

SCR - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 2.00 PM

ONLINE - MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING



Present:

Councillor Colin Ross (Chair)	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Penny Baker	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Dawn Dale	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Jeff Ennis	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Brian Steele	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Austen White	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Adam Hurst (Reserve)	Sheffield City Council

Absent

Councillor Allan Jones	Doncaster MBC
------------------------	---------------

Officers in Attendance:

Mayor Dan Jarvis MBE	Mayor of Sheffield City Region	SCR MCA
Dr Dave Smith	Chief Executive	SCR Executive Team
Dr Ruth Adams	Deputy Chief Executive	SCR Executive Team
Stephen Edwards	Executive Director	SYPTTE
Steve Davenport	Principal Solicitor & Monitoring Officer	SCR Executive Team
Christine Marriott	Statutory Scrutiny Officer	SCR Executive Team
Mark Lynam	Director of Transport, Housing and Infrastructure	SCR Executive Team
Gareth Sutton	Chief Finance Officer/ S73 Officer	SCR Executive Team
Stephen Batey	Head of Mayor's Office	SCR Mayor's Office
Andrew Shirt	Minute Taker	JAGU

In Attendance

Clive Betts MP

Apologies:

Councillor Ken Richardson	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Peter Rippon	Sheffield City Council

39 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted as above.

40 **Urgent Items/Announcements**

None.

41 **Items to be Considered in the Absence of Public and Press**

None.

42 **Declarations of Interest by any Members**

None.

43 **Reports from and Questions by Members**

None.

44 **Questions from Members of the Public**

None.

45 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 23 July 2020**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 July 2020 be agreed as a true record.

46 **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

Provided for information. Members were asked if they had any questions in relation to the most recent Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

No questions were raised by Members.

47 **Matters Arising**

None.

48 **MCA Response to the Bus Review**

Councillor Ross introduced a report reminding Members that discussions had taken place at previous meetings regarding the Bus Review which had been published on 18 June 2020. There were several lines of inquiry which Members would like to question at today's meeting, in particular, the role of the Traffic Commissioner.

Councillor Ross added that, Members would like to acknowledge in advance, the importance of the Bus Review. Members also wished to support the Mayor

in driving forward the 18 recommendations within the Bus Review, due to the inadequacies of bus services which were often being raised by constituents.

Councillor Ross welcomed Clive Betts MP and Mayor Dan Jarvis to the meeting.

Clive Betts MP thanked Councillor Ross and Members of the Committee for inviting him to today's meeting.

Clive Betts MP addressed the meeting. He reported that, in February 2019, the Mayor had announced a review of the region's bus network and had appointed him as Chair of an independent review, supported by a panel of expert commissioners. This included a Sheffield Hallam University student and two individuals with local transport interests, namely Martin Mayer (Sheffield Trades Union Council) and Peter Kennan (Chair of Sheffield Chamber of Commerce's Transport Forum) together with national experts coming together to help him draft the Bus Review report.

Members were informed that bus services in the Sheffield City Region were worsening. There had also been a decline in passenger numbers, which had been steeper than in other parts of the country, especially against South Yorkshire's background of a 'Cheaper Fares Policy' and pioneering transport innovation.

The Bus Review investigated the underlying causes of service and patronage decline, gathering evidence from multiple sources including interviews with stakeholders and a public survey, to which 5,900 people responded with a consistent message being received from them that, bus services are not fit for purpose.

The Review also identified the following key findings:

- **Frequency:** In many areas of South Yorkshire service frequency is poor or has fallen dramatically.
- **Reliability:** The South Yorkshire bus network experiences significant reliability issues. Over 60% of the respondents to the bus survey were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with bus reliability.
- **Climate Change:** Buses need to play a bigger role in reducing road transport emissions and tackling climate change.
- **Policy Alignment:** Despite the National Planning Policy Framework stipulating that new commercial or housing development must be accessible by public transport, the review has found many have little or no service provision.
- **Connectivity:** The Review has found that there is poor connectivity between part of the South Yorkshire bus network and other transport modes.
- **Service Changes:** Passengers felt there is insufficient communication on bus changes without any meaningful consultation.
- **Ticketing:** Passengers are presented with an overwhelming range of

ticketing options but little or no information on the best value option.

