

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, HELD ON FRIDAY 9 JULY 2021

Present:

Bolton: Councillor Andrea Finney
Councillors Susan Haworth
Bury: Councillor Mary Whitby
Manchester: Councillor Greg Stanton
Oldham: Councillor George Hulme
Rochdale: Councillor Michael Holly (Chair)
Councillor Raymond Dutton
Councillor Tom Besford (substitute)
Salford: Councillor Jim King
Stockport: Councillor Kate Butler
Trafford: Councillors Barry Brotherton
Wigan: Councillor Charles Rigby
Councillor Debra Wailes (substitute)

Officers in attendance:-

GMCA Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
GMCA John Wrathmell, Director of Research and Strategy, GMCA
GMCA Ian MacArthur, GM Growth Company
GMCA Paul Harris, Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA

EO&S21/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Councillors Michael Winstanley, Stephen Homer and Becky Senior

Apologies were also received and noted from Councillor Elise Wilson, GM Lead Member for Economy and Business, Simon Nokes, Executive Director, Policy and Strategy, GMCA and Amy Foots GMCA.

EO&S21/02 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2021/2022

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer sought nominations for the appointment of chair of the committee for the 2021/22 municipal year.

A nomination of Councillor Holly was moved and seconded. There were no other nominations made.

RESOLVED/-

That Councillor Michael Holly be appointed as Chair of the Committee for the 2021-22 municipal year.

COUNCILLOR HOLLY IN THE CHAIR

EO&S21/03 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR 2021/2022

The Chair sought nominations for the appointment of a vice-chair of the committee for the 2021-2022 Municipal Year.

A nomination of Councillor Andrea Finney was moved and seconded. There were no further nominations received.

RESOLVED/-

That Councillor Andrea Finney be appointed as vice chair to the Committee for 2021/22 municipal year.

EO&S21/04 MEMBERSHIP OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee was asked to note its Membership for the 2021/22 Municipal Year:

The Chair extended a welcome to Councillors Andrea Finney, Kate Butler and Ray Dutton as new members on the Committee.

The Chair also offered thanks to retiring members Councillors Samantha Connor, Basat Sheikh, Daniel Meredith and Kerry Waters for the contribution that they have made to the work of the Committee..

RESOLVED/-

That the following membership of the committee for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year, as agreed by GMCA at its meeting on 25 June 2021, be noted -

Councillor Barry Brotherton	Trafford	Labour
Councillor Kate Butler	Stockport	Labour
Councillor Ray Dutton	Rochdale	Labour
Councillor Andrea Finney	Bolton	Conservative
Councillor Susan Haworth	Bolton	Labour
Councillor Michael Holly	Rochdale	Conservative
Councillor Stephen Homer	Tameside	Labour
Councillor George Hulme	Oldham	Labour
Councillor Jim King	Salford	Labour
Councillor Charles Rigby	Wigan	Labour
Councillor Becky Senior	Stockport Council	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Greg Stanton	Manchester	Labour
Councillor Mary Whitby	Bury	Labour
Councillor Michael Winstanley	Wigan	Conservative

EO&S21/05 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT AND ANNUAL DECLARATION FORM

Members were reminded of their obligations under the GMCA Members' Code of Conduct. Members were also requested to complete an annual declaration of interests form, noting that the completed declaration will be published on the GMCA website.

RESOLVED/-

That the Members code of conduct and annual declaration of interests requirements.

EO&S21/06 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were provided with the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Terms of Reference be noted.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

EO&S21/07 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business reported.

EO&S21/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by any member in respect of any of the items on the agenda.

EO&S21/09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 12th March 2021 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

RESOLVED/-

That the minutes of the Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 12th March 2021, be approved as a correct record.

Members received an update on the economic impact of Covid and Brexit.

The report explained that Brexit and Covid-19 continues to present a range of challenges to Greater Manchester's businesses and economy. Members noted that this is closely monitored through the GMCA's Economic Resilience Dashboard which summarises the key data on the performance of the city region's economy. Members noted that the data from the dashboard is brought together with feedback from key stakeholders and provided commentary on the labour market, business sentiment, wider economic and behavioural trends and specific Brexit impacts.

