to help Government shape the Scrutiny Protocol that reflects the GMCA pre-decision scrutiny model and a sustained culture of scrutiny. Another condition of the deal committed the Chair of the GMCA and other portfolio holders to attend Overview & Scrutiny, Full Council of other authorities, Mayors Question Time and Parliamentary Select Committees as appropriate.
Continue to lobby government for the adoption of the Good Landlord Charter	Following the public consultation process at the beginning of 2024 – the Good Landlord Charter Implementation Unit launched in November 2024. The governance around the implementation unit operates independently from the GMCA and GM local authorities, being

	overseen by a governing board of tenants, landlords and industry experts. The Charter was due to be officially launched by the Mayor of Greater Manchester at an event on 26th June 2025
Support the establishment of governance and oversight of the Bee Network at the neighbourhood level.	Bee Network Local Committees/Forums are now established within the majority of GM boroughs, with seven of the ten boroughs having held at least one meeting, and a number having clearly defined terms of references in place. Transport for Greater Manchester officers have worked with local authorities to help develop these forums and have attended committee meetings to present reports and update on delivery of the Bee Network. The authorities with terms of reference in place have set out clear remits around accountability and participation, as well as a defined feedback function through the local representative to the overarching GM Bee Network Committee.

Ensure fit for purpose robust governance around the newly established Greater Manchester Land Commission.	The Land Commission has provided a strategic link between Greater Manchester and Governmental Departments/Non-Departmental public bodies to identify and facilitate the use of the public estate to support national and local policy objectives. It is intended that this will improve and enhance the effective use of the public estate by unlocking land and property for: • Housing delivery • Economic growth • Transformation of public services across the conurbation • Green sustainability and community benefits Working with colleagues from the Information and Governance team, a data sharing agreement will be produced between the GMCA and stakeholders, which will facilitate the sharing site of information to progress the objectives outlined.
Implementation of all best practice arising from the Scrutiny Protocol, ensuring that the organisation remains an exemplar authority in terms of its robust scrutiny processes.	The GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee is comprised of twenty members and twenty substitute members. They are representative of the ten local authority areas in GM and take responsibility for pre-

	decision scrutiny on GM policy development, informed by local knowledge and an understanding of GM-wide strategy and activity. Their work is supported by a dedicated scrutiny function within the GMCA which provided the template for and continues to adhere to the government's Scrutiny Protocol for devolved bodies offering a guideline for other Combined Authority areas. The GM Scrutiny Committee oversees its own work programme and meets monthly to consider key reports and policies in advance of them being taken through the decision-making process. This is supported by a programme of regular topical briefings which provide members with an overview of all areas of work across the GMCA. The final aspect of the model is the ability for members to select a complex topic which requires a deep-dive approach where expert witnesses can be brought in to help the task and finish group form its recommendations.
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	The role of scrutiny is further strengthened by the seat provided for the Chair of the Committee (who is of a different political party to the GM Mayor) at the GMCA meeting, where this individual is able to report on the recommendations of the pre-policy scrutiny activity. Members of the GMCA, including the GM Mayor are invited to attend alongside reports within their portfolio area to provide political oversight and respond to members questions. Performance monitoring is undertaken against the Greater Manchester Strategy and will be done against the outcomes framework for the Integrated Settlement going forward. All funding streams are subject to the GMCA's scrutiny and overview processes which includes internal and external audit processes. There remains the ambition to continue to seek ways of improving our model, such as the establishment of our first cross-committee task and finish review, inviting collaboration from members of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel
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	and GM Joint Health Scrutiny on a subject which spans their remits and multiple portfolio areas.
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AREAS FOR FOCUS IN 2025/26

