

# CAMPAIGN FOR BUSINESS

## 2024

### A Business Agenda for the GM Mayor following May's Election

Following May's Mayoral Election the successful candidate will have a new range of funding and powers via the Trailblazer Devolution Deal. This is a unique opportunity but one not without risk as the way that decision making and spending has been done in GM over the last few decades will need to change significantly.

The Chamber recognises that this next period of devolution in GM offers great opportunity alongside the above risks. Under the following 5 themes that make up our Campaign for Business 2024, we list a series of 'asks' that have been developed from our work with businesses and expertise on issues such as skills and trade alongside a range of other themes that impact on businesses in the city region.

We believe that by focussing on the Chamber's strengths coupled with the other 'asks' contained in our Campaign for Business 2024 we can play a critical role in ensuring that businesses will get the best out of the coming years in GM and will ensure that the city region maximises the opportunities coming out of devolution. Trailblazer devolution offers huge opportunities for economic growth and business in GM but businesses must be actively involved in this. We intend to facilitate, encourage and maximise this engagement.

## SKILLS

The current UK government has set an ambition for a "high skill, high wage" economy following years of low wage growth and low productivity. This ambition needs clear and concrete action on developing a pipeline of skilled workers that provides opportunities for all people if given the support and training they need. GMCC is the designated ERB for developing the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Greater Manchester. The findings from engagement with nearly 3,500 employers undertaken for developing the LSIP showed that employers across all sectors face recruitment difficulties and labour shortages. At the same time, the findings also showed that employers are not investing enough on upskilling and reskilling for their staff with a decline in training spend over the last 20 years.

Improving workers' skills is essential to improve productivity both nationally and locally and GMCC is working with education and training organisations across GM to ensure that the recommendations of the LSIP are implemented.

### GMCC ASKS FOR

**Continued full backing for the roll out of the Integrated Technical Education System in GM ensuring that employers have a fundamental role within this to inform, influence and help skills provision to meet their needs as well as play an active role in reversing the decline in Apprenticeships, support the development of T Levels and other technical and vocational qualifications. The structure of the new system should be able to react and respond quickly to employer needs as evidenced through the LSIP.**

**Certainty and clarity around existing initiatives such as the LSIP and other opportunities to encourage more businesses to actively support the local skills system and play more of a role in helping develop and deliver vital training, and encourage more uptake of existing training. This should include greater employer engagement supporting Careers Advice which will offer young people greater clarity over their employment options and career paths.**

The continuation of projects and funding that address skills needs identified as being critical to embed innovation across the workforce in all sectors. Activities such as the Further Education Innovation Fund will be increasingly important in helping with the 'new' technical skills alongside a focus on Leadership and Management to deliver the necessary personal skills to take full advantage of upcoming opportunities to maximise projects such as the GM Investment Zone.

Funding and other support necessary to ensure that there are sufficient tutors, teachers and trainers, paid at a level that reflects their skills and importance to the GM economy, to meet current and future demand especially in technical subjects and which also allows providers to keep pace with changing technology and methods. This may involve the input and assistance from employers and industry.

Digital skills - from basic 'office' functions to advanced coding and software development - need to be treated with the same importance as Maths and English. Future job roles will rely on employees having basic digital skill sets as a given and evidence is clear there are significant gaps at present. This mirrors the ambitions of the MBacc in creating options for young people to give them the right career paths and training.

A focus on ensuring that all members of the community have access to the training and skills development needed for them to be employed and take advantage of new initiatives across GM.

## TRADE

QES data shows that many GM businesses are struggling to enter export markets and/or expand the exporting they currently do and that demand from their international customers declined further in 2023. Increased paperwork and non-tariff barriers post-Brexit are a serious concern for businesses and it is important to make sure that SMEs are not put off by the heavy compliance and administrative burden associated with exporting

International trade links are vital to both exporting but also ensuring smooth flow of imported goods, including raw materials and components used by UK manufacturers. These links are also critical to attracting FDI into GM. Therefore, businesses need support with international trade but focussed in a different way than before.

### GMCC ASKS FOR

A new and expanded GM Trade Strategy to be established that will:

- bring together the existing strengths and expertise across the city region in a cohesive and better integrated and targeted way to simplify access, remove duplication and take advantage of existing connection with overseas markets,
- give more support to help with the export of services (60% of GM exports) as most of the support is currently geared for exporters of goods,
- reestablish and grow trade links and develop new opportunities with the EU with a corresponding expansion in resources to deliver this include preparing for upcoming new legislation and border control rules and changes to VAT and EU CBAM that will impact UK businesses. EU barriers must be addressed by specialist advice and support already available within GM but which needs better coordination,
- focus on inward investment opportunities that match priority sectors within GM such as Net Zero and Advanced Manufacturing/Materials and which offer the widest possible benefits and deliverables to the GM economy,
- be backed by ongoing and robust research and analysis to identify key GM sectors where trade is lagging behind other comparative regions and identify and deliver effective solutions,
- use effective data and analysis to forecast potential future issues as well as pick up on new and emerging high growth and fast developing markets (forecasted to make up 60% of global GDP by 2023) the analysis of which will be translated into effective strategies and delivery plans,
- expand on current help and support to ensure that GM businesses are best placed to cope with new and planned legislation and regulatory changes in all global markets.



