

Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 5 November 2024

Present:

Councillor Johns (Chair) – in the Chair
Councillors Abdullatif, Bano, Benham, Northwood, I Robinson, Shilton Godwin,
Taylor and Wills

Also present:

Councillor Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure
Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport
Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Jonathan Marsh, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)
Stephen Rhodes, TfGM
Nick Brooks-Sykes, Marketing Manchester

Apologies: Councillor Sadiq

ERSC/24/41 Minutes

Decision:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

ERSC/24/42 Update on Public Transport

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided an update on the recent performance of and future plans for public transport in Manchester.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- The Bee Network;
- Bus franchising operation and implementation;
- Metrolink performance;
- Bikes on Metrolink;
- Greater Manchester Rail Network;
- Bee Network fares, ticketing and customer experience;
- Transport infrastructure pipeline; and
- Strategy and reform.

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- To broadly welcome the changes being made, including bus franchising, the extension of the £2 cap on bus fares and the introduction of 'hopper' fares;
- To welcome the Credit Union offer for season tickets;

- Whether bus franchising would result in bus services which connected local communities, rather than providing journeys into the city centre, being reinstated;
- Concern that bus operators which had not been awarded the new franchises, starting in January, were no longer taking responsibility for service performance in their final months of operating on those routes;
- Overcrowding of trams at peak times;
- The importance of modal shift from cars to public transport to reduce congestion and improve air quality;
- Safety and perceptions of safety when using public transport;
- Promoting the chat function on the Bee Network app, which enabled users to speak directly to the police, as well as the WalkSafe app;
- Issues with Northern Rail and the impact of 'do not travel' notices on people's confidence in public transport;
- Concern about Northern Rail stopping selling advance tickets 15 minutes before travel;
- Aspirations for rail, noting the large population of Wythenshawe that was not served by a train station;
- Serving parts of the city that were not covered by Metrolink;
- Branding of public transport options at Manchester Airport and ensuring a positive experience for people arriving into the city;
- To welcome the number of jobs and apprenticeships being created and to request more information on employment in a future report; and
- Whether the one-hour limit for hopper fares was sufficient.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport advised that she would take forward the point about making the chat function on the app easier to find. She informed Members about the partnership with Strut Safe, which provided a phone line with volunteers that a person could talk to if they were walking alone. She reported that Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, was working hard to raise the issues in relation to Northern Rail and to try to get a better service.

Jonathan Marsh from TfGM reported that funding was being used to purchase more vehicles to provide double trams at peak times and that increasing capacity on the Metrolink system would continue to be a focus for future funding. He informed Members that next generation trams were also being considered, moving away from double trams to larger single vehicles. In response to a Member's question, he informed Members about the draft Rapid Transit Strategy, which included 15 priority projects which were being looked at to determine which would be the forerunners for being taken forward into future funding settlements. He highlighted TfGM's work with railway partners to achieve preliminary integration of the '8-priority corridors' into the Bee Network by 2028, stating that more information could be provided in a future report. In response to a question about Bee Bikes, he reported that the recovery plan had been going well and there was a commitment to ongoing expansion. In response to a Member's question about the specific safety concerns that passengers had, he advised that further information could be provided in a future report. In response to a Member's question, he advised that the approach to fare evasion was continuing to be monitored and reviewed.

Stephen Rhodes from TfGM informed Members that the initial bus franchising process, which was being rolled out in tranches, was largely based on existing bus routes and focusing on making the services more reliable. He advised that, following this, network reviews were being undertaken for each area, making use of data from franchised services which had previously not been available for deregulated services, and undertaking consultations and engagement work. He reported that this would include consideration of the introduction of new routes or reinstatement of previously axed services. He advised that bus operators were working to prepare for the transfer of services, depots and staff in tranche 3 but that he would be happy to discuss any specific concerns outside of the meeting. In relation to safety and the perception of safety, he reported that TravelSafe officers were being deployed across the network, with numbers being increased in tranche 3. He also highlighted the Strut Safe partnership and the opportunities that the renewal of the bus shelter contract presented in improving safety, for example, providing better lighting around bus shelters. A Member advised that it was important that TravelSafe officers had a welcoming approach to interacting with passengers.

In response to comments about rail tickets, Stephen Rhodes advised that one of the key aims of the Bee Network was trying to simplify the travel network for passengers and this included work which was taking place on rail ticketing. In response to a question about the £2 cap on bus fares, he advised that ongoing subsidy was likely to be needed and that the case was being made, politically and by officers, for sustainable, long-term funding for the transport network. He reported that it was recognised that branding at the Airport needed to be changed and that this was being actively looked into, with a meeting having taken place with representatives of the Airport the previous week. He advised that the time limit for the hopper fares was being reviewed, while clarifying that the time limit related to the point of boarding the service.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport reported that the Mayor of Greater Manchester had committed to the continuation of the £2 bus fare cap, subject to a mid-term review in 2025. She reported that the lack of a dedicated railway station for Wythenshawe had been raised as an issue when discussing options for the future and that she would continue to raise this.

