

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
GMCA OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY HELD WEDNESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2025 AT
THE MECHANIC'S INSTITUTE, 103 PRINCESS STREET, MANCHESTER, M1
6DD**

PRESENT:

Councillor John Walsh	Bolton Council (Chair)
Councillor Peter Wright	Bolton Council
Councillor Imran Rizvi	Bury Council
Councillor Basil Curley	Manchester City Council
Councillor Mandie Shilton Godwin	Manchester City Council
Councillor Colin McLaren	Oldham Council
Councillor Ken Rustidge	Oldham Council
Councillor Maria Brabiner	Salford City 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 Nathan Evans	Trafford Council
Councillor Will Jones	Trafford Council
Councillor Mary Callaghan	Wigan Council

ALSO PRESENT:

Andy Burnham	Mayor of Greater Manchester
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Laura Blakey	Director of Strategic Finance & Investment, GMCA
Karen Chambers	Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Mia Crowther	Strategic Planning Lead, TfGM
Martin Lax	Transport Strategy Director, TfGM
Andrew McIntosh	Director of Place, GMCA
Caroline Simpson	Group Chief Executive
Nicola Ward	GMCA Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Steve Wilson	GMCA Group Chief Finance Officer

O&SC 37/25

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dylan Williams (Rochdale), Councillor Joanne Marshall (Wigan), Councillor John Leech (Manchester) and Councillor Terry Smith (Rochdale).

Apologies were also noted from Vernon Everitt, Transport Commissioner for Greater Manchester.

O&SC 38/25

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

To ensure all members had the opportunity to contribute, the Chair advised that questions should be limited to one or two per agenda item, with additional questions to be taken at the end of the meeting if time permitted.

RESOLVED /-

That the Chair's announcements be noted.

O&SC 39/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED /-

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

O&SC 40/25

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 29 OCTOBER 2025

A Member expressed concern that £100m had been spent on the Clean Air Zone in Greater Manchester, amid significant speculation in the press and among residents, with signage still visible across the region. The Member considered the response given at the last meeting to be unsatisfactory and stated that the Committee should continue to press for further scrutiny, as failure to do so would undermine its purpose.

The Chair reminded members of the guidance previously provided by the Group Monitoring Officer, noting that the Air Quality Administration Joint Committee and the Clean Air Scrutiny Joint Committee remain active and retain responsibility for conducting an in-depth review of the Clean Air Zone, including its costs, contractual obligations, and impact on boroughs. Consequently, it would not be appropriate to incorporate such a review into the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme at this time. The Chair also informed members that a meeting had been scheduled with the Chair of the Audit Committee to clarify its role regarding such matters, and he would report back to members in due course if it was felt that further audit assurances were required.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the minutes of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 October 2025 be approved as a correct and accurate record.
2. That an update regarding Clean Air Zone spend would be provided.

Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), introduced the report which provided an update for Members on the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2050 and Transport Delivery Plan (2027-2037) and the proposed new statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP). He added that these aligned with the priorities set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) and the emerging GMS Delivery Plan. It was noted that the GM Transport Strategy 2050 and Delivery Plan outlined how Greater Manchester (GM) would develop the Bee Network and the wider transport network to 2050 enabling a transport system for a global city region.

The Chair reminded Members that the document under consideration was for the whole of the city region and advised that any issues specific to individual local authorities should be properly discussed at district level to ensure feedback could be provided during the consultation period. It was noted that there would be a 12-week consultation period for the entire document.

Officers advised that the aim of the initiative was to develop the Bee Network as a transport system for a global city region, making it easier for residents to travel across the conurbation for employment, education, and leisure opportunities. It was emphasised that transport was fundamentally about connecting people and places. It was explained that the objective was to deliver an integrated transport system and whereas transport modes had previously operated separately, the new approach would bring these modes together, enabling seamless movement for passengers between trains, trams, buses, and potentially other modes in the future.