Members raised the following questions and comments:-

- In relation to the data highlighting the numbers of furloughed workers by district, officers undertook to highlight data for Wigan. Members noted that the dashboard allows for identifying information by district to be shown.
- A Member asked how current unemployment levels compared to pre-pandemic levels. In response, officers noted that unemployment, although reducing, remains significantly higher than before the pandemic. A clearer understanding of the true unemployment rates in GM will be known once the current furlough scheme ends. It was also noted that in GM, the take up of Government loans, such as the Bounce Back loan scheme has resulted in a larger level of indebtedness of GM businesses, circa £2.6 billion, which wasn't there before the pandemic. In terms of projections and forecasts of GM economy risks, it was noted that risks would likely be different across sectors. Officers undertook to explore Bank of England analysis in this regard and share details with Members.
- A Member noted that the impact of the pandemic has not been evenly distributed across the population and highlighted the different impact on working men and working women. The member asked if there was granular data which identifies this difference. Officers noted that data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) is used to inform monthly analysis to the Economic Resilience Group and this information will be shared to the committee to provide an insight into the GM labour market, including the impacts on men and women.
- A Member highlighted that generally women in the workforce will be impacted greater where schools are forced to close and children are asked to isolate.
- A Member referenced the issue of skills shortages in GM. The Member noted that although there is work taking place to address this shortage in skills, it will still take time for any retraining or upskilling to see its way into the workforce. In response, officers noted that the noted the work and skills response to the pandemic will be included in a report to the Committee in September. In relation to opportunities following Brexit, it was noted that trade links were being developed with Japan and details of this engagement will be provided at an upcoming meeting of the Committee, as part of the report on the GM International Strategy.

- In response to an enquiry from a Member regarding responses and the number of businesses contacted as part of the rolling survey, officers undertook to share information on this after the meeting.
- A Member, in supporting the comments on working women, highlighted the research undertaken by the Women's Budget Group and the Fawcett Society in relation to the impact of the pandemic on women in the workforce. The Member highlighted the impact has been harder in areas like GM, where pay is lower. A mis-match of skills to fill current jobs vacancies was also highlighted, including chef roles. The Member asked if there were other roles which are seeing vacancies. In response, officers highlighted the Women's and Girls' Panel had established a sub group to look at skills and employment and it was suggested that a paper on this work be brought to a future meeting of this committee.
- A Member highlighted the increased unemployment claimant count whilst roles such as chefs and lorry drivers were in demand. The Member suggested that upskilling may help to address these job shortages and other professional roles in the workforce. The competitiveness of the GM region has been negatively affected by this job and skills gap with productivity in the region lower than the south-east of England. In response, officers noted that work was taking place by Jobs Centre Plus to address gaps in the workforce. Brexit has had some impact with businesses being unable to fill roles with overseas workers.
It was noted that that pay, working conditions and flexibility of some roles were not attractive to some people. Members noted that upskilling, particularly in the digital sector, has proved successful during the pandemic.
- A Member asked if there was any separation in the collection of data to understand the respective, segmented, economic impact of Brexit and the pandemic. In response, officers noted that the causes of impact would be challenging to analyse and will take time to untangle. To make international comparisons would allow to compare the impact of the pandemic.
- A Member noted that the numbers of EU citizens applying to remain in the UK was very high and noted the importance of having robust data in order to understand outputs and individual measures was important.
- A Member highlighted that of the firms researched, just 1.1% of firms were considering making redundancies. The Member enquired if job losses will increase following the end of the furlough scheme. In response, it was noted that the measure of firms considering redundancies has remained pretty constant throughout the pandemic but will continue to be monitored as the changes to the furlough scheme come in to affect.
- A Member enquired what the impact of the removal of the Universal Credit uplift will have on the GM economy. The member also asked what support would be available to help expected new covid cases and for business should then need to close. Officers noted that they would explore the impact of ending of the Universal Credit uplift. In terms of support for business, it was noted that a significant level of disruption is anticipated over the upcoming months.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the update on the economic impact of Covid and Brexit, be noted.

2. That it be noted that the work of the Women's and Girls' Panel sub group to look at skills and employment be brought to the next appropriate meeting of the committee.

EO&S21/11 LIVING WITH COVID RESILIENCE PLAN - QUARTER THREE PROGRESS UPDATE

A paper was presented which provided Members with a progress update on the Living with Covid Resilience Plan and the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy, as reported to GM Combined Authority on 25 June 2021.

The report provided an update on activity and system developments in support of the implementation of the Living with Covid Resilience Plan and also provided an update on the early stages of refreshing the Greater Manchester Strategy, and how this is being shaped and informed by the development and delivery of the Living with Covid Resilience Plan. Information was also provided on the extensive work underway to develop Greater Manchester's collective ability to evidence, target and more effectively respond to inequalities present, and how these approaches are being developed and embedded as future ways of working.

The update also provided information in relation to the Greater Manchester Strategy Refresh, the work of the Independent Inequalities Commission and the Marmot review.

Members raised the following comments and questions:-

- A Member highlighted concerns regarding the ending of the evictions ban and enquired if there was any data on the numbers of people affected by this policy change. In response officers undertook to pass this enquiry on to the Housing & Planning Scrutiny Committee as it falls into their remit.
- In relation to the Marmot report, a Member highlighted the work of Greater Manchester Poverty Action Group, particularly in respect of the living wage campaign.
- A Member highlighted that some workers in roles or business sectors will now experience profound change. In response, it was noted that this is notable for those workers that are self-employed.
- In relation to the target for zero carbon, a Member asked what was being done to address the reported target shortfall and developing the green economy in GM. In response, officers noted that it is vital to link economic recovery with the transition to carbon neutrality and that work is underway to do so.
- A Member highlighted the older members of the community that may have been made unemployed and the challenges they have re-entering the workforce. It was suggested that this older cohort has a wealth of experience and measures should be put in place to reach out to these people. In response, it was noted that, from the Office for National Statistics' data, the biggest employment impacts have been at both ends of the age distribution. A version of this analysis will be shared with members. In addition, the work of the Ageing Hub in GM as well as skills and work to support older workers was noted.
- A Member enquired if the level of food poverty in Greater Manchester is known. In response officers explained the recommendation of the Inequalities

Commission will be addressed as part of the refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy.

