

PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION

Date: 14 September 2017
Subject: Terms of Reference Review
Report of: Garreth Bruff

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the current terms of reference for the Commission and how these may need to be updated to ensure they are fit for purpose going forward.

This includes a proposal for strengthening private sector engagement in the work of the Commission and ensuring that this is matched by broader inclusion across other key stakeholder groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Commission members discuss the issues set out below and how the terms of reference for the Commission could be updated in light of recent changes to work and priorities at the GM scale.
2. That Commission members consider the proposal for improving the way we use the time of private sector members of the Commission, and how this could be complemented with wider stakeholder engagement from other sectors.
3. That the terms of reference and membership of the Commission are reviewed in light of these discussions, with a report brought to the next meeting.

Contact Officer: garreth.bruff@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The terms of reference for the Planning and Housing Commission are set by the GMCA/AGMA Executive Board and need to be noted by the Commission on an annual basis following each Annual General Meeting (see Item 4a).
- 1.2 In essence, the Commission is an advisory body for the GMCA and the AGMA Executive Board, focusing on the provision of research, advice, dialogue and strategic oversight over planning and housing issues at the GM scale.
- 1.3 As such, the terms of reference set out the role of the Commission, its objectives and ways of working as well as stipulating membership. Any changes to them would need to be approved by the GMCA/AGMA Executive Board.

2. OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 The Commissions current terms of reference were last reviewed in 2014, following a refresh of the GM Strategy in 2013, and are largely rooted in the priorities of that earlier plan.
- 2.2 Clearly, there have been many changes and developments in both planning and housing and Greater Manchester's governances since the Terms of Reference were last reviewed. For example:
 - Further devolution of powers and resources to Greater Manchester, including health and social care responsibilities
 - Increasingly close work with a wider range of stakeholders in the private, public and voluntary/community sectors to implement change on an expanding set of issues covering economic, social and environmental concerns
 - The election of a new GM mayor and a change in political portfolios at the GM scale, linking planning and housing to the increasingly important issue of homelessness
 - A further update of the GM Strategy, with a new vision and strategic priorities that seek to harness the strengths of Greater Manchester's people and places to create a more inclusive and productive city region (see item 9).
- 2.3 Given these changes, and the progress made in the three years since the terms of reference were last set, it is suggested that it is now timely to review the current terms of reference to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the future.
- 2.4 In particular, Commission members may want to consider a number of specific questions:

- i) Whether the overall role of the Commission could be more precisely defined in light of the priorities set by the GM Strategy – at the moment the role is very much defined around growth ambitions of GM and does not reflect wider place making considerations;
- ii) What a broader agenda for the Commission, which now encompasses homelessness as well as planning and housing, may mean for our the objectives and ways of working set out in the terms of reference.
- iii) Whether the terms of reference would benefit from specific performance indicators or targets to help keep track of progress.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION

3.1 Clearly, any change to the role and objectives of the Commission will need to be matched by consideration of the membership, to ensure that the people around the Commission table continue to be best placed to fulfil these demands.

3.2 Locally elected members

As currently constituted, the Commission is chaired by the GM Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Homelessness and includes one elected member from each of the ten GM districts, with nominations agreed annually by the GMCA.

The opportunity to bring together members from all ten authorities has proved to be important in terms of collaboration on many key pieces of work, not least of which the GMSF, housing intelligence and plans for housing delivery.

As such, it is not suggested to change these arrangement, although it should be noted that additional invites are often extended to ensure that all local Planning or Housing Portfolio Holders are able to attend Commission meetings, as these responsibilities are often split in several Council Cabinets. This can mean that Commission meetings are dominated by local authority contributions and this is an issue that would need to be addressed by looking at the wider range of stakeholders, as set out below.

3.3 Private sector engagement

Work on this aspect of the membership has already started. Following a request at the April meeting of the GM Planning and Housing Commission, private sector members met to consider how to deepen and broaden the engagement

of private sector stakeholders in GMs planning and housing work as well as ensure best use of time.

There is agreement that engaging the private sector more closely in several key areas of work (eg GMSF, housing delivery, infrastructure provision and investment) could be beneficial, but this needs to be managed sensitively to ensure that arrangements complement existing structures and utilise everyone's time effectively.

Based on their meeting, private sector members of the Commission have prepared a proposal for consideration – see details attached at Annex one. This proposal would see a Panel established, acting as both a sounding board for sharing advice and views, as well as a mechanism for identifying emerging trends or issues. It would enable a broader range of private sector stakeholders to contribute through less structured meetings and discussions hosted by a core group of members, whilst reducing the time spent in formal Commission meetings. Reports back to the Commission would ensure that close relationships are maintained.

Views on this proposition are welcome from Commission members prior to enacting any recommendations. If this proposal is broadly agreed by members, a core group would meet again to set the work programme and arrange subsequent Panel sessions.

