



The
Growth
Company



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THE GROWTH COMPANY

Corporate Plan 2026-2029

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CHAIR'S REFLECTIONS



Established over 35 years ago in Greater Manchester, a region renowned for its ambition, resilience, and adaptability, we have played a pivotal role in advancing Greater Manchester (GM) and beyond.

Across the UK, our work has enabled people to realise their potential, helped businesses to grow and compete, and contributed to the prosperity and sustainability of local communities.

We are on track to achieve significant impact from our 2023-2026 plan:

- assisting **113,720 businesses** to implement improvements;
- creating, safeguarding or filling **77,788 employment opportunities**;
- positively **progressing 136,881** individuals through our employment and skills services; and
- supporting **9,230 individuals and businesses** to accelerate action against climate change.

“Our success relies on the collective efforts of all our colleagues. Every part of our organisation contributes to inclusive growth. Their dedication, agility and professionalism enable us to deliver what matters”

Our new Corporate Plan sets out how we will continue to deliver impact in an environment that is changing more quickly than ever. It reflects our commitment to being a globally respected organisation, one that leads with purpose, responds intelligently to change, and delivers the ambitions of Greater Manchester and the UK.

As we look ahead, our focus is clear. We will continue to deliver high-quality, evidence-based services; strengthen our resilience and support for colleagues; and ensure that the Growth Company remains a trusted partner, responsive, insightful and aligned to our stakeholders' long-term aspirations.

Mike Blackburn

CEO'S FORWARD LOOK



I'm pleased to share our new Corporate Plan, a notable evolution of everything we've achieved together. It reflects the ambition, talent and purpose that defines us and is a clear statement of how we will deliver greater impact in the years ahead.

Co-designed with our colleagues, Board and partners, it sharpens our strategic intent and aligns our new ways of working to the opportunities of a fast-changing world. At its helm is a new organisational goal:

"To be a globally respected leader in delivering inclusive, sustainable growth for people, businesses and communities."

This goal sets a clear direction for the impact we want to have and the organisation we aspire to be. It will guide the services we deliver, the partnerships we build and the choices we make.

When we realise our goal in 2029, we will be a catalyst for opportunity and growth across Greater Manchester and the UK, attracting new investment, powering business success, delivering world-class skills and careers support, and helping residents to thrive – with sustainability built into everything we do. We will be the partner of choice for insight, innovation and excellence, recognised and respected nationally and globally for the quality and impact of our work.

We will be an inclusive, values-driven and digitally enabled organisation where our colleagues flourish. As a trusted and sustainable organisation, we will be resilient with the capability and ambition needed to shape our future.

We know we will deliver this plan in a fast-changing economic and political landscape. To stay responsive, we will keep the plan live and adapt it as needed, supported by clear communication and our Annual Group Delivery Plan and Service Team Plans. By working together and staying focused on our goal, we will keep making a meaningful difference for people, places, businesses and the environment.

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, reading 'Mark Hughes'.

Mark Hughes

OUR CORPORATE PLAN

2026-2029

Who We Are: A social enterprise, rooted in Greater Manchester, delivering impact across the UK.

Our Purpose: Enable Growth, Create Jobs, Improve Lives.

Our Values: Empower People, Make a Positive Difference, Stronger Together, Do the Right Thing, Build on Success.

Our Goal:

To be a globally respected leader in delivering inclusive, sustainable growth for people, businesses and communities.

What We Do:



How we work:



TELL THE STORY, ELEVATE THE IMPACT

Who We Are: Our not-for-profit status and place-based delivery makes the Growth Company unique, strengthening our community and social impact.

Our Purpose: Why we exist and the foundation for everything we do.

Our Values: They guide our behaviours and ensure we work with integrity and collaboration.

Our Goal: Our shared destination, built on our purpose.