Good Governance Principle	Action	Lead(s)/GMCA Officer Lead
B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement C: Defining Outcomes in Terms of Sustainable, Economic, Social, and Environmental Benefits G: Implementing Good Practices in Transparency, Reporting, and Audit, to Deliver Effective Accountability	<i>That work take place on the development of an appropriate governance structure around the establishment of GM rail reform and devolution.</i>	Group Monitoring Officer <i>Group Chief Executive</i>
A: Behaving with Integrity, Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values, and Respecting the Rule of Law C: Defining Outcomes in Terms of Sustainable, Economic, Social, and Environmental Benefits D: Determining the Interventions Necessary to Optimise the	<i>Ensure appropriate oversight is in place to monitor the implementation of the recommendations arising from ‘In Her Shoes’ – the recent review of safety of women and girls on GM public transport.</i>	Deputy Head of Governance <i>Group Monitoring Officer</i>

Achievement of the Intended Outcomes		
B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement C: Defining Outcomes in Terms of Sustainable, Economic, Social, and Environmental Benefits G: Implementing Good Practices in Transparency, Reporting, and Audit, to Deliver Effective Accountability	<i>Ensure that an appropriate governance structure is in place to support the devolution of post-16 skills, including the Manchester Baccalaureate</i>	Director Education, Work & Skills <i>Deputy Chief Executive</i>
E: Developing the Entity's Capacity, Including the Capability of its Leadership and the Individuals within it G: Implementing Good Practices in Transparency, Reporting, and Audit, to Deliver Effective Accountability	<i>That the Standards Committee will be asked to review areas of the constitution that have not recently been subject to review - for example the member officer protocol</i>	Group Monitoring Officer <i>Group Chief Executive</i>
B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement	<i>Ensure that all Bee Network forums are fully established with clear feedback mechanisms to the GMCA Bee Network Governance in place.</i>	Group Monitoring Officer <i>Group Chief Executive</i>
C: Defining Outcomes in Terms of	<i>Ensure that appropriate oversight is in place to monitor and review</i>	Group Monitoring Officer

Sustainable, Economic, Social, and Environmental Benefits D: Determining the Interventions Necessary to Optimise the Achievement of the Intended Outcomes	<i>the implementation of the new Greater Manchester Strategy</i>	<i>Group Chief Executive</i>
G: Implementing Good Practices in Transparency, Reporting, and Audit, to Deliver Effective Accountability	<i>Demonstrating and evidencing of conformance with the GIAS standards for Internal Audit</i>	Head of Internal Audit <i>Deputy Director Audit & Assurance</i>

SUMMARY

- 9.1 The GMCA has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to best practice and good corporate governance within the principles of the framework, shown through a pro-active adoption of this framework and delivery of the improvements suggested in the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24.
- 9.2 As the organisation moves forward in 2025 and 2026, the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy will be key in leading on its strategic direction and values. There is a strong focus on delivery with robust arrangements put in place to monitor delivery, performance and risk, underpinned by strong governance arrangements, which are designed to support this delivery. The new national government will continue to have a significant impact on the trajectory and future economic plans for the region, and the GMCA and its partners across the public, private and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors will seek to use this opportunity to truly deliver on its longer-term ambitions to ensure that Greater Manchester is a region in which no resident feels left behind.

9.3 The Trailblazer & Single Settlement Devolution Deal will be a hugely significant development for the region, giving the ability to create the country's first integrated technical education city-region, creating a region that delivers outcomes for both young people and employers, through a new partnership board with the Department for Education. More influence on regional rail services to deliver a London-style integrated public transport system - the Bee Network – by 2030. £150m of brownfield funding and powers to underpin the new Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter, which aims to raise standards in the social and private rented sectors; and a single funding settlement similar to Scotland and Wales - the first time such a flexible grant has been given to an English region. It will be vital to continue to ensure the most robust governance arrangements are in place to deliver the opportunities within this for the residents of Greater Manchester.

Signed by.....

Signed by.....

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester and Caroline Simpson,
Group Chief Executive on behalf of Members and Senior Officers of Greater
Manchester Combined Authority.

Date.....

Appendix – CIPFA SOLACE – Good Governance Principles

A. BEHAVING WITH INTEGRITY, DEMONSTRATING STRONG COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL VALUES, AND RESPECTING THE RULE OF LAW

The GMCA reviewed and updated its Constitution during 2024 and was agreed by the CA in July 2024, to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate. An external review was currently being undertaken to ensure that the constitution remains fit for purpose. The Constitution incorporates an Operating Agreement between the GMCA and the ten Constituent Councils, which governs the exercise of concurrent functions.

