

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023-24

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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):

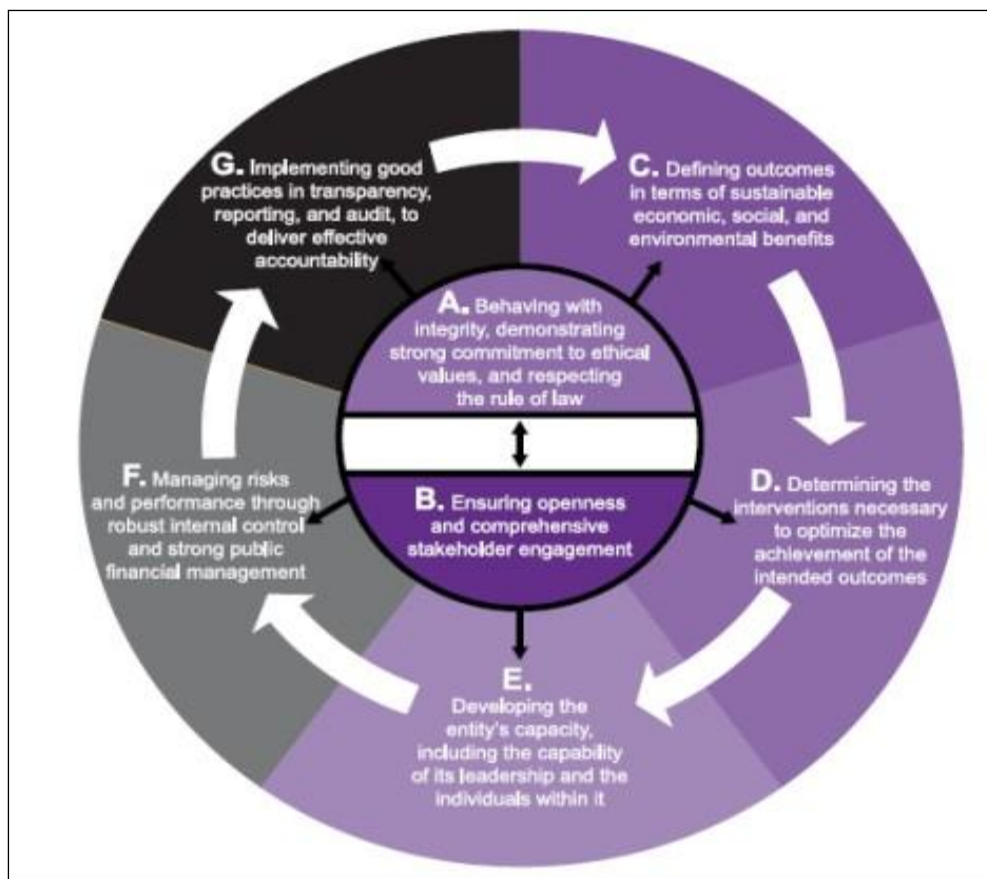


Fig.1 Seven Principles of Good Governance

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 following the May 2024 elections:

Member	Representing	Portfolio Responsibility
Mayor Andy Burnham	GM Mayor	Policy, Reform & Transport
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
Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester	Economy, Business & Inclusive Growth
Cllr Arooj Shah	Oldham	Equalities & Communities
Cllr Neil Emmott	Rochdale	Culture

City Mayor Paul Dennett	Salford	Healthy Lives & Homelessness (+ Deputy Mayor of the GMCA)
Cllr Mark Hunter	Stockport	Children & Young People
Cllr Gerald Cooney	Tameside	Housing
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 Following the withdrawal of central government core funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) the GMCA established the Greater Manchester Business Board which 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.