- In terms of the take up of apprenticeships, a Member asked if it was anticipated that apprentice take up will improve after the pandemic. In response officers noted that it wasn't clear how apprenticeship take up will improve after the pandemic. Representations have been made to Government to for GM to be afforded greater local involvement in apprenticeships, although a response to this request is still awaited. An update on this issue will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee as part of the Skills update.
- A Member noted that the resident survey on take up of vaccines was 80%. In response, officers noted that this is a monthly survey and take up is on a trajectory to provide a high level of immunisation.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the overall update on the system developments in response to the ongoing pandemic, as set out in the report be noted.
2. That the proposed approach, work to date and further development in refreshing the Greater Manchester Strategy, as set out in the report be noted.
3. That the overall progress being made to develop new mechanisms and ways of working to better understand and respond to inequalities, as set out in the report, be noted.
4. That the progress and development of activity being delivered to support attainment of the deliverables in the Living with Covid Resilience Plan, as set out in the report, be noted.
5. That an update on Apprenticeships, as part of the report on Skills, be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

EO&S21/12 GREATER MANCHESTER GOOD EMPLOYMENT CHARTER

Ian MacArthur, GM Growth Company, introduced a report which informed the committee on the work and activities taking place to support the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.

The report explained that on the 31st May 2019, the GM Combined Authority 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). It was reported that since then, work has been undertaken to create the Charter Implementation Unit and delivery mechanisms for the Charter, which is overseen by a steering group, and now Board consisting of business groups, trade unions, professional bodies, VCSE sector employers, public sector employers and academics.

Members also noted 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.

A discussion took place and Members raised the following comments and questions:-

- A Member highlighted the benefits of flexible working. In response, it was noted that work was taking place with a partner to develop resources for employers to understand the benefits of flexible working.
- A Member enquired as to how many employers had been approached but were not signed up. In response, it was noted that currently, there are challenges to engage with businesses but also noted that as we come out of the pandemic, this intervention will make a real difference for those staff in low paid, insecure work. The Growth Company has also been working with the GM Poverty Action Group.
- A Member suggested that this work if successful will provide an exemplar for GM. The Member commented that some people working from home may not be doing so in the best working environment and enquired if employers were required to make checks on their staff. In response officers explained that if an individual is working from home they were covered by the provisions in the Health and Safety at Work Act. The Charter tries to go beyond what is a legal minimum. Payment of the Real Living Wage criteria is currently a requirement of Charter membership, but it was noted that sick pay and pension provision were also important to for good employment. Ethnicity pay gap reporting was being explored.
- The Good Employment Charter is seen as an exemplar and is being picked up in other regions. The importance of consistency of approach in all regions to the Charter was highlighted, particularly when working with national employers. Work is taking place to have mutual recognition across regions.
- In welcoming this initiative, a Member enquired as to what mechanisms are there to engage with resistant employers to make them Charter ready and if resources were sufficient to enable progress to be made. In response, it was noted that resistance generally comes from employers regarding the Real Working Wage and also Trade Union involvement. To help address any scepticism from employers a support network of peers has been developed. There is a suite of support also available from the Business Growth Hub.
- A Member suggested local employer charters can be developed which might help engage with local employers. A Member suggested the use of white labelling help with marketing and engage with businesses. In response, officers

noted that they would continue to work with local officers. The matter of white labelling will be raised at an upcoming Good Employment Charter Board meeting.

- A Member suggested that an approach should include soft skills for good work and not just for hard times. Wellbeing is important. In response, it was noted that good employers will put wellbeing at the heart for what they are doing.
- A Member noted that flexible working is key. The Member asked if the Good Employment Charter can use procurement to incentivise businesses to be a good employer. In response it was noted that discussions were taking place with procurement officers.

RESOLVED/-

That the update on the Good Employment Charter be noted.

RESOLVED/-

EO&S21/13 REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

Members considered the register of key decisions.

The Chair asked that for future reports, details of those key decisions which are within the remit of this committee be highlighted.

RESOLVED/-

That the Register of GMCA Key Decisions as set out in the report be noted.

EO&S21/14 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022

Members considered the committee work programme for the 2021-2022 municipal year.

RESOLVED/-

That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

EO&S21/15 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED/-

That the following programme of meetings of the Committee for 2021-2022, be noted: -

Friday 10 September 2021, Friday 8 October 2021, Friday 12 November 2021, Friday 10 December 2021, Friday 14 January 2022, Friday 4 February 2022, Friday 11 March 2022.

Meetings will commence from 10:30 am.

