Report to CABINET

Greater Manchester's Integrated Settlement for Education, Work and Skills

Portfolio Holder: Councillor M Ali, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Councillor F Hussain, Cabinet member for Business Enterprise and Employment

Officer Contact: Jon Bloor, Assistant Director, Employment and Skills, Paul Tinsley, Interim Director of Education and Early Years

Report Author: Amanda Youlden, Post 16 and Skills Lead

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Reason for Decision

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is currently working with each of the ten local authorities to determine how devolved funding will operate. This activity is taking place with teams across the Council and has implications for various services and choices that the Council will want to make. This is part of the latest devolution deal and includes an integrated settlement that allows GMCA to prioritise areas of activity to deliver the GM Strategy and constituent policies, including Get GM Working, Live Well and Local Growth Plans.

This report specifically relates to an initial tranche of Integrated Settlement (IS) funding that is being allocated for Education, Work and Skills via GMCA and the position known to officers at the time of writing.

The report outlines the funding confirmed to Oldham from GMCA at this stage for extensions to 3 projects currently being funded in the Oldham area.

Request to accept the funding and permission extend associated contracts for additional Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) support (forms part of Targeted Specialist Services and Support (TSSS) contract), year 2 of economic inactivity trailblazer funding and associated projects and WorkWell Vanguard for the financial year 2026/2027.

Advising members that GMCA have made the decision to cease funding a fixed term post, in addition to the IS. GMCA suggest that the post is continued to be funded by this current allocation, if Local Authority's (LA's) choose to do so.

The report outlines the proposal for the allocation of the funding, and the intention of Officers to primarily secure the associated posts within the education, work and skills delivery teams that have been affected by the move across to the IS and the decisions GMCA have made in relation to the level of funding and allocations. The delivery teams affected are Action Together, Get Oldham Working, Positive Steps and Post 16 Service.

Advising members that further funding is to be allocated to Education, Work and Skills via the GMCA IS. Allocations not yet determined and will advise members when Officers are made aware.

Recommendations
Members accept the additional funding to deliver the extensions to the three schemes, namely NEET support, Trailblazer and WorkWell Vanguard, and the proposed use of the funds that support Oldham residents.

Members agree to sign the grant funding agreement issued by GMCA.

Members agree that each of the three funds bear the cost of the Education, Work and Skills Co-ordinator post previously funded by GMCA.

Members to note the change to grant funding mechanism for education, work and skills funding via the GM Integrated Settlement.

Greater Manchester's Integrated Settlement for Education, Work and Skills

1 Background

1.1 The Greater Manchester Integrated Settlement is a funding framework that provides £630 million to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), allowing greater flexibility in funding services and a localised view of where support is required.

1.2 The integrated settlement replaces a system of separate funding pots from different government departments into the Greater Manchester economy, including funding for adult skills, employment support, economic inactivity trailblazer and funding identified for NEET (not in education, training or employment) support for young people.

1.3 An outcomes framework has been established to measure the impact of the funding on local residents and services.

1.4 Whilst the wider integrated settlement covers a variety of funding pots across Local Growth and Place, Local Transport and Housing regeneration and retrofit. This report deals only with the funding relating to IS allocations for education, work and skills.

2 Current Position

2.1 In December 2025, GMCA received approval from their Treasurer to expedite funding requests totaling £22.6 million that were requested to ensure key local employment and skills provision remains in place for 2026/27. This funding covers the following activity in Oldham:

- Economic Inactivity Trailblazer - £566,475
- Locality Led NEET - £480,000
- WorkWell Vanguard - £381,475

2.2 Previous reports that outline the three projects are attached at item 13.

2.3 In addition to confirming the above funding, GMCA confirmed they would no longer be providing additional funding for the Education, Work and Skills Co-ordinator post that has been funded for the past two financial years. GMCA's expectation is that LA's fund this post from the £1,427,645 allocation above.

2.4 GMCA has now confirmed that funding for two other work and skills programmes currently delivered in Oldham has now ceased. These are Support to Succeed, sub-contracted to deliver in Oldham by Get Oldham Working and Community Grants, delivered by community groups across Oldham and managed pan-GM by WEA.

