Dear member

I hope you manage to get a break this summer and to enjoy the brilliant weather. I thought you might like some summer reading and so I have set out in this bulletin some of the things I have been working on as your Greater Manchester Labour Mayor.

There are many things happening in the Combined Authority, too many to mention them all in this bulletin, but I wanted to highlight some of the key issues and changes that we have implemented since I was elected.

I hope you find it interesting.

Best wishes

Andy

REPORT OF THE MAYOR OF GREATER MANCHESTER

Northern Rail Disruption

As colleagues will be well aware, Northern Rail services across the North, but especially across Greater Manchester, have been in chaos since May and were in an unsatisfactory place since January this year.

I received reports of service deterioration from late 2017 with growing evidence of disruption from the start of the year. When the new timetable was implemented in May 2018, the service effectively collapsed with hundreds of cancellations, delays and short formations causing major disruption to peoples’ lives. There were reports of people facing disciplinary action for continually being late for work, having to pay for additional child care, taxis and hotel rooms due to the appalling service.
Steve Rotheram and I challenged the Government over the disruption and, together with other Leaders, provided a voice for people in the North of England. I met with, participated in telephone conferences and, alongside Steve Rotheram, we led calls for action with Northern Rail. It was clear that the disruption was a shared responsibility between Network Rail and Northern Rail. The Secretary of State failed to grasp the severity of the situation and did not act until far too late.

I met with other Labour Mayors and Leaders who are in the Transport for the North Board and we raised the issues at TfN meetings. A compensation package, beyond that for season ticket holders, is currently being developed.

I worked closely with the RMT to get Northern Rail to engage constructively in talks with the Union which I’m pleased to say are now happening. I am of the view that trains across GM require a second person on board to assist the elderly, disabled and others and that Driver Only Operated trains in GM are not acceptable.

The rail operators have said that the May timetable should be implemented at the end of July, although we are waiting for an update on this.

Fire

First of all I want to put on record my thanks and praise for the tremendous work of the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service over the last few weeks in tackling the moorland fires at Saddleworth Moor and Winter Hill. Both I and the Deputy Mayor, Bev Hughes, visited the two sites on several occasions to thank the firefighters and see the extent of what they were facing. I also want to thank all of the other fire services who provide mutual aid, the army, the Mountain Rescue teams, United Utilities who provided air support and all of those who were involved.

Following concerns about the operation of Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service, highlighted in but not prompted by, the Kerslake Report, the Deputy Mayor, Bev Hughes and I initiated a whole service review. We have been visiting all fire stations across GM to speak to the firefighters and hear first-hand their concerns.

Whilst the Review is on-going, it has become clear that a number of steps can be taken now to deal with some of the issues raised. We have been working closely with the FBU locally, regionally and nationally and have their support for a number of changes that will be announced this coming week.
Rough Sleeping and Homelessness

Tackling rough-sleeping remains a top priority for me. My Homelessness Fund, established when I became Mayor, has now raised over £100,000 which is providing grants to organisations which are working locally to provide support to people sleeping on our streets.

We have developed constructive partnerships with our ten districts and are working together to eradicate the need for anyone to have to sleep rough in Greater Manchester.

Greater Manchester was the first City-Region in the country to move further on cold weather provision. Rather than waiting for three nights of zero temperatures before opening temporary accommodation, we ensured that places were available for any night that the temperature dropped to zero.

We now want to go further and are working with our Council Leaders to provide accommodation for every night of the year for every rough-sleeper. This won’t be easy and we aren’t there yet, but plans are being put in place.

In May, the Government pledged £8 million for a project called Housing First, which will enable us to free up 500 homes in the city-region for people with complex needs, including rough sleepers.

We have also established a £1.8m Social Impact Bond programme to assist the most entrenched rough-sleepers across Greater Manchester.

Whilst we will continue to do all we can to help people move from our streets to accommodation, the truth is that the impact of Universal Credit is putting more people in danger of losing their homes and ending up on the street.

