

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 26th September

Subject: GM Civic Universities Agreement

Report of: Councillor Bev Craig, Portfolio Lead for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth and Tom Stannard Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth

Purpose of Report:

This report seeks endorsement from Greater Manchester Combined Authority for the refreshed Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement, a collective, co-developed commitment between GM's five major universities, listed below, and GMCA around collaborative working to tackle a shared range of local priorities.

Manchester Metropolitan University, Royal Northern College of Music, University of Greater Manchester, University of Manchester, University of Salford

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note and endorse this refreshed approach by GM's universities embodied in the Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement (CUA).
2. Note that the CUA is a living document and can be revisited in light of developments to the Greater Manchester Strategy.
3. Note that, following endorsement by the GMCA, a public announcement will follow in October 2025 at the CUA Citizens' Panel.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

Insert text

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	The CUA was drafted in consultation with the Citizens' Panel to ensure the universities efforts stay focused on what residents need and value, reaffirming the commitment to serve the people of Greater Manchester.
Health	G	The CUA has a key priority of Health & Wellbeing promoting healthy lives with quality care available for those who need it by supporting health, mental health, and social care initiatives.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	The CUA has a key priority of Environment aligning research, innovation, education and operations activity to promote sustainability, reduce carbon usage and build resilience to environmental challenges, thereby contributing to Greater Manchester's transformation into a green-city region.
Housing		
Economy	G	The CUA has a key priority of Opportunity & Prosperity driving inclusive economic growth by supporting education, skills development, lifelong learning and innovation, ensuring good jobs and increasing access and opportunities for all people to learn, progress, and develop, fostering a thriving, inclusive and productive economy in all parts of Greater Manchester.
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	The CUA has a key priority of Environment aligning research, innovation, education and operations activity to promote sustainability, reduce carbon usage and build resilience to environmental challenges, thereby contributing to Greater Manchester's transformation into a green-city region.
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		The CUA has a key priority of Environment aligning research, innovation, education and operations activity to promote sustainability, reduce carbon usage and build resilience to environmental challenges, thereby contributing to Greater Manchester's transformation into a green-city region.
Further Assessment(s): Equalities Impact Assessment		
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	Justification/Mitigation			
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				
Land Use					
Land use	N/A				
No associated carbon impacts expected.	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

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

N/A

Background Papers

[GMCA 24th September 2021 - Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement](#)

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

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Universities across the UK were previously encouraged by government to enter into voluntary Civic University Agreements (CUA) – strategies co-developed with regional leaders and communities to address local priorities.
- 1.2 The five publicly-funded universities based in Greater Manchester worked with the GMCA in the early part of 2021 to agree the first CUA based on workshops with civic leaders and polling with the public.
- 1.3 The CUA supported more collaborative ways of working and opportunities to collectively address key priorities in Greater Manchester. It was endorsed by the Mayor and GMCA in September 2021.
- 1.4 A Civic University Board was established to oversee delivery of the CUA which included the GMCA portfolio lead for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth representing the GMCA.
- 1.5 The CUA has now been refreshed with updated priorities that reflect the new Greater Manchester Strategy.

2. INITIAL GM CIVIC UNIVERSITY AGREEMENT 2021

- 2.1 The CUA was the first time that all five universities in the city region came together to collectively make commitments on this scale. It built on their existing collaboration, recognising that there is more power in the collective than acting individually, as well as acknowledging their role and responsibility as major contributors and anchor institutions within the city region.
- 2.2 The CUA reflected the Greater Manchester Strategy and its commitment to make the region a good place to live where residents could engage with their universities. The CUA aimed to tackle inequality, boost the economy and protect the environment in our city region.
- 2.3 By working closely with GMCA localities and listening to communities, the CUA highlighted six priority areas for collective action: education and skills, reducing

inequalities, jobs and growth, the digital economy, net zero and the creative and cultural economy.

- 2.4 This approach is being adopted and replicated in other areas since the GM agreement was adopted in 2021 – e.g. the ‘Universities for Nottingham Civic Agreement’.

3. REFRESHED GM CIVIC UNIVERSITY AGREEMENT 2025

- 3.1 Delivery of the agreement was set to run for an initial three-year period from 2021, with an Annual Report produced setting out progress in delivering against the CUA priorities.

- 3.2 The latest Annual Report demonstrates this impact with key highlights including:

- Bringing together residents from across the city-region in the Civic University Citizens’ Panel ensuring that local voices play a central role in shaping how the universities serve and engage with their communities. Since its inception, the Panel has helped launch a pilot Maths Programme for young people; improve access to courses for small businesses to support local enterprise and economic growth; create clearer training pathways for ‘green jobs’ in the sustainable economy; strengthen partnerships with local FE Colleges to improve opportunities for learners; and promote community and civic initiatives projects.
- Launching the Centre for Digital Innovation funded by the GM Innovation Accelerator to create a connected ‘supercluster’ of digital innovation, providing accessible routes for businesses, communities, and learners to develop skills, innovate, and grow within the digital economy.
- Renewing the Green Skills Working Group’s shared commitment to environmental sustainability and Greater Manchester’s 2038 net-zero target, contributing to the GMCA’s Environmental Plan.
- Pioneering the Green Careers Mission event that brought together students from across the universities to tackle real-world environmental challenges. The initiative culminated in a showcase of student-led solutions at the GM Green Summit,

demonstrating the creativity and climate ambition of our city-region's future workforce.

- Partnering with Greater Manchester Colleges to open doors for T-Level learners and helping build a more connected regional innovation ecosystem.
- Collaborating with the Greater Manchester Students' Partnership to support development of the new Student Living and Staying Strategy which aims to better support our students, help them feel part of the local community and encourage them to build their futures in Greater Manchester after graduation.

3.3 As the initial three-year period draws to a close, the CUA priorities have been refreshed to reflect the evolving strategic and policy context with a focus on the new Greater Manchester Strategy and its vision for a thriving city region where everyone can live a good life.

3.4 This included consultation with the Citizens' Panel to ensure the universities efforts stay focused on what residents need and value, reaffirming the commitment to serve the people of Greater Manchester.

3.5 The draft CUA for 2025 has updated its priorities as follows:

i. Opportunity & Prosperity

Drive inclusive economic growth by supporting education, skills development, lifelong learning and innovation, ensuring good jobs and increasing access and opportunities for all people to learn, progress, and develop, fostering a thriving, inclusive and productive economy in all parts of Greater Manchester.

ii. Health & Wellbeing

Promote healthy lives, with quality care available for those who need it by supporting health, mental health, and social care initiatives.

iii. Culture

Enhance Greater Manchester's global reputation as a vibrant cultural city region by leveraging creative and cultural assets to ensure access to high quality culture and

leisure for all, drive economic growth, skills development and strengthen local community identity

iv. Environment

Align research, innovation, education and operations activity to promote sustainability, reduce carbon usage and build resilience to environmental challenges, thereby contributing to Greater Manchester's transformation into a green-city region.

3.6 The full text on the updated priorities is included as an Annex to this paper.

3.7 The Civic University Board is developing an Action Plan that will set out how these priorities will be implemented with a series of specific targets, deliverables and performance management measures.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Following endorsement by GMCA, the CUA will be formally launched at a Citizens' Panel event in October.