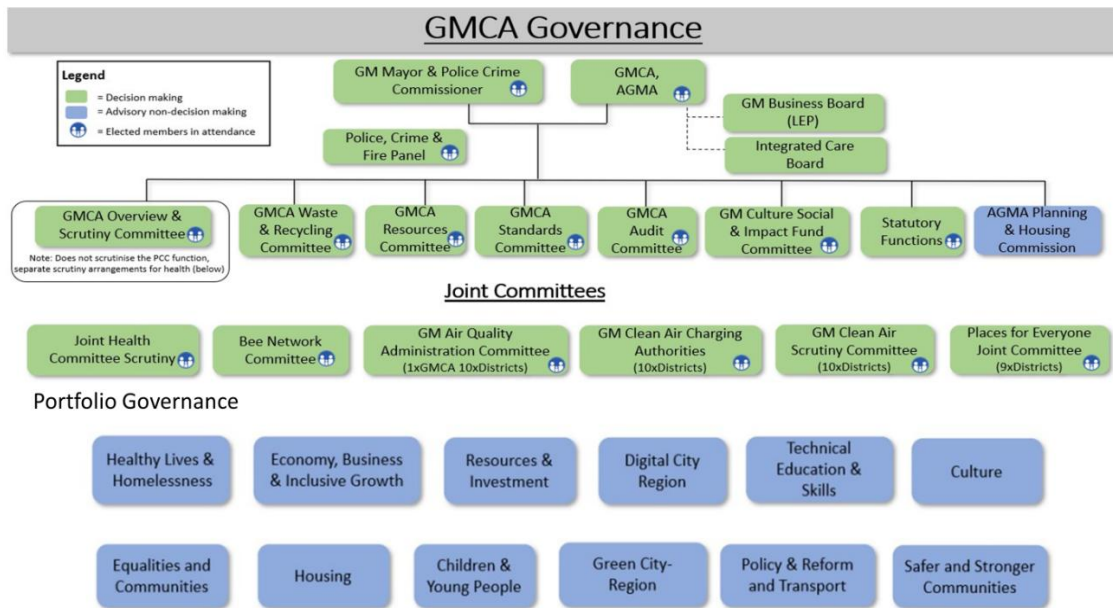


Fig.2 Governance Structure

ADDRESSING THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS THROUGH GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The Cost-of-Living Response Group continued to meet bimonthly throughout the year. The group is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive of GMCA with membership made up from officers from GMCA's Public Service Reform directorate, Local Authority representatives, NHS GM representatives and VCFSE partners. The group have met in the existing format since August 2022, having emerged from the previous GM Humanitarian Assistance Group, which formed part of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

3.2 As the group has developed the topic focus has evolved beyond immediate reactive issues (e.g. administration of the Household Support Fund) to looking at wider issues around financial inclusion and income maximisation. It has been proposed that moving forward, the focus of the group will be on Financial Inclusion rather than the previous focus on the Cost-of-Living Crisis. This aligns with the need to be more proactive in conversation and work, rather than the previous pressing need to be more reactive in the response. The format of the sessions will be similar, continuing to include the sharing of learning and good practice and discussions of new initiative and opportunities.

3.3 The terms of reference and revised name of the group will be decided following the next meeting and consultation with members. It is likely that the group will meet with the same regularity, but with the changed focus, as mentioned, and a modified name to reflect this.

3.4 From a strategic point of view, Greater Manchester finds itself in a very different context as well. We now find ourselves in a new Mayoral Term and with a new national government. The Mayoral manifesto calls for an entirely different way of providing social support and social security. The 'Live Well' initiative, within the Mayor's manifesto, is going to be developing and progressing and this group will be aligning with and connecting into this programme of work moving forward.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEE NETWORK COMMITTEE

- 4.1 Prior to the establishment of the Bee Network Committee – Transport Governance functions took place via an overarching Transport Committee supported by sub-committees focussed upon Bus Services, Metrolink & Rail & Active Travel. The Committee had limited delegations, reducing any opportunities for the Committee to influence strategic decision-making and therefore transport policy. Its role combined elements of both decision-making around relatively minor issues and performance monitoring which was usually considered to be a scrutiny committee function. This had in turn led to a lack of clarity both within and outside of the GM system.
- 4.2 The commencement of the Bee Network, providing local control of the GM transport network, and bus franchising in particular, changed the type and number of decisions being made. GM therefore needed to change the make-up of its decision-making bodies so as to ensure GM's new responsibilities were discharged in an effective and transparent way.
- 4.3 In establishing a new Bee Network Committee a number of principles were set out including support for shared ownership of the transport agenda across GM, informed by local priorities and driven by consensus; support for an integrated approach to policy development to support the delivery of an integrated network; separate decision-making and policy development from oversight and scrutiny; strengthened decision-making, scrutiny and local involvement including enhanced member and public engagement; and ensuring delegation to officers to enable operational flexibility, as appropriate.
- 4.4 In alignment with those principles it was proposed that a new, smaller, and more strategically focussed 'Bee Network Committee' (BNC) would lead transport decision-making at a regional level, taking greater ownership and responsibility for the GM integrated transport network. The BNC strengthened local engagement by increasing opportunities for local councillors and members of the public to contribute to and influence

transport policy and services in their area. Formal scrutiny of the Bee Network Committee was also now part of the work programme of the newly strengthened GM Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

4.5 Although the BNC itself has greater delegated powers from the GMCA, no additional constituent council functions have been transferred or delegated to the BNC.