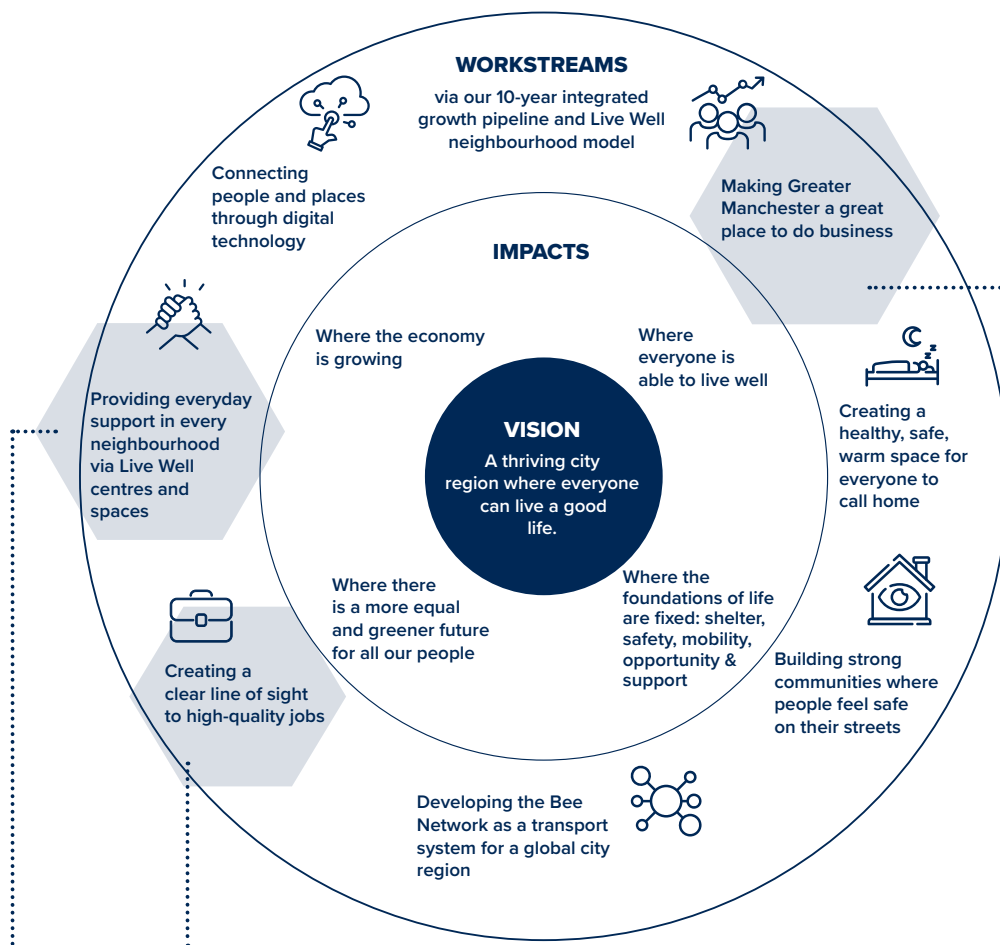
What We Do: We deliver through five core service areas which together form a connected ecosystem that drives growth and opportunity.

How We Work: We operate in a Supportive, Resilient and Agile way, enabling us to deliver with speed, innovation and impact.

Tell the Story, Elevate the Impact: We evidence our impact and celebrate the successes of our customers, partners and ourselves.

DELIVERING THE GREATER MANCHESTER STRATEGY

Greater Manchester Strategy:



The Growth Company (GC) was established to further the economic development of Greater Manchester, by delivering key elements of the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) 2025-2035 as its guiding strategic purpose. The 10-year Delivery Plan and Integrated Settlement set clear activities and objectives which GC will lead and support, partnering with key organisations to ensure impact, with a direct read across of GC KPIs to the GMS outputs.

GC will deliver a...

Leading role in:

A great place to do business enabling the Integrated Growth Pipeline, Growth Locations, Mayoral Development Corporations, Priority Sectors, Innovation and Internationalisation.

Substantial role in:

Everyday support in every neighbourhood via Live Well centres and spaces via our employment and skills support tackling inequalities.

A clear line of sight to high-quality jobs via business workforce development and inclusion along with our skills and employment delivery.

Supporting role in:

Healthy homes for all; Safe and strong communities; A transport system for a global city region; and Digitally connected places and people via our international, business support, skills and employment, and consultancy services.

WHAT WE DO:

PROMOTE PLACE & SECURE INVESTMENT

Promote Greater Manchester as a great place to visit, invest, meet and do business.

By 2029, we will have ensured that GM is the UK's leading inward investment city region*, preeminent amongst international peers and recognised globally for our thriving visitor economy, aligned to inclusive growth and which supports/is underpinned by the Good Growth Fund and the 10-year Investment Pipeline.



