

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Greater Manchester Combined
Authority

6th November 2023

Feedback





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1. Introduction

The combined authority undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during November-December 2022 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the combined authority's senior leadership to:

- Update peers on the early progress made and to receive feedback on this including how the action plan aligns to the CPC's recommendations
- Consider peer's reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank Greater Manchester Combined Authority for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the combined authority has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Greater Manchester Combined Authority took place on 6th November 2023.

The progress review focussed on each of the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge, under the following theme headings:

- Corporate developments – business plan; organisational culture; equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- Working relationships with local authority partners – developments including capacity, governance, effective use of meeting time
- Further improvements in Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) and Greater Manchester Police (GMP)
- Climate commitment actions

- Developing GM's Innovation agenda
- Working in partnership with VCSE sector and GM equalities agenda

For this progress review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Tom Riordan CBE, Chief Executive, Leeds City Council
- Dr Henry Kippin, Chief Executive, North of Tyne Combined Authority and Interim Chief Executive, North East Mayoral Combined Authority
- Judith Hurcombe, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

The peer team met virtually with Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, before the face-to-face meetings in Manchester.

The peer team met face to face in GMCA on Monday 6th November 2023 with the following representatives from the combined authority:

- Eamonn Boylan, Chief Executive
- Andrew Lightfoot, Deputy Chief Executive
- Claire Norman, Director, Communications and Engagement
- Julie Connor, Director, Governance, Scrutiny and Business Support
- Simon Nokes, Executive Director, Policy and Strategy
- Steve Wilson, Treasurer
- Gillian Duckworth, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
- Ben Norman, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- Jane Forrest, Director, Public Service Reform
- Paul Lynch, Director of Strategy and Planning, NHS Greater Manchester
- John Wrathmell, Director, Economy, Research and Strategy

3. Progress Review - Feedback

Corporate working

Greater Manchester Combined Authority has made clear progress on the recommendations arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in

December 2022. Those recommendations and the organisation's responses to them are embedded across the 2023/24 Business Plan. The Extended Leadership Network (ELN) Hub is overseeing delivery of the Business Plan and supporting coordinated activities across the CA, through meeting monthly and working closely on a cross-directorate basis on organisational priorities. There is evidence of progress across all recommendations in the CA's approach since December 2022, of which a snapshot is reflected in this report.

The CA has undertaken more work on its values, a new mission statement was launched following the first all-staff awayday and further awayday sessions are planned as annual events. Many positive responses have been reflected in the b-Heard staff survey reported in August 2023 including how employees feel their manager supports and communicates; team working and how much they enjoy working for GMCA. However, the survey also reflects concerns on employees' pressure to perform well; if the CA should do more to protect the environment; an ambition to do even more to champion equality, diversity and inclusion; and put more back into the local community.

Work is in progress to diversify the composition of the workforce, so that it more closely reflects the Greater Manchester population that the CA serves, but as might be expected it is too early to see a significant shift in that composition. Changes have been made from the Graduate Trainees Scheme to a Management Trainee Programme which has removed the requirement for applicants to have a degree level qualification, therefore expanding the opportunities for GM residents. This has been designed to have a positive impact on social mobility and workforce representation, and the first cohort of Management Trainees will start in January 2024. Corporate equalities objectives have been agreed both for the workforce, underpinned by clear targets based on bringing the composition in line with the 2021 national Census of Population by 2025. Within the CA a new Leadership and Development Framework has been developed.

Relationships with local authority partners

The success of the Trailblazer is being keenly watched by others in local government and highlights a number of unknowns. Questions for the sector include whether it will

enable the CA to be more agile? Does it have to follow the same processes as it has to date or is there a willingness from government departments to allow delivery which is more flexible, for example resolving how to get inclusive growth and innovation running through GMCA's programmes? The Trailblazer deal and subsequent negotiation with HMT on funding flexibility opens up a new phase of collective decision making within GM. Whilst the team was positive about progress to date, there are clearly significant implications for the political and officer teams across the conurbation that will need working through - most obviously in the shift from 'programme by programme' decision making to a more holistic model.

Another factor for the future is funding. The degree of funding for GMCA enables it to flex and adapt for delivery but a key constraint for some time has been the funding crisis facing local authorities, which means in turn some struggle to support programmes and initiatives because of resources and capacity. The annual budget process for 2023/24 included the allocation of £1m through the retained business rates levy to help capacity. This has led to new posts within the CA to support programme delivery but significant strain remains on the capacity within local authorities to deliver long term programmes consistently across localities. The CA understands it has a role supporting local authority capacity to deliver - and that the effectiveness of GMCA will depend on its ability to do this without creating a culture of 'performance management' of districts.

A significant programme at local level is the decision to acquire children's homes across GM, which will reduce placement costs for councils across the area. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed and acquisitions are underway. This is an excellent example of working together to produce better outcomes for young people and relieving pressure on stretched council budgets in doing so.

GMCA's Chief Executive has announced he will retire next year and this presents a risk and an opportunity to the organisation and the partnership both internally and externally. Consideration is being given to how the organisation may need to develop to ensure the required capacity is in place, continuing to support staff, and enabling further engagement with Districts at the right level and with confidence. Strategic relationships with constituent councils need ongoing care to ensure they remain involved because delivery and outcomes rely heavily on all aspects of the system having capacity and being able to contribute. Consideration is being given to

both the future delivery structure and leadership requirements of the CA. This is a positive development - opening up the possibility of evolving the GMCA model in the light of new powers and delivery priorities. However, it is vital that these changes (both any structural change and new CEO appointment) continue to balance the ability to convene and act at scale, with the relationship building and trust that is so important to effective delivery.

