

SCR - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY 2021 AT 2.00 PM

ONLINE MEETING - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS



Present:

Councillor Colin Ross (Chair)	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Allan Jones	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Penny Baker	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Jeff Ennis	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Phillip Lofts	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Brian Steele	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Duncan Anderson (Reserve)	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Adam Hurst (Reserve)	Sheffield City Council

Officers in Attendance:

Dr Dave Smith	Chief Executive	MCA Executive Team
Dr Ruth Adams	Deputy Chief Executive	MCA Executive Team
Gareth Sutton	Chief Finance Officer/S73 Officer	MCA Executive Team
Steve Davenport	Principal Solicitor & Monitoring Officer	MCA Executive Team
Christine Marriott	Scrutiny Officer	MCA Executive Team
Stephen Batey	Head of Mayor's Office	SCR Mayor's Office
Felix Kumi-Ampofo	Assistant Director Policy and Assurance	MCA Executive Team
Gillian Richards		

Apologies:

Councillor Julie Grocutt Sheffield City Council

62 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted as above.

63 Urgent Items/Announcements

The Chair announced that Cllr Peter Ripon, who was a member of the Committee, sadly passed away on the 20 December 2020 after a short illness.

Peter served on Sheffield City Council for 17 years representing Shiregreen and Brightside ward and latterly the Richmond ward. He was also the 118th Lord Mayor of Sheffield between 2014 and 2015.

He had been a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since 2018 and served right up to his final illness.

The Chair had known Peter over many years and regarded him as a colleague and friend, even though they were in different political parties. He was a truly respected gentleman right across the chamber in Sheffield and the other councils in South Yorkshire.

C Marriott gave an update on the South Yorkshire Scrutiny Officers Network.

It was explained that the network provided an open forum to share best practice and learning and development provision. The group had Terms of Reference which included the sharing of annual work programmes for Overview and Scrutiny Committees across South Yorkshire.

The group meet quarterly with additional meetings as appropriate, the Network includes officers from Barnsley, Doncaster Rotherham councils along with South Yorkshire Joint Authorities Governance Unit to represent the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police and Crime Panel and South Yorkshire Pensions Authority.

C Marriott had advised members of the Network of the referral process to the MCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in Article 6 of the Authority's Order. The Order stated that any member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee could refer a matter, including any members of the Combined Authority and its constituent councils.

Network members had been signposted to the SCR website where further details could be found along with a referral form.

C Marriott had made a commitment to provide Scrutiny Officers with a briefing paper after each MCA meeting to keep officers across South Yorkshire up to speed. Any suggestions on how communications could be improved would be welcomed.

The Chair thanked C Marriott for the update and commented that it was important that the work of the MCA complemented the work of the local authorities and that everyone was kept up to date with MCA decisions and vice versa.

The Chair noted that, at its meeting on 25 January 2021, the MCA had approved the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). As the Plan was the core economic plan for the region which focused on growth, inclusion and sustainability he requested that the final version of the SEP be circulated to all members of the Committee to decide if there were any items to be brought to future Scrutiny meetings.

Action: C Marriott to circulate the final version of the Strategic Economic Plan to all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Also, at the recent MCA meeting it was noted that the Transport Levy had been agreed and remained at existing levels.

The Assurance Framework 2021/22 and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework 2021/22 had also been discussed.

The Chair suggested that, as this was an important document in the way that the work of the MCA was monitored, a workshop should be arranged to discuss the implications of how it would affect the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed to this.

Action: C Marriott to arrange a workshop in late February/early March.

The MCA approved proposals for renaming linked to wider rebranding work allowing for a decision on implementation to be taken after May's local elections.

Members agreed with the suggestion as it was felt more inclusive and would be worth the cost of rebranding and endorsed the suggestion.

OSC Members noted that the Mayor's remuneration had been considered and approved by an Independent Remuneration Panel by the MCA on 25 January 2020. The allowance payable for the role of Sheffield City Region Mayor is £79,000 which Mayor Jarvis personally wishes to donate to charities across South Yorkshire. No allowance will be paid to the Deputy Chair.

64 Items to be Considered in the Absence of Public and Press

None.

65 Declarations of Interest by any Members

None.

66 Reports from and Questions by Members

None.

67 Questions from Members of the Public

None.

68 Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 29 October 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2020 be agreed as a true record.