The GMCA Standards Committee meets as required and deals with matters of conduct and ethical standards of GMCA Members.

A Code of Conduct for Officers and for Members form part of the GMCA Constitution. The Code of Conduct for Members is reviewed annually by the Standards Committee. The GMCA Standards Committee has the ability to undertake a review should any member of the GMCA or its committees fail to adhere to the Code. Each member receives an annual reminder of their duties under the Code.

A Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure is in place, which has been reviewed and updated in February 2023. Information on how to report concerns are easily located on both the external facing website and the staff intranet. An Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy forms part of the Constitution.

The Complaints Procedure was updated in December 2023 to ensure that it is in line with the latest guidance from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. Information on how to submit complaints pertaining to each individual area of the GMCA's remit, the process, and relevant FAQs are provided on the external website.

Declarations of Interest is a standard agenda item on all GMCA meetings, minutes from which are published on the external website, and members are asked to

complete a register of their personal and pecuniary interests on an annual basis. These are uploaded to each councillor's individual portfolio via the GMCA's governance portal and are also viewable on the website. A review of member/officer relations also took place during 2022/23 which added further clarity around interactions through social media, impartiality and the rights of members to inspect GMCA documents.

A Greater Manchester Independent Ethics Committee² is in place to help build trust and public confidence in policing. The Committee advises the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and Greater Manchester Police on the complex dilemmas that policing faces in the modern world. The committee has been given a wide remit, with GMP pledging to give access to the service's systems and people. When established, it was the first of its type in the country. The committee decides which issues it wants to consider, as well as having issues referred in by both GMP and the Deputy Mayor. Members of the public can raise issues with the committee - but it does not consider individual complaints about police. The committee considers both broad thematic issues - such as discrimination, safe drug use, and surveillance - and practical day-to-day issues, such as the use of body-worn cameras by police officers.

'Role of the Monitoring Officer' is a statutory role under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Monitoring Officer is to report on matters they believe are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration; to be responsible for matters relating to the conduct of members; and to be responsible for the operation of the Constitution.

Areas for Focus in 2025/26

- Ensure appropriate oversight is in place to monitor the implementation of the recommendations arising from 'In Her Shoes' – the recent review of safety of women and girls on GM public transport.

² [Ethics Committee - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ethics-committee)

B. ENSURING OPENNESS AND COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Meetings of the GMCA and its committees are live-streamed and retained for later viewing by all members of the public via the Civico portal. GMCA Committee agendas, reports, and minutes are published on the GMCA website. Inspection Copies of papers for each meeting are kept in reception at the GMCA's offices at the Tootal Buildings and the entrance foyer to the building.

The GMCA website includes publication of all Key Decisions, Officer and Mayoral Decisions, and Forthcoming Decisions. Reports for GMCA Committees are released into the public domain unless specifically excluded for items that are private and confidential; such reports must be marked Part B, and justification for keeping a decision confidential must be provided.

The GMCA is committed to ensuring that public meetings are DDA compliant, and all venues have now been confirmed as compliant – this includes the use of hearing loops and the ability to produce agenda papers in alternative formats if requested. Work is taking place during 2025 to ensure that the GMCA Boardroom is an appropriate venue for most Committees of the GMCA going forward – this allows for consistency in public knowledge of where meetings are taking place. The overarching GMCA meeting however will continue to take place across the ten GM authorities throughout the year, offering the best opportunity to all residents of the region to be able to attend a meeting in their borough.

The GMCA runs a Consultation Hub website to ensure that local residents are able to actively engage with decisions and projects. Recent consultations included topics such as asking for public views on GM's Night Time Economy, a Business and Employer Travel Survey, and surveying the public on the further evolution of the Mayoral Development Corporation.

The GMCA is founded on a long-term relationship between local authorities through the previous arrangements under the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

The GMHSCP Board was replaced by the GM Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) on 1 July 2022. This is one of two statutory components of an Integrated Care System, alongside the Integrated Care Board.

