

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 28 July 2023

Subject: Towards an Integrated Technical Education, Skills and Work City-Region

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Portfolio Lead for Technical Education, Skills & Work and Joanne Roney Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Technical Education, Skills & Work

Purpose of Report

To update the Combined Authority on the ambition for Greater Manchester as an integrated technical education, skills and work city-region, in the context of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal and Local Skills Improvement Plan developments.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to welcome the update and note the next steps over the coming months set out in paragraph 4.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The GMCA is requested to welcome the update and note the next steps over the coming months

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	Proposals should contribute to wider agenda around tackling social and labour market inequalities linked with access to learning/work
Health	G	Supports residents' ability to access pathways into the labour market - links between good, fulfilling work and improved health/wellbeing are well-established.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	Contributes to a stronger, more resilient GM labour market and supports residents in acquiring the skills they need to contribute to/benefit from it.
Housing	G	Potential for indirect/longer term benefit: education and skills are part of a raft of support and interventions that can help reduce the risk of homelessness linked to unemployment/economic inactivity.
Economy	G	Proposals will ensure businesses have the skills they need, now and in the future - approach is evidence-led, informed by employers. Supports increased employment/progression opportunities, both for young people entering the labour market for the first time and for those already in work. The skills base of the workforce is a key determinant of inward investment; these proposals help deliver the skills investors need, esp in: frontier/high employment sectors, growth locations, innovation/R&D pipeline. Will increase access to education, training and skills; strengthens connections between the skills offer across GM and local labour market needs.
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment		
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		Will help provide a suitably skilled workforce to deliver vital enablers of the carbon neutrality target. In particular, large scale infrastructure projects (both new-build and retrofit) will rely on having both the relevant skills base and the necessary labour supply to support the design, construction, management and maintenance of low carbon buildings and transport
Future	G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.
		R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
		RR Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment	
Overall Score	
Buildings	Result
New Build residential	N/A
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A
Transport	
Active travel and public transport	N/A
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A
Access to amenities	N/A
Vehicle procurement	N/A
L _c	No associated carbon impacts expected.
L _c	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.
	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.
	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.
	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management

There are no direct risks associated with this report at this time.

Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations arising from this report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

There are no direct financial consequences arising from this report at this time. Any financial considerations associated with specific programmes/services referenced within the plan will be dealt with in line with the relevant commissioning and governance arrangements for those activities.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no capital funding consequences arising from this report.

Number of attachments to the report:

N/A

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

This paper can be read in conjunction with a policy paper, [Towards a Technical Education, Skills and Work City-Region: Starting the Conversation](#), together with the [recording of an event](#) held to launch the paper and associated consultation.

Tracking/ Process

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

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

There is a well-established connection between skills, good work, and a resilient, inclusive, high-performing economy – not just in high-GVA frontier sectors but in high-employment foundation sectors as well. In the current economic environment it is more important than ever that the education, skills and work system connects our people and our businesses to opportunity and helps them to thrive and grow. However the current system is too fragmented.

Against that backdrop, in December 2022, the Mayor, GMCA's Portfolio Lead, the Chief Executive of Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and the Chair of the Greater Manchester Colleges Group unveiled a shared ambition for Greater Manchester to become an exemplar integrated technical education city-region. At the heart of this ambition is a unique package of devolved functions/resources, strong, mature strategic partnerships between core stakeholders, and shared commitment to the social and economic imperatives to work together to drive change in Greater Manchester's technical education, skills and work landscape.

In March 2023 a package of devolved work/skills powers was agreed via Greater Manchester's Trailblazer Devolution Deal. It recognised the value of 'place' in establishing a stronger connection between people, skills and jobs at a much earlier stage in an individual's journey towards/into the labour market. It established a new strong joint governance board with DfE to provide oversight of post 16 technical education and skills in Greater Manchester.

The Deal, while not conferring any pre-16 functions/powers, unlocks new opportunities to explore ideas around how this stronger connection can be built, and to start the discussion about how, working together, we can move towards the vision of Greater Manchester as an integrated technical education, skills and work city-region.

2. Towards the vision: key components

2.1. Technical Education: Proposals for a Greater Manchester Baccalaureate

In May, the Mayor, GMCA's Portfolio Lead, the President of Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and the Chair of the Greater Manchester Colleges Group [hosted an event](#) to share proposals, [set out in a policy paper](#), for a new approach to technical education.

The proposals included the introduction of a new Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc) to sit alongside the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), providing comparable clarity and ease of access to technical education pathways into the labour market, as has long been the case for the EBacc and academic pathways into work via university.

