

THE GM BRIEF

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we are **GREATER
MANCHESTER**



The GM Brief: July 2026

Welcome to the July edition of the GM Brief, which brings together the latest developments, announcements and opportunities shaping Greater Manchester's future. From the forthcoming mayoral election and last month's Combined Authority Annual Meeting to transport investment and funding launches, we hope this update provides useful insight and information.

As you'll be aware, we are currently in a pre-election period ahead of the mayoral election on Thursday 30th July. Although the essential business of the Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and Transport for Greater Manchester continues you will find that this edition is shorter in line with pre-election guidelines on publicity. We'll return to the fuller GMS strategy key updates next time.

This brief also contains updates on Caroline Simpson's role following Andy Burnham, former Mayor of Greater Manchester, being confirmed as Prime Minister.

As valued partners and advocates for our city region, your leadership and collaboration continue to play a vital role in helping us deliver our shared ambitions for residents, businesses and communities.

Thank you for your ongoing support, partnership and commitment to Greater Manchester. We look forward to continuing to work together to deliver a thriving city region where everyone can live a good life.

Best wishes,

Andrew Lightfoot

Managing Director, GMCA

Key updates

GMS strategy

July marks one year on since we launched the Greater Manchester Strategy. In the last edition we shared some of the key achievements from over the last year.

We'll do more to mark our first year of Greater Manchester Strategy delivery following the current pre-election period.

Mayoral election

An election for a new Mayor of Greater Manchester will take place on Thursday 30th July. This follows previous Mayor Andy Burnham's election as the Member of Parliament for Macclesfield.

The latest information on the election can be found on the GM Elects website and on GM Elects channels (X / Instagram / Facebook).

Key election dates:

Wednesday 22 July 2026, 5pm: Deadline to apply for a proxy vote.

Wednesday 22 July 2026, 5pm: Deadline to apply for a 'Voter Authority Certificate' (if you do not have a photo ID that allows you to vote).

Thursday 30 July 2026: Election Day. Polling stations in Greater Manchester will be open between 7am and 10pm.

Friday 31 July 2026: Votes counted and result expected to be announced.

Significant work is underway across GMCA, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and the Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) to prepare for the transition to a new mayor.

Group Chief Executive

As you will no doubt have seen, on Friday last week (17th) Andy Burnham became Leader of the Labour Party and was officially confirmed as Prime Minister earlier this week (Monday 20th).

The Group Chief Executive for GMCA, GMFRS and TfGM Caroline Simpson has resigned from her role to take up a position in the Prime Minister's new administration. She will serve as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister working on No 10 North.

Andrew Lightfoot, GMCA's Managing Director, is the designated Group deputy and has taken on interim leadership. This includes Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) duties, alongside the CARO Board, which includes deputy returning officers.

GMCA Annual Meeting

The GMCA Annual Meeting took place on Friday 26th June.

This meeting confirmed members of the Combined Authority and its Committees, following the recent local elections.

You can find the latest information on the Combined Authorities leadership at [GMCA Members - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)

The meeting also considered Greater Manchester's approach to taking forward our role as the country's Prevention Demonstrator, and revisions to the Private Hire Vehicle Support Fund to upgrade vehicles and improve their emissions.

GM developments:

Global AI Cities showcases GM's global leadership in AI

Greater Manchester recently hosted Global AI Cities 2026, bringing together hundreds of leaders, policymakers and innovators from across the UK and internationally to shape how AI is applied in cities to improve public services, strengthen resilience and support inclusive economic growth. Co-produced by the GMCA and Global Government Forum, the two-day inaugural event demonstrated the vital role cities play in shaping practical, responsible and people-centred approaches to AI.

It also reinforced Greater Manchester's position as a global leader in AI and digital, with partners from across the city region showcasing the impact of work already underway and helping to drive forward the next phase of adoption. This reflects GM's wider approach through AI.GM, our strategic framework bringing together activity across the system, and the AI and Data Innovation Office (ADIO), which is already supporting public services to apply AI in practice and deliver real-world benefits.

Housing 2026

The Housing 2026 conference was held over 3 days at Manchester Central and we hosted and joined a range of sessions – including having a dedicated day-long GMCA theatre.

With discussions on our housing delivery, increasing workforce capacity, creating digitally-connected homes, finding opportunities from our

integrated settlement, and how we'll contribute to the prevention demonstrator work to create healthy homes – we shared what joined-up housing delivery can look like, and how housing is key to ensuring Greater Manchester's future growth works for everyone, everywhere.

The event will return to Greater Manchester in June 2027.

Major investment in Metrolink infrastructure

TfGM is continuing to invest in the long-term future of Metrolink through a major programme of track upgrades this summer.

During a three-week closure of parts of the network, the team will be replacing around 1.6km of track - parts of which are more than 30 years old – at Trafford Bar and Deansgate-Castlefield, as well as working on a separate section on the Eccles line at the same time.

