

Briefing: Greater Manchester Trailblazer Devolution Deal

The Trailblazer Devolution Deal process was launched in the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022. Greater Manchester and the West Midlands have been negotiating with Government on the Deal. The Deals have been announced in the March 2023 Budget. The key features of the GM Deal are:

- **Single Settlement.** For the next Spending Review period (due to begin in 2025-26), Government will agree a Single Funding Settlement with GMCA. It will include funding for Local growth and place; Local transport; Housing and regeneration; Adult skills; and Retrofit/Net Zero. This will cover an entire Spending Review period, giving GM greater flexibility to plan and fund priorities over the long term, and replace multiple grant agreements and bespoke reporting requirements with a single streamlined accountability framework.
- **Skills and employment.** A new Partnership for post-16 Technical and Education and Skills will provide oversight of post 16 technical education and skills. Non-apprenticeship adult skills functions and grant funding for post-19 will be devolved in the next Spending Review period, and several immediate flexibilities given. And Government has committed to a co-design approach to all future contracted employment support programmes, with an assumption of a delegated delivery model.
- **Transport.** A new Rail Partnership with Great British Railways (GBR) will support the integration of Rail into the Bee Network by 2030, inc. through full fares and ticketing integration across bus, Metrolink, and Rail. Government will also work with GM on the legal powers needed to effectively tackle anti-social behaviour and fare evasion on buses.
- **Housing and regeneration.** £150m of Brownfield funding will be devolved over the next three years to deliver 7,000 homes. GMCA will gain new, strategic oversight of the Affordable Homes Programme and the existing Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England will be strengthened. A Housing Quality Pathfinder will provide funding and powers to support GM authorities to tackle poor quality private rented sector properties.
- **Fiscal devolution.** Authorities in GM will be allowed to retain 100% of their Business Rates for 10 years. The Government will also work with GM to designate a number of specific growth zones, within which 100% of Business Rates growth will be retained for 25 years.
- **Governance and accountability.** There are a series of measures designed to strengthen the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including commitments that the GMCA Chair and other Members will attend Council meetings, public question times, and a new scrutiny session for GM Members of Parliament to be held in public four times a year.
- **Economy, growth and culture.** The Deal establishes a new Strategic Innovation Partnership, Strategic Productivity Partnership (on business support), and Strategic Cultural Partnership. There are also a range of commitments to support between GM-Government joint-working on trade, investment and exports.
- **Net zero and environment.** Government will pilot devolving net zero funding (inc. buildings retrofit) to GMCA from 2025 onwards, as part of GMCA's single department-style settlement. The Mayor of Greater Manchester will be appointed as the responsible authority to develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for GM, and Government and GM will work on a range of net zero, nature recovery and climate change adaptation strategies, regulations, pilots and policies.
- **Public services.** New funding streams relating to prevention and/or multiple disadvantage will be considered for inclusion as part of the single settlement. Government will also work with GM to review the secondary legislation underpinning pooled budgets (Section 75).
- **Data and digital.** A new Data Partnership, alongside a review of options (legislative or otherwise), will support better sharing of data between Government and GM bodies. A new Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group will also be established.
- **Resilience.** Government will work with GMCA to pilot and test key aspects of the UK Government Resilience Framework.