

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER BUSINESS BOARD (LEP)

The Greater Manchester Business Board (LEP) last held a public meeting in January 2023.

However, the Board was unable to meet formally in public until May 2022 and held regular meetings to ensure they remained informed of the latest developments and could help drive the recovery of the city region.

The Board met in March and May 2023 where a small number of emergency decisions were taken using the written procedure protocol as set out in the Terms of Reference where appropriate.

March 2023

The Board agreed:

1. That Lou Cordwell was confirmed as Chair of the GM Business Board at the completion of the three year term
2. That the £250k 2023/24 Capacity Funding was approved including:
 - I. Delivery of GM Business Board (LEP) Priorities and Strengthened Capacity - £135k
 - II. Promoting Greater Manchester's Economic Vision and Assets - £75k
 - III. LEP Oversight and Governance - £40k

MINUTES FROM THE GREATER MANCHESTER BUSINESS BOARD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT 16:00 ON WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 2023 IN THE BOARDROOM, GMCA OFFICES, TOOTAL BUILDINGS, 56 OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER

Board Members:

Lou Cordwell (In the Chair)

Mike Blackburn, Mayor Andy Burnham, Marilyn Comrie, Steve Connor, Cllr Bev Craig, Lorna Fitzsimons, Justin Kelly, Clive Memmott, Chris Oglesby & Miles Rothbury.

Advisors:

David Rogerson (GMCA), Lee Teasdale (GMCA), Simon Nokes (GMCA), John Wrathmell (GMCA), Mark Hughes (The Growth Company), Oscar Lynch (GMCA), Diane Modahl (GMCA), Chris Barnes (TfGM), Ross Beard (TfGM) & Simon Elliott (TfGM).

Attending via Hybrid Link:

Cllr Amanda Chadderton (LEP Member), Cllr Eamonn O'Brien (LEP Member), Eamonn Boylan (GMCA), Joanne Roney (Manchester City Council), Sheona Southern (Marketing Manchester), Louise Latham (Marketing Manchester) & Mark Atherton (GMCA).

GMBB/23/01 WELCOME, APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed all present to the first meeting of the Board following its restructure as the GM Business Board (LEP).

Apologies were received from GM Business Board (LEP) Members Amanda Halford, Vimla Appadoo & Vanda Murray. Apologies were also received from Tom Stannard (Salford), Steve Wilson (GMCA) & Rhys Whalley (MIDAS).

The Chair advised all present that Amanda Halford would be stepping down as a member of the Board due to increased work commitments. However, Amanda remained fully committed to support the health innovation agenda within GM and would look to attend relevant working groups where time allowed. Members recorded their thanks to Amanda for her fantastic support during her tenure on the Board.

GMBB/23/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

GMBB/23/03

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 15 NOVEMBER 2021

Ratification was required for the minutes of a meeting held on 15 November 2021 along with a small number of emergency decisions made using the written procedure protocol when the Board could not meet in public due to ongoing challenges resulting from the Covid pandemic

RESOLVED:/

1. That the Board agrees the minutes of 15th November 2021 as a true and correct record of the meeting and ratifies the emergency decisions.

GMBB/23/04

BOARD MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Simon Nokes was invited to provide an update on the refresh of the Board.

The Chair together with officers was looking at how best to fill current gaps in membership in terms of sectoral gaps – looking at large companies, SMEs and areas of specific interest. A mapping exercise was being undertaken before going out to the market to fill these gaps. The plan was to recruit up to four new members.

Members asked that the specific areas being sought be shared with them, so that they could use their contacts in aiding the mapping exercise.

RESOLVED:/

1. That the Board Membership Update be received.
2. That information about the sectoral gaps that needed to be filled be shared with Board Members.

GMBB/23/05

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

There were none.

