

GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 23 November 2022

Subject: Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter

Report of: Councillor Bev Craig, Elected Portfolio Leader, Economy, Business and International, and Tom Stannard, Executive Portfolio Leader Economy, Business and International

Purpose of Report:

On the 1 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, trade bodies, unions, and academics. On the 31 May 2019, the GMCA agreed funding for the implementation of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. 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 and its impacts.

The report reflects upon the challenges the changing nature of work and the growth of the good employment movement in the current socio-economic climate, moving from the COVID-19 pandemic through to the current cost of living crisis. It will set out:

- 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:

The GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Note and comment on the report.

Contact Officers

Ian MacArthur, Director, Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter
John Wrathmell, Director of Economy, Strategy and Research, GMCA

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment

The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter is designed to develop diverse, equal, and truly inclusive working conditions across Greater Manchester. By promoting the benefits of equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, it aims to support employers to create workplaces that embrace the seven characteristics of good employment in ways that ensure fair pay, opportunity, and progression to all.

There is a focus on improving pay and conditions in the 'foundational economy', covering the services and sectors that people use every day such as healthcare, early years, and retail. Individuals with protected characteristics are overrepresented in foundational economy sectors such as Adult Social Care, with the sector being a primary focus of the efforts of the real Living Wage campaign.

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	Guidance
Equality and Inclusion		The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter is designed to develop diverse, equal, and truly inclusive working conditions across Greater Manchester. By promoting the benefits of equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, it aims to support employers to create workplaces that embrace the seven characteristics of good employment in ways that ensure fair pay, opportunity and progression to all. These seven characteristics include the payment of the real Living Wage and running parallel to the activity of the Charter there is an initial three-year campaign to promote awareness of the real Living Wage and encourage take-up among public, private, and third sector employers. This began in November 2021 and will run until November 2024. The real Living Wage campaign and the Charter run in person events and webinars, produce blogs, host roundtables, and record podcasts to raise awareness of the good employment agenda across Greater Manchester. The Good Employment run a series of events specifically targeted at improving employment outcomes for individuals with protected characteristics, helping employers to ensure their workplaces are adapted and welcoming to an ageing workforce, disabled person, those from racialised communities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. There is a focus on improving pay and conditions in the 'foundational economy', covering the services and sectors that people use every day such as healthcare, early years, and retail. Individuals with protected characteristics are overrepresented in foundational economy sectors such as Adult Social Care, with the sector being a primary focus of the efforts of the real Living Wage campaign.	
Health	N/A		
Resilience and Adaptation	N/A		
Housing	N/A		
Economy		The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter is designed to develop diverse, equal, and truly inclusive working conditions across Greater Manchester. By promoting the benefits of equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, it aims to support employers to create workplaces that embrace the seven characteristics of good employment in ways that ensure fair pay, opportunity, and progression to all.	
Mobility and Connectivity			
Carbon, Nature and Environment	N/A		
Consumption and Production			See Carbon Assessment Result

Contribution to achieving the Greater Manchester Carbon Neutral 2038 target. The Good Employment Charter does not directly contribute to the 2038 carbon neutral target. To support the ambition, employers committed to the Charter can be direct to national and international employment standards and accreditations that recognise and promote netzero business practices.

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: N/A

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers

The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter – Evaluation. Final report available here: [Research: Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter | Manchester Metropolitan University \(mmu.ac.uk\)](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/research/greater-manchester-good-employment-charter)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

Exemption from call in

N/A

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2022

A brief history of Charter Implementation

- 1.1. On 1 March 2019, the GMCA agreed to the establishment of a Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter predicated on the model developed through co-design with employers, employees, trade bodies, unions, and academics. On 31 May 2019, the GMCA agreed funding for the implementation of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.

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

The Charter Framework also set out the notion of three progressive membership tiers:

- Supporter
- Member
- Advocate

- 1.2. 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 Supporters' network was launched, attended by c.200 employers and stakeholders.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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.

- 1.5. 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 guests, and the first six members of the Charter were announced.
- 1.6. 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.

