

Greater Manchester Mayoral

Coverage of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority mayoralty, currently held by Andy Burnham, and its intersection with the Makerfield by-election.

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Greater Manchester Mayoral — Current State

Greater Manchester Mayoralty — Current State & Context

“ This file covers the current Greater Manchester Combined Authority mayoralty, held by Andy Burnham since 2017. The next statutory mayoral election is May 2028. However, Burnham is also standing in the **Makerfield by-election** (June 2026) — if he wins, he would be both Mayor of Greater Manchester and an MP, a situation that has generated significant political debate.

Last updated: 25 May 2026

Overview

Detail	Info
Incumbent Mayor	Andy Burnham (Labour)
Term	2024–2028 (re-elected May 2024 with 63.4% of first-preference votes)
Next scheduled election	May 2028
Combined Authority	Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)
Population covered	~2.9 million

The Dual Candidacy Controversy

Andy Burnham is standing in the **Makerfield by-election** (18 June 2026) while continuing as Greater Manchester Mayor. This has generated significant debate:

- **Critics argue** he cannot effectively serve as both GM Mayor and a constituency MP
- **Supporters say** he will continue as mayor while serving as MP, using Westminster to fight for GM
- **Labour NEC** previously blocked Burnham from standing in the Gorton & Denton by-election (Feb 2026) citing the cost and disruption of a mayoral by-election if he won the seat
- That blocking by the NEC was widely seen as Keir Starmer protecting his leadership from a Burnham challenge

Key Issues

1. **Bee Network** — Flagship integrated transport scheme (bus franchising, ticketing, cycling). Now partly operational; performance and expansion plans are central
2. **Clean Air Zone** — Scrapped in 2023. Alternative non-charging plan's effectiveness is debated
3. **Housing** — GM has consistently missed housebuilding targets
4. **Devolution** — Burnham has pushed for more powers (transport, housing, skills, rail)
5. **Policing** — Mayor oversees the GM Police and Crime Commissioner role

Candidates for 2028 Election

No candidates have been formally announced as of May 2026. However:

- **Labour:** Andy Burnham is expected to stand for a fourth term if he hasn't moved fully to Westminster
- **Reform UK:** Likely to field a candidate given their surge in GM in recent local elections (won 8 wards in Wigan area in 2026 locals)
- **Conservative:** Expected to stand but faces an uphill battle — their vote collapsed to 2% in Makerfield polling
- **Green, Lib Dem:** Expected to stand as usual

Polling

Date	Pollster	Burnham %	Reform %	Con %	Green %	Lib Dem %
May 2024 (actual result)	—	63.4%	2.4%	18.6%	8.4%	5.9%

No recent mayoral-specific polling available. Burnham remains personally popular (>60% approval in most surveys) but Labour's national collapse in May 2026 local elections could affect his position.

Twitter/X Discussion

“ Source: Nitter search, May 2026

The mayoralty discourse is dominated by the Makerfield by-election and Burnham's leadership ambitions:

- **Leadership framing:** "Andy Burnham has plan to return to Westminster 'within weeks', allies say" — the dominant narrative is that Makerfield is a springboard for a Labour leadership challenge against Starmer
- **King of the North:** The nickname is widespread. "Well done to the shotgun press robbery by nearly every southern news rag and Labour bigwigs, slapping that daft nickname 'King of the North' on Andy Burnham" — the framing is debated between supporters who embrace it and critics who see it as a media construction
- **NEC blocking:** "Blocking Burnham wasn't just about protecting Starmer, it was about defending the Westminster Club" — the January 2026 NEC block is still discussed
- **Risk of losing mayoralty:** "Massive gamble for Andy Burnham if he resigns as Greater Manchester Mayor now. Labour's collapse in the May 2026 locals has Reform UK surging" — some warn that if Burnham leaves the mayor role, Reform could take it in a by-election
- **Dual role practicality:** "Andy Burnham is trying to please everybody at once. Makerfield, the country and the markets..." — the feasibility of being both mayor and MP is questioned

Reddit Discussion

On r/ukpolitics, the mayoral dual-candidacy is discussed in the context of whether Burnham can realistically serve both roles. The NEC block (Gorton & Denton) is frequently cited as evidence of Starmer's fear of Burnham. The "King of the North" nickname is debated — some see it as earned, others as a media narrative designed to build him up before knocking him down.