



## **Japan Local Government Centre, London**

### **Monthly Report for April 2011 – Greater Manchester Combined Authority**

#### **Background**

Following the abolition of the Greater Manchester Metropolitan County Council in 1986 by the then Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) was formed from the 10 newly single-tier metropolitan districts of Greater Manchester as a voluntary association to represent Greater Manchester to the UK government and European Union. In December 2008, AGMA held a referendum in Greater Manchester on a proposed Manchester Congestion Charge to fund a £3bn extension of its Metrolink system, which was rejected by voters (78% to 21%).

In 2008, AGMA signed a Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) with the Department for Communities and Local Government, styling this 'Manchester City Region' on account of emerging government policy in favour of city regions (as identified in the 2004 report *Moving Forward: The Northern Way Growth Strategy*) following the demise of elected regional government for England plans with the 2004 referendum defeat in the North East.

Under the 2009 Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (passed to enact the provisions of the 2007 HM Treasury Sub-National Review), it was made possible for the Secretary of State to issue secondary legislation to enable the creation of formal city regional entities above the local authority level, as well as formalised MAAs with lesser statutory powers (subject to statutory guidance issued).

In the 2009 UK Budget, it was announced that Greater Manchester was to become one of two pilot formal city regions (the other being Leeds), although the intervention of the May 2010 general election saw this policy halted. Prior to the election a consultation among AGMA member authorities saw consensus shift in favour of enhanced powers over further education and changing the proposed name from Manchester City Region Authority to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

As the new coalition government intends to prioritise its plans for Local Enterprise Partnerships, the city region pilots and statutory MAAs have been discontinued by virtue of no applications being made by local authorities nor the Secretary of State issuing the necessary statutory guidance. However, AGMA pressed ahead with its plans for greater integration among its members and convinced the coalition to grant it the necessary statutory backing for these to proceed, with a formal announcement made by the Department in November 2010.

## **Greater Manchester Combined Authority Order 2011**

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority Order was issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under the 2009 Act and passed by resolution of both Houses of Parliament in March 2011, with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) established on 1 April 2011. Under the GMCA constitution, its membership consists of the 10 Greater Manchester Metropolitan District Councils who each have one voting member on the authority (and may appoint one deputy member). The authority may appoint a Chair and Vice Chair but neither of these may use a casting vote in the event of any tied vote of the authority, which must have a simple majority, except for the following, which require at least seven votes in favour:

- any statutory plans or strategies
- the authority's budget and financial plans
- acceptance of any proposed delegation of functions and budgets to the authority by the Secretary of State
- any such other plans and strategies as are determined by the authority

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has been established as an executive agency of the GMCA and will arrange public transport functions such as the Metrolink light rail system and subsidised bus and rail services, as well as transport and environment planning for the city region (replacing the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive, established in 1968). TfGM is supervised by the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee (replacing the Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority), which consists of 33 councillors nominated from the 10 member authorities, which sets policy in relation to TfGM (although GMCA retains power over its budget and the Local Transport Plan).

A Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) performs the scrutiny role over GMCA and its associated bodies, consisting of three councillors from the 10 member authorities. While AGMA will continue to exist in its role to lobby government and coordinate local authority policy matters not handled by GMCA (such as shared services, emergency planning, public health, housing, efficiency and community grants), its non-local authority members such as the Greater Manchester Fire, Police and Waste Authorities may only have 'enhanced' attendance and speaking rights at GMCA meetings.

Like AGMA, the GMCA is headquartered in the suburb of Wigan, 16 miles from Manchester city centre. The GMCA also appoints board members of the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which also became operational in April.

In February it was announced that the six promotional bodies for Greater Manchester will be merged into three 'centres of excellence' on account of funding cuts following the closure of the North West Regional Development Agency in 2012. Marketing Manchester and Visit Manchester will come together to lead tourism,

marketing and communications strategy. New Economy will drive research, employment and skills in the region, while MIDAS will focus on growth and investment. The three new 'centres of excellence' will report jointly to GMCA and the LEP.

*Any opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of JLGC or CLAIR.*