Officers outlined that the document set out how the outcomes from the GMS would be achieved through the Transport Delivery Plan, which would run from 2027 to 2037 to align with the Government funding cycle. It was noted that the plan was supported by a number of policy documents, an evidence base, and an integrated

assessment. Thanks were recorded to district colleagues for their significant contribution to developing both the policies and the delivery plan, which would enable the opportunities identified. Subject to Combined Authority approval at the end of the week, the process would move into consultation and engagement. Members were advised that a 12-week public consultation on the strategy would commence in December, including opportunities for feedback from the public, stakeholder groups, and Members. Engagement would take place through various platforms, events, drop-in sessions, and communications. Following consultation, the plan would be finalised and brought back for approval by all ten districts and the Combined Authority, with the anticipated timeline for completion being next summer.

Members expressed concern about the ambition for the 'right mix' of transport modes, particularly the proportion of private car use. It was suggested that the current target of 50% was too high and should be reviewed, given the limitations on road space and the impact of car ownership on public transport uptake. Members noted that the proposed figure of 38% of neighbourhood trips by car remained problematic, as these trips contributed to congestion and pavement parking, which obstructed walking and cycling. Officers advised that the ambition was to achieve a 50:50 split between public transport and car trips by 2040, ten years earlier than the strategy's long-term horizon. Current figures were around 38% public transport and 62% car use, with progress toward 60:40. Policies within the strategy, alongside the Bee Network and active travel initiatives, aimed to make public transport more attractive and increase walking and cycling for short local journeys. It was noted that these measures were expected to deliver significant change, including one million additional public transport trips per day, and officers confirmed that targets were both realistic and ambitious.

Members highlighted the need for the document to address HS2 and its implications for the strategy. Officers acknowledged Members' concerns regarding HS2 and confirmed ongoing engagement with central Government following the cancellation of Phase 2. They advised that discussions continued on Northern Powerhouse Rail, linking Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Hull, and Newcastle, and

proposals had been submitted to address capacity issues on the North–South route once HS2 services terminate in Birmingham. Clarity from Government on future plans was still awaited.

Members noted long-standing challenges in securing step-free access at existing stations and welcomed its inclusion in the strategy. They sought further detail on plans for new stations and asked for confirmation that all future stations would include step-free access from the outset. Officers confirmed that a programme was underway to deliver step-free access at a number of stations across GM using both local and national funding, noting that reliance on the national programme alone would significantly delay progress. Officers advised that all new stations would include step-free access from the outset.

Members acknowledged the significant work undertaken but expressed strong disappointment that the strategy did not address safety concerns for women and girls. It was felt that there was a serious omission relating to the feeling of safety when travelling on the Bee Network. Having undertaken a task and finish review on the very topic last year, members were disappointed to not see this as a fundamental and integral part of the Plan. The Committee's review was clear, that as 51% of Greater Manchester's population are female, it's imperative that they feel safe on public transport to enable us to reach our other ambitions for increased patronage, less dependence on the car etc.

Members emphasised that safety considerations must be embedded from the outset of transport planning and reflected within the plan. Officers acknowledged the concerns raised and agreed that the issue was significant and needed to be addressed. Officers confirmed that the matter would be reviewed and incorporated before the document progressed further, noting that the deep dive had highlighted its importance and that there was still time to make the necessary changes.

Members raised concerns about a lack of ambition within the strategy, noting that the 15-year timescale did not align with GM's carbon-neutral target for 2038.

Members stressed the need for stronger measures to increase bus use, including prioritising buses over cars and considering bus lanes where possible. It was also

highlighted that residents should have a say in shaping local routes to ensure services meet community needs. Officers advised that achieving a 50:50 split between public transport and car use would represent a significant step change. While pushing beyond this target would require substantial restrictions on car use, the strategy focused on a 'carrot' approach by providing high-quality, attractive alternatives to encourage modal shift. Officers confirmed that bus prioritisation measures, including bus lanes and priority routes, were already being implemented across GM and would continue as part of the delivery plan. Officers noted the importance of Bee Network forums for community engagement and acknowledged feedback that their effectiveness varied across areas. Officers agreed to review consistency and explore ways to ensure all communities can engage fully, with further discussions to take place outside the meeting with key representatives.

