

GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 26th March 2025

Subject: Culture Portfolio Update

Report of: Councillor Neil Emmott, Portfolio Lead for Culture and Alison McKenzie-

Folan Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Culture

Purpose of Report

In 2025 Greater Manchester published its second Culture Strategy, CreateGM, which sets out a five year vision for culture, heritage and creativity in Greater Manchester;

Greater Manchester: A place of rich history, innovation and compassion, where the creativity of our people and the distinctiveness of our places can delight, inspire, provoke and change our world for the better.

This report provides the GMCA Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an update on the impact of GMCA cultural investment of £4,425,000 p/a as well as providing opportunity for the committee to discuss portfolio plans for the next twelve months, including the development of GMCA's Cultural Investment approach 2026-onwards and development of the Greater Manchester Creative Industries Sector Plan.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

- 1. Consider and comment on the impact of GMCA cultural investment
- 2. Consider and comment on development of GMCA's Cultural Investment Approach 2026-onwards, ahead of GMCA approval of process in June, 2025
- Consider and comment on development of Greater Manchester's Creative Industries Sector Plan, ahead of publication in Summer, 2025

Contact Officers

Marie-Claire Daly, Head of Culture and Creative Policy marie-claire.daly@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The importance of culture, heritage and creativity to the vibrancy, prosperity, and wellbeing of people in Greater Manchester is well understood.
- 1.2 In July, 2024, GMCA published its second strategy for Culture, Heritage and Creativity, CreateGM, which sets out Greater Manchester's five-year vision for culture across the city region, building on significant consultation around culture, heritage and creativity undertaken by all ten districts.
- 1.3 The Strategy includes vision and mission statements that articulate the importance of culture, heritage and the creative industries to Greater Manchester and the actions required to protect and develop our cultural infrastructure, workers, places, and practices.

VISION

Greater Manchester: A place of rich history, innovation, and compassion, where the creativity of our people and the distinctiveness of our places can delight, inspire, provoke, and change our world for the better.

MISSION

Greater Manchester will care for and invest in our artists, audiences, heritage assets and cultural organisations, creating the conditions for creative businesses and communities to thrive and for people to enjoy, create, learn, understand, and express themselves.

Beneath the vision and mission statements are CreateGM priorities, split into two distinct areas; Foundational Priorities and Thematic Priorities, which explore how and where GMCA will prioritise resources. The CreateGM Foundational Priorities are Insight, Representation, Care and Ethics. The CreateGM Thematic Priorities are Wellbeing (health, wellbeing and ageing), Prosperity (economy, education, skills and talent), Environment (place and environmental sustainability) and Reputation (visitor economy, trade and vibrancy.

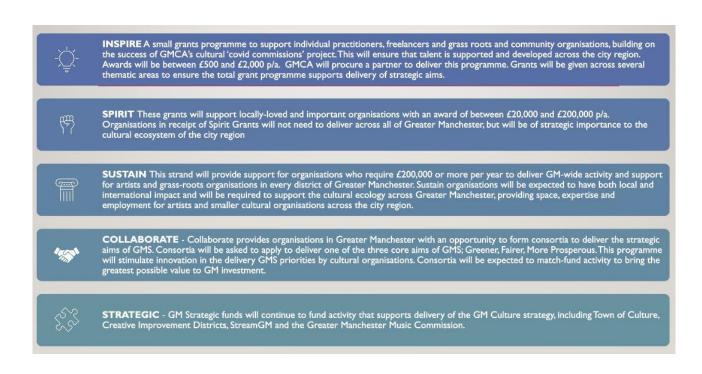
- 1.4 Invest 2035 UK Government's Industrial Strategy identifies the Creative Industries as one of its eight growth-driving sectors. Greater Manchester has identified the Creative Industries as one of its high-growth frontier sectors. In January 2025, DCMS announced Greater Manchester as one of six Creative Industries Priority Places.
- 1.5 GMCA's three-year cultural investment approach runs between April 2023 and March 2026. The investment approach includes direct investment into a portfolio of 39 cultural

organisations, a small-grants programme designed to support freelancers and small creative businesses, a collaborative investment fund and targeted strategic investment in programmes like GM Town of Culture.