What we will deliver:



The launch of Invest Manchester and a strengthened position as the UK's leading inward investment region* and a leading global and top European destination



A more focused and intentional approach to targeting of strategic companies with the potential to transform our growth clusters and deliver great opportunities for our citizens



The lead role in achieving the Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy 2025-2030



Innovative GM place proposition through promoting the 10-year integrated investment pipeline to international capital investors



Focused three-year market plans in APAC, Europe, India and North America for our frontier sectors and place propositions

How we will measure success:

- Leading European city region for core markets and recognised for our partnerships and shared learning with peer cities
- A fast-growing visitor economy that consistently outperforms the national benchmark
- A balanced scorecard with economic and strategic value, high ROI delivering the Greater Manchester Strategy
- Monitor our position in global benchmarks, that assess cities' performance and perceptions, e.g. Resonance World Best Cities

* outside London

WHAT WE DO:

HELP BUSINESSES SUCCEED

By 2029, we will be the access point and default provider of Greater Manchester commissioned business support services and SME finance, making Greater Manchester “a great place to do business”. We will establish ourselves as a UK leader in business support, certification and assessment services.



What we will deliver:



Holistic business and finance support, from idea to international growth and investment – driving productivity, supporting research and innovation across key sectors and growth locations



The UK's leading Business Growth Hub for service innovation and technology adoption, delivering personalised support that helps businesses improve their productivity



Integrated Workforce Development that connects business support, skills, employment and retention, progressing the Good Employment Charter and inclusivity



A networked approach to business engagement in Greater Manchester supporting the Business Alliance, Sector Forums and enhanced key account management



Sustainability and decarbonisation outcomes, supporting businesses and innovators to develop, adopt and scale low-carbon technologies and climate-resilient solutions



Certification and quality standards assessments giving businesses the assurance and insight to drive improvement

How we will measure success:

- Businesses' awareness, understanding and use of the GM Business Growth Hub
- Return on investment and contribution to Greater Manchester's Integrated Settlement KPIs
- Inclusivity of business owners/directors
- Increased market share and revenue growth in the UK ISO management systems market, delivered through organic growth and exploring selective acquisition

WHAT WE DO:

DEVELOP SKILLS & CAREERS

By 2029, we will be the leading partner in the skills system across Greater Manchester, locally, and nationally, creating “a clear line of sight to high quality jobs”. We will rank among the top providers for young people, apprenticeships and adult training, recognised for our quality and inclusive outcomes.



What we will deliver:



Innovative services for young people that inspire confidence, unlock potential, and support progression into further education or employment



Local employer partnerships which generate new apprenticeship opportunities, including technical skills and which address skills gaps (e.g. visitor economy, green), meeting real workforce needs



The growth of The Manufacturing Institute, providing world-class training and consultancy to global manufacturers



Demand-led adult skills including pre-recruitment, in-work training and apprenticeships, to help individuals gain skills, secure work, and advance their career



High quality and performance in delivering exceptional skills development, ensuring consistently strong outcomes and clear progression for all learners



A UK-leading Apprenticeship Levy Matching Service, connecting large employers with SMEs and maximising levy impact

How we will measure success:

- Top 10 provider for adult skills & apprenticeships in Greater Manchester and other mayoral strategic authorities
- “Expected standard” Ofsted rating with inclusive outcomes for learners
- Greater Manchester’s largest 16–18 support provider (outside colleges)
- Financial stability by working towards break even or better

WHAT WE DO:

SUPPORT PEOPLE TO THRIVE

By 2029, we will be GM's strategic partner, and a top quartile UK provider, of employment, justice, health, and related support services. We'll have diversified our offer and scaled our impact, collaborating with VCFSE partners and employers to deliver person-centred, Live Well aligned support that helps residents "live a good life".



What we will deliver:



Live Well aligned employment support, removing barriers and helping unemployed/economically inactive residents to enter work and supporting people in work to sustain, develop, and progress into high-quality jobs



Justice and rehabilitation services which support people in custodial and community settings to rehabilitate, reintegrate and make sustained progress



Innovative and specialist services for distinct groups, delivering tailored, person-centred support that promotes health and wellbeing through a tech-enabled approach



Integrated employer partnerships that bring together recruitment, social value, inclusion and occupational therapy, designed and delivered locally for long-term impact



Growth in reach, markets and impact by scaling our services, diversifying our offer, and operating in a broader mix of local, national and specialist markets, supported by locally embedded partnerships

How we will measure success:

- Top quartile provider in our markets for people outcomes
- Expansion into service markets and localities
- Reach into underrepresented/disadvantaged communities
- GC recognised by GMCA and local authorities for our joint work in supporting residents to live a good life
- Achieve five per cent margin and grow revenue

WHAT WE DO:

SECURE IMPACT THROUGH INSIGHT

By 2029, we will be recognised as the national provider of choice for intelligence-led insight that helps secure local inclusive growth. We will work with clients to achieve sustained, purpose-driven growth through our innovative approaches, advanced tools, and expertise.