CURRENT ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

GMBB/23/06

ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE AND BUSINESS ANALYSIS

National Train Network Issues

The Chair agreed that, given how much the issue was impacting upon business in the region – that the section would open with an additional discussion of train network issues, particularly those on the Arriva Trains network. TfGM officers were invited to provide the latest update. Points highlighted included:

- Current challenges included the December 2022 timetable change, predicated on issues raised over the last few years. Following the disastrous timetable changes of 2018, the industry had put a mechanism in place to look at installing a reliable and high-performing timetable. This had led to increased services for some areas. However, there in turn had been difficulties with reduced connectivity from certain areas to the airport.
- Due to driver availability and training issues – Avanti Trains over the summer had reduced the number of trains between Manchester and London Euston from 3 trains per hour to just 1. This had now been stepped back up to 3 from December.
- Industrial relations continued to impact the ability to truly monitor Avanti Trains ability to meet their commitments. However, there had been a post-Christmas period without strikes – this provided a week and a half window to assess where Avanti, Transpennine and Northern stood in early 2023 in terms of performance. The results had shown some improvement in performance, though not a significant improvement. Avanti still clearly had some staffing challenges.
- It was requested that businesses in the region provide TfGM with any data they had collated to show the detrimental impacts upon their bottom line that had correlated with the train issues to aid in the development of an assessment of how much the transport failings were impacting the region.
- Members noted a claim that Avanti’s timetable was based on no ‘rest day working’ and that this was presumably a statement of intent rather than the reality. It was confirmed that this must be the case as driver training programmes took upwards of six months. TfGM would liaise with Avanti to ensure that they do not require reliance on rest day working at the present moment.
- Members expressed significant concern about the economic impact upon the Greater Manchester region – with drops in economic activity in Manchester during the Christmas period reflecting the public’s concerns about being able to get to and from Manchester via train.
- Members noted that the sustained length of the problems were now impacting upon longer-term business confidence in investing in the North. This was a huge worry and showed how fragile the situation was in terms of inward investment. Members were provided with an example of being asked to hold business seminars for international clients in Manchester but having to turn them down due to the lack of confidence in them being able to travel by train. This was hugely embarrassing for the region.
- Concerns around the impact on net zero ambitions were also highlighted. As people lost confidence in trains they increasingly turned back to

personal vehicles. There needed to be proof of a consistent reliable service to attract these people back to public transport.

- It will be important to keep engaging with Government to emphasise how much this issue was strangling the local economy. This needs to be a broad package of comments that did not just refer to concerns over one specific franchise holder.

Action – The Business Board (LEP) to explore with TfGM how to best highlight the ongoing economic impact of rail network issues with Government.

Government Policy Update

- Active conversations were ongoing with government on devolution deals. Gradual feedback was coming out from government, but crucial information remained outstanding around housing/housing quality; transport; skills/work programmes; and single pots of funding arrangements.
- It was hoped that the Trailblazer deal would be signed by February.
- Conversations remained ongoing about revisions to Investment Zone plans. Whilst the Government had withdrawn the original plans, it was advised they would look again as this initiative.
- Shared Prosperity Funding was now flowing into the region following agreement of GM's proposals.
- The Convention of the North would be taking place at Manchester Central on Wednesday 25th January. Almost 1000 people were currently signed up to attend, with a number of notable guest speakers in place to discuss the Levelling Up agenda.

Cost of Living & Economic Resilience

- Previous conversations had questioned whether GM may be reaching a tipping point in the labour market following surprisingly strong levels of performance in 2022. Data now received indicated that GM was 'still on the cusp' with unemployment marginally falling and employment marginally rising, but universal credit claims also raising slightly.
- With the labour market remaining relatively strong and pay having risen on average by 6.4% nationally – this pointed towards the Bank of England likely to continue in raising interest rates for now.
- A slight increase nationally had been seen in the CPI. Inflation had fallen by 0.2%

- Members expressed concern that the dashboard did not fully reflect the 'reality' of what was happening. It was queried whether other metrics could be added that would aid wider conversations – such as information pertaining the number of rail journeys happening monthly within GM; or information from the three national credit agencies on how much less disposable income GM residents now had access to.
- Members referenced the drop in inflation but noted this did not reflect the reality of the most impactful areas of inflation – such as the huge amounts being seen in terms of food.
- It was agreed that to avoid a data overload – there needed to be discussion and agreement on the data that would be of most consequence to the Business Board (LEP) as a group.

Action – Officers will explore what additional data could be added to the dashboard.

Action – Officers to share the latest GMCA Cost of Living Dashboard with the Board

RESOLVED:/

1. That the updates and actions above be noted.

LONG TERM ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

GMBB/23/07 ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES

Note: with agreement from the Board – the Chair re-arranged the agenda order so that Item 11(i) – GM Civic Leadership Programme, was taken as the next item at the meeting.