4.6 This smaller and more focussed board membership now comprises one member from each of the ten constituent councils (in general expected to be the transport portfolio holder), a GMCA appointment, the Mayor, and any additional members appointed by the Mayor for political balance, up to a maximum total membership of 15 members. By bringing together executive members from across the city region, the BNC is able to take a holistic and integrated view of transport in GM, and better supports and co-ordinates activity across district boundaries.

4.7 It is intended that further steps to increase and strengthen member and public engagement will include supporting the constituent councils in implementation of further oversight of the Bee Network at the neighbourhood level.

HMICFRS POSITION UPDATE (GMP & GMFRS)

5.1 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.

5.2 During the period from September 2023 to January 2024, Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) had undertaken 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. The results were very positive with GMFRS having received one of the strongest, if not the strongest HMICFRS report and stood as the most improved fire and rescue service in the country.

5.3 The Police, Fire and Crime Panel (PFCP) continues to hold the Deputy Mayor, Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to account on both the improvements at GMP and GMFRS. The PFCP continues 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. 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

6.1 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

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

6.2 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 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.

6.3 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.

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

AUDIT & STANDARDS ACTIVITY 2022/23

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

7.1 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 five times during 2023/24. Meetings covered a variety of matters in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference.

7.2 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 Audit and Assurance Annual Opinion 2023/24

7.3 Based on the work undertaken by Internal Audit in respect of 2023/24 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 is based upon the findings of the audit work undertaken during the year. It is reflective of the continued progress made in relation to the evolving maturity of risk management arrangements in place within GMCA and in the continued development of the performance management framework. The opinion has also taken into consideration other external sources of assurance.

Annual Review of the System of Internal Audit 2023/24

7.4 An external quality assessment (EQA) of the Internal Audit Function was undertaken in 2021/22. The conclusion was that the service complies with PSIAS. A further self-assessment of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Function was undertaken in 2023/24 by the Deputy Director, Audit

and Assurance. The assessment concluded that the internal audit Function is effective and has operated in compliance with PSIAS.

7.5 A Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) has been implemented within the Internal Audit Team and an Internal Audit Development Plan developed which is reviewed on a regular basis and updated to reflect any findings or recommendations from either external or internal effectiveness reviews. Progress with the plan is reported to the Audit Committee.

GMCA Standards Committee

7.6 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 23/24 to consider the GMCA Complaints Procedure & the Code of Corporate Governance.

PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE 2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Action Identified in 2022/23	Progress Made
<p>Embed the Bee Network Committee within the GMCA Governance Structure.</p>	<p>Following agreement of the governance principles (see section 4 for further detail) the Bee Network Committee commenced with an inaugural AGM on 27th July 2023, at which the Committee’s terms of reference and rules of procedure were agreed. It now meets on a regular monthly basis and has been fully incorporated into the GMCA governance structure.</p>
<p>Continuing to address the cost-of-living and inflation crisis via governance and work with external partners.</p>	<p>The Cost-of-Living Response Group continued to meet bimonthly throughout the year. It has been proposed that moving forward, the focus of the group will be on Financial Inclusion rather than the previous focus on the Cost-of-Living Crisis. This aligns with the need to be more proactive in conversation and work, rather than the previous pressing need to be more reactive in the response. The format of the sessions will be similar, continuing to include the sharing of learning and good practice and discussions of new initiative and opportunities. (See section 3 for further detail)</p>

<p>Ensuring full understanding across the authority reporting system in terms of addressing climate crisis issues and low carbon targets.</p>	<p>The use of the co-benefits tool to assess impacts arising from decisions taken is now embedded, supporting greater visibility of the climate impact of GMCA's plans, strategies and delivery.</p>
<p>Ensure that the appropriate governance and decision-making structure is in place to meet the new responsibilities arising through the trailblazer devolution deal and the single settlement as part of that.</p>	<p>The GMCA is continuing to prepare and is fully aware of the governance and accountability requirements that will arise from the trailblazer deal, including a commitment to abide by the English Devolution Accountability Framework and the Scrutiny Protocol; taking the further actions required to enhance scrutiny and audit committee resources and prestige; and a new Accountability Framework underpinning the single settlement.</p>
<p>Ensure that the next steps and further actions contained within the GMCA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan are embedded within the 23/24 Business Plan and delivered wherever possible over the coming year.</p>	<p>The Corporate Peer Challenge provided GMCA with a series of recommendations for action, which have been considered and embedded within the Business Plan and aligned with activities being delivered across Directorates.</p> <p>The Peer Challenge team returned in November 2023 for a review visit, a progress report on the original</p>