The ICP contains three key features:

1. The forum that brings the ICB and Local Authorities together and connects them to partners from other sectors
2. Responsible for producing the GM wide health and care strategy and
3. The forum in which partners can hold each other to account for meeting the strategy and improving outcomes.

By law, the ICB and each of the Local Authorities in the area of the Integrated Care System must be represented. The minimum core membership of the GM ICP consists of the ICB Chair and elected members of 10 Local authorities.

In addition, the GMCA continues to maintain formal and informal partnerships through committees such as the Bee Network Committee; Planning and Housing Commission; Police, Fire and Crime Panel; GM Culture and Social Impact Fund Committee; GM Green City Region Partnership; and the GM Business Board.

The GMCA had been tasked as the lead authority for supervising the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in the GM region – the UK SPF being the domestic replacement for the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF). The GMCA UKSPF Board met quarterly with a diverse board of local stakeholders and actively delivered on a wide range of the proposals agreed within the investment plan. Confirmation had been received from MHCLG that the UKSPF would move into the Local Growth and Place pillar of the Integrated Settlement from 2025/26. The governance what would have been UKSPF activity had to move into the new Integrated Settlement governance structure meaning the winding down of the Local Partnership Board, with a final meeting taking place on 29th April 2025.

The GM VCFSE Accord ensures that there is a shared commitment and close partnership working with Greater Manchester's 16,000 VCFSE organisations.

Community engagement events regularly take place (including the GM Youth Combined Authority; the Mayor's Disabled Peoples Panel; LGBTQ+ Panel; and the Faith, Race & Women's Panel). Regular feedback mechanisms are offered through the proactive use of social media platforms and the supporting of surveys. The Mayor also holds a weekly radio phone-in event on Radio Manchester.

Areas for Focus in 2025/26

- That work take place on the development of an appropriate governance structure around the establishment of GM rail reform and devolution.
- Ensure that an appropriate governance structure is in place to support the devolution of post-16 skills, including the Manchester Baccalaureate.
- Ensure that all Bee Network forums are fully established with clear feedback mechanisms to the GMCA Bee Network Governance in place.

C. DEFINING OUTCOMES IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Greater Manchester has a long-term ambition to create a green and prosperous city-region. The Clean Air Plan, Spatial Framework and Minimum Licensing Standards plans form part of this vision, looking to offer a better quality of life for everyone living and working in the city-region.

The GM Strategy and Implementation Plan have been agreed as the overarching Strategy for all GM work. Performance against the Strategy's priorities and performance is reported to Scrutiny on a regular basis and is used to aid in shaping the work programme. The GM Strategy and information graphics used in the GM performance report describe the anticipated impacts of the delivery of the GM Strategy.

The GMCA Business Plan further defines GMCA's vision, objectives and outcomes in relation to economic, social and environmental developments within GM. The GMCA Business Plan and subsequent publications have been developed with stakeholders to ensure the organisational priorities and objectives are in line with shared ambitions.

The Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) has acted as the region's framework for its vision and priorities for a number of years. The latest version of the SMS is due to be launched in July 2025 following an extended engagement process that has emphasised the need for the SMS to focus on objectives that would create real impacts upon the lives of residents, with pledges and outcomes that will be tangible and measurable, supported by case studies and vignettes of public engagement, as well as activities that have fed the priorities and actions. There will be a continued focus on ensuring the effective delivery of the SMS priorities through strong governance arrangements, which are designed to support this delivery. Progress monitoring reports are produced for the SMS every six months, which are published as part of GMCA papers and on the SMS webpages.

Greater Manchester's long-term ambition to create a green and prosperous city region is more vital than ever given the increasing detrimental impact of climate change. Brought together, the developing Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, Clean Air Plan and Minimum Licensing Standards provide a holistic view of the city region's economic, social and environmental ambitions, looking to offer a better quality of life for everyone living and working in the city-region. Greater Manchester's Five-Year Environment Plan sets out a further suite of actions that will support the conurbation's goal of carbon neutrality by 2038.