2.5 The removal of the three projects effectively removes £969,567.36 (£536,899.96 Community Grants, £52,667.40 EWS Co-ordinator and £380,000.00 Support to Succeed) from Oldham to support residents into employment and skills.

2.6 Further funding is expected to be received for education, work and skills delivery in Oldham from the IS, however this has not yet been confirmed by GMCA and we await future decisions on these allocations.

2.7 Previously, each funding stream was passported to localities separately, with a separate requirement for approval, grant agreements and monitoring arrangements and requirements. GMCA, taking into account the feedback from LA's and their own departments on the unnecessary additional workload the additional funding streams create they intend to streamline processes, providing one integrated funding settlement to each Local Authority, therefore minimising the administrative and monitoring processes and associated costs

2.8 The grant agreement that this report deals with is only in relation to the provision outlined at 2.1. Further reports on the wider IS allocation will follow when detail emerges.

2.9 GMCA expect that this funding will support the delivery of existing programmes of work during this transitional year, whilst Greater Manchester moves across to the IS model of funding. Accepting the funding and agreeing this model gives Officers time to work with GMCA to influence the shaping of the model understand how the new model will be implemented and ensure Oldham is ready implement the employment and skills support via the IS in a seamless way and ensure residents are not affected.

2.10 The primary function of the proposed model of funding is to secure existing staff working in the wider Oldham partnership of work and skills. The model allows us to continue to deliver services at no detriment to Oldham residents and retains the expertise developed in Oldham. This provides GMCA the time to fully develop Oldham's allocation (as per 2.6) and allows Officers the next 12 months to develop a model of delivery that works for Oldham residents.

Empower Oldham	£461,769.00
Work Well Vanguard	£236,200.00
Trailblazer (One Front Door)	£239,267.00
Trailblazer (Volunteering into Employment)	£65,000.00
Trailblazer (GOW Healthy)	£60,000.00
Support to Succeed	£233,052.00
Work and Skills Co-ordinator	£52,667.40
Contingency	£79,689.60
	£1,427,645.00

2.11 The required monitoring for the three projects has not yet been agreed or made available. Officer's understanding from GMCA is that monitoring requirements will be in line with previous year's expectations.

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 Option 1: We accept the extension to the funding up to 31 March 2027 and continue to deliver the three projects, and adjust the funding to secure the internal post. This option secures additional support for residents in Oldham that is not funded by Council funding.

3.2 Option 2: We decline the extension to funding up to 31 March 2027. This option effectively removes existing provision, resource and support for residents.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 Option 1 is Officer's preferred option. This option secures additional funding and therefore support for residents that would not normally be available.

5 Consultation

5.1 No consultation is required or has been undertaken. There are no declared interests.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 This report seeks approval to accept GMCA funding of £1,427,645 and to extend the related contracts that provide additional support for young people who are NEET through the TSSS contract. It also requests approval to continue year two of the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer funding and its associated projects, as well as the WorkWell Vanguard programme, for the 2026/2027 financial year. The proposed model of funding is included in the table in para 2.10.

6.2 GMCA has indicated that the funding allocation is intended to maintain delivery of the current programme portfolio throughout this transitional year, pending Greater Manchester's move to the new Investment Strategy (IS) funding model. Acceptance of this funding will ensure continuity of service without requiring additional Council resources and will mitigate the financial risk of programme disruption during the transition period.

6.3 Agreeing to operate within the proposed model will also provide Officers with the necessary time and capacity to work with GMCA on the design and implementation of the IS framework. This will support financial planning, enable clearer forecasting for future years, and ensure Oldham is fully prepared to deliver employment and skills support under the new IS arrangements. This approach minimises the risk of unfunded pressures emerging and protects residents from any service interruptions linked to the funding model change.

6.4 As part of this funding offer, GMCA has confirmed it will no longer directly fund the Education, Work and Skills Co-ordinator post previously funded for the last two years. GMCA's expectation is that Local Authorities fund the post from within their IS allocation. The proposal in this report is that the cost of this post (£52,670) is apportioned across the three funding streams on a proportional basis. This approach avoids creating an unfunded budget pressure for the Council.

