

## **Economy, Business Growth & Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Subject: Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

Report of: Ian MacArthur, Director, Greater Manchester Good  
Employment Charter

---

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 The GMCA agreed to the establishment of a Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, based on the model developed through co-design with employers, employees, and others. On the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019 the GMCA agreed funding for the of the implementation of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. (£233,00 2019-20, and £236,000 p.a. for 2020-22). Since then, work has been undertaken to create the Charter Implementation Unit and delivery mechanisms for the Charter. This work has been overseen by a steering group, and now Board consisting of business groups, trade unions, professional bodies, VCSE sector employers, public sector employers and academics.

This report provides an update on this work, how the Charter has been delivered, its impacts and reflects upon the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented to the good work agenda and indeed the changing nature of work. In particular it will reflect:

- How the Charter can help support the COVID recovery plan including how it will support the Build Back Better efforts especially regarding inequalities in the workplace and supporting both individual employers and the broader Supporters Network in strengthening their resilience.
- How the Charter will continue to create a good employment 'movement' in Greater Manchester, not only expanding its reach generally, but will focus on engagement with sectors that require the most support and development to improve employment practice.
- The Charter will continue to work with its partners to deepen the pool of supporting resource and provide a platform for the Good Employment community to spread and support good practice.
- How the Charter will work with partners to develop innovative approaches to good employment practice and to continually evolve and develop new solutions.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Members are asked to:

- Note and comment on the report.

**CONTACT OFFICERS:**

Ian MacArthur, Director, Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

[ian.macarthur@growthco.uk](mailto:ian.macarthur@growthco.uk)

John Wrathmell, Director, Strategy, Research & Economy , GMCA

[john.wrathmell@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:john.wrathmell@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Risk Management – n/a

Legal Considerations – n/a

Financial Consequences – n/a

Financial Consequences – n/a

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter – Evaluation -Interim Report May 2021. Available here: [GM-Charter-Evaluation-Interim-Report-June-2021.pdf \(mmu.ac.uk\)](#)

## **1. A brief history of Charter Implementation**

- 1.1. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019 the GMCA agreed to the establishment of a Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, based on the model developed through co-design with employers, employees, and others. On 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019 the GMCA agreed funding for the of the implementation of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.
- 1.2. The agreed Charter framework set out seven headline ‘characteristics’ of good employment:
  - The Real Living Wage
  - Secure Work
  - Flexible Work
  - Good Management
  - Employee Engagement & Voice
  - Recruitment
  - Health & Wellbeing
- 1.3. The Charter Framework also set out the notion of three progressive membership tiers:
  - Supporter
  - Member
  - Advocate
- 1.4. Once resources were secured at the end of May 2019 a small team (3.5fte) was recruited, hosted by the Growth Company, to form the independent Charter Implementation Unit. Subsequently in July 2019, the Charter’s Supporter’s network was launched attended by c.200 employers and stakeholders.
- 1.5. In September 2019, a pilot group of c.20 employers was formed to work with the Unit to consider and develop draft membership criteria for the seven characteristics. This group worked through to November 2019. Also in September 2019, the Unit held its first monthly Supporter Network event (on mental wellbeing) attracting c.60 employers.
- 1.6. At the end of November 2019, the Unit held the ‘Setting the Standards’ working conference, where supported by ACAS and Manchester and Manchester Met Universities, c.100 delegates worked across 18 working groups to consider the work of the employers’ pilot group and further refine the Charter’s membership criteria. The Mayor attended the feedback session of the conference.

- 1.7. In December 2019, the Charter Steering Group agreed the final membership criteria and the following month (Jan 2020) at the GM Chamber of Commerce, the Membership Tier of the Charter was launched with c.200 guest, and the first six members of the Charter were announced.
- 1.8 Also, in January 2020 the Charter Steering Group transitioned to the Charter Board which was formed on the basis of tripartite representation with representatives from private sector employers (3), public sector employers (2), third sector employers (2), trades unions (3), independent experts (3 – ACAS, CIPD, MMU) and chaired by the GMCA.