GM Police and Fire

Progress continues on improving the confidence in and delivery of GM Police. This includes the introduction of plans on a page which set out the values of the service and its commitments to reducing crime and improving community safety. A new neighbourhood policing model was launched in April 2023 that has a stronger focus on place-based working, local targets and increased visibility. 'Master classes' have been introduced in each borough to develop problem solving initiatives and are underpinned by place-based working.

External inspections undertaken in the last few months are showing continued improvements in Fire and Police Services:

- At the time of the progress review the CA was expecting positive results from the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection undertaken in May-July 2023
- The third His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection of GMFRS undertaken in autumn 2023 gave positive informal feedback. The full results are due to be published in February 2024

Other recent developments include bringing in external challenge and support, for example in the introduction of a GMFRS Culture First Board. With an independent co-chair, this has been created to provide scrutiny of and challenge to service improvement. GMFRS has reintroduced the Improvement Board to oversee delivery of its annual delivery plan, which includes attendance from across the Service, and

senior Police and Crime team staff.

Innovation

The CA continues to work with others on a wide range of innovation projects across the region. Innovation Greater Manchester is the business-led collaboration for research and development, and is moving to a new partnership model, giving greater clarity and independence in its role. Its Foundational Economy Innovation Fund is also now being delivered, funding the testing of new ideas to localise supply chains/reduce environmental impacts, support the workforce, and provide more effective services and goods. And the Energy Innovation Agency has secured funding for innovation projects in both energy transformation and commercial buildings.

GMCA is the first combined authority to use its powers to bring the bus network back into local authority control and into the Bee network integrated transport system. In September 2023 Bolton, Wigan and parts of Bury and Salford's bus provision was franchised, with tranche 2 scheduled for March 2024 and tranche 3 by early 2025. This is a major development since the CPC reported in 2022. The long-term impact will depend on the success of the next phases of roll out and keeping the pressure up on patronage on all modes of transport.

Work is ongoing to improve intelligence about how the new arrangement is working, both on data on usage, as well as income levels. Early signs are positive and effort is ongoing to test the reliability of the data since September. Planning for the wider network across Greater Manchester is also considering traffic signal prioritisation, artificial intelligence and roadworks. As the whole network is rolled out, improvements in performance are likely to demand even closer working between GMCA and the ten councils.

Given recent national decisions on transport having such a disruptive impact on Greater Manchester and other Northern cities, it is important that GMCA works across the North to demand a stronger voice for the MCAs and councils in future transport policy and operations.

Health delivery is under significant pressure, with financial challenges and the system subject to external review and management. Waiting lists are long and health

inequalities remain significant across Greater Manchester. Relationships with health partners have been the subject of focus and a new executive has been created.

The CA and GM NHS partnership are working together on a prevention model to address system demand related to deteriorating health over time, using a population segmentation approach. Cohorts of people who would benefit from increased support to reduce deterioration and therefore demand on services have been identified. Detailed evaluation of cost estimates for this support across these cohorts has the potential to reduce demand and therefore costs by approximately £1.2bn by 2028, should the interventions be implemented at scale and yield the gains predicted. The developing metrics are interesting and have potential to make a significant difference to health and social care if accompanied by the right interventions in the right places. This approach is in 3 stages of:

- Understanding the prevalence of poor health
- Which services need to be provided differently and where
- How to target support for those most in need

There is confidence from the CA that this approach has the potential to be different from the first health deal for Greater Manchester due to better data, more access to patient and service user records for care and a better understanding of what has not worked so far. It will be vital for the CA and ICB to work together to identify the resources and service changes required to deliver better outcomes for people.

Equality, diversity and inclusion, and the voluntary and community sector

Greater Manchester has been selected by Bloomberg and Harvard University as one of 12 leading global cities for civic engagement. Building on this an action plan is being developed for a more systematic approach to participation in GMCA.

The Race Equality Panel has worked alongside a broad range of partners develop the GM Race Equality Strategy which was agreed in October 2023. As well as shaping targets for the workforce within the CA it includes the identification of named senior political and officer leads across the 10 constituent councils. The Civic Leadership Programme Year 2 has been launched with a new provider and approach. Responses to the Big Disability Survey are being progressed with

Disabled People's Panel.

In March 2023, a five-year Implementation Plan for the Voluntary and Community Sector Accord was published. The Accord Delivery Plan aims to improve system-wide data sharing, and to support the overall capacity of the VCSE across Greater Manchester including building skills and capacity within the workforce.

What next?

GMCA's capacity to deliver low carbon programmes has increased since the initial visit, with more cohesive working with districts on delivery of funded and collaborative programmes. Maintaining and enhancing these arrangements will be essential to achieve the CA's ambitious climate mitigation agenda."


Future success for the CA will depend on navigating three tensions:

- Continuing to be bold and setting the pace on devolution nationally, whilst being agile enough to adapt to new policies, collaborate with others and develop and ways of working
- Ensure that the system has capacity to deliver, lead and innovate at the Greater Manchester level. But in doing so it needs to avoid becoming a 'Whitehall in the region', through a continued focus on relationships and trust building at a local level
- And continuing to celebrate and promote the progress that GM has made, whilst being open, collaborative and building ongoing feedback.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Greater Manchester Combined Authority for undertaking an LGA CPC progress review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.



Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Claire Hogan (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) and their e-mail address is claire.hogan@local.gov.uk