



# Roundtable on Devolution & Levelling Up with Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Wednesday 10th January 2024

## Introduction

The APPG held a roundtable meeting examining devolution and Levelling Up with Andy Burnham, Mayor of the Labour run Greater Manchester combined authority, focusing on planning, urban development, skills and transport. Valuable insight was shared on the driving factors behind successes in Manchester, most notably the importance of the trailblazer agreements and continued cross-party support for the devolution agenda in Westminster. The roundtable meeting also explored the challenges faced by local and regional authorities in delivering on the Levelling Up agenda, crucially in introducing efficient transport and infrastructure networks to match levels of growth. The following key takeaways summarise the highlights of the meeting.



## Key takeaways

- Discussions placed focus on the importance of the continued cross-party support for devolution within Westminster. Andy Burnham expressed that the success of Greater Manchester, which is currently experiencing faster economic growth than the UK economy, exemplifies the force for change that Westminster can be when political parties can collaborate on a shared goal.
- The roundtable meeting highlighted robust housing development and urban planning strategies backed by central government as the cornerstone for growth and development. The housing investment loans fund, introduced by George Osborne, has proven to be massively beneficial for greater Manchester, allowing for the creation of urban core development and high-density housing. The more recent trailblazer agreements are facilitating £150 million in funding for 7,000 new homes.
- Participants emphasised the importance of providing confidence to investors, the main challenge being that local and combined authorities do not have sufficient funding to create a skills environment attractive to investors. Andy Burnham noted that a key focus of the

Greater Manchester combined authority is developing a skilled workforce through innovative technical education and collaboration between the city's schools, colleges and universities.

- Transport networks were also highlighted as a barrier to providing Manchester and other UK cities with the skills networks necessary to support private investors. As a result, Greater Manchester is following the example of London and endeavouring to provide an integrated carbon neutral public transport system that includes rail, tram and bus. This network is due for completion by 2030.

## Issues raised

- Combined and regional authorities such as the GLA are not working closely enough with local authorities and residents when introducing new planning and infrastructure projects. Greater Manchester is successful because it consults at street level.
- Political point scoring has proven to be a barrier in the discussions surrounding increases in funding for local and combined authorities, especially on the topic of potential raises to council taxes.
- The Government's cancellation of the HS2 project was disappointing with regards to improving connectivity in the north, however Greater Manchester is working with the Liverpool metro mayor to introduce a new Manchester to Liverpool railway.

We would like to thank the members of our Advisory Board for their contributions and continuing support.



Richard Bacon MP is the Chair of the APPG for Regeneration & Levelling Up

**To get involved, please contact**  
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