## 2. The Charter in Numbers

- 2.1 Since the membership launch at the beginning of 2020 the impact of the COVID pandemic has undoubtedly affected the degree to which the Charter could engage with prospective new Supporters and sectoral representatives. However, over the past twelve months the Charter has grown to reach well over **300 employers**, including **180+ Charter Supporters** covering in excess of **230,000 employees** and now **29 full Members**.
- 2.2 The pandemic has also provided an opportunity for the Charter to develop topical content and support as well as new ways of engagement. The Charter has held over **c.30 events/webinars** since the launch of the Supporter's network attracting a total of over **1,000 attendees**. (See Appendix A for topics covered to date) The Charter has also published **63 blog post articles** highlighting topical issues or innovative practice. Series one of the Charter's podcast **Good Employment Chatter** was released earlier this year with eight episodes. Analytics show that the podcast landed in the **top 35% of SME podcasts**.
- 2.3 With the support of key partners such as ACAS, CIPD, GMH&SCP, GreaterSport, the Real Living Wage Foundation and others, we have produced and corralled a range of good employment resources and toolkits covering all Characteristics and equality issues.
- 2.4 The first year of full operation has also allowed effective systems to be developed and introduced to provide robust, credible and effective assessment processes and mechanisms to ensure that Charter Members have reached the standards set out in the membership criteria and understand that the development process is continual.
- 2.5 To strengthen the quality assurance and governance of the Charter, and in addition to the Board, an independent and highly qualified Technical Assessment Panel has been created to support the membership assessment process.

- 2.6 Over the past year the Charter has become established as a key GM policy tool. It is referenced in several other funded programmes and policies, including the revised GM Social Value Framework and will play a key part in the aspiration of making Greater Manchester a Real Living Wage City region. It has also featured prominently in the discussions at the Independent Inequalities Commission. Employer referrals are now being received through a number of routes to the Charter.
- 2.7 In combination, the increasing demands placed on the Charter have been reflected in an increased GMCA budget allocation as part of the COVID Recovery plan that has allowed the Charter Unit to grow with two further Good Employment Advisers and a Business Administration apprentice joining the team, responding enabling the Charter to have a broader and deeper impact through to April 2023.

### **3.0 Building Back Better / COVID-19 recovery**

- 3.1 During the 2020 four broad priorities emerged through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic for the Good Employment agenda:
- Increasing **Inequalities** across all domains
  - Increased demand for truly **Flexible Working**
  - The need for increased capacity and more effective **Line Management and Leadership**
  - A constant focus on **Health and Wellbeing**
- Throughout 2020-21 the Charter has worked on these four areas and developed and delivered content to support employers in addressing these key issues and moving forward will continue to work with partners to maintain a focus on them into the 'recovery' phase.
- 3.2 Following the recommendations of the Inequalities Commission the Charter has developed strong engagement with the equality panels and will be creating partnership programmes, events and materials to help employers address their practices across gender, ethnicity, disability and LGBTQ+ issues. Roughly every second event the Charter delivers tries to focus on an equalities issue.
- 3.3 The Charter team is specifically engaged with the Night Time Economy Adviser and colleagues in considering the development of a specific thread of good employment standards that will aim to address some of the particular challenges that face the hospitality sector and employees.

- 3.4 The Charter is playing a central part in the Real Living Wage Region Campaign, and routinely engages all employers in discussions around the real living wage and remuneration more broadly - especially around sick pay provision and is focused on engaging foundational economy sub-sectors in addressing low pay in the city region.
- 3.5 In terms of flexible working the Charter is working closely with [Timewise](#) to develop a suite of resources to understand the flexible working landscape in GM as well as providing bespoke resources to support employers navigate the challenges of hybrid working across all sectors.
- 3.6 Together with ACAS and CIPD the Charter has developed a programme to support managers to deal with the changing nature of work. The [Soft Skills for Hard Times](#) campaign is aimed at line managers highlighting the golden thread they provide in binding the aspects of good employment together.
- 3.7 The Charter is a key partner of MMU's, Good Employment Learning Lab project which is an excellent additional element to bring to this agenda and will greatly support the understanding of the best mechanisms to build managerial capacity across the city.
- 3.8 The focus on mental health and wellbeing over the past 9-12 months has increased greatly and in partnership with the GM H&SCP we have produced a [Mental Health Toolkit for Employers](#) to help organisations of all sizes think about and take action to support mental wellbeing
- 3.9 All of this and good employment more generally relies on a solid understanding of employee engagement and voice. Whilst the Charter works closely with Trades Unions and employers to support this aspect, the past eighteen months have been particularly challenging as employees have been working individually, remotely or on furlough and collective voice difficult to facilitate and gauge. In recognition of this challenge the Charter is working with partners to test and evaluate the use of App based technologies to facilitate direct and open communications across large and dispersed organisations. The full evaluation of this work will be available in the Autumn of 2021.

## **4.0 Charter Development**

- 4.1 Now that the Charter has established its brand, positioning and profile within the GM architecture, a future balance will now need to be struck between the quantity and quality of its interactions with employers, partners, and supporters.

