

**MINUTES OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY
ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE, HELD ON FRIDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2022**

Present:

Bolton: Councillor Susan Haworth
Bury: Councillor Mary Whitby
Manchester: Councillor Greg Stanton
Oldham: Councillor George Hulme
Rochdale: Councillor Michael Holly (Chair)
Councillor Raymond Dutton
Salford: Councillor Jim King
Stockport: Councillor Kate Butler
Councillor Becky Senior
Wigan: Councillor Charles Rigby
Councillor Debra Wailes (substitute)

Also Present:-

Lou Cordwell, Chair, GM Local Enterprise Partnership
Councillor Elise Wilson, GMCA Lead Member for Business and the Economy.

Officers in attendance: -

GMCA Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
GMCA John Wrathmell, Director of Strategy, Research & Economy
GMCA
GMCA Phil Swan, Director for Digital
GMCA Lisa Dale-Clough, GMCA
GMCA David Rogerson, GMCA
GMCA Paul Harris, Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA

EO&S21/39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Councillors Michael Winstanley, Barry Brotherton, Samuel Rimmer, Stephen Homer and Sam Al-Hamdani.

Apologies were also received from Andy Burnham, GM Mayor and Councillor Bev Craig, GMCA Lead Member for Education, Skills, Work and Apprentices, Digital.

EO&S21/40 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent businesses reported.

EO&S21/41

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14th JANUARY 2022

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 14th January 2022 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 held on 14th January 2021, be approved as a correct record.

EO&S21/42

GM LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Lou Cordwell, GM LEP Chair introduced a report which provided Members with an update on the work of the GM Local Enterprise Partnership (GM LEP). The update gave an overview on how the GM LEP is overseeing the delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy, GM Local Industrial Strategy and GM Economic Vision, as set out in the Annual Delivery Plan and Report.

A presentation was also provided which outlined to the committee the GM Economic Vision: Building a Greater Manchester, Making a Greater Britain, Key LEP Deliverables 2021/22, ESG Framework and Economic Dashboard, Working Across Greater Manchester, Performance and Progress and LEP Strategy.

Members made the following points:-

- In respect of the Local Growth Fund, a Member asked if GM LEP had any concerns that the activities were city centric. The Member also sought the thoughts of officers in respect to levelling up in Greater Manchester. In response it was noted that there is a local GM LEP member for each GM district and has broad geographical representation on its Board. The work of Innovation GM was noted and the link to places provides a golden thread for the levelling up agenda in GM.
- A Member noted that in terms of attracting private investment, some localities in Greater Manchester were more attractive than others. The member highlighted that Wigan is an area in GM without a university. In response, it was noted that GM LEP was in the process of meeting with local Leaders. Members also noted that the quality of life of workforce is important and areas with large areas of green space were attractive. The existing food industry in Wigan can develop growth and innovation.
- A Member noted that the core of the city region needed to continue to flourish to help create growth in GM districts.
- In respect of university and skills, a Member sought the views of the LEP on skills development. The Member noted the potential benefits technical colleges may have in respect of engineering skills which may meet the needs of employers. In response, the collaborative approach of higher and further education providers in GM was noted. In addition, it was also noted that skills are needed to support the changes in industry and emerging opportunities such as electric vehicle

maintenance. In noting the importance of Universities to the GM system, the value of other bodies to support entrepreneurial ambitions was also highlighted.

- A Member suggested that the retrofitting of houses should be prioritised to support fuel costs and help reduce the impacts on physical and mental health, stress. In response, it was noted that this work will provide opportunities to support the green agenda and also job creation. A Retrofit Taskforce has been established and a plan is being developed, with early progress on public buildings and construction standards.
- A Member suggested that the introduction of a Real Living Wage would benefit productivity and suggested that a discussion on this was needed. In response, officers noted that the Real Living Wage is linked to the Good Employment Charter and that Greater Manchester was currently on track to be a real living wage city region.
- A Member sought further information on the work of the GM LEP in districts. The Member also highlighted the aspirational benefits primary school aged children gain by being exposed to business and engineering. In response it was noted that the ambition of Innovation GM is to help to further this ambition in young people. Details of research on this would be brought back as part of a future report to this committee.
- A Member asked what opportunities there are to support entrepreneurs. In response, it was noted that that the Growth Company can help with funding advice and support to help foundational enterprises in Greater Manchester.
- A Member asked how realistic the target for GM to be carbon free by 2038 is given that the national target is 2050. In response, it was noted that the innovation agenda will have a focus on green technologies. GM has the capability to collaborate with all sectors to support this innovation at pace and scale.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the update on the work of the GM LEP be received with thanks and noted.
2. That details of local GM LEP members were to be shared with Committee Members.

EO&S21/43 REFRESH OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Councillor Elise Wilson, Portfolio Lead for Business & Economy and Lisa Dale-Clough, Head of Industrial Strategy, GMCA introduced a report which provided an update on the refresh of the GM Local Industrial Strategy.

Members noted that since the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy was launched with Government on 13th June 2019, a coordinated programme of work has been underway to implement the actions in the strategy and to achieve its

ambitions, under the umbrella of a Programme Delivery Executive and the guidance of the GM LEP and GMCA. At the same time, the economy of Greater Manchester and the UK has been impacted by a global pandemic and the exit of the UK from the European Union. The report explained that the national economic policy context has also shifted substantially and set out the plans to refresh the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) in response to these changes, as well as learning from the first phase of delivery.