Decision:

To note the report.

[Councillor Johns declared a personal interest as he was undertaking a research project on buses as part of his employment.]

[Councillors Johns, Shilton Godwin, Wills, Taylor and Rawlins declared personal interests as members of the Manchester Credit Union.]

ERSC/24/43 Evening and Night-time and Visitor Economy

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided an overview of the visitor and night-time economy in Manchester, demonstrating the city's strong position and the scale of the opportunity in the coming years. It highlighted the changes and economic challenges which all cities were

grappling with and demonstrated how Manchester was well placed to capitalise on emerging trends. It also set out the proposed next steps to ensure that the city was best positioned to support growth in a way which maximised these opportunities.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Visitor economy highlights;
- The visitor experience;
- Visitor attractions and cultural offer;
- Travel and transport highlights;
- Hotels and accommodation in Manchester;
- An overview of the evening and night-time economy;
- Retail and leisure highlights;
- Opportunities and challenges; and
- Next steps.

Nick Brooks-Sykes from Marketing Manchester provided an overview of key points, including highlighting the forthcoming launch of a new Visitor Economy Strategy and suggesting that further information on this be provided at a future meeting. The Chair agreed to this proposal.

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- To welcome the strong cultural and leisure offer in the city;
- To welcome the shift to more independent businesses in the city centre;
- Balancing the needs of people living in and near the city centre and the need to drive numbers of visitors to the city centre and provide a good cultural offer;
- Safety and perceptions of safety including for people working in the night-time economy, referencing Unite the Union's Get Me Home Safely Campaign, and for particular communities, such as trans people;
- The impact of the introduction of the Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID);
- The impact of the night-time economy on public services, including the police and health services, and the need for late night public transport;
- That a lot of the night-time economy was focused on alcohol consumption;
- Improving the offer for families with children;
- That Manchester had some thriving district centres and how were they linked into the strategy;
- Where visitors to the city centre were coming from;
- Signage to better walking routes to help visitors navigate the city;
- Was more hotel capacity needed; and
- Recognising that different parts of the city centre had different characters and faced different challenges.

The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) agreed that balance was important, highlighting the growth in relation to homes, jobs and the cultural offer in the city centre. She advised that licensing decision on the times that venues could stay open until helped to deliver this balance but that busy city centre streets needed to be managed, and she informed Members that the Night-time Economy Strategy would focus on broadening and deepening the offer as well as on how to manage it.

She informed Members that the ABID Board, which was primarily led by hoteliers, oversaw the use of the £1 levy on room bookings to increase hotel occupancy, advising that their work focused on targeted marketing, increasing business events, increasing visitor events, and improving the city welcome. A Member asked for more information on the use of the £1 levy in a future report.

In response to a Member's question about venue closures, the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) advised that there was a challenging market for many leisure and hospitality businesses, with a lot of competition and increasing costs, and that the Council was doing what it could to support businesses.

The Director of City Centre Growth and Infrastructure advised that there had also been a number of new businesses opening so some of these closures were just the normal ebb and flow of business. In relation to safety and security, she informed Members about the work of ABID's security group and the Pub and Club Network. In response to a Member's comments about staff not being familiar with the Ask for Angela scheme, she advised that further work might be needed to ensure staff were briefed on this while highlighting that the high turnover of staff in the sector presented a challenge.

Nick Brooks-Sykes reported that the newly introduced night buses would help staff working in the night-time economy to get home safely and that many establishments offered taxis to staff working late.

In response to comments about District Centres, the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) informed Members that the Cultural Strategy focused on the importance of a local offer and that the Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy focused on the offer across Greater Manchester, not just in the city centre. She acknowledged that the offer needed to be diversified to meet the needs of a range of residents and visitors, advising that the Night-time Economy Strategy would include this, and that, as with many cities, there were issues with anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol consumption and a collective response to managing this was needed. She informed Members that walking routes were being looked at as part of the City Centre Movement Plan and offered to provide further information in a future report. She reported that hotel capacity was sometimes not sufficient, when a number of large events were taking place in the city, and that a 20% increase in bed space was expected; however, she advised that the challenge was to fill those hotel rooms at other times and she offered to provide more information on ABID in a future report. She reported that for some events, such as the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) event at Co-op Live, 78% of visitors were from outside the area, including national and international visitors.

Nick Brooks-Sykes reported that the city had periods of very high demand for hotel rooms, particularly linked with football matches and concerts at the Arenas, and the city did not have sufficient capacity for this, whereas there were other times when demand was much lower, commenting on the supply of AirBnB accommodation focused around the venues which created this higher demand. He reported that ABID employed welcome hosts in the city centre, promoting a sense of safety and welcome for visitors. He advised that, as the transport network developed, this would facilitate visitors exploring the suburbs and that this was an opportunity which could

be highlighted in the new Visitor Economy Strategy. He advised that regular leisure visitor surveys were carried out, with the information from these shaping the marketing strategy. In response to a Member's question about what visitors said could be improved, he advised that he could provide this information after the meeting. He reported that more families were visiting the city, both for day visits and overnight stays, and that there was an opportunity to further develop the offer for families.