Bus Reform

Work has been underway since I was elected to provide the assessment of options for bus reform in GM. These assessments are required by the Government’s Bus Services Act and include franchising and Enhanced Partnership options. However, it is worth noting that the Government has not yet laid before Parliament all of the Transport Orders to transfer all of the relevant responsibilities to the Mayoral office.

The Act requires detailed assessments which means that Transport for Greater Manchester needs data to be provided by the bus operators. This has not been forthcoming from all operators and we suffered a delay whilst awaiting a ruling from the Traffic Commissioner. Work on the assessments is continuing and will be brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible.
I have, however, been able to introduce a half-price concessionary for some bus tickets for 16-18 year olds as a step towards introducing a free bus pass for all 16-18 years olds in Greater Manchester.

In addition, we were able to provide funding to support some of the women affected by the changes to the state retirement age (WASPI). Although we haven’t been able to help all women affected, we have received no Government funding for this, but believed it important to help as many as we could.

**Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF)**

Work has continued on re-writing the GMSF to reduce the amount of green-belt take across GM and it is being developed to include infrastructure proposals, particularly on transport, and to better set out our housing and employment plans.

The GMSF will be a plan to tackle the housing crisis by building the right homes in the right places including a greater emphasis on social and truly affordable housing.

The consultation on the draft GMSF has been delayed until October so that we can take account of the newly published housing figures from the ONS, which are likely to reduce the numbers of homes needing to be built across GM.

The consultation will still run for 12 weeks and we are still able to meet the timetable for agreement set by Government.

**Convention of the North**

Mayors and Leaders from across the North of England met at the opening of the Great Exhibition of the North in Newcastle and agreed to hold the first meeting of the Convention of the North in Newcastle on the 6th September.

The Convention will bring together political, business and civic leaders to speak with a single voice to Government on the key issues affecting the North including transport, skills, Brexit and further devolution.

**Other**

**Taxi reform** – I am lobbying the Government to introduce legislation that will allow us to stop out of town taxis operating in Greater Manchester. At the moment taxis can gain their licence from councils with the lowest criteria but can operate anywhere. Working with the GM Leaders we have agreed a scheme to operate across GM to improve standards and enhance security and safety check. We are undertaking a listening exercise, but already the taxi trade has
indicated that they are supportive. This could potentially include a standardised livery for taxis in GM.

**TGI Fridays/Unite dispute** - I was pleased to join colleagues from Unite the Union in support of workers at TGI Fridays who were having their tips raided to top up the salaries of other employees.

**Night Time Economy Advisor** – With the agreement of Leaders I have appointed Sacha Lord to be my Night Time Economy Advisor. Sacha will work with a panel of people from across GM to look at what we need to do to enhance the night time economy in all parts of GM. This could include safety issues, such the Purple Flag designation, protection of small music venues and transport.

**Digital Summit**

I have held two Digital Summits which have engaged businesses, experts and individuals from across the sector and which has resulted in a GM Digital Strategy which has been written by the sector and aims to make GM a leading European Digital City-Region.

**Green Summit** – in Greater Manchester we have the ambition of bring forward by a decade – to 2040 - when we become carbon neutral. Using the approach of engaging the sectors and the public in our policy development I held a Green Summit in March this year. A second summit will be held in 2019 which will agree the plans and actions that we need to take to meet that ambition.

**Beelines** – shortly after my election, I appointed Chris Boardman as our Walking and Cycling Commissioner. Working with the ten districts Chis has developed an ambitious plan for safe cycling and walking routes (Beelines) across GM which we are funding with £160 million over 3 years through our Transforming Cities Fund.

**Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh FT** - I issued a statement in support of the Unison campaign at WWL about the proposal to transfer staff into WWL Solutions Ltd. I am delighted that this issue has now been resolved and that the Trust will not now be pursuing this course of action.