What we will deliver:



Strategic frameworks and delivery programmes that translate long-term ambition into sustained, real-world change for our clients



Robust evidence, evaluation and learning that helps clients understand the issues they face, assess the effectiveness of policies and programmes, and demonstrate the value and impact they generate



Investment-ready insight and assurance that enables our clients to unlock funding and secure planning consent



Industry-leading performance tools and data services to help businesses make better decisions and unlock their growth potential



Co-lead roles within UK Research and Innovation programmes, building capability, developing evidence, engaging in long-term innovation and commercialising solutions

How we will measure success:

- Nationally recognised brand, working with local and national government, devolved administrations, and every combined authority
- GC Insight intelligence underpinning major decisions and published research and Growth Flag a valued growth tool for localities
- New tools and approaches enabled by AI and other digital technologies
- Sustained high growth in commissioned work for public, private and academic partners, delivering 10% net margin

HOW WE WORK:

SUPPORTIVE

Further advance our reputation as a supportive employer, attracting the brightest and best.

By 2029, we will be an employer of choice, recognised for our inclusive, digitally enabled and values-driven culture, where colleagues feel heard and supported, and develop the skills to shape GC's future together.



Our commitments:



An organisation where every voice counts: and colleagues have the autonomy and tools to influence decisions today and shape tomorrow



A representative and diverse workforce: through enhanced recruitment practices and clear pathways for career progression and succession



Values-led and consistent leadership practices: which fosters high engagement, agility, innovation, and high-performing teams



An environment with wellbeing at the heart: delivered through recognition that motivates, flexibility that works, and person-centred support that helps every colleague thrive



A workforce ready for the future: driven by high-quality learning and investment in digital skills and capabilities, with modern unified workspaces

How we will measure success:

- Colleague Engagement Score ≥ 80
- Our senior leadership and wider workforce reflect the diversity of the communities we serve
- IIP Platinum, signifying our outstanding leadership, culture, engagement, development and continuous improvement

HOW WE WORK:

RESILIENT

By 2029, we will be recognised as a trusted, sustainable organisation, with the systems and capabilities to operate safely, sustain growth, and ensure resilient, high-quality performance.



Our commitments:



Building financial strength: growing income and profit, controlling costs and managing cash well, ensuring public money and profit is used responsibly and delivers value



Secure and reliable infrastructure: developing scalable, secure and modern systems, with strong cyber defences so our services stay safe and compliant



Business process improvement: streamlined processes and procedures through effective use of automation and AI to improve colleague experience and productivity



Governance oversight: risk and assurance insight will strengthen how we work, ensuring we meet our legal and regulatory duties and enable smarter decisions



Responsible sustainability: reducing our environmental impact by using resources efficiently, purchasing responsibly, and supporting colleagues and partners to move towards a fair and sustainable future

How we will measure success:

- Credit rating, profit margin and cash reserves enable long term investments
- ISO standards and certifications ensuring compliance with international standards
- Carbon emissions reduced by 19% and securing Carbon Literacy Silver accreditation

HOW WE WORK:

AGILE

By 2029, we will be recognised for service innovation and excellence – drawing on insight, modern platforms and strong partnerships to rapidly create solutions that meet evolving customer and partner needs.



Our commitments:



Service excellence: enhancing services with user insight to maximise quality, impact, and improve client experiences



Proactive and Collaborative Culture: building on our cross-group ways of working, learning quickly and adapting with confidence to deliver a unified service offer



Accelerate digital adoption: supporting colleagues to adopt new technology that unlocks service innovation and delivers market-leading outcomes



Intelligence driven change: turning data into foresight so teams can anticipate shifts and adjust what we do, sooner



Transformative partnerships: reaching diverse communities, working together with partners to respond quickly to community needs, scale what works, and increase impact

How we will measure success:

- Net Promoter Score >70
- Top quartile for performance and quality
- We are recognised and engaged by local, national and international stakeholders as the leader of inclusive growth services

TELL THE STORY, ELEVATE THE IMPACT

By 2029, our work will be globally respected and recognised for its value and impact, strengthening our influence and shaping the conversations that inform policy and commissioning decisions at local, regional, and national levels.