- 1.6 Throughout 2025, the GMCA Culture Portfolio will undertake two significant pieces of work that will support delivery of CreateGM and wider Greater Manchester priorities;
 - Development of Greater Manchester's Cultural Investment Approach 2026-onwards
 - Development of Greater Manchester's Creative Industries Sector Plan
- 1.5 By April 2026, Greater Manchester will have its strategy for culture, heritage and creativity, its creative industries sector plan and new cultural investment approach in place.

2. CULTURAL INVESTMENT 2023-26

2.1 In February, 2023, GMCA approved a three-year budget of £4,425,000 p/a from April 2023 to support the new GMCA Cultural Investment Approach.



- 2.2 In January 2025, the Culture and Social Impact Monitoring Committee reviewed activity delivered by GMCA investment in culture 2023/24. The report included information on the first two rounds of Inspire, information based on annual returns of Spirit and Sustain-funded organisations, plus an update on the Collaborate Fund and GM Culture strategic activity.
- 2.3 **Inspire** supports artists, creatives, and small creative and heritage organisations with small grants of between £500 and £2,000 for vital equipment, upgrades, instruments, training and more.

Applications for the first two rounds of this fund far exceeded expectations, demonstrating the real need for this type of investment. Investment decisions are made by a panel of artists and creative professionals from across Greater Manchester.

Round 1

373 applications £604,882.93 32 awards

32 awards £50,972.23

Round 2

292 applications £477.481.91

37 awards £50,774.24

"Overall this investment has given me the chance to further improve my own technical expertise and to find ways to develop new work through experimentation and collaboration. As an emerging artist, this grant represents a significant amount of support towards the future of my practice."

HAILEY BAINBRIDGE, PHOTOGRAPHER

"We are now able to bring our own equipment to venues and not have to rely on them. This has improved the quality of our events and increased levels of professionalism. We are now also able to create our podcast which will improve our ability to make content and expand our reach. The DJ decks we purchased have also allowed us to up-skill members of the team."

RAISE THE BAR MCR

"I would 100% recommend this funding to any local artist or creative business and I can't express enough how much I appreciate this funding. It means a lot to have received this grant."

HOLLY MOELLER, ARTIST

A full breakdown of all awards for Rounds 1 and 2 is available at Appendix A. This information will be used to tailor and target advice sessions and awards as Rounds 3, 4 and 5 progress to ensure the fairest possible artform and geographic spread.

2.4 In March 2023, GMCA announced the organisations that would receive three year funding through GMCA's Spirit and Sustain investment strands. A full list of organisations and awards is provided as Appendix B.

Spirit: Supporting locally loved and important organisations, this grant programme will award between £20,000 and £200,000 per year. Spirit does not require organisations to deliver across all of Greater Manchester, but they will be of strategic importance to the "cultural ecosystem" of the city region. The "cultural ecosystem" is the whole of Greater Manchester's cultural offer, all the people who work in it and all the people who take part in it in some way.

Sustain: This strand will provide support for organisations who require £200,000 or more per year to deliver Greater Manchester-wide activity and support for artists and grassroots organisations in every one of the 10 districts.

Both Spirit and Sustain organisations were asked to deliver against five key priorities, with levels of delivery proportionate to levels of investment. GM Culture Fund recipients are asked to;

- 1) Contribute to the recognition of Greater Manchester locally, nationally and internationally to attract new investment, new visitors and new talent to Greater Manchester
- 2) Make a positive contribution to improving skills and employability of residents in Greater Manchester, including support for the creative education, expression and ambition of young people across Greater Manchester
- 3) Play a strong role in developing strong and inclusive communities and an improved quality of life for residents, particularly those residents at risk of disengagement or social isolation

- 4) Be able to evidence how the project will make a positive contribution to improving residents' health and well-being and meeting our equality duties.
- 5) Provide paid employment and opportunities for freelancers, individual practitioners and organisations within the Greater Manchester

Analysis of 39 Annual returns shows that, between April 2023 and March 2024, GMCA Spirit and Sustain organisations delivered 5,245,380 cultural engagement opportunities, ranging from opportunities in schools and care settings to world-class cultural moments taking place on stages across the city region.