Members expressed concern that the engagement process underpinning the strategy did not reflect a participatory approach and felt the document lacked representation of diverse lived experiences. It was noted that consultation, as currently planned, risked being inaccessible to local communities and overly technical. Members stressed that future engagement should adopt a bottom-up approach, similar to other GMCA initiatives such as Live Well, and ensure community voices shape long-term transport planning. Members questioned whether the approach should be reconsidered before proceeding to consultation. Officers acknowledged the points raised regarding community engagement and agreed to review how the approach could better reflect lived experiences. Officers confirmed they would seek background from the Live Well team to understand their successful bottom-up engagement model and consider how similar principles could be applied to the transport strategy.

Members urged that towns not explicitly referenced in the strategy not be overlooked, leading to further marginalisation. It was felt that while strategic priorities were clear, areas outside these priorities might only see marginal improvements. Members requested assurance that all localities would benefit and that a stronger local focus be incorporated into the plan. Officers addressed concerns about forgotten towns and confirmed that the strategy was intended for

the whole of GM, ensuring all areas benefited from good growth. Officers highlighted that significant work had been undertaken with district colleagues to identify the right locations and priorities, and emphasised that the strategy aimed to improve transport for all users across the region.

Members asked for an example of a recommendation from a local Bee Network forum that had led to a tangible improvement or meaningful change within the Bee Network. Officers confirmed that Bee Network forums had influenced changes to bus services, including service enhancements. While specific examples could not be provided during the meeting, Officers undertook to share details of these improvements following the meeting.

Members requested further details on the vision for late-night services within the Bee Network, noting the importance of connectivity both for travel from the city centre during late hours and for links across districts. Officers advised that the GM Mayor had set an ambition to introduce late-night services in every district during his term. While initial focus had been on routes serving Manchester city centre and major town centres, services had already been launched in Wigan and Bolton. Officers noted the importance of catering for workers in sectors operating 24 hours, such as hospitals and distribution centres, and confirmed that assessments for additional nighttime routes were ongoing.

Members asked whether GM taxi licensing was a priority within the strategy and requested clarification on how it would be delivered. Officers advised that discussions were ongoing with Government regarding the ability to introduce a GM-wide taxi licensing system. This would ensure that all taxis operating in the city-region met consistent minimum standards. Officers confirmed that proposals were being considered as part of the current devolution bill, alongside work with the Department for Transport, to enable GM to set and enforce local licensing requirements rather than relying on operators licensed outside the area.

Members noted that the GM School Travel Strategy did not include a commitment to School Streets for primary schools and suggested this should be incorporated.

Members felt this was an important measure to reduce short car journeys of under a mile and encourage active travel. Officers acknowledged the suggestion for a School Street at every primary school and agreed it was an ambitious goal. Officers advised that delivery would be through the School Streets programme but noted this required agreement with individual schools and districts, and as a result implementation would take time.

Members asked how improvements to walking and wheeling routes would be delivered and raised concerns about accessibility for disabled people, particularly wheelchair users. They highlighted inconsistent provision of dropped kerbs across GM, noting good coverage in the city centre but significant gaps in some districts, and queried whether a standardised approach would be introduced. Officers advised that walking and wheeling were fundamental to the strategy, ensuring people can access community facilities and move easily. Officers confirmed that dropped kerbs formed part of the adopted Design Street Well Guide and were being delivered in partnership with district highway authorities. These measures would be incorporated into improvement schemes and targeted in areas with identified demand.

