

JOINT GMCA AND AGMA SCRUTINY POOL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 7 APRIL 2017
AT MANCHESTER TOWN HALL

PRESENT

Bolton Council	Cllr Kevin McKeon Cllr Debbie Newall Cllr Andrew Morgan
Bury MBC	Cllr Stella Smith Cllr Roy Walker
Manchester CC	Cllr James Wilson Cllr Zahara Alijah
Oldham MBC	Cllr Colin McLaren
Rochdale BC	Cllr Neil Butterworth Cllr Michael Holly
Salford CC	Cllr David Jolley
Stockport MBC	Cllr Iain Roberts Cllr John McGahan
Tameside MBC	Cllr John Bell
Trafford MBC	Cllr Pam Dixon Cllr Barry Brotherton Cllr Michael Young
Wigan MBC	Cllr John O'Brien Cllr Pam Stewart

IN ATTENDANCE

GMCA	Simon Nokes Paul Beardmore
NW Skills Academy	Samuel Riley
GMIST	Nicola Ward Susan Ford

17/25 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Skillen (Bury), Cllr Ali (Manchester), Cllr Harkness (Oldham), Cllr Rowbotham (Rochdale), Cllrs Collinson and Walsh (Salford) and Cllr Peet (Tameside).

17/26 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Vice Chair, John Bell made a short presentation to the Chair, Councillor John O'Brien and thanked him for his long standing commitment to GM Scrutiny since its establishment and the work he had undertaken in the role as Chair over the last five years.

17/27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alijah declared an interest in relation to item 6 and 7 on the agenda as she is a Trustee for the Hideaway Youth Project and a Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester.

RESOLVED/-

The Scrutiny Pool noted the declared interest as above.

17/28 MINUTES OF THE GMCA AND AGMA SCRUTINY POOL MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2017.

The Minutes of the GMCA and AGMA Scrutiny Pool meeting held on 10 March 2017 were submitted for consideration.

RESOLVED/-

The Scrutiny Pool approved the Minutes of the GMCA and AGMA Scrutiny Pool meeting held on 10 March 2017.

17/29 GMCA/AGMA FORWARD PLAN

Members received a report which provided a forward plan of key decisions to be made by the GMCA and Joint GMCA/AGMA Executive.

Officers reported that over the forthcoming weeks there would be an opportunity for members to complete a short survey as part of an annual reflection process for the Scrutiny Pool. The findings of this survey will highlight those areas of review which members felt were particular successes, and identify areas where members believe that further improvements could be made.

RESOLVED/-

The Scrutiny Pool noted the GMCA and Joint GMCA/AGMA Forward Plan.

17/30 EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Simon Nokes, GMCA's Executive Director for Policy and Strategy took members through a report which provided an update on activity against the recommendations agreed by the GM Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. It also gave an overview of the work being undertaken against each of the ten GM work and skills priorities.

He reported that there are challenges which remain in the skills sector, including the uncertainty about the economy, a fragmented higher education system, a gap in digital skills provision, and incentives which only reward starting courses. The GMCA are working to address these issues through a number of projects including the introduction of Careers and Enterprise Advisors, a travel allowance scheme for apprentices, the co-commissioning of the Work Programme, and strengthening links between employers and schools through an improved work experience programme.

Members commended the work being undertaken with post 16 young people, but urged that GM should commit to earlier intervention with young people before they become NEET and prioritise the creation of a wider curriculum which values practical skills and academic skills equally. Members commented that the current disengagement of young people in schools has a direct correlation to increased levels of unemployment. Officers reported regular conversations with Government regarding early intervention opportunities to improve school readiness and increase GCSE results but that there remains a need to better join up the whole education process.

A member commented that careers advice is crucial to supporting young people into the right career, but that high profile careers fairs which brought professionals into the young people's domain seem less prevalent. Officers reported a general decline in work experience and careers advice but reminded the Pool that the linking of employers to schools remains a key priority for GM work and skills.

Members asked for young people who do not fall into the NEET category to be addressed as often they can fall below the radar. They added that there had been a number of policies to address skills gaps in schools which had been 'parachuted' into schools and had no sustained impact. Consideration should be given to how GM will do things differently to ensure long term relationships. Officers reported that the Careers and Enterprise Advisors will help to unlock relationships with schools and provide the inroad to building sustainable relationships.

Members of the Pool asked whether a GM skills analysis had been undertaken to identify the areas in which further education provision is required. It was reported that GM are undergoing work to identify the future employment needs for the conurbation and the changing nature of the economy over the next 20 years. It is anticipated that the devolved powers regarding post 19 education will give GM opportunities to influence how we can ensure that young people can acquire the skills they need for the future jobs market.

A member thanked the GMCA for their support in taking forward the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, and welcomed the progress made. They commented that the introduction of the Careers and Enterprise Advisors was a step in the right direction, but that

more advisors were needed to ensure the scheme has impact across GM. In addition, this advice needs to be of quality, consistent and coordinated across all areas of GM.