69 Matters Arising

The Committee received updates on actions from previous meetings.

- S Edwards had met Cllr Baker on 18th November 2020. Discussions were held on how SYPTTE might improve communications with Councillors more generally. Cllr Baker commented that it had been a

very useful meeting.

Action: update action log as 'Action Complete'.

- On the concerns regarding parking in bus lanes: Blocking of bus lanes was an issue in all four districts and the use of mobile enforcement vehicles and static enforcement cameras had seen improvements.

Action: Continue to monitor. C Marriott to update Item to be on Action Log for follow up in 6 months' time.

- It was confirmed that a letter of thanks had been sent to Cllr Richardson to thank him for his contribution to the OSC.

Action: C Marriott to update action log as 'Action Complete'

- It was confirmed that there had not been a role for the Traffic Commissioner in the Bus Review to date. Further details were included in the report.

Action: Cllr Jones stated he would continue to monitor the role of the Traffic Commissioner throughout the implementation of the Bus Review report recommendations.

Action: C Marriott update action log as 'Action Complete'

- P Zanzottera had circulated details of the Active Travel Project Tranche 2 bid to the Committee by email immediately after the last meeting.

Action: update action log as 'Action Complete'

- Baseline Data for monitoring active travel uptake: P Zanzotterra has informed the Committee that a Baseline Data Report for Active Travel is expected during the course of February, which will be shared with the committee.

Action: C Marriott update action log and ensure report is shared with OSC.

- A letter from Mayor Jarvis had been received in response to the Committees' formal recommendation that all future reports contained a Climate Change Impact Assessment.

Action: Continue to monitor. C Marriott to update Item to be on Action Log for follow up in 6 months' time.

- A letter from Mayor Jarvis had been received concerning the importance of public engagement and consultation in addressing climate change issues.

Action: Continue to monitor. C Marriott to update Item to be on Action Log for follow up in 6 months' time.

- Tier 3 Pandemic funding – a presentation from F Kumi-Ampofo was included on today’s agenda.

Action: C Marriott update action log as ‘Action Complete’

- Preparations for Brexit – a briefing paper on Brexit preparations was circulated to OSC members on 13th January 2021.

Action: C Marriott update action log as ‘Action Complete’

70 **Review of latest Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was provided for information and to give Members the opportunity to ask questions.

No questions were raised by Members.

71 **Question and Answer Session with Mayor Jarvis**

The Chair welcomed Mayor Jarvis to the meeting for a question and answer session.

Mayor Jarvis began by commenting on the sad passing of Cllr Peter Rippon who had been a much respected councillor and would be sadly missed. The Mayor expressed condolences to Peter’s family.

The Mayor commented that the MCA was now in a better position to respond to the challenges that would lay ahead in 2021 because £¼bn had been secured for transport, active travel, infrastructure and housing; this was in addition to the money that had been unlocked by the Devolution deal. In practical terms this meant that the MCA would have a budget of £344m for the financial year 2021/22.

Cllr Ross asked how the Tier 3 funding was being spent. Mayor Jarvis replied that the MCA in conjunction with the four constituent local authorities was doing all they could to assist the region’s businesses and residents.

The Tier 3 funding, which had been made available in October 2020, was aimed at the hospitality, accommodation and entertainment sectors and the MCA, working with local authorities, had provided additional top-ups to affected businesses. A target had been set of allocating the original £30m to businesses by the end of March 2021. Data showed that, through working with the local authorities, this target was both sensible and achievable.

Additionally, on 22 January 2021 a further allocation from government of £12.5m had been received which reflected the impact of the latest restrictions. This amount had to be spent by March 2022 and MCA officers were currently considering how to target and deploy the additional grant.

Cllr Ennis asked what help was available for “elite” sporting clubs who could not access training, eg, Ice Sheffield. Ice skating rinks in the area were classified

as entertainment venues and therefore remained closed. This meant that aspiring elite skaters could not currently train and were being disadvantaged from skaters in other regions.

Mayor Jarvis replied that all businesses forced to close were in receipt of support from the government. Elite sport had been allowed to continue through Tier 3 and in the current national lockdown. Sports clubs and clubhouses experiencing a significant loss of trade were eligible for the Additional Restrictions Grant.

Cllr Ennis requested clarification as to whether the region's elite skaters could now use the facility in Sheffield.