Members asked for clarification on funding and investment, including where the greatest risks lay and what measures were within GMCA's control to mitigate them. Officers advised that funding remained a significant challenge, with ambitions exceeding available resources for both network operations and capital investment. Operational funding was reviewed annually through the GMCA's budgeting process, while capital funding was largely dependent on central Government allocations. Officers noted that the first phase of the capital programme was supported by the Transforming Cities Fund, providing £250m for transport improvements between March 2027 and March 2032. Risks associated with network growth and infrastructure renewal were acknowledged, and mitigation measures were considered as part of ongoing financial planning.

Members sought clarity on how the strategy would address persistent congestion hotspots, while reallocating space for buses and active travel without adversely

impacting key business and freight routes. Officers acknowledged concerns about congestion hotspots and confirmed that these were considered when developing bus and active travel schemes. Officers emphasised the need to balance public transport and active travel priorities with maintaining highway capacity for essential journeys, including business and freight. Schemes would be designed to ensure sufficient capacity remained while delivering improvements for sustainable travel.

Members raised concerns about cycling safety and asked how the strategy would make cycling a realistic and safer option for more people. They noted the commitment to develop a strategic cycle network and queried how lessons from other regions and historic routes could inform improvements, including better connectivity to green spaces and across districts. Officers acknowledged the challenges of cycling in areas such as Oldham and confirmed that the strategy aimed to make cycling viable for appropriate journeys. Officers advised that measures included improving access to local transport hubs, enabling bikes on trams, and providing facilities such as segregated cycle routes where possible. Officers emphasised the importance of supporting cyclists with infrastructure that addresses physical barriers and enhances connectivity across GM.

Members again highlighted the importance of addressing the issue of safety of women and girls, particularly during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, and requested that GMCA publicly acknowledge its commitment to improving safety for women and girls. Members stressed that safety must be embedded within the vision for GM and noted that, within the seven workstreams, 'Safer and Stronger Communities' currently appears at the bottom of the list, which they felt did not reflect its importance.

Members reflected on the historic impact of the Beeching Report, which led to significant rail closures and a shift of freight from rail to road. Members asked whether the current strategy included measures to reverse this trend by moving more freight off congested roads and onto rail, and how the rail network could be strengthened to support this ambition. Officers confirmed that work was underway to explore opportunities for shifting freight from road to rail across GM. Officers

noted that new rail capacity and expanded facilities would be essential to enable this transition and advised that options for increasing rail freight capability were being actively developed.

Members noted the imbalance in employment between the north and south of GM and suggested that the strategy should support economic growth in northern districts to reduce the need for long commutes. Members highlighted the importance of strengthening the rail network, reopening stations, and improving connectivity both within GM and to neighbouring cities such as Leeds and Liverpool, calling for an integrated approach that looks inward and outward. Officers noted the employment imbalance between north and south GM and highlighted significant proposals at Atom Valley between Bury and Rochdale. Officers confirmed that plans included delivering appropriate public transport infrastructure, such as bus connectivity, walking and cycling routes, and Metrolink extensions, so that new jobs could be accessed by local residents. Officers confirmed that cross-boundary engagement was taking place with districts and neighbouring authorities to improve integration of ticketing and travel across administrative borders. Officers noted that while boundaries existed for governance purposes, most journeys were based on where people live and work, and the aim was to make travel seamless across the wider region.

Members highlighted the importance of rail connectivity for economic growth and asked whether the strategy would strengthen links to Yorkshire and the North East, including Sheffield, Doncaster, and Barnsley. Members stressed that improved inter-regional connections would support manufacturing and business opportunities and should be a priority alongside HS3 development. Officers confirmed that proposals for Northern Powerhouse Rail included improved connectivity from Liverpool through Manchester to Leeds, Hull, and Newcastle, and that discussions were also taking place on strengthening links to South Yorkshire, including Sheffield and Doncaster. Officers noted that capacity constraints on the rail network, particularly through Stockport and towards Sheffield, were being considered as part of these plans.

Members noted that Salford, despite being a city, did not currently have a bus station or interchange following the closure of Victoria Bus Station and asked whether there were any plans to address this in the future. Officers acknowledged that Salford currently lacked a central bus station or interchange following the closure of Victoria Bus Station. It was noted that there was a station at Eccles but provision in Salford city centre remained limited and undertook to review options for future improvements.