Members asked whether there was a consistency to private sector apprenticeship schemes and who holds training providers to account. Officers responded that all training providers are regulated via Ofsted and that future funding schemes would change as a result of the introduction of the apprenticeship levy.

A member urged that young people need to be given parity of esteem with an array of vocational training which are seen as valuable elements of the colleges' offer. Curriculums should allow for personal tailoring to ensure that young people can have their particular skills developed through a range of interest-based subjects which are not deemed as secondary to more academic routes.

RESOLVED/-

1. To note the report.
2. That officers take back the comments and views of scrutiny members to the Employment and Skills Partnership, and continue to drive forward the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group.

17/31 NORTH WEST SKILLS ACADEMY

The Chair introduced Samuel Riley, Director of the North West Skills Academy who talked to the Pool about his background and the development of his company. Through his work in the construction industry, he recognised a gap in the market for providing training that would allow people straight into employment in the construction sector. NW Skills Academy has supported 1500 young people into work over the past 12 months, through the use of small government grants and funding. They now employ 16 people, including 8 specific trade assessors which has allowed the curriculum provision to be expanded. He further commented that the GM devolution deal offers a great opportunity to develop new ways of thinking and strengthen the integration of businesses with the GMCA.

Members commented that the skills agenda needs to begin with young children as many are being failed by the current system and the lack of careers knowledge at the age of 15 when they are required to make choices about their higher education. Samuel shared about the 'Construction Skills Village' ¹in Doncaster where young children are invited to go and experience the construction industry and learn about trade skills. He further added that the current education system places barriers to learning as many people continue to fail their Maths and English GCSEs and as a result are unable to progress to further education.

Members felt that the experience of NW Skills Academy should be shared across GM as there were many lessons to be learnt and opportunities to support the building sector.

¹ <http://www.barnsley.ac.uk/our-departments/construction/skills-village-open-event/>

Members asked whether the NW Skills Academy had diversified into any other areas and whether their company could grow with additional funding and support. Samuel responded that their approach to skills provision was not sector specific and could be applied to any area with the right coordinators and specialism knowledge.

The Pool discussed how college based diploma qualifications do not allow for a student to move directly into work as this needs to be followed by a NVQ to give them the full qualifications required to work on a building site. This was an issue that needed addressing at a GM level to remove these barriers to employment and to avoid using public funding to support qualifications which are no use in the workplace.

Members of the Pool asked how the GMCA could further support organisations like NW Skills Academy across the conurbation to increase more people back into work. Samuel commented that any influence over the flexibility of funding would be really beneficial to supporting future schemes as in the current arrangements some learners are not eligible for programmes because they do not meet the narrow funding criteria.

RESOLVED/-

The Scrutiny Pool noted the information provided and thank the representative from NW Skills Academy.

17/32 SOCIAL HOUSING

At the request of members, Paul Beardmore, GM Lead Officer for Housing presented a report which set out the current position, recent trends and policy developments and some likely key issues emerging from the recent Housing White Paper.

The report highlighted some of the priority areas for GM, including finding more opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing, the consideration of a workable funding model for supported housing, the possibility of improving older persons housing to allow for the re-let of large family homes and how to address increased levels of homelessness.

A member commented that the current house building market appears broken as the only recent growth has been in private rented sector and there have been fewer social housing builds.

Members urged that the planned housing builds across GM are designed and approved to meet the needs and demands of the population, rather than meeting the demands of the developpers.

A member of the Pool asked that the variation on housing register data are addressed to show a truly comparable picture of housing waiting lists across GM. Officers agreed to undertake some further work on this and report back to members.

Members were concerned that despite the demand for affordable homes and the availability of brown field sites that finance was not available to support building schemes and therefore the creation of more homes. Officers reported that GM is in a good position to negotiate bespoke deals with Government through the White Paper and that ensuring funding flexibility was a key priority to ensure housing growth.

A member asked whether the taxation changes have impacted the private rental sector for GM. Officers reported that there had been a significant drop in sales in March 2016 but that levels had picked up again to projected levels for 2017. The taxation changes had the most impact on smaller housing landlords and their ability to purchase new properties, larger firms were less affected.

A member of the Pool urged that GM should be supporting more people to be purchasing their own home. Officers reported that this was happening through a number of schemes including the 'shared ownership programme' and the 'rent to purchase' model.

Members reported high quality social housing and asked whether there had been an increase in aspirations to live in social housing stock. Officers re-iterated that many of the new build social housing has been of a really high standard and this was encouraging more people to choose this over poorer quality private rental housing.

RESOLVED/-

1. To note the report.
2. To review the data relating to housing register (as shown in table 2) and report back to members once the data was comparable across GM.
3. To bring a report to a future scrutiny meeting regarding the future plans for schemes to increase home ownership.

17/33 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017/2018

The dates for the GM scrutiny meetings for 2017/18 will be determined following the GMCA AGM in June 2017.

CHAIR