Members made the following points:-

- In welcoming the report, a Member highlighted workforce matters, including good employment and occupational health. In response it was noted that this refresh of the strategy was an opportunity to share with government the good work taking place. The work on Good Employment was continuing well. The refresh will not change the content of the strategy but will adapt the strategy to be more agile in issues such as Covid and longer-term GM ambitions.
- Following an enquiry from a Member it was noted that the refreshed LIS did not need to be agreed by Government.

RESOLVED/-

That the plans to refresh the Local Industrial Strategy, as set out in the report be noted.

EO&S21/44 GREATER MANCHESTER DIGITAL BLUEPRINT: PROGRESS UPDATE

A report was presented which provided a progress update on the delivery and activity planned for 2022 in support of the GM Digital Blueprint.

Members were reminded that the first GM Digital Strategy was published in February 2018. It built on the ambition outlined in the Greater Manchester Strategy that GM will be a world-leading digital city-region, to set out our vision for GM as a digital city-region with a difference.

This work was refreshed in 2020, placing the city-region's people more firmly at the heart of plans in an updated GM Digital Blueprint which set out a three-year approach for Greater Manchester to be a world leading digital city-region which supports the GM Strategy and the GM Local Industrial Strategy.

It was noted that the Blueprint sets out five priorities where we will focus activity and influence to achieve the ambition of being a world-leading digital city-region. These priorities are: Empowering People, Enabling Innovative Public Services, digitally enabling all businesses, creating and scaling digital businesses and becoming a global digital influencer.

The report explained that the pandemic increased the reliance of digital services, however it also identified significant number of people that were either digitally excluded or on the margins of being unable to access digital services.

There has been an increase of 165% of digital technology jobs over the last 12 months and the challenge to attract talent was noted. Digital security and cyberspace in the northwest has been seen as a great success.

The following matters were raised by Members:-

- Following a question from a Member regarding the digital pipeline in schools, it was noted that there is a reported 40% decline in the number of Computing and IT students at GCSE level nationally between 2015 and 2020, at a time when the digital economy is rapidly growing in Greater Manchester. Only 11% of students took computer science, and that young people in areas of deprivation have less access to school computer science courses, and that the numbers of girls choosing computer science as a course remains at only 23%. The Member sought further information on this at a local level, noting that this is a national challenge and needs to be addressed as part of the national curriculum. A further update on this will be provided.
- A Member asked what was happening in relation to Block Chain technology. In response it was noted that this is part of the digital agenda, but a recent bid for funding on this had been unsuccessful.
- In terms of digital infrastructure, a Member enquired as to what was being done to improve digital connectivity in areas with weak broadband levels. In response it was noted that Digital Infrastructure Groups have been established to explore connectivity issues with Telecom providers. The Government has also developed a Rural Broadband Strategy programme which will include certain areas of GM. The strategy will pinpoint specific areas and buildings in localities.
- In response to an enquiry from a Member in relation to dark fibre, it was noted that work on the local full fibre network will introduce 2.7km of new fibre and improve local ducting and is being coordinated by local highway departments.
- Following an enquiry from a Member, it was noted that the GM ambition was for 100% digital connectivity for all buildings in the next 3 years. Currently this level is at 78%. Data consumption is doubling each year as the quality of downloads is getting higher and the challenge ensure that this is affordable. A further report on the full fibre network was suggested.
- A Member noted digital inclusion issues and highlighted affordability concerns, which can impact upon residents being able to connect to essential services. The ambition for 80% connectivity was highlighted and clarification on how this will be measured. In response, it was noted that the scale of connectivity is huge, and some people may have concerns about accessing services remotely. People need to have the confidence to do online and support is needed at a local level. In addition, resources were also needed to support this agenda. Social Value is included as part of the procurement process to help to mainstream digital access to essential services.

- A Member noted concerns regarding access of young people to digital jobs, particularly in deprived areas and amongst girls. The GMCA needs to be formally notified of the Committee's concerns that young people in areas of deprivation do not have access to computer science courses and that there is a drop in the number of girls taking computer science as a course.

In supporting this approach, a Member noted that computer science courses were not compulsorily in schools and that it is difficult for teachers to be attracted to these roles. Young people do have a range digital skills, from smart phone use and gaming, and it was suggested that work is needed to capture these skills and develop them further. In response, it was noted that computer science is not necessarily the only route into computer and digital careers.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the progress against the GM Digital Blueprint's ambitions during 2021 and consider the key activities planned for 2022, as set out in the report be noted.
2. That the direction of travel and prioritization of GM Digital activity outlined in the report be noted.
3. Members agreed that GMCA be formally notified of the Committee's concerns over the 40% decline in the number of Computing and IT students at GCSE level nationally between 2015 and 2020 at a time when the digital economy is rapidly growing in Greater Manchester. GMCA is also asked to note the Committee's concerns that only 11% of students took computer science, with young people in areas of deprivation having less access to school computer science courses, and that the numbers of girls choosing computer science as a course remains at only 23%.
4. That a further update be provided to an appropriate meeting of this Committee.

EO&S21/45 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Members are asked to note and comment on the GMCA Forward Plan of Key Decisions, for the period 1st February 2022 to 31st May 2022.

RESOLVED/-

The Economy, Business Growth and Skills Scrutiny Committee noted the report and provide any feedback

EO&S21/46 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022

Members considered the Committee Work Programme. It was noted that an update on the Night Time Economy will be provided to the next meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED/-

That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

EO&S21/47

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Friday 11th March 2022, commencing at 10:30 am.

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting it was agreed to extend this meeting by 30 mins.