

**Minutes of the Greater Manchester Waste and Recycling Committee held on
Wednesday 11 March 2026**

Present:

Bolton Council	Councillor Richard Silvester
Bury Council	Councillor Alan Quinn (in the Chair)
Bury Council	Councillor Gareth Staples-Jones
Manchester CC	Councillor Lee-Ann Igbon
Manchester CC	Councillor Shaukat Ali
Oldham Council	Councillor Pam Byrne
Oldham Council	Councillor Ken Rustidge
Rochdale Council	Councillor Aasim Rashid
Rochdale Council	Councillor Mohammed Arshad
Salford Council	Councillor Barbara Bentham
Tameside Council	Councillor Laura Boyle
Trafford Council	Councillor Stephen Adshead
Trafford Council	Councillor Dylan Butt

Officers in Attendance:

GMCA Deputy Monitoring Officer	Sarah Bennett
GMCA Waste & Resources	David Taylor
GMCA Waste & Resources	Michelle Whitfield
GMCA Waste & Resources	Justin Lomax
GMCA Waste & Resources	Paul Morgan
GMCA Governance & Scrutiny	Lee Teasdale

DISTRICT OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Bury Council	Daniela Dixon
Salford CC	Rupert Casey
Tameside Council	Jo Oliver

WRC 26/14 Apologies

Resolved/-

To note the apologies for absence received from Councillor Sue Maitland (Trafford)
Subs: Gina Reynolds (Salford)

Apologies were also noted from Anthony Johns (Rochdale)

WRC 26/15 Chairs Announcements and Urgent Business

Members reflected on the sad loss of Councillor David Lancaster MBE, who had served as a member of the Committee for many years. The Chair noted how he had been one of the Councillors behind the vision to make the Waste Management system throughout Greater Manchester what it was today with one of the finest recycling systems, and recycling rates in the country.

Councillor Bentham, reflected on how Councillor Lancaster had been a mentor to her at Salford Council, and that he had been the longest serving Councillor in England with over 60 years of service to his community.

Resolved/-

1. That the Committee notes the sad loss of Councillor David Lancaster MBE and acknowledges the significant contribution he made to Greater Manchester in his tenure as the longest serving Councillor in England.

WRC 26/16 Declarations of Interest

Resolved/-

1. There were no declarations of interest reported.

WRC 26/17 Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 January 2026

Resolved/-

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

WRC 26/18 Contracts Update

Justin Lomax, Head of Contract Services, GMCA Waste and Resources Team introduced a report which provided an overview on performance of the Waste and Resource Management Services and Household Waste Recycling Centre Management Services contracts that commenced on 1 June 2019.

The report presented cumulative annual data, for the period up to the end of 2025/26, quarter 3, for the two contracts held by Suez. An overview of the cumulative data, total waste arisings, contamination levels, landfill diversions, performance rates, HWRC recycling rates and HWRC visit levels were also provided.

It was highlighted that the combined (overall) Contract Recycling rate was at 46%, which was nearly 1.3% lower than Quarter 3 of the previous year. It was advised that this rate had been particularly affected by lower biowaste tonnages (garden and food waste) in Quarter 1, which was due to the unusually dry and warm start to the summer season bringing lower amounts of garden waste than usual.

The contamination level of kerbside collected recyclate, from materials accepted on reception but extracted by the mechanical MRF process, stood at 18%. However, materials that had to be rejected on delivery at Contract reception points, due to excess levels of unacceptable materials in the delivered loads, meant around 170t were lost over the 9 months, which was 22% lower than at the same point the previous year. This continued the ongoing downward trend in non-target materials rejected in kerbside collections, which was still a positive position, but there was still room to improve the accuracy of materials presented for recycling.

Unfortunately, since the last report to the Committee, there had been two further incidents reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013. The Committee was informed in the Quarter 2 update, that a medical screening process had detected 2 cases of Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). Since then, in Quarter 3, an employee was also diagnosed with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. As with the previous cases, all recommendations and controls had been reviewed as a result of this diagnosis. Practices and procedures were in place to prevent the circumstances that are related to these conditions.