The annual investment in cultural organisations through the Spirit and Sustain strands equates to around 3.25 million pounds per annum. Which means that, GMCA spent, on average, 67p on each funded engagement with culture in Greater Manchester. While 'levels' of engagement vary, from one-off attendance at an event, to involvement in a bespoke, in-depth activity, this represents significant value for money.

- 2.5 Collaborate will provide opportunity for organisations in Greater Manchester to form consortia to deliver Greater Manchester's strategic aims, including Health & Wellbeing, Economy & Innovation, Education & Skills, Environment, Placemaking and Safe Spaces.
 - Expressions of interest to the fund opened on the 24th February, 2025. It is envisaged that GMCA will fund four £25,000 collaborations, two £50,000 collaborations and one large scale £100,000 collaboration. Awards will be announced in April, 2025.
- 2.6 Strategic Activity supported by GMCA includes GM Town of Culture, Creative Improvement Districts, the Greater Manchester Music Commission and StreamGM.
 - In February, Rochdale was announced as GM's Town of Culture 2025, following previous title holders Bolton, Stockport, Stalybridge and Bury.

Creative Improvement Districts is GMCA's approach to culture, creative and night-time economy-led regeneration. To date, GMCA has supported Creative Improvement District activity, which includes secondment of a GMCA officer to work with local authorities, in Oldham, Stockport, Wigan and Leigh, Rochdale and Salford. Future activity is currently planned in Bolton and Trafford.

The Greater Manchester Music Commission (GMMC) was established in 2022 to provide advice and guidance to the Greater Manchester Mayor and GM Culture team around issues relating specifically to Music across the city region.

- Supporting Greater Manchester artists to showcase at major international events including SXSW (Austin), MAMA (Paris), Focus Wales and the Cambridge Folk Festival.
- Inaugural Nordoff & Robbins Northern Music Awards, raising money for a bespoke music therapy centre for Greater Manchester, to be based in Salford
- Support for Manchester Camerata's successful bid to be the UK's first ever Centre of Excellence for Music and Dementia.
- Blue Plaques for Black Musicians

StreamGM

StreamGM is GMCA's cultural streaming service that provides a platform for emerging Greater Manchester talent to perform to global audiences, taking talent beyond venue walls. In September 2023 multi award-winning streaming platform StreamGM moved into Cheetham Hill's hidden cultural gem The Yard MCR.

In twelve months, StreamGM has;

- Accrued a combined global audience for local talent of more than 55,000 people from more than 84 different countries
- Produced/broadcast a new 7 episode northern indie music series.
- Produced/broadcast a new 4 part creative career podcast series.
- Produced a hybrid launch event attended by 210 guests with two live acts &two DJs
- Produced and broadcast three live streams on location in Greater Manchester as part of its Grassroots clubbing series, Mainroom,
- Paid local crew and creatives for work on 38 separate broadcast / filming opportunities

3. CULTURAL INVESTMENT 2026-ONWARDS

3.1 All five strands of GMCA's cultural investment approach 2023-26 will come to an end in March, 2026. Significant activity has and will take place since funding was agreed, including a new government, the Devolution White Paper, Integrated Settlement,

- development of a new Greater Manchester Strategy and associated local plans for growth and prevention.
- 3.2 There has also been significant increase in prioritisation of the creative industries, and of Greater Manchester as a key focus for growth in this area, leading to the development of a Creative Industries Sector Plan for Greater Manchester.
- 3.3 GM needs to ensure that any future approach to cultural funding approach recognises and reflects the above changes, while evaluating efficacy of previous investment approaches and supporting the stability of the existing ecosystem, which includes significant local level and national investment from Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.
- 3.4 A paper will be taken to GMCA in June 2025 which outlines the preferred investment approach from 2026-onwards.
- 3.5 Development of the preferred investment approach will start with external evaluation of GMCA's previous approaches to cultural investment and the context in which any future funding will be delivered, followed by public and sector consultation in May 2025.
- 3.6 If the new approach includes core-funding of organisations as in previous years, applications to the new GM Culture fund will open in Autumn 2025, with a costed investment portfolio being taken to GMCA in early 2026 for budget approval.

4. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SECTOR PLAN

- 4.1 Greater Manchester is developing bespoke sector development plans for all frontier sectors; Creative Industries, Digital, Cyber, and AI, Advanced Manufacturing and Materials, Health Innovation & Life Sciences, and Low Carbon goods and services.
- 4.2 Plans will be authored by GMCA but are designed as plans for the whole of GM, containing actions identified through engagement with GM stakeholders.

4.3 All frontier sector plans will come together under Greater Manchester's plans for growth, previously articulated in Greater Manchester's Local Industrial Strategy.

4.4 Sector Plans will;

- Provide strategic direction for local partners, institutions and businesses to work towards the development of each of Greater Manchester's Frontier Sectors.
- Identify physical investment priorities, leading into the development of the GM
 Investment Plan, which will set out the principles for investing funding available at a
 GM level for driving growth, and the different priority activities that will support this
 across GM
- Identify wider intervention priorities not covered by the scope of the Investment Plan but which the evidence suggests will support the development of the sector (these may include areas such as skills, business support, research and innovation programmes, or non-financial sector development initiatives and partnership models).
- Provide an updated understanding of the state of our frontier sectors, which were last reviewed as part of the Local Industrial Strategy process.
- 4.5 As well as feeding into Greater Manchester's plans for growth, the Creative Industries Sector Plan will also feed into work being undertaken by DCMS to develop a national plan for the Creative Industries which will be published later this year alongside the Government's Industrial Strategy.
- 4.6 The cultural and creative industries play a key role in the UK economy, employing 2.4 million people and generating almost £126 billion in 2023, which accounts for nearly 6% of the country's annual Gross Value Added (GVA).
 - Greater Manchester has the largest concentration of creative businesses outside London, with a mature and thriving ecosystem with potential to deliver significant growth to the UK economy.
- 4.7 Development of Greater Manchester's Creative Industries Sector plan started with an ask to all ten GM districts to provide an overview of the creative industries in their place, including challenges and opportunities for growth. This, alongside sector

- engagement undertaken by GM Growth Hub, as part of the DCMS-funded Create Growth Programme have formed the basis for development of the plan.
- 4.8 On March 10th, 2025, an online consultation went live on GM Consults, asking businesses and individuals working within the creative industries in Greater Manchester to feed in their views on the challenges and opportunities in the sector.
- 4.9 In April, 2025, there will be a series of 10 online engagement sessions, themed according to the DCMS Creative Industries subsectors; Advertising & Marketing, Architecture, Design and Designer Fashion, Film, TV, Radio & Photography, Museums, Galleries & Libraries, Crafts, Performing and Visual arts, Publishing, IT, Software and Computer Services (inc Video Games) and Music. These will be accompanied by three additional sessions, for Universities and FE, GM Partners (district colleagues, GM Growth Hub and MIDAS) and one for leaders of creative institutions within the city region.
- 4.10 Once all sector sessions have happened and the online survey closes in mid-April, the plan will be drafted and go through internal governance before being published in Summer 2025.

Appendix A. INSPIRE AWARDS, ROUNDS 1 AND 2

Grant ID Organisation/ Individual Name		Award	Borough	Art form	
GMIF24 02	Bolton Contemporary	£2,000.00	Bolton	Visual art	
GMIF24 21	ROJAK	£2,000.00	Salford, GM	Music	
GMIF24 22	Sour Grapes Records	£1,499.00	Manchester	Music	
GMIF24 29	Emma Black – Music in Health	£1,930.00	GM (except Wigan)	Music	
GMIF24 40	Loose Articles	£1,783.20	GM	Music	
GMIF24 43	Hidden Altrincham Festival T/A Inch Arts	£1,855.00	Trafford	Mixed / Music	
		£1,955.00	Manchester	Graphic design	
GMIF24 50	Angus Riddell	£1,344.96	Manchester	Woodwork	
GMIF24 54	Harley Bainbridge	£1,011.74	GM	Photography	
GMIF24 65	Kintsuku	£1,000.00	Manchester	Music	
GMIF24 87	Hart Creative	£1,998.97	Manchester	Photography	
GMIF24 90	Crafty Clay- Saddleworth	£2,000.00	Oldham, Tameside	Pottery	
GMIF24 94	Richard Babington £1,539.00 Trafford, Salford Manchester,		Trafford, Salford, Manchester, Oldham	SFX/outdoor arts	
GMIF24 107	Laynah Juma	£2,000.00	Wigan	Music	
GMIF24 110	Martin Purdy	£1,017.00	GM	Music	
GMIF24 112	Dan Lovatt	£1,409.00	Salford	Film/Theatre	
GMIF24 120	Becky McGillivray	£1,645.00	GM	Muralism	
GMIF24 141	Rebecca Taylor Sharman	£2,000.00	GM	Music	