	<p>recommendations was provided at that time. The Review team were pleased with the progress made to date and confident in GMCA's ability to continue to deliver.</p>
<p>In the GMCA's role as the Lead Authority for the delivery of the GM Mayor Elections in May 2024. Ensure a legally compliant and high-quality delivery of the election.</p>	<p>The GMCA supported the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) to deliver a high quality and legally compliant GMCA Mayoral election, ensuring that electors, candidates and other key stakeholders had confidence in the result.</p> <p>To achieve this, robust governance arrangements were put in place including the establishment of a Project Board which met monthly, to drive and oversee GMCA's corporate delivery model. A dedicated CARO team was also convened with elections and programme management expertise. Existing structures were used to regularly work with 10 GM districts and their Returning Officers (ROs), regarding the detailed arrangements for delivery. This included taking into account that the Mayoral election would be delivered at the same time as their local elections and the City Mayoral election in Salford. Regular updates</p>

	<p>and guidance/legal directions were issued to ensure there was clarity regarding CARO/RO roles and responsibilities throughout all phases of planning and delivery. Following the successful delivery of the Mayoral election, an extensive lessons learnt exercise has been undertaken to capture key findings for next time. This is particularly important given that the Mayoral Election is only scheduled to take place every 4 years.</p>
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AREAS FOR FOCUS IN 2024/25

Good Governance Principle	Action	Lead(s)/GMCA Officer Lead
<i>G: Implementing Good Practices in Transparency, Reporting, and Audit, to Deliver Effective Accountability</i>	<i>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.</i>	<i>Deputy Director Audit & Assurance Monitoring Officer</i>
<i>B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement</i>	<i>Continue to develop robust governance around devolution.</i>	<i>Director of Policy & Strategy Chief Executive</i>
<i>D: Determining the Interventions Necessary to Optimise the Achievement of the Intended Outcomes</i>	<i>Continue to lobby government for the adoption of the Good Landlord Charter</i>	<i>Deputy Chief Executive</i>
<i>B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement</i>	<i>Support the establishment of governance and oversight of the Bee Network at the neighbourhood level.</i>	<i>Director of Governance & Scrutiny Monitoring Officer</i>
<i>B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement</i>	<i>Ensure fit for purpose robust governance around the newly established Greater Manchester Land Commission.</i>	<i>Director of Governance & Scrutiny Monitoring Officer</i>

<p><i>A: Behaving with Integrity, Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values, and Respecting the Rule of Law.</i></p> <p><i>B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement</i></p>	<p><i>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.</i></p>	<p><i>Director of Governance & Scrutiny</i></p> <p><i>Monitoring Officer</i></p>
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SUMMARY

- 10.1 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 2022/23.
- 10.2 As the organisation moves forward in 2024 and 2025, 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 arrival of a new national government could 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.
- 10.3 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, Chief Executive on behalf of Members and Senior Officers of Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Date 26th February 2025

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. A further review is due in the autumn of 2024 to incorporate devolution arrangements. 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 2024/25

- 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.

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

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 GMCA's YouTube channel/Public-I 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 Churchgate House 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 has taken place to ensure that the GMCA Boardroom is a suitable venue for most Committees of the GMCA going forward – this will allow for consistency in public knowledge of where meetings are taking place. The 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 The Places for Everyone main modification phase and the GMFRS Fire Cover Review. The Fire Cover Review was a strong example of a consultation resulting in an improved outcome for the public with day crewing proposals at two stations being reversed following feedback.

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. New governance arrangements for the implementation of the Health and Care Bill commenced on 1 July 2022 and a statutory integrated care system for GM is now in place.

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 has been tasked as the lead authority for supervising the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) in the GM region – the UK SPF being the domestic replacement for the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF). The GMCA has developed an investment plan with as wide a range of local stakeholders as possible, the Plan went on to be approved by the government in December 2022. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Board continues to meet quarterly with a diverse

board of local stakeholders and is now actively delivering on a wide range of the proposals agreed within the investment plan.