The Chair confirmed that the points raised by Members during the discussion would be presented robustly to the Combined Authority. He stated that some fundamental changes to the draft strategy were required before it proceeded to consultation and undertook to ensure Members' comments were rigorously reported at the meeting on Friday.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Draft GM Transport Strategy 2050 and the Draft GM Transport Delivery Plan (2027-2037)
2. That the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Draft GM Transport Strategy 2050 and the Draft GM Transport Delivery Plan (2027-2037) are noted.
3. That Officers would review the Draft GM Transport Strategy and the Draft GM Transport Delivery Plan and ensure stronger references to the safety of women and girls are included.
4. That Officers would review the consistency of Bee Network forums and explore ways to ensure all communities can engage fully with the consultation.
5. That Officers would provide Members with specific examples of recommendations from Bee Network forums that have led to service enhancements or other meaningful improvements, following the meeting.

6. That Officers would review the engagement approach for the Local Transport Plan, seek background from the Live Well team on their bottom-up model, and consider how similar principles can be applied.
7. That Officers would review options for improving bus station or interchange provision in Salford City Centre and report back on any future plans.
8. That the Chair would present Members' concerns and recommendations to the Combined Authority and ensure they are reported robustly, with emphasis on the need for fundamental changes to the draft strategy before consultation.

O&SC 42/25

GM GOOD GROWTH FUND

The GM Mayor introduced the report and provided the Committee with an overview of the proposed Good Growth Fund, highlighting a new approach to investment aimed at ensuring all boroughs benefit from growth. He explained that this strategy marked a significant shift in GM's development model, building on lessons from the first decade of devolution and responding to calls for inclusive growth across all areas. The GM Mayor emphasised that the fund would enable ambitious regeneration projects, setting higher standards for development and linking investment to social value commitments such as apprenticeships, T-Level placements, and adherence to the Good Employment Charter.

The Committee was informed that the Good Growth Fund would initially comprise over £1b of public investment, including £150m borrowing against future retained business rates, £300m from the Greater Manchester Pension Fund, and recycled funding from the Housing Investment Loans Fund. The GM Mayor noted that the Housing Investment Loan Fund had a proven track record, with no defaults and no viable schemes turned away over the past decade. He stressed that the fund would operate as a blended portfolio, using strong city-centre schemes to support more patient investment in other boroughs, with the ambition to recycle into a £10 billion fund over the next decade.

The GM Mayor further explained that this model aimed to accelerate development, attract strategic investment partners, and align with GM's transport capital pipeline. He cited Stockport Interchange as an example of how public intervention could unlock stalled schemes and deliver wider benefits. The GM Mayor assured Members that robust governance and oversight arrangements would be in place and emphasised that this was a collective approach designed to deliver good growth for all parts of GM.

Members sought clarification on the proposed £150m borrowing for the Good Growth Fund, asking where this would sit within the overall risk profile and how interest costs would be covered. Members queried whether developers would bear these costs and raised concerns about safeguarding pension investments. Concerns were expressed about ensuring fair distribution of investment across all boroughs, particularly for areas such as Wigan and Tameside. Members also highlighted that initial schedules showed a high proportion of allocations for Manchester and asked how the Committee could guarantee equity and transparency in decision-making going forward. While acknowledging the financial success of the fund, Members noted that investment had been concentrated in the city centre, leaving areas such as Tameside and Wigan lacking employment space and development opportunities. Officers explained that the £150m borrowing was secured against future retained business rates from investment zone areas, which were expected to generate significantly more than the borrowed amount, providing a prudent financial basis. Officers noted that each scheme would have a different funding mix, combining grants and commercial loans as appropriate, and details were set out in section 3 of the report. This blended approach was intended to enable delivery across all locations, including those requiring higher levels of grant support. The GM Mayor explained that, historically, it would not have been viable to deliver loans across all boroughs without significant risk. He noted that the strong growth achieved in the city over the past decade now enabled investment on a wider scale. He highlighted that recycled funding from the Housing Investment Loans Fund had supported wider housing ambitions, including funding for enforcement officers and social housing schemes and emphasised that the current

proposals represented a long-term strategy to deliver inclusive growth at the right time, leveraging GM's strengthened economic position.