Action: Mayor Jarvis would check the precise arrangements for the skaters and report back to Cllr Ennis.

Cllr Steele asked whether the grant from government had to be spent on certain things or was there any leeway on this. Also, did the Mayor think that the current lockdown would be extended?

In response, the Mayor informed the Committee that there was very limited flexibility in terms of the funding received; he had been in correspondence with the Chancellor about more flexibility – devolution was all about greater local decision making.

In terms of the lockdown, there was still a great amount of uncertainty regarding the next few months. The reality was that everyone would be living with the impact of the virus for the foreseeable future and it was not envisaged that there would be a relaxation of the lockdown in the near future.

The Chair commented that the MCA had a stream of funding as did the four constituent councils; he asked how much co-operation there was to ensure that there was no overlap or gaps. Also, more generally, what was being done at a regional and district level to ensure that individuals and business were not falling through funding cracks.

The Mayor gave assurances that the MCA was working very closely with authority partners. The scheme for distributing the grant funding and the development of the Renewal Action Plan and Strategic Economic Plan had all been co-developed with local authority partners.

It was evident that a significant number of individual and businesses, such as the self-employed and new start-up business had been excluded from government support. The Mayor had been involved with M9 (a cross-party Metro Mayor group) and other parliamentarians to lobby the Chancellor to do much more to provide support for those who had been excluded.

Cllr Baker queried whether there was any regional support for the smaller SMEs and what was being done to identify those in need.

The Mayor replied that the Additional Restrictions Grant had been targeted at those not in receipt of national support, including non-rate paying businesses

and others in the supply chain of closed sectors; home based businesses had also recently been targeted.

Officers were working with business support experts and the LEP was also involved as was the Covid-19 Business Group which drew from the expertise of the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and a range of other private sector business representative groups.

Cllr Jones reported that he had recently attended a meeting of the Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) Consultative Committee. The Committee had written to the Mayor stressing the key part played by DSA in regeneration and sought local leaders' support in presenting the airport's case to government. The Consultative Committee expressed disappointment that they had not received a reply.

The Mayor stated that he took pride in responding to correspondence and didn't recall seeing the letter; he would look into the matter.

He commented that a lot of work had been done to support DSA and it was recognised as a strategic asset by all of the local authorities.

D Smith gave an outline of recent work undertaken to support the airport through the pandemic and also the work in progress to encourage growth in the future.

Cllr Anderson commented on the recent flood warnings, advice to residents and the man hours taken to respond to any potential flooding. Luckily this time the floods had not happened, but the situation had caused immense stress and anxiety to residents. He stated that a robust and permanent solution was needed.

The Mayor agreed and commented he was pleased to be able to confirm that at Monday's MCA meeting it had been announced that, after working closely with the Environment Agency, £80m funding from the government had been secured towards funding some of the identified flood prevention schemes in South Yorkshire.

This was a good start for the 27 schemes identified as part of the Flood Priority Programme but, in reality, a further £125m of investment was needed to deliver the programme in full and, as Mayor, he would continue to lobby for further investment.

In answer to a question from Cllr Lofts, Mayor Jarvis agreed that a balance between encouraging economic growth and meeting emissions and other environmental targets was needed and gave details of the work in progress to achieve this.

Cllr Hurst requested information on progress on implementation of the recommendations of the Bus Review and whether there were any plans to bring transport systems back under public control.

The Mayor commented that the Covid-19 pandemic had affected all areas of

public transport including the ability to respond to the Bus Review's recommendations. The focus had been on keeping services running to enable key workers to get to work where necessary.

It was noted that the Department for Transport (DfT) was currently providing support to bus services whilst patronage remained low. There would be a need for a period of stabilisation and recovery once social distancing measures were removed and the subsidies withdrawn.

The Mayor informed the Committee that:

- Preparations were underway for when social distancing measures were removed.
- Discussions were ongoing with DfT regarding recovery and transformational funding.
- The MCA had allocated a minimum of £5m of Gainshare funding to invest in the network.
- Bus pilot projects were being considered as part of the process to determine the best future operating model.

Cllr Hurst asked if there was any possibility that, in the future, the South Yorkshire transport system could look more like Transport for London.

Mayor Jarvis replied that the focus in the short term was on the day-to-day survival of the network, but the ambition remained to put in place something that much more resembled the system in London. He also acknowledged that this would require very significant investment.