The GM VCSE Accord ensures that there is a shared commitment and close partnership working with Greater Manchester's 16,000 VCSE 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 such as the 'GM Big Disability Survey' – which provided important insight into the issues faced by disabled people across GM during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis.

Areas for Focus in 2024/25

- Continue to develop robust governance around devolution
- Support the establishment of governance and oversight of the Bee Network at the neighbourhood level.
- Ensure fit for purpose robust governance around the newly established Greater Manchester Land Commission.
- 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.

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

The coronavirus pandemic had highlighted more than ever the importance of securing Greater Manchester's 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 6-monthly 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 refresh was finalised and agreed in September 2021 with a progress report provided in July 2022. The refreshed Strategy incorporates the objectives and actions from the Living with Covid plans and also the Mayoral Manifesto commitments. 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. There will be a continued focus on ensuring the effective delivery of the GMS priorities through strong governance arrangements, which are designed to support this delivery. Progress monitoring reports are produced for the GMS every six months, which are published as part of GMCA papers and on the GMS webpages.

A refresh of the Strategy will take place in 2024, in line with the new Mayoral term, changing national Government priorities and delivery of the Single Settlement from April 2025.

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 are affecting the trajectory and resilience of the GM economy - therefore the Authority also reports to the GMCA with the regular 'GM Economic Resilience Dashboard' to understand how these factors are impacting. The Dashboard summarises the latest responses to insights, as the GMCA, Greater Manchester Business Board and other partners across the public, private and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors continue to drive the ambitions set out in the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy and Greater Manchester Economic Vision. The rising cost-of-living has emerged as a key issue for the GM economy and the Authority is working to provide greater intelligence to support the analysis of the impact.

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 the GM Spatial Framework – 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. The Good Landlord Charter has also been the subject of a public consultation which closed on 26th February 2024. Responses from this are being analysed and will feed into the development and implementation of the Good Landlord Charter throughout 2024.

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 2024/25

- Continue to lobby government for the adoption of the Good Landlord Charter.

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 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.

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

An increased focus on leading the delivery of system change through the Greater Manchester Strategy with improved co-ordination the GMCA and with Place has required:

- A wider range of Directors coming together to pull the 'professional specialisms' from across the CA together to lead/drive the organisation as a whole to meet agreed priorities. No one team can deliver system change
- A generic 'Director' role with a specialist portfolio – to show role is about working cross the organisation with 'blocks of activity' grouped under

Directors. By definition these 'Directorates' will rely on each other to deliver 'whole system change'.

- Corporate/Enabling Services are integral part of driving forward overall outcomes of the CA and the work of individual Directorates

These renewed directorates have been based on what the CA is trying to achieve:

- We want everyone to be Life Ready with the skills needed throughout live to succeed (Education/Skills block)
- We want people to have good jobs in a prosperous economy (Economy block)
- We want people to live in vibrant and safe places (Place Making and Police/Fire/Criminal Justice blocks)
- We want GM to be a Low Carbon city region at the forefront of the 4th Industrial Revolution (Green and Digital blocks)
- We want joined-up public services that support individuals' holistically, focussing on prevention and the promotion of the best life chances (Public Service Reform block)

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 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.

³ [Corporate Plan 2022-2025 \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/corporate-plan-2022-2025)

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 will subsequently feed into the GMCA Business Plan.

The GMCA has developed a GM Good Employment Charter which has continued to expand its membership and support throughout 2023/24. The GMCA itself has achieved Member status through its own excellent employment practices.

The integrated staff Personal Development Plans first developed through 2017/18 as part of enhanced HR and organisational development service for overall GMCA 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 procured and being rolled out 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 wants to become 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.

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 provide assurance to the Committee around the effectiveness of the arrangements for governance, risk management and the effectiveness of the internal control environment.

The Internal Audit Plan is approved by Audit Committee, and Internal Audit provide quarterly progress reports to Audit Committee. In line with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), the Deputy Director, Audit and Assurance produces an Annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion.

GMCA has a risk management framework in place. The Deputy Director, Audit and Assurance is responsible for the development and implementation of the framework but ownership of risk lies within GMCA Leadership 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 the 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 compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and for 2023/24 confirmed that work had been undertaken in line with PSIAS.

Areas for Focus in 2024/25

- 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.