Capital programmes for both transport and economic development schemes are assessed using a fully rounded appraisal mechanism which includes deliverability alongside social, economic and environmental considerations.

The GMCA Social Value Policy is actively applied in commissioning and procurement activities. This Policy will support commissioners to set out their procurement and contract management requirements to maximise relevant social value, and providers to develop and submit proposals.

The rising costs of living, inflation and other national & international factors have affected the trajectory and resilience of the GM economy in recent years - therefore the economic monitoring function within the Authority provides ongoing intelligence on the performance of the GM economy. This is provided through structured inputs to relevant boards and stakeholder groups (including the Combined Authority, Business Board and Economic Resilience Group). Economic monitoring is supported by a range of dashboards such as the Economy Factbook and Economic Resilience Dashboard.

Areas for Focus in 2025/26

- That work take place on the development of an appropriate governance structure around the establishment of GM rail reform and devolution.
- Ensure appropriate oversight is in place to monitor the implementation of the recommendations arising from 'In Her Shoes' – the recent review of safety of women and girls on GM public transport.

- Ensure that an appropriate governance structure is in place to support the devolution of post-16 skills, including the Manchester Baccalaureate.
- Ensure that appropriate oversight is in place to monitor and review the implementation of the new Greater Manchester Strategy

D. DETERMINING THE INTERVENTIONS NECESSARY TO OPTIMISE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTENDED OUTCOMES

The strategic, crosscutting nature of much of the GMCA's work means that delivery is often achieved through collaboration with GM partners including GMP, TfGM, the GM Integrated Care Partnership and GM Councils.

A strong evidence base is developed to underpin all decisions of the GMCA, including a robust evaluation of service delivery. One example of this is the devolved Working Well: Work and Health Programme, which helped approximately one in five of its clients into a job and the principles of which are now being used in nationally commissioned programmes.

Internal and external stakeholders are engaged through consultation on key strategies and plans – for instance the GM Strategy, Culture Strategy, and Places for Everyone – to help determine how services and other courses of action are planned and delivered. The GM Good Employment Charter which launched in January 2020 was co-designed with employers, trade unions, professional bodies and academics; and the GM Good Landlord Charter was now being developed in conjunction with Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) to deliver a scheme that will reaffirm Greater Manchester's commitment to deliver safe, decent, and affordable housing for all residents, and acknowledge that housing is fundamental to people's health and wellbeing. Following a consultation process during early 2024, the GMCA has led the development process for the Good Landlord Charter with advice and feedback from a coordinating group of stakeholders and industry experts. An Implementation Unit was subsequently commissioned in November 2024. The Implementation Unit operates independently from the GMCA or any Greater Manchester local authority and is overseen by a Governing Board of tenants, landlords, and industry experts.

To ensure robust planning that covers strategy, plans, priorities and targets, the GMCA operates a Budget Timetable including peer scrutiny from Leaders and Treasurers on each of the GMCA budgets.

Building on the findings of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission Report, the GMCA co-benefits tool requires all decisions to be taken with information provided about the likely arising impacts of the proposal, both positive and negative. As part of the completion of the co-benefits tool equalities impact assessments are also completed for any proposals which impact on people with protected characteristics.

The GMCA seeks to achieve 'social value' through service planning and commissioning. A Procurement Strategy is part of the GMCA Constitution, and this is supported by a GMCA Social Value in Procurement Policy. The GM Procurement Hub offers a centralised procurement service that can support joint commissioning across GM organisations.

An updated social value policy has been developed, with closer links to the Greater Manchester Strategy. The new policy will ensure social value plays a key role in the city region's public procurement and wider priorities, sitting at the heart of work to tackle inequalities and build a better, fairer and greener economy in Greater Manchester. The updated framework guides the delivery of social value within public sector contracts across the GMCA, individual local authorities and NHS organisations. It supports commissioners to set out their procurement and contract management requirements to maximise relevant social value, and providers to develop and submit proposals.

