

Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

ANNUAL REPORT

2025/26

CONNECT. SUPPORT. GROW.

FOREWORD



GREG LOWSON

Chair of the Board,
Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

It is my pleasure to introduce the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce Annual Report for 2025/26.

This year, we were delighted to welcome Henrietta Brealey back as Chief Executive. Under her leadership, the Chamber has continued to adapt its support for businesses while remaining firmly focused on its mission: creating a business community in which members can connect, access support and achieve their growth ambitions.

During the year, the Chamber delivered 177 events attended by 8253 delegates, bringing businesses together to build relationships, share expertise and explore new opportunities. A particular highlight was the revamped GBCC Awards, which attracted a record number of entries and brought around 1,000 guests together at the ICC to celebrate the region's business community.

The Chamber has also continued to respond to the changing needs of its members. This included launching the Finance for Growth service, developing international trade support and expanding the practical help available to businesses exploring artificial intelligence through the Business Growth Studio.

Representing the interests of Greater Birmingham's business community has remained central to our work. Throughout the year, the Chamber has engaged with the West Midlands Combined Authority, supported work on devolution across Staffordshire and responded rapidly to major issues affecting regional businesses. More than 1,300 businesses contributed to our economic research, while over 300 firms took part in roundtables, workshops and interviews to inform regional and national decision-making.

The Chamber ended the year in a sound financial position. Total income was £8.126 million, with an operating surplus before tax of £312,000 and a surplus after tax of £230,000. While income was 6% lower than in the previous year following the conclusion of several publicly funded contracts.

Membership increased by 2% to 2,339, while 85% of income was self-generated through membership and patronage, events, sponsorship and overseas services. Export Documentation continued to perform strongly, with the Chamber issuing more than 22,000 documents to support over 850 businesses trading overseas.

As a not-for-profit organisation, the Chamber reinvests its surpluses to strengthen its services and long-term resilience. The Business Plan to 2030 places a clear emphasis on membership growth, improved retention and a stronger member offer, supported by continued investment in digital transformation and cyber security.

I would also like to recognise and thank Andy Dawson following his first year as President. Andy has brought considerable energy and commitment to the role and has been a strong ambassador for the Chamber and the regional business community.

Finally, I would like to thank our members for their continued support and engagement, and the Chamber team, Board, committees, councils and partners for their work throughout the year. Despite an increasingly complex economic environment, the Chamber remains ambitious for Greater Birmingham and committed to helping its businesses connect, grow and succeed.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:

OUR WHY AND HOW:

We're in business, for business. As a private sector not-for-profit, our mission, vision and values are at the heart of what we do, why and how we do it.

OUR MISSION:

We are on a mission to Connect, Support and Grow local businesses.

OUR VISION AND PURPOSE:

We do it because we care about the people and places that we represent. We believe that thriving businesses are the core of a vibrant community. Our ultimate vision and purpose is to make Greater Birmingham the best place to work and do business.

OUR VALUES:

Our values reflect who we are and what we stand for; shaping our work ethic, defining our organisational culture and guiding our interactions with everyone we engage with: we care, we are curious, we make a difference, and we are a partner.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2025/26

- Total income for the year was **£8.126 million**, down **6%** on the previous year. The reduction reflects several programme contracts that came to an end during the previous year, as underlying non-programme income remained broadly unchanged year on year.
- BCCI generated an operating surplus of **£312,000** before tax.
- **85%** of income was self-generated through memberships & patronage, events, sponsorship and overseas services. **15%** of income was from programmes/grant funded projects.

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) is the legal entity operating under the name Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (GBCC). The operating surplus before tax for 2025/26 was **£312,000** (2024/25 **£482,000**). After a taxation charge of **£82,000**, the surplus for the year was **£230,000** (2024/25: **£355,000**).

There were no recognised pension fund movements in the Statement of Comprehensive Income because the scheme remained in surplus and the actuarial gain could not be recognised.

Total reserves increased to **£3.084 million** (2024/25: **£2.854 million**), while net current assets increased to **£2.742 million** (2024/25: **£2.406 million**).

BCCI is a not-for-profit organisation and generates surpluses to support cash flow, maintain working capital and reinvest in services for members. Its diversified income base includes membership & patron subscriptions, international documentation and other overseas services, events & sponsorship, and publicly funded business growth & innovation programmes. This supports a sustainable business model that is not dependent on any single income stream.

The audited accounts include an Environmental, Social and Governance statement setting out GBCC's progress and plans across sustainability, inclusion, responsible business and organisational resilience.

Export Documentation continued to perform well during 2025/26, aided by word-of-mouth recommendations. Grant-funded project income during 2025/26 included working with Innovate UK and partners, including the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Innovate UK contract ended in September 2026 and the team has now pivoted towards other programmes and commercial opportunities.