Members welcomed the ambition of the growth plan and noted its potential to make GM one of the most exciting places to live. Members emphasised that success should be judged on achieving climate goals and reducing inequalities between communities. They stressed the importance of ensuring local residents benefited from new jobs and training opportunities created by the plan. Members highlighted concerns about workforce capacity to deliver multiple projects and asked how GM would accelerate skills development, particularly for residents facing barriers such as health issues or low literacy. Members requested further detail on measures to prioritise GM residents for employment and training linked to the growth programme. The GM Mayor agreed that broader goals, including green growth and good growth, must remain central to the strategy. He advised that two investment rounds per year were planned, with the first focused on place-based housing and the second, due in March, expected to include sectoral priorities such as the low-carbon and green economy. He noted that many housing schemes were likely to be low or zero carbon and undertook to provide figures to the Committee. On employment, the GM Mayor highlighted that the proposed schemes could generate around 12,000 construction jobs and stressed the importance of linking these opportunities to GM residents. He outlined plans to use social value procurement to secure apprenticeships, T-Level placements, and degree apprenticeships, alongside initiatives to support those furthest from the labour market. He emphasised that this approach would ensure local people would benefit.

Members expressed concern about the Committee's ability to provide effective scrutiny of large-scale investment schemes, noting that current processes appeared static while GMCA's functions continued to expand. Members questioned whether democratic scrutiny alone was sufficient and asked for assurances regarding independent oversight arrangements for the Good Growth Fund. The GM Mayor acknowledged the concerns raised about scrutiny and suggested that the Committee may wish to consider how its role could evolve. He noted that the Housing Investment Loans Fund had independent oversight from external experts

and confirmed that scrutiny of the Good Growth Fund would also involve more than democratic oversight. The Group Chief Executive suggested providing the Committee with a short note outlining the assessment methodology and the level of independent financial scrutiny already embedded in GMCA's processes to offer assurance. She noted that the current approach included a robust methodology and expert oversight, which had been tested through previous legal challenges, and confirmed confidence in these arrangements while remaining committed to transparency.

Members asked whether there was any opportunity to use the Good Growth Fund to invest in green infrastructure beyond transport projects. The GM Mayor advised that that future reporting should provide the Committee with early sight of schemes ahead of CA approval, including detailed information on how each proposal meets 'good growth' criteria. This should cover social housing delivery, climate considerations such as low-carbon or passive design, and wider infrastructure needs. He emphasised the importance of integrating flood resilience and green infrastructure into development plans and called for a more consolidated approach with strategic partners to avoid piecemeal investment.

Members raised concerns about water management and noted that, unlike other areas, there was limited devolution of responsibilities and funding for flood and coastal management. They highlighted constraints within Environment Agency funding and suggested that this issue should be addressed at a national level. The GM Mayor noted that GM would be writing to the Minister to request a review of current flood and coastal investment arrangements, which were considered outdated. He acknowledged internal lobbying for specific schemes, such as one in Wigan, and emphasised the need for a more modern, regional approach to water management funding.

Members welcomed the progress being made in Wigan and highlighted the positive impact of the growth plan, including apprenticeships, Live Well initiatives, and pension fund involvement. Members noted strong interest from trade unions and emphasised the importance of ensuring housing developments include social and

affordable homes, as well as low-carbon and green standards. The GM Mayor thanked Members for their comments and welcomed the proposed Cottonworks development in Wigan noting its contribution to housing and employment growth, including 180 homes and 80,000 sq ft of commercial space. He praised local companies for taking the initiative and highlighted the importance of continued investment to support regeneration across GM.

