Economy, Business Growth and Skills Scrutiny Agenda Planning 2018-19

1 Introduction

1.1 After 6 months of operation it is worth reflecting on the development of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s new statutory scrutiny arrangements. Each of the three new committees have a monthly meeting, and have a chair and deputy chair from a different party to the elected mayor.

1.2 The GMCA’s scrutiny function now has 45 elected members across the three committees (previously there were 30 in total). In addition there are a further 8 named substitutes who help ensure that the committees are quorate.

1.3 This year two thirds of the committee members of the Economy, Business Growth and Skills scrutiny committee haven’t served on a GMCA scrutiny committee in the last three years.

1.4 There have been significant changes to the GMCA’s governance - most notably the election of the mayor- and the launch of a new Greater Manchester Strategy, associated implementation plan, and performance management arrangements. This has ensured that the new Committee has had a substantial workload.

1.5 In addition it is worth noting that the Committee has also committed to wherever possible to focus upon pre decision scrutiny and to comment upon and influence policy and strategy as it is developed.

1.6 This note suggests a more systematic approach to developing the Committee’s work programme, whilst still ensuring the Committee are able to shape and flex their agenda as required.

2 Possible Option for Discussion

2.1 The Committee’s remit is broad:

- Investment
- Science and technology
- GM’s global brand (including Northern Powerhouse)
- Improving GM’s international competitiveness
- Business Support
- Skills and Employment to support business growth
- Culture, leisure and sport

2.2 To support the Committee’s oversight and understanding of all policy areas within their remit it is suggested that there could be a rolling programme of thematic update reports. These reports would have the express purpose of highlighting to the Committee:

- challenges, and successes in the policy theme being investigated
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- a description of any anticipated key decision and some indication of when these decisions are likely to be taken. This would answer the request to have a better understanding of the forward plan.

This would ensure that over the course of a municipal year the committee have considered all the major policy areas within their remit.

2.3 Such an approach would build on the success of the skills and employment themed meeting in January, which enabled the Committee to engage and explore the crosscutting themes within different workstreams in this policy area.

2.4 To ensure the Committee was still able to shape the agenda and areas of discussion, and for this approach to work, it is suggest that:

- The month before a particular topic was due to come to the committee, members would be asked for particular issues that they wanted that thematic report to cover
- Each thematic update report would include a mixture of strategic oversight, performance information (linked to GMS) and key areas for scrutiny’s views/decision (as was done with the skills/employment update report)
- Specific key decisions would still come to the Scrutiny Committee for discussion (in addition to the rolling themed updates) but members would have a better understanding of the context of these decisions
- Specific actions raised during the discussion on a particular theme would still be followed up immediately, with wider general issues being wrapped into the next update on that particular theme

2.5 The table overleaf is an initial draft of how these rolling updates could be scheduled. It builds on the major policy themes (identified by the GMCA policy team) that are the Committee’s responsibility. It is important to note that the table includes 3 potential topics at each meeting. The ‘rolling programme’ only covers 2 of those topics giving the Committee flexibility to look at another area at each meeting as it chooses.

2.6 Most topics would be considered twice over a municipal year. Some topics, in particular employment and skills, would benefit from being considered on a more frequent basis, given the size of the topic and the scale of change being driven at a GM level within that topic (eg devolution of Adult Education Budget). It should also be noted that the 6 monthly GMS update gives scope for the committee to focus on areas of particular interest or concern.

3 Recommendations

3.1 The Committee is asked to give their views on the proposal set out in the report, to help shape the forward work programme for 18/19
A flavour of the areas that might be covered under each topic is given below:

- **Culture** – an update on the cultural grants programme, cultural strategy and Great Places project
- **Digital** – an update on the implementation of the main areas of the Digital Strategy – including Digital Infrastructure, Skills, Inclusion, Business/Sector Growth and Profile
- **Internationalisation** – an update on the implementation of the Internationalisation Strategy, including Trade and Investment
- **BREXIT** – an update on the potential implications/impacts of the latest BREXIT deal progress for the GM economy, and in particular its impact on GM’s growth sectors
- **Business** – an update on work in GM’s prime capability and large employment sectors including Business Start Up, Growth and Innovation
- **Science** – an update on investment in, and commercialisation of, GM’s science assets building on the Science and Innovation Audit
- **Skills/Employment** – an progress update on all skills/employment issues and programmes
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- GMS – a progress report on implementation of the GMS and latest performance dashboard
- Industrial Strategy/Devolution – an update on the development of the Local Industrial Strategy and areas emerging for potential further Devolution conversations with Government and its relationship with the GMSF
- Northern Powerhouse – an update on Northern Powerhouse (NPH) work, including GM’s contribution to driving NPH in key areas such as trade, science, energy, visitor economy etc