(Catherine Dunkerley – Accountant)

7 Legal Implications

7.1 Acceptance of the funding is lawful provided that the Council enters into and complies with the associated grant funding agreement. The agreement should be reviewed to ensure clarlity on the permitted use of the funds, reporting obligations, clawback provisions, any subsidy control considerations prior to execution.

7.2 The proposed use of part of the allocation to fund the Education, Work and Skills Co-ordinator post is permissible, provided this is consistent with the grant conditions. HR should be consulted so that any appointment is made on a fixed term basis aligned to the funding period and to ensure it does not create employment liabilities beyond that period unless further funding is secured.

(Pamela Nsofor – Solicitor)

8 Procurement Implications

8.1 There are no concerns with accepting grant money into the Council. Once grant money has been received by the Council then it becomes Council money, so how that is utilised is subject to the Council's internal requirements such as the CPR's. If the money is awarded to providers as a grant, then there are no procurement implications.

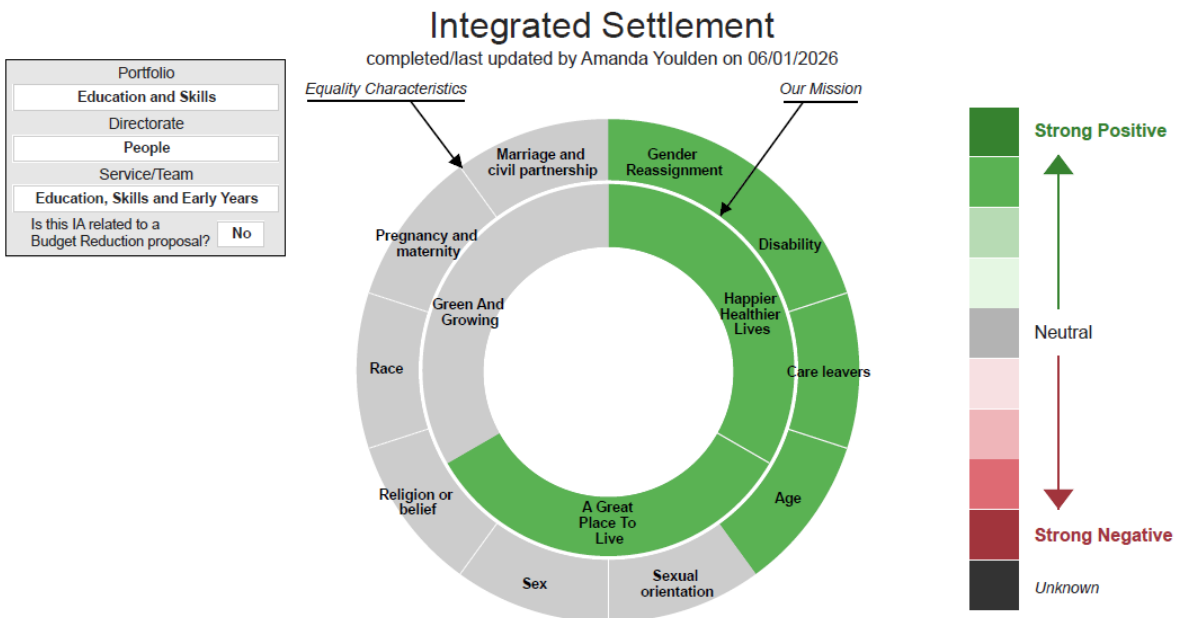
8.2 However, Subsidy Control may need to be considered. A grant does not require the grantee to deliver any services or goods and therefore does not constitute a contract for services. If a contract is required then spend would need to be compliant with the CPR's. The Business Unit should seek support and guidance from CPU for any spend over £30k (inc. VAT) that is not issued as a grant.

8.3 The TSSS contract was awarded for 7 years (3+2+2) under PCR2015 starting April 2025 with a value of £3,111,300, so in theory up to £1.55m could be added over the life of the contract and remain below 50% modification. Modifications would be governed by PCR2015.

(James England, Procurement Manager)

9 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

9.1



10 Key Decision

10.1 Yes

11 Key Decision Reference

11.1 CYP-02-26

12 Background Papers

12.1 N/A