Evidence impact

by gathering robust evidence, publishing high quality insight and impact reports, and clearly demonstrating how our work delivers tangible economic and social value for the people and places we serve.



Tell the story

working with partners to boldly and consistently share impact across all channels, celebrate joint success and showcase our expertise. This approach, empowered by our group wide messaging, will create wider visibility that reinforces both our services and the organisation as a whole.



Shape the conversation

by leading national debates, sharing thought leadership that influences policy and practice, and positioning our experts at the forefront of key issues that matter to our communities and partners.



How we will measure success:

- Demonstrable change in stakeholder perception and influence
- Policy, practice or investment decisions informed by GC's work
- Increased reach and engagement of priority audiences

KEEPING US ON TRACK:

PERFORMANCE, ASSURANCE & RISK

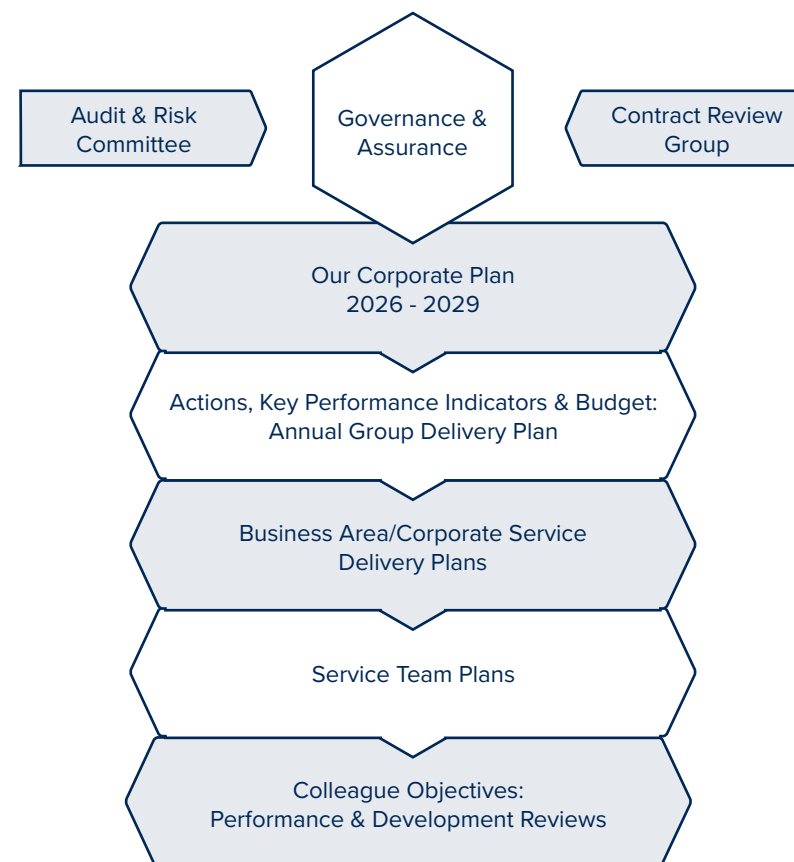
All colleagues play an essential role in driving and sustaining successful delivery of our Corporate Plan. We will apply a robust, organisation-wide approach to performance and risk management to ensure effective delivery, building on strong mechanisms already in place through our Audit & Risk Committee and Contract Review Groups.