Resolved/-

1. That the performance of the Waste and Resource Management contracts be noted.

WRC 26/19 Update on Delivery of the Communications and Behavioural Change Plan

Michelle Whitfield, Head of Communications and Behavioural Change, GMCA Communications & Engagement Team, presented a report providing the Committee with an update on communications campaigns and educational activities delivered and a look ahead to the main priorities for the next financial year. Points highlighted included the following:

- The 'Big Recycling Survey' had taken place over July/August 2025 and a final analysis and report was now available following the survey. This report provided data on barriers, motivations and information sources, with key takeaways including that residents relied on councils for information, that residents in flats tended to be outliers as they received fewer information leaflets and that residents felt they were doing a better job than they were in reality.
- The report included a breakdown by age and ethnicity, this would be very helpful in the targeting of communications to where they were most needed.

- The report also broke down the items which people had most confusion around in terms of appropriate disposal. The most confusing items had been found to be juice cartons, crisp packets and ripped t-shirts.
- Participants had been asked to highlight their biggest challenges to recycling, with the most common responses being that bins got filled too quickly, and that there was confusion around what should go in each bin.
- It was noted that 'GM Repair Week' had been celebrated between 2-8 March. This was a yearly event and coincided with the new look GM repair directory which made it easier for residents to find and use repair services. Over 30 events were taking place across GM including repair cafes, sewing workshops and bike repair sessions.
- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) resources were being developed to teach basic vocabulary to help residents contact their councils about recycling collections services and provide worksheets showing each bin and which items went into each.

Comments and Questions

Members enquired whether information provided by councils to residents could be put in a format that would be closer to the bins themselves so that people do not need to refer to websites or previous published materials. Officers advised that some councils chose to put stickers on bins to reconfirm what goes into each bin. There was also a planned launch of a campaign to remind residents of what goes into each bin.

Members noted however that there would be quite significant cost implications in providing stickers to all bins across the region at a time when authorities had finite resources, and as with comms campaigns, there instead should be targeting of areas where recycling rates and cross-contamination performance was weakest. Officers confirmed that the data analysis now available would be used to focus the campaigns appropriately.

Members referenced targeting campaigns they had undertaken around local mosques – which had been particularly successful during Ramadan when mosques were full on most days.

Members welcomed a change of attitude being seen towards residents increasingly seeking to get items repaired rather than disposing of them to replace with new items.

Members referenced concerns made by residents that having too many types of recycling bins created a situation where bins could not be appropriately stored in confined curtilages, resulting in them spilling out into alleyways/streets. The Chair noted that the English Waste Strategy released in 2018 had suggested seven separate bins, so the four bin approach in GM was a more convenient approach.

Resolved/-

1. That the contents of the report be noted.

WRC 26/20 Capital Programme and Asset Management Update

David Taylor, GMCA Executive Director of Waste, provided an update on the key capital projects and lifecycle projects during quarter 4 of 2025-26.

The report focussed on two facilities currently undergoing significant development. Firstly, the Reliance Street Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) which had closed in summer 2025. Since the closure the site had been cleared and handed over to the contractor to demolish all of the existing structures and peel back the grounds to start the remediation works for the new facility. In the run up to Christmas, a number of unforeseen ground conditions had come to light. This had been unforeseen due to the previous construction contractor not adequately reflecting the conditions in their documentation. A high voltage cable had needed to be diverted, as had some of the existing drainage systems. The additional work had introduced some delay, and the constructor was currently reassessing the work

completion times, which it was now expected would be delayed into the late summer or the autumn of 2026. Further information would be provided to the Committee on the handover date when available.

The second facility undertaking significant redevelopment was the former compositing building at Salford Road, Over Hulton where the installation of the new materials recovery facility would take place. The procurement process had commenced in September 2025 and a number of tenders were reviewed as part of stage one. Subsequently two bidders went into the second stage, both had provided good technical and financial proposals, these would now be refined and resubmitted later in March. Award of contracts was expected around June 2026 and the plant was expected to start its commissioning process around autumn 2027.

Comments and Questions

Members expressed concerns around the Reliance Street HWRC, with a significant increase in fly tipping in the area directly around the facility having been reported in the period since it was temporarily closed, although there was no evidence to directly link this increase to the site closing. The cost of clearing this additional waste was significant to Oldham Council. It was asked if communications around this closure were appropriate. Officers advised that they would review this and ensure that they were up to date.