GMIF24 168	Cheryl Blake	£1,671.85	GM	
GMIF24 189	Ashton-U-Lyne photographic society	£1,680.00	Tameside	Photography
GMIF24 192	Caroline Daly	£816.68	Manchester, Trafford	Puppetry
GMIF24 196	Ula Fung	£1,904.36	Wigan	Painting
GMIF24 223	Ms Man Wai Tse	£950.00	Trafford	Crochet/Painting
GMIF24 229	Caroline Channing Stained Glass	£1,177.80	Stockport	Stained glass
GMIF24 238	Pui Ka Cheng	£800.00	GM	Puppetry
GMIF24 257	Magdalena Kij aka Maggie Stick & DJ Try	£1,000.00	GM	Music
GMIF24 261	Freya Wysocki	£1,618.10	Manchester, Salford	Textiles
GMIF24 272	Jim Parris	£1,933.00	GM	Music
GMIF24 276	Safety Catch Studios	£1,544.00	Trafford	Live performance/audio
GMIF24 289	Explosive Entertainments	£1,993.36	GM	Music
GMIF24 311	Kathleen Studios	£1,919.94	Salford	Music
GMIF24 335	Sonia Bird	£1,975.27	Salford	Visual art/photography
X		£50,972.23	5	

Round 2 Awards

Grant ID	Organisation/ Individual Name	Award	Borough	Art form
GMIF24 12a	Theatre Dance Academy Ltd	£1,965.00	Oldham	Dance/Movement
GMIF24 28a	Krystan Sharpe- Young	£1,809.09	Manchester, Salford	Visual art, Drawing, Painting

GMIF24 73a	Arvinda Gray	£1,784.00	Manchester, Salford Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan	Visual art
GMIF24 74a	Raise The Bar MCR	£1,730.00	Manchester	Music
GMIF24 80a	Matilda Glen	£1,919.00	Stockport	Visual art
GMIF24 90a	Michelle Collier	£895.00	Trafford	Visual art, writing
GMIF24 98a	Neil Jacob	£1,951.00	Greater Manchester wide	Circus
GMIF24 102a	Mogan	£750.00	Manchester	Music
GMIF24 111a	Tom Orchison	£1,950.00	Manchester	Music
GMIF24 114a	Jude Jagger	£1,000.00	Trafford	Music
GMIF24 122a	Acid Rain Productions LTD	£1,744.70	Bury, Manchester, Salford	Music, Writing
GMIF24 125a	Annie Keki	£1,995.00	Manchester, Oldham	Crafting
GMIF24 127a	Manchester History Club	£500.00	Manchester	Writing
GMIF24 136a	Jack Hughes	£853.50	Bury, Manchester	Music
GMIF24 137a	AdamTrela.Com	£1,999.00	Stockport	Visual art