# CONNECTIVITY

It is vital that the movement of goods, people and data is made easier, more sustainable and recognises the long term economic benefits rather than purely through the lens of costs.

Connectivity is also vital to encourage the support that businesses can give each other. The establishment of vital connections, sharing ideas and the ability to engage with other businesses and organisations can help unlock new opportunities and innovative ways of working.

Supporting this is the need for the expansion and distribution of the benefits from major investment schemes and key sector-based initiatives such as Atom Valley, ID Manchester and the GM Investment Zone across as wide a range and number of businesses as possible to embed innovative ideas and practice that will drive further economic growth and employment opportunities.

## GMCC ASKS FOR

**The continued expansion of local transport networks and infrastructure to complete the rollout of the Bee Network, including expansion of Metrolink, integration of rail, and implement 'tap in tap out' ticketing across all transport modes as a priority.**

**The recognition and acknowledgment that the movement of freight is given the same attention and status as other modes of transport. Logistics is a critical sector for GM and is a key factor in any successful economy. This should be aimed at developing, funding and encouraging more innovative and sustainable ways of moving and delivering freight that retains convenience but is done more efficiently.**

**Continued activity campaigning for the delivery of critical infrastructure investment such as the Ordsall Chord - the single, most critical barrier to rail improvement in the North. It is vital that GM's strategic transport connections to the rest of the UK can meet the demands required to achieve economic growth and labour market requirements.**

**The continued investment and roll out of digital infrastructure with 1gb broadband as a minimum to allow all businesses and residents the access required in a modern 21st century economy. Accessible and affordable broadband connectivity must be treated as necessary utility.**

**Workable options for an effective orbital public transport option for GM to offer more effective cross-borough options as opposed to the current radial route network which results in unnecessary journeys into the regional centre to then continue outwards again.**

**A greater focus on connecting businesses, especially SMEs and smaller businesses, to major investment and growth plans such as Atom Valley and GM Investment Zone, through effective networks to share and promote ideas to help unlock innovative developments and solve problems to boost economic growth across GM.**

# NET ZERO

The transition to net zero is not only a societal requirement but could also be an opportunity for UK businesses to develop, adopt and share world leading net zero technologies. Meeting these objectives requires providing clarity to businesses about net zero targets and measures that they can adopt to reduce their carbon emissions. Through the LSIP, GMCC has also identified specific net zero skills requirements across sectors. The transition to net zero required addressing emerging skills requirements and ensuring training provision will help GM address the transition and attract further investment into the sector in GM.



## GMCC ASKS FOR

A sustained campaign to make sure local businesses are aware of the 2038 net zero target for Greater Manchester and are informed of support and help available to make the transition. There is a lack of clarity over how this is to be delivered and businesses and residents must have a better understanding of what is required to achieve this ambition.

Support mechanisms that help businesses access innovative net zero technology, processes and techniques and help roll out locally based and developed net zero solutions.

Adequate funding to deliver the uplift in training and upskilling required to ensure GM has the skilled workforce necessary to deliver the net zero transition. This must include the training and skilling up of the tutors and trainers required to deliver this at the necessary scale and must ensure they are paid at a rate that will attract highly skilled professionals.

An inward investment strategy centred on innovative green technology to help make GM a leader associated with this technology this will be linked with the new model proposed for an expanded trade support service strategy.

Help with the delivery of collecting data for businesses that shows their current carbon footprint and which will assist in monitoring reductions.

Support for retrofitting insulation and make it easier for listed buildings to get permission to retrofit double glazing and insulation.

# BUSINESS CONDITIONS

A major challenge in the UK has been low levels of business investment. Although schemes such as full expensing have encouraged some businesses to invest more this has not been completely successful in a period of prolonged economic uncertainty - unlocking business investment requires providing certainty over economic conditions. Private business investment follows public investment and there isn't enough of either at the moment in the UK. Further public investment in infrastructure and regeneration will enable businesses to invest more and unlock a virtuous cycle of growth and prosperity.

## GMCC ASKS FOR

Funding designated for business support and workforce development to be used so that available resources can be fully utilised and give businesses the best chance to access the support and help they need. Business support must be rationalised to a smaller number of high impact services and more collaborative models set up to reduce any duplication.

Clarity and greater awareness around the GM Innovation Strategy, a critical component for future economic growth, with an emphasis on SMEs and encouraging their interest, engagement and involvement.

Opportunities within GM to make more use of funding mechanisms such as retained business rates to maximise financial support for businesses and help develop key future growth sectors. The Mayor should also explore the use of other funds such as pension funds to help grow and sustain business development and innovation.

Continued promotion of the Good Employment Charter to maximise the impact of the focus on creating more jobs in key sectors and, potentially, more young people entering employment.

Greater interaction with a wider range of businesses, especially SMEs, to ensure decisions taken as part of the Devolution Deal match needs and gaps in provision, investment and services to develop new and innovative solutions to the challenges they face.