Corporate Plan Implementation:

- **Our Corporate Plan** defines overall strategic direction
- **Annual Group Delivery Plan** translates the Corporate Plan into actions, KPIs and budgets
- **Business Area Delivery Plans and Service Team Plans** cascade priorities so every area knows its required deliverables
- **Colleague objectives (PDRs)** link directly to these plans, ensuring alignment and measurable performance

Performance, Assurance and Risk Management:

- **Track delivery quarterly** through performance reports to Board and colleagues
- **Drive accountability** via regular Business Area/Corporate Service Reviews and contractual performance checks
- **Embed ownership** through 1:1s and individual Performance Reviews
- **Proactively manage risks** with early identification, mitigation and continuous monitoring
- **Provide assurance** through our Risk & Audit Committee and Contract Review Group, ensuring independent oversight of controls, risks and delivery



APPENDIX 1:

GROUP KPIS

Top 10 Group Key Performance Indicators	
Enable Growth:	1. No. of businesses/clients implementing improvement
Create Jobs:	2. No. of employment opportunities created, safeguarded or filled
Improve Lives:	3. No. of individuals positively progressed
Tackle Climate Change:	4. No. of individuals/businesses supported to accelerate action against climate change
Supportive:	5. Colleague Engagement Score ≥ 80
Resilient:	6. Available Liquidity of £10m
	7. Platform Reliability and Security (PRSS) ≥ 95
Agile:	8. Net Promoter Score ≥ 70
Net Zero:	9. Net Zero across Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2035 and Scope 3 by 2045
Tell the Story, Elevate the Impact	10. Uplift in audience reach of 50%
	11. Media and communications sentiment ≥ 70 -75% positive/neutral

APPENDIX 2:

GROUP KPI DEFINITIONS

Top 10 Group Key Performance Indicators		Definition
What We Do		
Enable Growth: No. of businesses/clients implementing improvement		Businesses/clients who have been supported by GC to implement an improvement(s) in their operations through the provision of business information, advice, guidance or through a GC Insight service. This includes all business support services, inward investment, GC Insight services, accreditations and standards achieved, along with workforce development improved, and outcomes from Marketing Manchester membership/partnerships.
Create Jobs: No. of employment opportunities created, safeguarded or filled		The number of employment opportunities created/safeguarded through our business support/finance and inward investment services, and the number of clients placed into work through employment/recruitment/skills services.
Improve Lives: No. of individuals positively progressed		The number of individuals successfully completing an apprenticeship, adult or youth programme, supported via employment service contracts, or supported by an intervention programme for offenders.
Tackle Climate Change: No. of individuals/businesses supported to accelerate action against climate change		GC supports businesses and people to accelerate actions against climate change through a range of green services including consultancy, the Journey to Net Zero programme, delivery of green-related standards and accreditations, and delivery to learners.
How we work		
Supportive:	Colleague Engagement Score $\geq 80\%$	In 2023, GC conducted a full staff survey with colleague engagement at 81%. GC seeks to maintain this high level of engagement.
Resilient:	Available Liquidity of £10m	Available Liquidity is the money the business can access immediately – cash in our bank accounts plus any agreed but unused lending (such as overdrafts). It shows how much funding is readily available for day-to-day needs or unexpected costs.
	Platform Reliability & Security (PRSS) ≥ 95	Platform Reliability & Security (PRSS) measures how reliably and securely our IT platforms operate, combining system uptime with key security indicators such as patch compliance, remediation activity and security incidents. The annual target is 95, with scores of 98–100 (Excellent), 95–97.9 (Strong), 90–94.9 (Good), 85–89.9 (Caution) and below 85 (Critical).
Agile:	Net Promoter Score ≥ 70	NPS is a common market research metric based on one question: how likely someone is to recommend a company, product or service. Scores range from –100 to +100. Generally, above 0 is good, above 20 great, above 50 exceptional, and above 80 top-tier, though this varies by industry. GC's average NPS is 65.
Net Zero:	Net Zero across Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 2035 and Scope 3 by 2045.	GC's carbon reduction target is based on the 2019–2020 baseline and includes Scopes 1, 2 and relevant Scope 3 categories. GC can reduce Scopes 1 and 2 more quickly as they are within its direct control, while Scope 3 reductions depend on influencing third-party activities. GC also sets annual reduction targets based on the previous year's emissions, and measures progress against the 2019-2020 baseline, in line with best practice. Year-on-year reductions may vary as new projects are introduced throughout the Corporate Plan period.
Tell the Story, Elevate the Impact:	Uplift in audience reach of 50%	Audience reach measures the scale of GC's engagement across its services and audiences using aggregated communications data. The 50% uplift target reflects GC's ambition to increase scale and visibility over the Corporate Plan period.
	Media & communications sentiment ≥ 70 -75% positive/neutral	Media & communications sentiment measures the tone of GC-related coverage across communications channels, indicating credibility and trust. As visibility grows year-on-year we will maintain ≥ 70 -75% positive/neutral sentiment.



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