GMIF24 138a	Peter Walker	£1,700.00	Bolton, Bury, Oldham	Painting, Sculpture
GMIF24 142a	Holly Moeller	£522.85	Rochdale	Visual art, Drawing, Painting
GMIF24 143a	Tom Hardman	£1,975.00	Salford	Theatre, Dance/Movement
GMIF24 144a	Jaydev Mistry	£960.47	Greater Manchester wide	Guitar Building
GMIF24 149a	Lewis David Oldham	£1,000.00	Greater Manchester wide	Visual art
GMIF24 158a	1922 North Manchester Ltd	£1,300.00	Manchester	Visual art, Photography
GMIF24 159a	Elisa Morais	£1,000.00	Salford	Digital art, Cinema/Video, Drawing
GMIF24 171a	Sleepy parrot studios	£2,000.00	Stockport	Crafting, Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Video
GMIF24 174a	Melanie Howells	£628.24	Trafford, Greater Manchester wide	Painting
GMIF24 178a	Tori Davies	£1,706.77	Greater Manchester wide	Dance/Movement
GMIF24 179a	The McGoldrick Sisters	£670.00	Greater Manchester wide	Music
GMIF24 180a	Evita Evelina Ziemele	£582.84	Manchester	Painting
GMIF24 192a	MADE	£1,666.00	Manchester	Visual art, Theatre
GMIF24 199a	Abigail Ward	£1,669.00	Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Trafford	Music

GMIF24 227a	Leeway Creative Production LLP	£2,000.00	Greater Manchester wide	Live Event Production
GMIF24 234a	JAKE MOLLOY	£1,000.00	Stockport	Music
GMIF24 258a	Sarah Unwin	£592.68	Manchester, Salford	Music
GMIF24 268a	Ruby Unsworth	£1,037.49	Bolton, Manchester	Visual art
GMIF24 279a	Make Build Grow C.I.C.	£2,000.00	Stockport	Pottery, Painting
GMIF24 288a	Fay Farah	£1,951.00	Greater Manchester wide	Music, Dance/Movement
GMIF24 291a	Circus Diaspora	£827.33	Trafford	Street Theatre
GMIF24 292a	Chanje Kunda	£1,139.28	Manchester	Theatre, Performance art
	Total:	£50,774.24		

	Organisation name	District	2023-2026 Annual Award
	The Octagon Theatre Trust Ltd	Bolton	£ 117,920.00
NEW	Headspace Bolton C.I.C.	Bolton	£ 48,438.00
	The Met	Bury	£ 50,000.00
	GM Arts	GM	£ 200,000.00
	Hallé Concerts Society	Manchester	£ 749,170.00
	People's History Museum	Manchester	£ 408,970.00
	Royal Exchange Theatre	Manchester	£ 219,340.00
	MIF	Manchester	£ 99,000.00
	Z-arts	Manchester	£ 54,725.00
	HOME	Manchester	£ 150,590.00
	Contact Theatre	Manchester	£ 106,700.00
	Brighter Sound	Manchester	£ 20,000.00
	Manchester Camerata Ltd.	Manchester	£ 60,280.00
	Manchester Pride	Manchester	£ 33,000.00
	Company Chameleon	Manchester	£ 59,895.00
	Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art	Manchester	£ 38,500.00
	Manchester Literature Festival	Manchester	£ 44,000.00
	Manchester Jazz Festival	Manchester	£ 32,476.40
	Music Action International	Manchester	£ 20,000.00
	Manchester Jewish Museum	Manchester	£ 38,500.00
	Manchester Histories	Manchester	£ 27,500.00
	Comma Press	Manchester	£ 24,697.00
	Gaydio Community Interest Company	Manchester	£ 20,000.00
	Sheba Arts CIC	Manchester	£ 20,000.00

NEW	Odd Arts	Manchester	£	40,000.00
NEW	Muslim Arts and Culture Festival	Manchester	£	30,000.00
NEW	Portraits of Recovery	Oldham	£	30,000.00
	OLDHAM	Oldham	£	50,000.00
	English Folk Expo	Rochdale	£	38,500.00
	Cartwheel Arts Ltd	Rochdale	£	33,000.00
	The Lowry Centre Trust	Salford	£	190,000.00
	Art with Heart CIC	Salford	£	91,141.60
	Walk the Plank	Salford	£	44,000.00
NEW	From the Other Limited	Salford	£	38,000.00
	Arts for Recovery in the Community (Arc)	Stockport	£	44,000.00
NEW	GRIT Studios CIC	Stockport	£	20,000.00
	Global Grooves	Tameside	£	30,000.00
NEW	Made By Mortals CIC	Tameside	£	28,705.00
	MancSpirit	Trafford	£	25,000.00
	Arts At The Mill CIC (AATM)	Wigan	£	100,000.00
	Wigan Steam	Wigan	£	49,500.00