Members reflected positively on the Committee's past scrutiny work and its role in building investor confidence in GM. They emphasised the importance of maintaining strong oversight as the Good Growth Fund progresses, ensuring equitable investment across all boroughs and delivering benefits for local communities. Members noted that while the £150m borrowing was modest and manageable, future scrutiny must remain robust to uphold transparency and fairness. The GM Mayor noted that the Good Growth Plan represented an evolution of GM's existing model rather than a departure. He emphasised that the strategy was built on proven methods while deepening partnerships with boroughs and setting higher ambitions. He added that bold investment was necessary to change perceptions of places and reduce risk, provided it was managed prudently.

Members raised questions about ownership and funding arrangements, noting that many Registered Providers currently relied on Homes England for support. Members asked whether the proposal to involve Homes England as a strategic partner was intended to secure the development pipeline and reduce the need for repeated funding applications. Members also requested an update on initial discussions and how this partnership was expected to work in practice. The GM Mayor reported that initial discussions had taken place with Homes England to explore a more collaborative approach to funding, aimed at reducing duplication and delays. He explained that the intention was to agree outcomes at a strategic level, such as affordable and social housing targets, while maintaining accountability for delivery. He noted that the partnership was not yet finalised but highlighted opportunities for Homes England to support the Good Growth Fund, including through the forthcoming National Housing Bank for scheme guarantees.

Members welcomed the ambition of the growth plan and highlighted examples such as Prestwich Village, Atom Valley, and Bury Interchange, noting their potential to deliver significant housing and employment opportunities. Members expressed strong support for these initiatives but raised concerns about the long-term retention of business rates and asked what risks might arise if future governments changed the current arrangements. Officers explained that the borrowing was secured against the current agreement with Government, which guarantees 25 years of business rate retention without reset for designated investment zones. This provided certainty, as the borrowing was based on confirmed income rather than speculative future growth or policy changes. Officers added that the scheme would continue to evolve, exploring ways to share and recycle value with Government to reinvest in GM. The GM Mayor highlighted the importance of providing the Committee with early visibility of future investment rounds and detailed reporting on each scheme's contribution to 'good growth'. This should include metrics such as social housing delivery, climate performance and supporting infrastructure. He noted that presenting the full pipeline would help demonstrate how projects complement each other and strengthen confidence in the overall strategy.

RESOLVED /-

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the GM Good Growth Fund report and note the recommendations which will be considered by the GMCA at its meeting on the 28 November 2025 as below.

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note progress made in developing the GM Good Growth Fund and GM Integrated Pipeline since the original launch in May;
2. Agree the revised approach to investment and note the emerging governance process;
3. Note the intention that the revised approach to investment will be supported by the GM Good Growth Fund for which initial capacity, subject to approval of the borrowing outlined at recommendation 4, is in excess of £1bn;

4. Approve GMCA borrowing up to £150m against future Retained Business Rates, for investment into the integrated pipeline.
 5. To agree the prioritisation methodologies used to appraise the initial funding allocations recommended in this report as set out in Appendix 1;
 6. Approve the indicative allocation of funding to the recommended housing and employment projects as set out within this report, and
 7. Note the alignment with the GMCA budgets setting process
 8. Note the opportunity to leverage social value through the investment pipeline supply chain
 9. Approve the changes to the Stockport Interchange loan as set out in the report
2. That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the GM Good Growth Plan are noted.
 3. That Officers would provide the Committee with figures on the carbon performance of housing schemes in the first investment round and ensure future reports include details of low- or zero-carbon standards.
 4. That Officers would provide the Committee with a short note outlining the assessment methodology and the level of independent financial scrutiny embedded in GMCA processes to give assurance on governance and risk management.

O&SC 43/25

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME & FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED /-

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

O&SC 44/25

FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED /-

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

- Wednesday 10 December 2025
- Wednesday 28 January 2026
- Wednesday 11 February 2026
- Wednesday 25 February 2026
- Wednesday 25 March 2026