

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Waste and Recycling Committee

Date: 8 October 2025

Subject: Options to Expand Social Value delivered through Waste Contracts

Report of: David Taylor, Executive Director, Waste and Resources Team

Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with an assessment of options to expand the delivery of social value through the waste contracts.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Comment and provide feedback on the potential options for expanding social value;
2. Consider the allocation of the £20k Innovation Fund to support the University of Manchester scholarship as set out in section 5.0; and
3. Approve the proposed approach to expanding social value delivery set out at section 6.0.

Contact Officers

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BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

Insert text

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion		
Health		
Resilience and Adaptation		
Housing		
Economy		
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	
Consumption and Production	G	
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target	The resultant waste strategy adopted later in 2025 will set a route map for the sustainable management of household waste for nine of the ten GM districts. For example, it will detail how plastics recovery will be further increased to remove them from residual waste (subject to markets) and assess methods to prevent the emission of CO2 to atmosphere.	
Further Assessment(s):	N/A	
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.

Risk Management

No risks arise from the report.

Legal Considerations

There are no legal considerations within this report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

Financial consequences for revenue budgets are set out in the report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no implications on the capital budget that arise from the activities set out in this report.

Number of attachments to the report:

Appendix A – GMCA Social Value Options

Appendix B - Social Value Delivery in Districts

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

N/A

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/Background

The SUEZ/GMCA waste management contracts prioritise creating social value from Greater Manchester's waste. SUEZ has developed and continues to deliver 54 individual social value commitments with annual targets. These commitments aim to deliver a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits across Greater Manchester. The commitments include creating apprenticeships, work placements and training opportunities, supporting schools by attending careers events and supporting universities with research projects.

SUEZ also have internal social value commitments including paying their staff the real living wage and are members of the GM Good Employment Charter. They also offer staff a range of accredited training and professional development opportunities as well as volunteering opportunities in the local community.

To put into context the value of SUEZ's social value contribution, the GMCAs Social Value Annual Report for 2023-2024, reported £32.015 million was generated by GMCA's suppliers. Nearly 73% of this, a total of £23.3 million was delivered by SUEZ through the waste management contracts.

Since 2021, over £1 million has been raised to support over 100 VCFSE projects (Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise) that assist financially vulnerable families and creates opportunities for residents to learn new skills and improves community cohesion. £500,000 has also been donated to the Greater Manchester's Mayors Charity which supports A Bed every Night scheme.

Now that the contracts have been extended to 2034, a review has been undertaken of the current social value activities to determine what more can be delivered and the potential resource implications. This report sets out the outcome of the review and provides options for members consideration.

2. Social Value Delivered in Districts

Working in partnership with GMCA and districts, Suez is delivering considerable social value benefits in each district. The potential for expanding the offer has been discussed and reviewed with Suez. The document at Appendix B provides an overview of the Social Value delivery across all nine boroughs of Greater Manchester.

3. Options for Further Expansion of Social Value

Through discussions with Suez, a range of options for expansion of the social value offering have been identified. These are set out in full in the accompanying Part B report and are summarised in the following table:

Option	Description	Outcomes
1	Supporting young people into employment – Hitz programme with local sports clubs.	Young people (NEET) offered learning, skills and visibility of the resources and waste sector and career opportunities available. FT employment opportunities via SUEZ and other partners
2	Enabling Manchester's reuse economy – Reuse and repair accreditation and support network.	Increase in the public's confidence in repaired items, increased marketing through accreditation process and increase in items being reuse and repaired, possibly new businesses, repair groups etc establishing themselves as a result.
3	Taking repair into the community – Fixy mobile repair van	Depending on the route taken. A mobile repair van could increase the number of items being reused and continued to be used, reduced costs for the public and businesses.
4	Community Led Action – Community Action Groups	Community support network across the region, which enables grass roots change through supporting existing groups and helping new groups to established and grow.
5	Creating more circular neighbourhoods – In the Loop	Creation of a more circular neighbourhood in an area with high

		levels of deprivation and vulnerability to climate change.
6	Creating imagination and enthusiasm at playtime – OPAL	Increases in imagination and play, with associated benefits to schools in terms of focus and attainment. Reuse of items that are typically a cost to GMCA/SUEZ.
7	Library of Things	A network of highly professional and effective Library of Things centres across the GM region, with community engagement surrounding it to promote and support long term borrowing habits and the skills that align with them. It is understood that Library of Things has applied for funding through the Business Investment Fund managed by GMCA.

Appendix A to this report sets out the resource requirements for each option.

4. The Renew Hub

At more than 5000m², the Renew Hub is the UK's largest re-use operation. Whilst the Renew Hub has been pioneering and set the blueprint for waste contracts and local authorities to move into reuse on an industrial scale, the Renew Hub has operated at a loss since it opened in 2021. The revenue raised from sales has to cover the guaranteed donations each year to the GM Mayors Charity and the Renew Community Fund as well as the running costs of the facility. The scale of the loss has reduced year on year, as SUEZ has introduced additional processes.