Cllr Baker commented that the opportunity should not be lost to provide a transport system that was better, safer and greener for the future and also stressed the importance of further public consultation before any final plans were implemented to ensure the system met the needs of the public.

Cllr Ennis commented that recently West Yorkshire Combined Authority had announced its intention to establish a mass transit public transport system across the whole of West Yorkshire and questioned whether South Yorkshire had any plans to extend the SuperTram into Barnsley and Doncaster.

Mayor Jarvis replied that it was a very difficult time to be envisaging such a significant development of the system at the moment given the challenges currently being faced.

Work was ongoing to look at how the SuperTram system could be renewed and improved in Sheffield which would require considerable investment. He agreed that the MCA should be ambitious with regard to connectivity across the region and there could be a case for the extension of tram/train but there would be a massive challenge in securing funding for such a project.

In response to a question from Cllr Lofts the Mayor stated that his priorities for 2021 included:

- Ensuring that businesses are supported and thrive post Covid-19.

- Securing investment for economic regeneration.
- The levelling-up agenda, including education, skills, training and the inequalities of health outcomes.
- Assisting businesses through the impact of Brexit, although this had been somewhat overshadowed by the impact of Covid-19.

The Chair thanked Mayor Jarvis for his time in attending the meeting for what had been a very informative session. He requested that this be repeated on a six-monthly basis. He also requested that the Committee receive quarterly progress reports on MCA projects.

RESOLVED – That the Committee to be supplied with quarterly progress reports on MCA projects.

72

Sheffield City Region Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

A report was submitted which gave an update in relation to the Sheffield City Region MCA response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the OSC Agenda setting meeting on 3 December 2020, the Committee asked for an update on the following areas:

- Schemes already launched.
- Schemes scheduled for launch.
- Who had received support?
- Government support available.

Appendix A to the report responded to the questions put forward by OSC members and reflected the position as at 20th January 2021.

Cllr Lofts asked how easy it was to access the grants.

F Kumi-Ampofo replied that that in most cases it was straightforward; applicants either had to fill in one form, or in some Authorities, one of two forms and officers would then work out what the business was eligible for. For Phase 4 schemes, this money was sent out automatically without the need to reapply.

Cllr Ennis queried what anti-fraud mechanisms were in place.

The Committee was informed that local authority colleagues were experienced and knew businesses in their area. There had been a small number of fraud cases and mechanisms were in place to retrieve monies paid. In other cases, for example loss of trade, evidence of this had to be produced and officers would check the information provided.

Cllr Baker queried whether grants to non-rate paying business were means tested. F Kumi-Ampofo confirmed that they were not.

The Chair welcomed the fact that the scheme had picked up previously unsupported business such as home-based companies and taxi drivers. It was confirmed that the grants were paid to individual taxi drivers and not to the taxi companies.

In answer to a question from Cllr Jones, it was confirmed that the grants had to be sent to government criteria.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

73 **Scrutiny of MCA Thematic Boards**

A report was submitted to advise members of the updated governance arrangements for the MCA Thematic Boards that had been agreed at the September 2020 MCA Board.

Members noted that the MCA had agreed to reduce the number of Thematic Board from five to four to reflect the priorities on the Strategic Economic Plan. These were:

- i. Business Recovery and Growth.
- ii. Educations, Skills and Employability.
- iii. Transport and the Environment.
- iv. Housing and Infrastructure.

The Terms of Reference of the Boards were at Appendices B-E to the report.

OSC members had asked for clarity on three specific areas in relation to the Thematic Boards:

- Transparency and openness of Board meetings.
- Arrangements for public questions.
- The meeting cycle and membership.

Details of these were contained within the report along with the proposed scrutiny process.

The Chair reported that problems had been encountered whilst researching the process of submitting a public question. The SCR website needed updating to enable the public to find out how to submit a question to a Thematic Board and needed improving so that the search facility functioned correctly.

It was noted that the full membership of the Thematic Boards could be found at Appendix F.

RESOLVED – That the Committee:

- i) Note the updated governance arrangements for the Thematic Boards and agree on the method of scrutiny as set out in section 2.6 of the report.
- ii) **RECOMMEND** that the information on the SCR website be improved to enable the public to find out how to submit a question to the Thematic Boards and that the website is improved so that the search facility functions correctly.

I, the undersigned, confirm that this is a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Signed

Name

Position

Date