Members expressed wider concerns around 'endemic' fly tipping issues taking place in various parts of the region.

The Chair reminded all present that fly tipping did constitute a criminal offence, but vitally, it was necessary to prove this beyond all reasonable doubt to bring about a successful outcome. This required significant officer time to build up a case at a time when officer capacity was reduced due to austerity measures, and the cost recovery from successful court cases often did not recover the full costs placed upon authorities.

Members stated that fines needed to be high enough to ensure that people were put off fly tipping, and this would likely require changes to national legislation. It was suggested that an ask be put forward to government to change this legislation to ensure the most punitive impacts upon those caught fly tipping.

Members stated that there needed to be a communications piece around public expectations when it came to reporting fly tipping. Simply taking photos of the offenders would not suffice without the willingness to provide a narrative statement to the court about what they witnessed.

Members were reminded that the GMCA Waste Crime Conference would be taking place on 20th March bringing together key partners such as GMP and the Environment Agency and would consider the issues raised during the item.

Members expressed concerns about van permits not being sharable between friends to ensure that it was as easy as possible for residents to dispose of bulky waste legally. Officers advised that the sharing of van permits with friends and family was allowed, and any cases where this has been denied should be fed back.

Members referenced considerable increases in litter around motorway slip roads and verges. It was advised that these were the responsibilities of the Highways Agency and that any issues could be reported directly them.

Members noted that the sides of tram tracks were often covered in large amounts of rubbish – was this the responsibility of TfGM? It was asked that officers write to them to get clarity around this.

Resolved/-

1. That the matters set out within the report be noted.
2. That it be noted that award of contracts will be in accordance with the Constitution and Contract Procedure Rules.
3. That the Committee requests that officers write to the government on their behalf seeking changes to fly tipping legislation to enhance local authority powers.

4. That members be reminded that the GMCA Waste Crime Conference would be taking place on Friday 20th March.
5. That the Committee asks that officers write to Transport for Greater Manchester to get clarity around the responsibilities for clearing rubbish from the immediate vicinity of Metrolink tram lines.

WRC 26/21 The Introduction of Measures to Prevent Cross-Border Usage of GMCA Household Waste & Recycling Centres.

Paul Morgan, Head of Commercial Services, GMCA Waste & Resources Team, introduced a report detailing the pressure GMCA Household Waste and Recycling Centres are under from their use by residents outside of the nine districts that make up the GMCA Waste disposal arrangements. Recent HWRC facility closures by Cheshire East had placed additional pressures on neighbouring Stockport facilities, where people quoted Stockport postcodes to get around the meet and greet aspect. Other closures being mooted, such as at Warrington and in Lancashire/Derbyshire would increase the pressures on Greater Manchester waste facilities.

The report proposed a two-stage approach for which the Committee was requested to approve. It was confirmed that these would be proportionate and not increase delays at sites and ensure that the sites would still be easily accessible for all valid users.

The suggested initial first stage 'soft steps' were to undertake soft checks around postcodes, though it was acknowledged that these could be easily bypassed, so work would be taking place with Suez on a standard operating procedure that would include updating signage on site about usage of sites; and that proof of address may be asked for in the future; that the meet and greet facilitators initially inform visitors that checks will be introduced to allow forewarning for people to be prepared in future; and introduce checks on a random basis to minimise disruption (with a driving licence preferred). This information would also be disseminated via mailing lists, social media and other traditional media.

For the second stage there were a number of options to explore for the design and introduction of a systems-based approach and each needs detailed analysis. The options likely to be reviewed included (but were not limited to):

- Whether a system is needed following the operation of Stage One
- What systems are used by other Waste Disposal Authorities
- Whether the van permit system could be adapted for the purpose
- Whether systems within the individual districts could be utilised in part; and
- How, if at all, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's database could be utilised.

A further report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee providing recommendations on Stage 2.

Comments and Questions

Members expressed disappointment with the authorities undertaking the site closures. It was not the responsibility of GM residents to pick up the bill for neighbouring authority areas. It was felt that the government should insist that all authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide a suitable number of waste disposal sites for its residents. Even the introduction of new checks to combat cross-border usage would bring further costs that shouldn't be needed. It was asked if officers could write to the government to ensure that they were aware of the impacts on neighbouring authorities of these closures?