From Monday 13 July to Sunday 2 August, no trams will run on the Eccles, Trafford Centre and Altrincham lines and services on the East Didsbury, Manchester Airport and Rochdale lines will also be affected. Replacement buses will run between affected stops, with normal services due to resume from Monday 3 August. There will be a special event bus service running for the cricket at Old Trafford on 26 and 31 July.

The track between Trafford Bar and St Peter's Square is one of the busiest sections of light-rail in the world, with one tram passing through every 30 seconds for 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

The work forms part of a wider £150 million investment programme to maintain, upgrade and improve the UK's largest light rail system, ensuring it remains safe, reliable and accessible for the millions of

passenger journeys made each year – and continues to support the growth of Greater Manchester for years to come.

Transforming access to transport

TfGM will kickstart a £1.7 million investment in new lifts at Bee Network tram stops this summer, with those at Heaton Park and Failsworth the first to be installed. Starting this month, it is all part of the commitment to increase reliability and step-free access for passengers in Greater Manchester.

Each replacement is expected to take 4-8 weeks, during which time the affected lift will be out of service. TfGM staff will be deployed to support passengers during the work, and the team will continue to work closely with accessibility groups, partners and stakeholders, while providing clear and timely updates and doing everything possible to reduce the impact on people's journeys.

Investment in step-free rail stations

TfGM is also improving access at train stations in the city region. Work is already underway to make Bryn (Wigan), Hindley (Wigan) and Reddish North (Stockport) rail stations step-free. Construction work at Swinton (Salford) station is also due to begin in August.

The schemes – which include new lifts and footbridges, alongside improvements to station facilities - build on similar step-free projects completed at Daisy Hill and Irlam last year.

The stations will stay open during the work and train services will continue to run as normal, although passengers may notice some temporary changes while improvements take place.

All four schemes are expected to be completed by summer 2027, helping make rail travel easier for disabled passengers, older people and people travelling with pushchairs or heavy luggage.

MBACC Summit

MBacc Summit wraps up second successful year of delivery

More than 200 educators, employers, community organisations, local authority representatives and partners gathered at Aviva Studios for this year's MBacc Summit to explore how Greater Manchester can achieve its ambition that, by 2030, every young person experiences an MBacc offer connecting technical education, employment opportunities and the city region's growing economy.

The Summit also marked the close of the second year of MBacc delivery. Since launching, more than 100 schools and colleges have engaged with one or more programme initiatives, employers have pledged an additional 1,163 T Level placements and delivered over 3,500 workplace experiences, and more than 11,000 young people have used Beeline to explore where technical education could take them. The last year has also seen the launch of the MBacc Award, the Beeline Discovery Quiz and the first pilots of inclusive MBacc pathways.

Attendees saw the MBacc vision brought to life through an opening film following young people across the seven MBacc Gateways and the opportunities they can unlock. Discussions then focused on inclusive pathways, technical education and how Greater Manchester can equip young people with the skills needed for a changing economy.

A highlight of the day was the launch of the new Beeline Discovery Game, which helps young people explore careers and technical

education pathways with trusted adults. During the break, attendees headed straight to the foyer to try it for themselves and take packs back to schools, community groups and organisations across Greater Manchester.

GMFRS urges residents to stay safe this summer

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) is working with a wide range of partners to keep residents, including young people, safe during hot weather.

Firefighters continue to respond to a major incident covering moorland fires around Dovestones and Swineshaw Reservoirs, as part of a multi-agency response.

GMFRS is instructing people to stay away from affected moorland areas and act responsibly when visiting other moors, including by not lighting BBQs, campfires or any other open flames.

Alongside, the Service is urging parents and guardians to remind their children about the dangers of swimming and jumping into open water during hot weather.

Since the start of 2026, GMFRS has attended 75 water incidents, of which five were fatal incidents.

GMFRS would welcome partners sharing the campaign with colleagues, family and friends, details of the campaign, including social media toolkits and key messages:

The Prevention Demonstrator: accelerating Live Well

Greater Manchester has been chosen as the UK's first national 'Prevention Demonstrator', which means we are the first place gathering

evidence to show that investing in joined-up support and early help leads to better health and wellbeing, and better use of public money.

We have been chosen because of our devolved system, strong neighbourhood working, and partnerships across health, councils, communities, and businesses.

As Live Well expands across the city-region, the Prevention Demonstrator will help accelerate delivery and show how things are changing. As part of this, we will use data and AI to identify people who need support and we will track residents' experiences, workforce impact, service pressures, and long-term outcomes.

Public services: Enabling and supporting this change

On Friday 26 June, GMCA supported this approach. GMCA agreed that all ten areas of Greater Manchester will be changing how public services work through Live Well, but four localities (Manchester, Rochdale, Stockport, and Wigan) will be going further and helping design, test and evaluate now.