2.2. Consultation

Consultation on the proposals took place on GM Consult from late May to early July, followed by a public poll, due to close week commencing 24 July. Consultation/poll responses are currently being analysed, but initial review shows strong overall support for the proposals. A total of 92 stakeholder responses were received to the formal consultation, of which 89% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposals.

Key themes from the responses included:

- Strong support for the subjects proposed for inclusion in the MBacc (English Language, Maths, and Technology (ICT, Computer Science)), with Digital and

Creative subjects commonly cited by respondents as crucial, described by some as ‘the backbone of the technical pathway’. This reflects not only the importance of the Digital and Creative industries to the GM economy but also the transferable nature of the skills developed in these subjects to occupations across the labour market and to the essential ‘soft’ skills for the workplace that employers are looking for, and which has been flagged as being of particular importance in the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (see below).

- An overwhelming number of respondents thought that strong Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance, and clear pathways, were critical for young people to be able to make informed choices about their futures. It was also suggested that access to this careers advice extends to parents/carers, to both help improve their understanding about the merits of technical and academic pathways and to help them support their children/young people make informed decisions about their pathways. Respondents felt there was a role for employers in both informing and delivering careers information and advice in schools.
- Respondents raised concerns about the capacity of the system to deliver the required number of workplace opportunities such as T Level industry placements and apprenticeship opportunities. One of the key mitigations identified was the need to work with employers and key stakeholders to shape the MBacc and technical pathway in greater detail, building support and therefore capacity to deliver the proposals.

A further update will be provided in due course with the response to the public poll.

3. Making technical education work: the role of employers

3.1 Employer Boards

The role of employers and industry, playing a proactive part in developing the talent that their businesses will rely on to thrive and grow, is central to the government’s ambitions for an employer-led skills system and to the GM vision of an integrated technical education city-region. A core component of the Integrated Technical Education City Region proposals in general, and the MBacc in particular, is a **robust commitment from industry partners, through Employer Boards linked to each Career Gateway**. This employer visibility and drive is so important to:

- set out and champion the skills/talent that employers in each career gateway will need in the future and present, in order to both present a strong regional voice to inform the national boards charged with developing the occupational standards that shape all technical education qualifications, and to shape local delivery and support, ensuring labour market relevance
- establishing clear visibility and routeways for young people from the subjects they study into the jobs of the future – to inspire young people
- offering opportunities such as first-hand experiences of the workplace and work placements, and supporting school/college curriculum enrichment across MBacc subjects, including apprenticeships, T level industry placements and other technical education and training opportunities
- underscore the role of employers across the technical education, skills and work landscape in providing good work and inclusive employment, not just for young people but for adults looking to enter the labour market for the first time, change careers, or return to work after a period of unemployment or economic inactivity.

These employer boards will work in tandem with the Business Board, Chamber of Commerce (as Employer Representative Body designated to lead the Local Skills Improvement Plan - see below) and with innovation activity via Innovation GM. This will be brought together under simplified work and skills governance jointly with Government, as set out in the Devolution Deal.

3.2 Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)

These proposals will form part of the response to GM's Local Skills Improvement Plan, due for publication imminently. Developed in Greater Manchester by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms set out in DfE's Skills for Jobs White Paper that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. It will be part of the strategic framework that helps to deliver the refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy, the golden thread running through the shared commitments and many of the Levelling Up missions, driving the shift towards a system characterised not by its individual parts or where one policy or funding stream stops and another kicks in, but by evidence-led approaches and by the fairer distribution of and access to labour market opportunities.

The LSIP will articulate employers' skills needs and make recommendations about changes that are needed to ensure that the education and skills offer in Greater Manchester more closely aligns with the needs of the local labour market. In addition, the

GM LSIP is expected to make recommendations to employers about their role investing in and contributing to workforce development and talent pipeline planning, in ways that help maximise the opportunities arising from the Devolution Deal and facilitate new ways of delivering the technical education, skills and work ambitions that will deliver a productive, inclusive and resilient GM economy/labour market.

4. Next Steps

This work to implement the component parts of the Devolution Deal and establish an integrated technical education city region system are progressing at pace. Specifically the next developments, over the next couple of months, will be:

- Analysis of the stakeholder consultation and public poll responses will be completed and will inform the further development of the technical education/MBacc proposals.
- Framing of the seven Employer Boards (one per career gateway) to help employers shape clear pathways for young people into the jobs of the future and understanding the areas of study needed for these pathways. In this way it will create the same clarity around the technical education route as already exists around the university route. These Employer Boards will sit within the wider governance and accountability landscape linked to the Devolution Deal, including arrangements for implementing the LSIP recommendations. These Boards will be established in the early Autumn.

Developmental work will continue over the summer and further details will follow with the intention to bring proposals for the new governance arrangements to the Combined Authority in September for consideration and approval.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As above.