Members asked if there would be any GDPR concerns around data collection. It was advised that for the current ANPR system, there was already a data protection impact assessment in place that governed how the data was gathered and used. This would be extended to any new service. The service would 'hold' no data itself but simply use a third party's existing compliant database.

Members emphasised the need for a gradual, well communicated introduction to any ID requirements. Members also expressed concern around residents who did not have driving licence ID and may be disincentivised from using the facilities.

Members referenced the Chester Road HWRC in Stretford and that its popularity and location often led to traffic backing up on to the motorway slip road, creating a potentially dangerous scenario. Officers advised that traffic flow management at this site was being reviewed and the contractor had some ideas that it was felt could increase the throughput to make it smoother and faster, the proposals were currently being drawn up and would hopefully be implemented in the near future.

Members asked if conversations were taking place directly with these neighbouring authorities to explain that GM would not be 'picking up the purse' for their closures. The Chair advised that he had been in direct email conversation with a Derbyshire Councillor and he made it clear that these facilities were to benefit residents of GM alone.

Members stated that they would like to see up-to-date statistics on levels of fly tipping around each of the HWRC sites in the region, so they could begin to evidence impacts on those closest to neighbouring authorities.

Members stated that it was important for local police forces to treat incidences of fly tipping seriously as crimes, and often organised crimes. This did not only impact communities but often had a significant cost implication for businesses.

Resolved/-

1. That the pressure GMCA Household Waste and Recycling Centres are under from usage by residents coming from outside the nine GMCA Waste Disposal Authority districts be noted.
2. That approval be given for the implementation of a 'soft' approach to informing residents of restrictions in usage of the Household Waste and Recycling Centres if they are from outside one of the nine GMCA Waste Disposal

Authority districts and to introduce spot checks on residency at the Meet & Greet point.

3. That approval be given for the research into the development of a potentially more technologically based system to check residency.
4. That it be requested that officers write to the government seeking enhancements to the powers of local authorities around Household Waste & Recycling Centres and cross-border usage.
5. That, at a future meeting, up-to-date statistics on levels of fly tipping around each of the HWRC sites in the region be made available to the Committee, so they could begin to evidence impacts on those closest to neighbouring authorities.

WRC 26/22 The Impact of Government's Plans for the Management of Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Paul Morgan, Head of Commercial Services, Waste & Resources Team, presented a report giving an early warning to the Committee on the future requirement to manage per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS – can also be referred to as PFOS) that may be contained in landfill leachate arising at GMCA's closed landfill sites.

PFAS were essential for many uses in society and valued for their resistance to heat, water and oil, and had been widely used across industries from firefighting foams and medical devices to textiles and packaging. These chemicals were also often referred to as 'forever chemicals' as they were long-lasting and widespread in the environment.

In early February 2026 Defra published its PFAS Plan containing a long-term vision "...to work in partnership, taking a science-based and proportionate approach, to reduce and minimise the impacts of harmful PFAS on public health and the environment...". It would deliver this vision through three actions:

- understanding and identifying the sources of PFAS including where they originate from;
- accounting for the movement of PFAS around society and the environment, which means tackling PFAS pathways; and

- reducing and managing ongoing exposure to PFAS for people, animals and the environment.

It was expected that new limits for the discharge of PFAS from wastewater treatment works (WWTWs) will be introduced in April 2027 and facilities would be unable to meet the new limits. As a consequence, many WWTWs were believed likely to refuse to accept PFAS-containing effluents (the current Trade Effluent Discharge Consent process regulates this) pushing the problem back to the source of the effluents – in this case landfill operators and/or owners.

The report summarised the potential impact on GMCA as the custodian of two closed landfill sites that generate leachate that is likely to contain PFAS.

Resolved/-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That it be recognised that there is a need to explore options and present them to a future Committee when more is understood.

WRC 26/23 Future Meeting Dates

Resolved/-

1. That the provisional meeting dates for 2026/27 be noted.

WRC 26/24 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved/-

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business because this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and

that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

WRC 26/25 Contracts Update

Resolved/-

1. That the contract updates and key risks set out in the report be noted; and
2. That the financial details outlined from the Biowaste treatment Call-Off contracts submissions be noted.