GMCA and SUEZ have reviewed the operation and identified that the working pods for upholstery, joinery, painting etc, are not fully utilised at present which presents the opportunity to bring in other commercial work to the facility to raise further revenue.

The introduction of a commercial reuse operation at the Renew Hub will allow SUEZ to make better use of the facility. This activity, in the form of commercial reuse will then generate additional revenue for the Renew project, which will help close the gap to breaking even and then move into profitability. Once the Renew project makes a profit, SUEZ and the GMCA then have the ability to make further charitable donations and increase the Renew Community Fund.

The first commercial opportunity to arise is through the bidding for furniture refurbishment work to be undertaken in the upholstery pod. Many local authorities and municipal service providers are now looking at reupholstering of furniture rather than buying new replacement furniture and are tendering for this service. Suez will now be actively monitoring for tender opportunities to bid for in this area. As an example, Suez were donated 26 chairs by a library that were being replaced with new chairs at a cost of £46.8k. If a commercial contract had been in place with the Renew Hub, Suez could have reupholstered each chair for £1000, saving the library £20,800 and generating a £13,000 profit for the Renew hub. This gives an indication of the commercial opportunity that is available through increasing the productivity of the repair pods.

5. Graham McKenna-Mayes Scholarship

Suez established the Graham McKenna-Mayes Scholarship (GMMS) in memory of Graham Mayes, Suez Chief Development Officer who sadly passed away in 2021. Graham led the bid for the GMCA waste contracts and was instrumental in developing the Suez social value offering in the contracts.

The GMMS was established by Graham's family and Suez with the aim of supporting access, success and progression for underrepresented groups in the Greater Manchester area applying for Law and Environmental Science degree level studies. The bursaries specifically aim to address obstacles faced by students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to offer the first stepping-stone to a successful career after graduation in Law or Environmental Sciences and offers eligible applicants an annual grant of £2,000. To date 18 students have been supported with 7 graduating in 2025, 9 due to graduate in 2026 and a further 2 graduating in 2027. Current funding is due to expire after this final cohort graduate.

Suez has approached GMCA to enquire whether a proportion of the current £220k per annum Community Fund could be diverted each year to support the GMMS enabling this to

continue. The funding level proposed is £20k per annum, which would reduce the Community Fund to £200k per annum from April 2026. The benefits of doing so are summarised as:

- The GMMS widens participation by supporting applicants which would otherwise not be in a position to attend university;
- Only supports applications from those who live in Gtr. Manchester; and
- Sponsorships available for those wanting to study Law or Environmental Science degrees – both of which are relevant subjects in the context of the WRMS & HWRMS contracts and the services Suez deliver in Gtr. Manchester.

The GMSS will help to promote innovation in the region via transferring knowledge, providing technical expertise, developing talent, and offering shared resources like specialised equipment and research facilities.

SUEZ believes the GMM Scholarship aligns with the GMCA's wider ambition to, 'create social value through education, which aims to create positive, lasting benefits for Greater Manchester's communities through education, skills, and work opportunities'.

If the Community Fund is reduced by £20k per annum, then this will reduce the number of community groups that can be funded via this route. Typically, around 21 groups are funded each year through the Renew Community Fund with each project usually being awarded up to £10k. Reducing the overall level of funding available to £200k will reduce the number of groups that can be funded to around 19 each year.

The Committee is requested to consider whether to support the GMMS or to retain the Renew Community Fund at the current level of £220k per annum.

6. Recommended Approach

Significant social value has been delivered through the waste contracts with Suez and there is scope to deliver more through the options set out in this report. A number of these do require significant ongoing financial input that would need to be funded through the waste Levy thereby increasing annual costs to Districts at a time when all are under financial pressure.

There are low cost/no cost options in the proposals that should be adopted, combined with the increase in commercial activities at the Renew Hub to generate additional revenue that could then be made available for additional social value activities once the Hub reaches a

surplus financial position. On that basis, the Committee is recommended to approve the following approach to develop and deliver further social value from the waste contracts:

1. Increase the commercial operations undertaken in the Hub to raise additional revenues;
2. Carry out further research into option 2 (reuse accreditation) to quantify the cost and to determine whether a Greater Manchester accreditation scheme is viable;
3. Explore funding routes eg Material Focus for option 3 (Fixy van) and implement if external funding is available;
4. Carry out research into option 4 (community action groups) to understand the current community network in Greater Manchester to determine if this is a viable option to develop;
5. Implement option 6 at zero cost;
6. Subject to the Library of Things network receiving funding from the Business Investment Fund managed by the GMCA Core Investment team, option 7 could be implemented; and
7. Review progress on a yearly basis.