Overview

- 2.1. Since the membership launch at the beginning of 2020, the Charter has grown to reach around 1,300 employers, including over 450 supporters and 66 full members, covering in excess of 400,000 employees. This is a 250% increase in the number of supporter organisations since the last update given to the committee in July 2021. To note, the impact of the COVID pandemic has undoubtedly affected the degree to which the Charter could engage with prospective new Supporters and sectoral representatives.
- 2.2. The Charter website details the events/webinars delivered and blogs published that highlight examples of topical issues or innovative practice. To date, there have been three series the Charter's podcast 'Good Employment Chatter', with each season centred around particular theme, most recently Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- 2.3. The inaugural Good Employment Charter Awards were held in March 2022, with awards awarded to employers across the different characteristics of the Charter. This was a celebration of employment excellence as demonstrated by supporters and members and entries for the 2023 awards have now opened.
- 2.4. We have also developed our peer learning capacity for supporters and members in the Charter, building a community through 'Share and Learn' Cohorts of employers who aren't currently at membership level who take part in a series of workshops to disseminate best practice, facilitated by the Charter Unit.

- 2.5. There are plans in development for a 'Good Employment Week' to be held in June 2023, designed to respond to the demand side of good employment, chiefly to improve awareness of the Charter and of the concept of a 'good job' to employees and residents across the city region. Activity is planned across GM, with sponsors already secured.
- 2.6. With the support of key partners such as ACAS, CIPD, GMH&SCP, GreaterSport, the Living Wage Foundation and others, we have produced and corralled a range of good employment resources and toolkits covering all Characteristics and equality issues.
- 2.7. The first two years 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.
- 2.8. 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. Assessment for membership is a robust and time intensive initiative and we have decided to bring in external HR expertise to support the work of the technical panel in producing recommendations to the board for membership.
- 2.9. 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.
- 2.10. The Charter also features prominently in the joint commitment made by GM leaders at the 'New Era' event held in March 2022. There was an agreement to ensure that all service providers of procured and commissioned services by public authorities across Greater Manchester would be a supporter of the Good Employment Charter, or equivalent if based outside of the city region. Discussions are ongoing and progress being made with procurement leads and trade unions to ensure that this commitment is fulfilled in a practicable way, cognisant of the resource available to the Charter Unit and to local authorities.

- 2.11. 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, enabling the Charter to have a broader and deeper impact through to April 2023.

Supporting an inclusive economy

- 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
- 3.2. These priorities remain valid and over the last two years 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.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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. This is part of a renewed focus on sectors and employers in the 'Foundational' or 'Everyday' economy in which low pay has traditionally been prevalent. This includes bespoke engagement with the Early Education sector following a workshop held in October 2022.
- 3.5. 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.

- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. 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.

Charter Development

- 4.1. Now that the Charter has established its brand, positioning and profile within the GM architecture, a 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 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 which is continually under review through a standing subgroup of the board, charged with ensuring that the characteristics of the Charter remain live to the changing world of work. The Board agreed to revise the previous 'real Living Wage' criteria, which has been broadened to consider remuneration in the round. As such, the membership criteria now includes provisions for sick pay.
- 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.

Building Credibility & Resilience

- 5.1. During its first two years 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
 - 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.

- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. 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).

Evaluation of the Charter

- 6.1. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) have produced a two-part evaluation into the first year of the Charter, examining both the motivations and experience of Charter 'leads' – those who took their organisation through the process of becoming either a supporter or member – and employees in Charter organisations on their experience of good employment. The findings from the evaluation were broadly positive, with some suggested next steps and recommendations on how to improve the reach and impact of the Charter.
- 6.2. MMU have also produced a 'toolkit' designed for other regional or local authorities outside of GM who are interested in designing, implementing, and resourcing their own voluntary initiative to improve employment conditions in their locality and recognise best practice. The toolkit does not present GM as the exemplar but instead provides some learning for other areas to factor into their policy development. This will be another tool to use in working with other areas and regions to encourage a consistency to definitions of good and fair work.

Recommendations

- 7.1. Recommendations are laid out at the start of the report.