The Chair referenced requests to bring reports to the Committee on the Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy, the Evening and Night-time Economy Strategy and the Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID), as well as a previous discussion about bringing a report on work taking place on hotel supply as part of the Local Plan process and advised that he and officers would look into scheduling these items for future meetings.

A Member advised that some district centres experienced similar issues to the city centre, in terms of needing to balance the needs of local residents and visitors to the night-time economy, and asked if this could also be addressed in the Evening and Night-time Economy Strategy. The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) advised that the Strategy would primarily focus on the city centre but that the scope of the work could be looked at and that there would be principles from this work that would be applicable to areas outside of the city centre.

Decisions:

1. To note the update, including that Marketing Manchester's Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy will be launched in early 2025.
2. That the Committee will receive reports on the Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy, the Evening and Night-time Economy Strategy and the Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID) as well as a report on work taking place on hotel supply as part of the Local Plan process.

[Councillors Johns, Northwood, Abdullatif, I Robinson, Rawlins and Benham declared a personal interest as members of Unite the Union.]

ERSC/24/44 Autumn Statement 2024

The Committee received a report and presentation of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) which provided an update on the main announcements from the Statement, focusing on those which had a direct implication for the remit of the Committee.

Key points and themes within the report and presentation included:

- An overview of the Autumn Budget;
- Key announcements for Manchester and for local authorities;
- Economic growth;
- Business;
- Regeneration;

- Housing;
- Transport and highways; and
- Work and skills.

Key points and queries that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- To broadly welcome the budget statement from the Government;
- Asking the Executive Members present for their views on the impact within their areas of responsibility;
- The impact of changes to National Insurance;
- The Single Settlement and ensuring that Manchester received a fair share;
- Business rates;
- Whether there would be funding for infrastructure to support economic growth, including energy infrastructure;
- Rail services, following the decision on HS2;
- Concern that the investment in walking and cycling infrastructure would not be sufficient;
- The Apprenticeship Levy;
- Affordable housing; and
- To welcome the additional funding for colleges.

The Head of City Policy reported that it was currently too early to provide an accurate analysis of what the changes to National Insurance would mean for the city but that this would be analysed. He confirmed that the Council would be making a submission to the business rates review. He reported that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero had had a significant increase in their budget but that it was not yet known what the impact would be on the energy infrastructure for Manchester. He advised that reform to the Apprenticeship Levy was welcomed but that the Council would need to see the details of this.

The Strategic Director (Growth and Development) reported that the city would continue to make the case for the rail infrastructure that the north needed and that it was likely that there would be more information on this in the spending review in the spring. She reported that the confirmation of the Greater Manchester Single Settlement was welcomed, although there were some risks, and she advised that positive discussions were taking place at a Greater Manchester level on the prioritisation of investment, as well as separate discussions with the national Government on some of the larger projects across the city region, such as Victoria North. In response to a question from the Chair, she reported that preparations were already underway for the spring spending review and that a submission would be made in advance with an integrated offer and ask for Manchester, including growth, housing delivery, meeting the net zero challenge, transport and public service reform, with an emphasis on prevention.

The Executive Member for Housing and Development welcomed the additional funding for the Affordable Homes Programme. He also welcomed the changes on Right To Buy, which he advised would reduce the amount of social housing which was lost, although he reported that the Council would continue to call for further reform. He also welcomed the retention of levelling up funding for Wythenshawe and

that councils would no longer have to compete against one another for regeneration funding.

The Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport reported that all additional funding was welcomed and, while the additional £100m investment in cycling and walking infrastructure would not go far when spread across the country, it should not be viewed in isolation. She informed Members that the Council knew where improvements were most needed and had projects in the pipeline ready to maximise funding opportunities.

The Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure stated that he welcomed funding for work and skills and advised that of particular importance was the continuing devolution of decision-making so that funding could be deployed to meet the needs of the city. He reported that further details were needed on the announcements in the Autumn Statement and that the Council was having ongoing discussions with the national Government on a range of issues, including post-16 education.

Decision:

To note the report and presentation.

ERSC/24/45 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve. The report also included the Quarterly Economy Dashboard, for information.

In response to a Member's question about the previous recommendation "that the Council's representatives on TfGM and the GMCA communicate the recommendation that the 'Right Mix' deliver carbon reductions in line with the Council's carbon budget", the Committee Support Officer advised that the Executive Member for Clean Air, Environment and Transport had agreed to raise this at a future Bee Network meeting, when the relevant item was on the agenda. The Chair stated that he would speak to the Executive Member about this.

In response to a question about the previous recommendation that "when the Social Value Framework is next reviewed, children and families who have experienced homelessness be added as a priority group", it was agreed that the Committee Support Officer would follow up on this.

Decisions:

1. That the Committee note the report, including the Quarterly Economy Dashboard, and agree the work programme.
2. That the Committee Support Officer will check on the timeline for the review of the Social Value Framework, in relation to the previous recommendation.