The elusive prize of prevention

Warren Heppollette, Director of the Prevention Demonstrator (GMCA), recently shared an article in the Heywood Quarterly which explores why investing earlier in people's health, wellbeing and community support can lead to better outcomes and reduce pressure on public services. The piece examines the challenges organisations face when trying to shift from reacting to problems to preventing them and highlights the importance of joining up support around the needs of individuals, families and communities.

Drawing on examples from Greater Manchester, the article showcases initiatives that are helping people stay healthier, live more independently and access employment opportunities, while also making services more sustainable in the long term. It also looks at how local partnerships are testing new approaches and sharing learning that could benefit other areas.

Greater Manchester Production Fund launched

A new £10.5m fund has launched to attract major film and TV projects to Greater Manchester, support local production companies, and create new opportunities for homegrown talent across the city region.

The Greater Manchester Production Fund ([external website](#)) will back ambitious, market-ready feature films and scripted and unscripted TV projects that can deliver real economic impact, grow skills and strengthen our thriving creative sector.

It is open to Greater Manchester companies and to productions from elsewhere that will make a meaningful contribution to the city region.

The fund will provide a welcome boost to one of Greater Manchester's fastest-growing sectors, with our creative industries already contributing more than £1.4 billion to the local economy and supporting more than 48,000 jobs.

Local Innovation Partnerships Fund

Greater Manchester has secured £50 million through the Government's flagship Local Innovation Partnerships Fund (LIPF), with investment earmarked for five major projects designed to accelerate innovation, drive business growth and create high-value jobs across the city region. Greater Manchester is the first UK city region to have its full portfolio of

projects approved by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), underlining the maturity and strength of its innovation ecosystem.

The programme focuses on three sectors where Greater Manchester has established global strengths: advanced materials and manufacturing, health innovation and life sciences, and applied artificial intelligence. Every £1 of public investment is expected to leverage £4 of private sector funding, creating a total investment package worth around £250 million.

The five projects being funded are the Atom Valley Innovation District and the Retrofit Advanced Materials and Manufacturing Innovation Centre, which will support sustainable manufacturing and the transition to net zero; GROW AI, which will help businesses adopt and commercialise AI; and two health innovation initiatives – the Greater Data Accelerator and the Greater Manchester Wearables and Remote Monitoring Innovation Cluster – aimed at accelerating the development of new medicines, diagnostics and digital health technologies.

Together, these projects will strengthen Greater Manchester's global competitiveness, attract further investment, boost productivity and deliver inclusive economic growth while improving outcomes for residents.

£1 million funding to boost innovation and improve everyday services for residents

Greater Manchester has awarded £1 million to 21 organisations through the second phase of its Foundational Economy Innovation Fund, helping to scale innovative projects that improve everyday services, strengthen communities and support inclusive growth across the city region. The

investment focuses on the ‘everyday economy’ – the sectors people rely on daily, including social care, education, culture and local high streets.

The fund, launched by GMCA in 2023, is designed to support innovation in sectors that employ large numbers of people but have historically seen lower levels of productivity growth and investment. Following an initial phase in which organisations received funding to test new ideas, 21 projects have now secured up to £60,000 each, alongside tailored support through the Business Growth Hub.

Projects receiving support include AI-powered tools to assist carers, a digital platform supporting children experiencing school-related anxiety, initiatives improving access to culture and learning, and programmes creating employment and skills opportunities through local high streets.

The programme reflects Greater Manchester’s commitment to ensuring innovation drives benefits across all parts of the economy, not just high-growth sectors. By backing local SMEs, social enterprises and community organisations, the fund is helping to improve everyday services, create jobs and support the city region’s ambition to deliver a new decade of inclusive, good growth where all people and places can benefit.

Greater Manchester signs formal Sister City Agreement with Austin

Greater Manchester has signed a formal Sister City Agreement with the US city of Austin, cementing a fast-growing international relationship and kicking off a new era of closer collaboration between our growing economies.

The agreement will foster closer collaboration in innovation, education, tourism, culture and music, and seeks to create trade and investment opportunities for businesses on both sides.

It was the highlight of a two-day visit by a delegation of Austin-based business, civic and cultural leaders, which follows longstanding engagement between the two places and Greater Manchester's previous missions to Texas in 2023 and 2025. As part of this relationship, 16 businesses from Greater Manchester's creative industries have been taken to the US over recent years under the Business Growth Hub's Create Growth programme.

The Sister City Agreement marks the first partnership between a UK city region and Texas since the UK Government signed their landmark Statement of Mutual Cooperation on economic development and trade in March 2024.

National developments

Cllr Eamonn O'Brien elected chair of the LGA

Cllr Eamonn O'Brien, Leader of Bury Council and lead for technical education and skills, and clean air on the GMCA, was elected as the Chair of the Local Government Association at their Annual Conference and Exhibition.

Cllr O'Brien succeeds Cllr Louise Gittins who held the role for two years.