At 31 March 2026, total memberships was at **2,339**, being a 2% increase on the prior year (2024/25: **2,294**). The Business Plan to 2030 prioritises membership growth, improved retention and a stronger member offer, supported by the digital transformation programme that improves member engagement. Continued investment in digital transformation and cyber security remains a priority.

During 2025/26, BCCI undertook a 12-month programme with a fractional Chief Information Security Officer, with reviews continuing in 2026/27 alongside development of a detailed cyber risk register and a cyber risk response plan.

The pension scheme recorded a gross surplus of **£169,000** at 31 March 2026, which was not recognised under FRS 102. A full buy-out was completed in May 2026, securing pension members' benefits through individual annuity policies with Just Retirement Limited. This removed BCCI's future employer contribution obligations, other than interim administration costs up to the formal wind-up.

The directors were pleased to report a healthy surplus for 2025/26. With a sound financial position, a diversified income base and a clear strategy for membership, commercial growth and digital transformation, the outlook remains positive.

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT



ANDY DAWSON

President,
Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

The last 12 months have gone incredibly quickly, and I want to convey my sincere thanks to everyone at team Chamber for all their support, dedication, and hard work.

It is fair to say it has been one hell of a year for all of us, with many challenges that have come our way internationally, nationally, and regionally. We are all still here, and perhaps we should recognise the Helter-skelter world that we live in as the norm rather than the exception. Rather than battening down the hatches when the latest challenge comes our way, we should view this as the next opportunity.

I am focussing on two themes during my term as President: A successful Invictus Games in July 2027 for all concerned; and ensuring that our young people get the support and access to the future opportunities that they need to thrive and survive.

The Invictus Games is gearing up to take place in July 2027, and the team behind it are working to highlight the opportunities it will offer for the region and for businesses of all shapes and sizes. This is not on the scale and budget of the Commonwealth Games, and success in part depends on the engagement and support that we can all give. Whether that is through sponsorship, volunteering or supporting the competitors on the day, there is a role that we can all play.

On the challenges that our young people are facing, I am, first and foremost, a concerned dad. At a recent Future Leaders event during Birmingham Tech Week, I could not help noticing some of the concerns and challenges our young people are experiencing and fearing, despite their positivity and determination.

At the time of writing, I await the recommendations and next steps for the Milburn report with interest. Much needs to be done if we are to help our children to thrive rather than survive.

The problem is well documented, but solutions and actions are not. At the GBBC Awards, I referenced the need for businesses and policy makers to come together and create opportunities for our young people. I see plenty of ability and motivation in our young people, but without the opportunities to gain invaluable experience, they will continue to struggle.

We cannot expect policymakers alone to fix things, we need the doers to do, and the right environment and conditions to be created. I know everyone who works hard in our schools, colleges, charities, and universities are desperate for action in this area, and I'd like to offer my profound thanks to everyone who is working to support our young people today, including my chosen Charity Sport 4 Life UK for all the great work they do in the region.

Looking to the Chamber, the region, and our members, I continue to hear many a conversation about the city and the region and how we need to shout louder, stand taller and stick our shoulders out. As an adopted Brummie of 23 years, and with Birmingham the proud home of my sons, I see the cracks and the issues that we have, but they are no different to anywhere I visit. Collectively we are always stronger, and as Brumbassadors, the challenge is to now move from talking about it to proactively positioning ourselves better as a city-region.

I've thoroughly enjoyed my first year as President of the Chamber, getting out and meeting the fantastic businesses that make our region what it is. I'm looking forward to building on that over the year ahead.

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY
40 YEARS

Birmingham City University is deeply rooted in the city, with a history dating back to 1843 and the founding of the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design.

Throughout its evolution, the University has retained a strong connection to Birmingham and its communities.

Today, it brings together education, research and industry, with research shaped by regional needs giving a total focus on preparing students for employment while delivering tangible benefits for communities, businesses and society. Its Business School works closely with companies through collaborative research and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, connecting academic expertise with business needs.

The University's unique multidisciplinary STEAM approach for its students encourages creativity, decision making and experiential learning, ensuring they have key employability skills when they leave.

Birmingham City University remains a proud part of Birmingham, combining its rich heritage with a commitment to opportunity, innovation and the city's future.

PRIME ACCOUNTANTS
42 YEARS

Prime Accountants is a leading independent firm of accountants and tax advisers in the West Midlands, with a proud heritage and deep roots in the region.

With offices in Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull, the firm supports businesses and individuals with accurate, honest advice and a personal approach.

Offering a comprehensive range of services, from accounts, audit and tax advice to payroll and wider business support, Prime Accountants works with clients across a diverse range of sectors and at every stage of their business journey.

From starting and growing a business through to succession planning, selling or exiting, the team combines specialist expertise with transparent communication and attention to detail.

Prime Accountants continues to be a trusted presence in the West Midlands, combining decades of experience with a personal approach and a commitment to helping businesses prosper for the long term.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S STATEMENT



HENRIETTA BREALEY

Chief Executive Officer, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

If the past twelve months have reinforced anything, it is just how quickly the environment our businesses operate in continues to change.

Economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, rapid advances in technology and unexpected shocks have created fresh challenges, and opportunities. As our members' needs change, our offer has to change with them. Throughout the year, our focus has remained firmly on providing the practical support, connections and voice businesses need to navigate that changing landscape.

I'm proud of how we have responded. We launched our Finance for Growth service, continued to develop our international trade support and expanded the practical help available to businesses getting to grips with AI, including through our Business Growth Studio.

We have also continued to champion the interests of business. From our work on devolution across Staffordshire and engagement with the West Midlands Combined Authority, to responding quickly to the impact of the JLR cyber attack on the regional supply chain and helping businesses understand emerging geopolitical risks, we have worked to ensure our members' voices are heard when it matters.

But what makes me proudest is the strength of the communities behind all of this.

Across the Group, our teams, members and partners continue to bring businesses together, forge new connections, share expertise and champion their places. Whether we are helping a business tackle an immediate challenge, seize an opportunity or influence the decisions that affect them, that sense of community remains at the heart of what we do.

Thank you to our members, partners, colleagues, committee & council members and Board for everything you have contributed over the past year. The Chamber is proudly in business, for business: our members. I'm incredibly proud of what we have achieved together this year, and ambitious about what we can achieve together in the year ahead.

> **"Across the Group, our teams, members and partners continue to bring businesses together, forge new connections, share expertise and champion their places."**

A YEAR OF CONNECTING BUSINESS COMMUNITIES, CHAMPIONING BUSINESS INTERESTS AND DRIVING BUSINESS GROWTH.

CONNECTING BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

Bringing businesses together to build valuable relationships, raise their profile and discover new opportunities, ideas and potential partners across Greater Birmingham.

- Delivered 177 events, attended by 8,253 delegates.
- Conducted over 4,000 phone calls and appointments with members.
- Made over 750 personal introductions for members.
- Connected our members to causes making a difference to communities, raising over £45,000 for our chosen charities.

CHAMPIONING BUSINESS INTERESTS

The leading voice of Greater Birmingham businesses, using economic evidence and business intelligence to influence decision-makers and create better conditions for growth.

- Shared economic data from over 1,300 local businesses with key stakeholders such as Birmingham City Council, the West Midlands Combined Authority and HM Treasury.
- Held roundtables, workshops and interviews with over 300 firms, gathering critical business intelligence to help inform the West Midlands Plan for Growth, devolution in Staffordshire, and stakeholder decision-making on international trade and skills.
- Secured over 200 pieces of earned media coverage, including high-profile opportunities with Reuters, CNN, Bloomberg, BBC TV and radio, and The Times/Sunday Times.

DRIVING BUSINESS GROWTH

Providing the expertise and practical support businesses need to secure finance and investment, enter new local or global markets and turn their growth ambitions into action.

- Supported 47 businesses to secure a total of £6.44m in funding and investment, of which £5.3m was in equity and £1.14m in grant funding, with 90 jobs created, 156 safeguarded, and 8 companies also exploring international markets.
- Supported 60 businesses to explore international opportunities, resulting in 13 businesses engaging in new markets, productivity improvements across 24 businesses, and 8 businesses adopting new-to-the-firm technologies.
- Issued over 22,000 documents to facilitate over 850 businesses trading overseas.
- Translated 1,205,626 words in 300 languages.

GREATER BIRMINGHAM CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS



GREG LOWSON
GBCC Chair



ANDY DAWSON
GBCC President and Co-Founder, Curium Solutions



CARMEN WATSON, DL, FCGI, HON DBA, FREC,
GBCC Vice President, Chair, Pertemps Network Group



HENRIETTA BREALEY
Chief Executive, GBCC



NAVEEN GUPTA
Finance Director, GBCC



DR NASIR AWAN, MBE DL
CEO, Awan Marketing plc



CHARLIE BLAKEMORE
CEO, Intercity Technology Ltd



DR KARL GEORGE, MBE
CEO, The Governance Forum



MIKE OWENS
Founder, Glenveagh Advisory



RUTH PIPKIN
Managing Director, Rewired PR



SUZY VERMA
Director Sustainability Partnerships, CMB, HSBC



SAM WATSON
Store Director, Selfridges Birmingham







OUR ACCREDITATIONS

Living Wage Foundation

ARMED FORCES COVENANT
EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME
GOLD AWARD

disability confident EMPLOYER

RACE CODE
ACCREDITED UNTIL JULY 2026



Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

- Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
- Burton & District Chamber of Commerce
- Cannock Chase Chamber of Commerce
- Lichfield & Tamworth Chamber of Commerce
- Royal Sutton Coldfield Chamber of Commerce
- Solihull Chamber of Commerce
- Asian Business Chamber of Commerce
- Future Faces Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Birmingham Global Chamber of Commerce

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