GM Civic Leadership Programme

The Chair invited Diane Modahl, the Chair of the Civic Leadership Programme Steering Group to provide an update to the Board on the inaugural Greater Manchester Civic Leadership Programme, commissioned by the GMCA and delivered by Operation Black Vote. The report highlighted how the programme would be strengthened in year two, and opportunities for the GM Business Board (LEP) to support delivery to maximise impact. Key points highlighted included:

- The Civic Leadership Programme was a key part of Greater Manchester's aspiration to reduce inequalities and maximise opportunity.

- The key focus of the Programme was to help young black and racially minoritised people to realise their leadership aspirations. The GM Independent Inequalities Commission had found in the course of its research that GM’s ability to get to grips with racial inequality issues was hampered by the lack of representation in leadership positions within the organisations that would have the power to act.
- 28 individuals had been recruited from across all of GM’s ten boroughs with an objective to be upskilled, be mentored by individuals who had reached senior leadership positions and wherever possible ‘de-layer’ the journey.
- Diane’s role as the Chair of the Programme was to engage with boards and leaders such as this one to encourage further collaboration with the programme – such as work experience days, providing talks to incoming cohorts and even possibilities around apprenticeship opportunities.
- Members emphasised the importance of sustainability following the initial flurry of activity in response to a programme. This needed to be a concerted effort properly monitored and working towards long term shifts with lasting impacts.
- The Board would consider how best to its engagement with the programme to provide continued support and business contacts.
- Members gave consideration to the evolving of the programme towards become a ‘civic and business leadership programme’ as it developed.

RESOLVED:/

1. That the Board notes the Programme’s first year outputs, outcomes and case studies.
2. That Board Members be asked to give further consideration to how they could support this year’s participants, and next year’s programme delivery and participants.

KEY GMS DELIVERABLES

GMBB/23/08	BOARD	MEMBER	FEEDBACK	ON
	DELIVERY/AFFILIATED GROUPS			

Digital

The Chair advised that the digital portfolio remained unallocated at the present time but would be resolved shortly as part of the Board refresh.

Real Living Wage Campaign

This continued to be a key focus for the city region – there had never been a greater need to have this conversation which has developed to take account of current challenges faced by business. Overall, the progress seen indicated that the campaign continued to be a success.

Skills

The biggest success in the last few weeks had been the confirmation that the Greater Manchester Institute of Technology had secured a licence and would open in September 2023.

It was hoped that the Institute would sit at the heart of a new innovative approach to the skills agenda. Lobbying continued to take place around devolution in this area – with an aim to create the country’s first integrated technical education system.

Innovation Greater Manchester (IGM)

The Innovation Accelerator is assessing the projects to be funded and wider consultation was taking place with stakeholders on the future of IGM with a focus upon how the innovation ecosystem would be developed across the city region.

Economic Resilience Group/GM BROs

The next meeting would be taking place next week – and would include a strong focus upon the impacts of the current travel challenges.

GC International and Marketing Advisory Board

SXSW and MIPIM were key upcoming international events to help showcase Greater Manchester on the world stage.

Investment Finance/Investment Portal

It was agreed that ‘access to finance’ was the biggest issue facing potential SMEs in the region and so a significant amount of work was being placed into signposting towards potential business support and funding. This could appear as a complex area and the plan was to demystify this and provide a platform that would signpost in clear English how to do this. The launch was planned for Summer 2023.

Bee Network Partnership Board

Business has a key role to play when the Bee Network went live to ensure that it can succeed and benefit all the people of Greater Manchester.

RESOLVED: /

1. That the board member feedback received be noted.

2. That the Board welcomed the progress of the Investment Portal and noted that a future funding source would need to be found to sustain the Portal if it proved successful.

It was agreed by the Chair that the Deep Dive items on Bee Net Zero and Digital Blueprint, plus the Time to Change report would be brought to the next meeting of the Board to allow sufficient time to dedicate to them.

GMBB/23/09 LOCAL GROWTH FUND UPDATE

A report was provided report that updated the Board on progress to deliver key elements of the Local Growth Deal (LGF) Programme (tranches 1, 2 and 3).

RESOLVED:/

1. That the progress made in relation to the Growth Deal Transport schemes as set out in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the report be noted;
2. That the progress made in relation to the Non-Transport Skills Capital and Economic Development and Regeneration (ED &R) programmes as set out in Section 5 of the report be noted;
3. That the use of returned Life Sciences funds to proceed with Life Sciences 2, as set out in Section 5.5 of the report be noted.