Areas for Focus in 2025/26

- Ensure appropriate oversight is in place to monitor the implementation of the recommendations arising from 'In Her Shoes' – the recent review of safety of women and girls on GM public transport.
- Ensure that appropriate oversight is in place to monitor and review the implementation of the new Greater Manchester Strategy

E. DEVELOPING THE ENTITY'S CAPACITY, INCLUDING THE CAPABILITY OF ITS LEADERSHIP AND THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN IT

Each Member has a clear role profile in relation to their portfolio. The assigned portfolios are published through the GMCA website, so members of the public are aware of which member of the GMCA has strategic responsibility for which area. Leaders meet regularly with senior officers in relation to their portfolio.

Member Induction Sessions are held at the beginning of each year, and Member capabilities and skills are supported through the Member development programmes. Informal briefings are provided to Members in advance of all Audit Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Group Chief Executive Officer's role includes oversight of Transport for Greater Manchester. Part 3 of the GMCA Constitution sets out a Scheme of Functions Delegated to Chief Officers and those exercisable only by the GMCA to ensure clarity over the types of decisions that are delegated and those that are reserved for collective decision making of the Board.

Changes to the GMCA Group leadership structure have been approved, which will allow for broader accountability and create better opportunities for alignment between the GMCA, GMFRS, and TfGM. This has commenced with the formalisation of a new Group Leadership Team (GLT) consisting of leaders across all three of the organisations.

Strategic management oversight and direction is provided through the Chief Executives Management Team, which is also the Incident management Group for emergencies, the Group Leadership Team. The wider Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Team and Extended Leadership Teams meet regularly to discuss and share knowledge.

A comprehensive GMCA Corporate Plan is in place and can be found on the GMCA's [website](#)³. The Corporate Plan provides insight into the city region and the

³ [Corporate Plan 2022-2025 \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

related devolution arrangements; how the GMCA works in terms of its staff, partnerships, business and governance; its business model, resources and funding arrangements; achievements and most importantly the key priorities looking forward. Additional to the Corporate Plan, an annual GMCA Business Plan is produced for organisational use. This includes the activities to be delivered through the year, with detailed Directorate Plans included. All the priorities are drawn from the GMS and monitoring performance against the GMS is delivered through the progress reports, underpinned by comprehensive performance dashboards, which are reported through the Scrutiny Committee, and to the GMCA, on a six-monthly basis.

During 2022/23, the GMCA had put itself forward as the first Combined Authority to go through the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge. The authority sought an external view on what it was doing well and what needed to improve on in order to help the authority meet its organisational objectives and make a difference to the lives of the people in Greater Manchester. In February 2023 the independent LGA peer challenge team published its final report. The report was overwhelmingly positive recognising the many strengths of GMCA, and by extension Greater Manchester as a whole. The report made 15 core recommendations where the reviewers felt there was opportunity for development, exploration of additional activities, or where collectively Greater Manchester could do something different or further than currently. It also highlighted some of the significant risks and future funding challenges. These have been captured within an action plan that fed into the GMCA Business Plan.

The GMCA has developed a GM Good Employment Charter which has continued to expand its membership and support throughout 2024/25. The GMCA itself has achieved Member status through its own excellent employment practices.

The integrated staff Personal Development Plans forming part of the enhanced HR and organisational development services continue to take place. Further initiatives include:

- The launching of a health and wellbeing area on the intranet that includes a comprehensive suite of online support, virtual learning and opportunities to have face to face support
- An expanded portfolio of e-learning modules for staff and manager including equality and diversity awareness
- The launch of Mi Learning with a suite of new and improved managerial support tools to help people managers improve their knowledge and skills
- A 'Festival of Learning' is also held several times a year, during which a series of presentations and events are held to upskill and build the knowledge base of colleagues through the organisation.
- Leadership Development Programme taking place across GMFRS
- Annual 'B-Heard' surveys are held to give colleagues a chance to share their views on how it feels to be a part of the GMCA and how they can help to shape the future of the organisation.

In order for GMCA staff to be able to work in a way that allows them to do their job effectively whilst supporting health and wellbeing needs – a flexible and hybrid Working Policy is in place.