3.4 Creating a more inclusive approach

In parallel to private sector membership, there is also an opportunity to consider whether other stakeholders should be more closely involved in the work of the Commission and how we could develop a more inclusive way of working.

For example, the Commission does not currently benefit from any input from the health sector or the voluntary and community sector. Both of which have an important role to play in good planning and housing, as well as in tackling homelessness, where a more inter-disciplinary approach has been proved to be important.

At the same time, there are wider moves taking place across Greater Manchester to engage local groups and residents on all issues facing the city region. This includes monthly question time sessions for the GM mayor and GM wide summits on important issues such as the natural environment or digital connectivity. The results of this activity are still being processed, but it is clear that they all offer more opportunities to engage a wider range of people in the decisions of the GMCA, including on planning, housing and homelessness.

Views are sought from Commission members on the range of other stakeholders who could usefully be brought in to the Commission and how the Commission could better link to wider engagement processes by the GMCA and GM Mayor.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Any changes to the terms of reference would need to be approved by the GMCA/AGMA Executive Board. As such, it is proposed that discussions around the issues above are used to develop a more up to date terms of reference for the Commission. This would need to be agreed at the next full meeting of the Commission before being proposed for approval to the GMCA/AGMA Exec Board.
- 4.2 Full recommendations are set out at the front of this report.

ANNEX ONE: PROPOSITION FOR A PRIVATE SECTOR PANEL

Following discussion at the April meeting of the GM Planning and Housing Commission, private sector members of the Commission have been considering how to deepen and broaden the engagement of private sector stakeholders in GMs planning and housing work.

The proposition below represents the outcome of these discussions and is shared for amending/agreement by the Commission before further steps are made.

1. Overall proposition

The aim is to establish a small and flexible panel of private sector stakeholders who would be asked to contribute to the work of the GM Planning and Housing Commission by sharing experience and ideas on relevant issues or GMCA proposals at an early stage in development.

The panel would have two over-riding roles:

1. Sounding board: to respond to proposals and work in progress by the Commission and its GMCA officer group, testing the thinking and assumptions of different approaches and generally acting as a “sounding board” for sharing advice and views. This would largely be based around the current work programme of the Commission.
2. Forward look: looking ahead to identify issues which are not necessarily part of the Commission’s current work programme but are likely to be of increasing importance to GM in the future. This would be an opportunity for private sector stakeholders to bring forward issues or opportunities that need greater consideration.

2. Membership

Rather than see this as a standing group, the aim would be to create a more dynamic network of appropriate individuals who would be contacted directly to take part in specific panel discussions as and when required.

A core group, consisting of the five existing private sector members of the commission, would be responsible for organising panel meetings, agreeing a programme of work with GMCA officers and bringing in other relevant stakeholders. The core group would be supplemented with other participants on a flexible and changing basis, dependant on the issues under consideration.

The aim would be to invite real “stakeholders” to panel discussions – ie individuals from organisations with a very real business interest in the issues under consideration, as well as appropriate expertise and experience to contribute.

This would be supported by GMCA officers, with two or three relevant officers invited to take part in panel meetings.

3. Format

The majority of work would be based around breakfast meetings at the start of the usual working day. These would be hosted and chaired by one of the core group in turn and focus on a single piece of work or issue, with around of 10-12 participants in total.

The aim is to create an informal and open environment for frank and honest discussions in some depth, with participants able to exchange ideas and opinions with each other as well as with GMCA officers.

It is accepted that meeting dates would need to be programmed ahead of time for diaries, but would remain flexible to avoid any unnecessary meetings or calls on participant's time.

4. Links to Commission and GM governance

It would be essential for the Panel to maintain strong links with the Planning and Housing Commission.

The results of Panel sessions would be written up for sharing informally with relevant planning and housing officers or for using in more formal reports back to the Commission itself. One member of the Panel would still attend the usual Commission meetings on a regular basis to contribute directly to these and report back - this may take the form of issues based reports reflecting the outcomes of different Panel discussions.

In addition, the Panel would also link to other GM bodies, such as the GM LEP and the LEPs Infrastructure Advisory Group, inviting relevant members where appropriate to take part in panel discussions.

5. Programme of work and next steps

A panel of this type would help to respond to the call for greater private sector engagement in the recent GMSF consultation and planning issues would form a key part of the work programme. However, a focus on the delivery of housing and infrastructure would mean that panel sessions have a much broader utility.

For example, meetings of a Panel could focus on a range of critical issues such as:

-) Housing requirements in GM – proposals in the GMSF, responding to announcements in Housing White Paper, etc
-) Housing types – demand for different housing types, differences between different parts of GM, trends in city centre supply, etc
-) Offices – viability in different parts of city region, trends and forecasts
-) Infrastructure - where are capacity issues, how do we address those, etc
-) Town centres - delivering homes in TCs and future of TCs, etc