- 4.2 The number and scale of employers involved with and supporting the Charter is important as it provides an indication of broad engagement and lends credibility to the notion of a ‘movement’ and extended networks. However, moving forward scale of employer engagement cannot be the only indicator of success and the impact of the Charter must become as important as it reach.
- 4.3 The Advocate tier as originally set out in the 2019 Framework will now be used as a mechanism to engage individuals on a peer to peer – employer to employer basis to advocate and support employers deal with particular characteristic challenges or those that are found in particular sectors.
- 4.4 Currently through our event and webinar series, coupled with the publication of blog posts, the Charter provides a platform for employers to highlight their changing and good practice across a range of areas. This reporting of lived experience is highly valued by Supporters and Members, but is it carried out in an ad hoc manner.
- 4.5 This changing landscape also applies to the Charter’s Membership criteria and through the Charter Board a review is being undertaken to consider how the Real Living Wage criteria could be broadened to consider remuneration more broadly to consider sick pay, pension provision and pay gap reporting.
- 4.6 Moving forward the ambition is to be far more focused and deliberate about how we capture case studies to highlight learning and innovation in employment practice. To deliver this we will be dedicating specific resources to building a library of good practice / lessons learned case studies that will be underpinned by supporting resources and contacts.

## **5.0 Building Credibility & Resilience**

- 5.1 During its first year of operation the Charter has built a range of processes and tools to ensure that recognition as a Supporter and Member is a robust and credible process. This is, by its nature, an iterative process and is constantly under review.
- 5.2 As the Charter moves forward there is a need to build further on these processes to retain the value and credibility associated with the Charter marque. Two areas will need to be developed over the coming months:
- A mechanism to ensure that Supporter Employers are continuing to progress towards Member status, and
  - A review that ensures Charter Members are continuing to meet the membership criteria

- 5.3 It is proposed in the original Charter framework that Supporters would be formally reviewed on an annual basis and that members would undergo a review every three years. The Membership review will need to be carried out 'in person' with the same level of detail as the original accreditation process. Supporter reviews will be more demanding as they are greater in volume and more frequent and are unlikely to be carried out 'in-person' without significant staffing resources.
- 5.4 An alternative approach is the notion of a digital diagnostic which was partially inspired by the [ACAS Model Workplace toolkit](#) which breaks down various elements of good employment and after ten or so simple questions provides an overview of the areas and resources that will assist the employer to become better equipped in that area.
- 5.5 The digital diagnostic required for the GM Good Employment Charter will need to probe the seven Characteristics in a similar way and highlight areas of progression but importantly those that need further work. It will be important that the diagnostic is simple and short enough to ensure that it does not become a burden and is suitable for all types of employers (Private, Third, Public, Small, Medium, Large).

## **6. Recommendations**

The recommendations are set out at the front of the report.

## Appendix A

Good Employment Events and Webinars – All webinars and Podcasts can be viewed on the Charter’s [YouTube Channel](#) and [Website](#).

### Events(E) & Webinars (W)

- Mental Health & Wellbeing with MIND (E)
- Modern Slavery with Slave Free Alliance (E)
- Real Living Wage with Living Wage Foundation (E)
- Active Workplaces with GreaterSport (E)
- Recruitment with GMCVO/GMCA (E)
- Employment Law with Acas (E)
- Building Back Better (W)
- Home Working/Flexible Working(W)
- Equality Issues, Equalities Reporting(W)
- Employee Engagement & Voice(W)
- Reopening Workplaces Safely(W)
- Health and Wellbeing(W)
- Redundancy the Right Way (W)
- Coffee Chat – Mental Wellbeing(W)
- Real Living Wage – Getting Accredited(W)
- In Conversation with Joeli Brearly, Pregnant then Screwed(W)
- Hospitality Sector Specific – with ACAS(W)
- Age Friendly Employment(W)
- Financial Wellbeing(W)
- The Future of Work (W)
- Responsible Business(W)
- Re-Opening and Hybrid Working(W)
- LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Workplace(W)
- Menopause Workplace Policies(W)

### Podcasts

- S1 Ep. 01 - with Andy Burnham
- S1 Ep. 02 – with Kate Pickett
- S1 Ep. 03 – with Cary Cooper
- S1 Ep. 04 - with Sacha Lord
- S1. Ep 05 - with Sam Booth
- S1 EP 06 - with Clive Memmott
- S1 Ep 07 - with Diane Modahl
- S1 Ep 08 - with John-Quinton Barber

Series 2 will be released in the Autumn.