As an employer, the GMCA prides itself as an organisation where staff are managed through their performance and contribution to organisational objectives rather than the time they are at their desk.

The GMCA is moving away from traditional methods of management by trusting and empowering our staff to deliver its organisational objectives in the best way that suits the business and their individual needs.

Areas for Focus in 2025/26

- That the Standards Committee will be asked to review areas of the constitution that have not recently been subject to review - for example the member officer protocol

F. MANAGING RISKS AND PERFORMANCE THROUGH ROBUST INTERNAL CONTROL AND STRONG PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Audit Committee is responsible for overseeing the effective operation of the systems of governance, risk and Internal control arrangements. Through the delivery of a risk-based Internal Audit Plan, Internal Audit provides independent assurance to the Committee on the adequacy and effectiveness of GMCA's control environment (framework for governance, risk management and internal control).

The Internal Audit Annual Plan is approved by the Audit Committee, and Internal Audit provide quarterly progress update reports to Audit Committee. In line with the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) Uk - Public Sector and CIPFA Code of Practice, the Head of Internal Audit produces an Annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the control environment.

GMCA has a risk management framework in place. The Deputy Director, Governance, Audit and Assurance is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the framework, supported by a Corporate Risk Manager, but ownership of risk lies within GMCA Leadership Team and within Directorates. The Corporate Risk Register consists of the Strategic Risks faced by GMCA as well as the high scoring cross-organisational and Directorate risks. This provides an organisation-wide view of the risks that require management. The GMCA Audit Committee receives quarterly updates on risk management and any significant movement and changes in the risk profile.

There is an established scrutiny / call-in process whereby any Member of Constituent Councils can refer items for possible scrutiny. Areas for the scrutiny committee to are also proposed by the Chair and other members of the committee who are the owners of the committee's work programme.

The Information Governance Transformational Change Programme has been developed to delivers transformational change across Greater Manchester. Project areas range from organisational interventions to pan GM work. All outcomes

delivered by the Change Programme are aligned to the fulfilment of the Vision of the GM Information Strategy. The GMCA Information Governance team is running this project to improve the existing processes of fulfilling information rights and transparency requirements requests in line with legislative, regulatory and best practise recommendations, as laid out with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The success of the project will build upon the developments around Information Asset Management, and will depend on management and staff across GMCA, GMFRS and TfGM (the organisations supported by the IG shared service) being receptive to, contributing to and eventually adopting the changes and activities delivered as part of this project.

GMCA's Revenue and Capital Budget and Monitoring Reports; Mayoral General Revenue and Capital Budget and Monitoring Reports; Mayoral Police and Crime Revenue and Capital Budget and Monitoring Reports; Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Outturn Reports are all subject to appropriate reviewing, scrutiny and challenge where appropriate.

G. IMPLEMENTING GOOD PRACTICES IN TRANSPARENCY, REPORTING, AND AUDIT, TO DELIVER EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparency of decision-making is achieved through live streaming key meetings, a centralised FOI process, and through the GMCA Communications Strategy.

In terms of reporting: the annual accounts with narrative introduction; GMCA Annual Performance Report; Police and Crime Annual Report; Head of Internal Audit Annual Opinion; Annual Governance Statement; and Statement of Accounts are considered by the GMCA Audit Committee and the GMCA and contained within publicly viewable agendas.

External Auditors (Mazars) produce annual reports upon the conclusion of their work. The Audit Committee has oversight on the final accounts process. Actions taken to implement External Audit Recommendations will be reported as part of a combined audit recommendations tracker for 2023/24 as part of a revised audit action tracking process.

The Annual Internal Audit Opinion sets out conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) UK – Public Sector and CIPFA Code of Practice.

Areas for Focus in 2025/26

- That work take place on the development of an appropriate governance structure around the establishment of GM rail reform and devolution.
- Ensure that an appropriate governance structure is in place to support the devolution of post-16 skills, including the Manchester Baccalaureate.
- That the Standards Committee will be asked to review areas of the constitution that have not recently been subject to review - for example the member officer protocol
- Demonstrating and evidencing of conformance with the GIAS standards for Internal Audit