• **Quality and Accessibility:** The quality of the bus network is variable, and the quality of the bus fleet can vary considerably between local authorities and operators.

Looking to the future, Clive Betts MP, referred to the detailed 18 recommendations set out in the Bus Review for delivery over the short, medium and long term.

The first immediate recommendation was for the appointment of the Mayor to act as a regional leader to promote buses and maintain their importance on regional political agendas. He was pleased to note that the integration of the SYPTE into the MCA had been agreed at the MCA meeting held on 21 September 2020.

Councillor Ross thanked Clive Betts MP for his introduction and asked Mayor Jarvis to address the meeting.

Mayor Jarvis informed Members that the publication of the Bus Review represented a very significant milestone in the SCR's journey to making improvements people would wish to see in the future.

It was noted that work was already flowing from the Bus Review. South Yorkshire Leaders' had agreed a framework to implement the Commissioners' key recommendations in the near future. The impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic was having a very significant impact upon passenger numbers. At present, bus services were being operated broadly on the same frequency as they were in March 2020, however, this was with very significantly reduced capacity and patronage (approximately 50% less, compared to pre-Covid levels).

Members noted that Government support was currently underpinning this level of operation and the additional capacity required to support the return of bus services for school children who had returned to school at the beginning of September 2020. Currently, the Mayor was unaware of how long Government support would continue and the likely impact on passenger numbers when the pandemic came to an end.

The Mayor commented that these were all considerations which he would need to consider as part of his response.

The Mayor outlined that the MCA had adopted a set of 6 key principles, which he would be taking personal responsibility for:

1. A fundamental need to act - business as usual is not an option.
2. Greater investment of funds from the public and private sector will be required to deliver improvements.
3. New funding sources must be found. The Local Authority levy, even if frozen, and agreed for the current year is not sufficient to make the changes he would wish to see.
4. Buses must form part of a whole systems approach to achieve the

ambitions of an integrated transport system. There is a need to plan for buses, but also a plan that sits alongside the work which is taking place with regards to other transport systems (rail, active travel, cycling and walking etc).

5. The MCA's Policies along with the South Yorkshire Local Authorities, must actively seek to increase public transport patronage.
6. The approach to decision making needs to change. Leadership and accountability are required to deliver real change.

The Mayor stated that the Commission had recognised the delivery of the Report required substantial resources and political support. The recommendations could not be progressed successfully without the agreement of the South Yorkshire Local Authorities and the bus operators.

Responsibility for improving bus services must be made clear; too much currently falls to the many different authorities, the MCA, SYPTE, individual Local Authorities and bus operators, each without the leverage and the power to deliver changes.

The Mayor gave assurances to the Committee that this was being addressed as an urgent priority and was progressing the work as quickly as possible. Fundamentally, the Mayor accepted that there could be no more transferring blame between stakeholders. They all need to work together as partners to deliver the transport network which the Bus Review has very clearly set out.

The Mayor invited M Lynam to address the Committee to present how the MCA was responding to the Bus Review.

M Lynam reported that the MCA had adopted a set of 6 key principles which the Mayor had outlined above. The principles would form how the MCA intended to respond to the findings and recommendations within the Bus Review. The principles set out the platform upon which further work would be undertaken to drive improvement on the bus network.

To deliver upon the 6 principles, a 7-point plan had been agreed, which would guide the MCA's work over the coming months. Further details on the 7-point plan were presented at paragraph 2.3 of the report and noted by Members.

At this point in the meeting Councillor Ross invited questions from Members.

Councillor Baker reported that she had been very disappointed with communications from SYPTE following the submission of complaints to them regarding bus services in Sheffield and their lack of challenge to the bus operators in Sheffield. This had led to an open letter being published in the Sheffield Star and a response issued by Mayor Jarvis.

She added that, moving forward, there was a need for accountability and scrutiny to be built into the work. She asked if there was an opportunity for the Mayor to use the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or a Task and Finish Group to help support this work and to evidence that there is scrutiny and accountability being undertaken throughout the process.

Mayor Jarvis replied that, Devolution was currently an un-folding process in South Yorkshire. Currently, there were no processes and governance structures in place. As part of the MCA's response to the Bus Review they also had to ensure that governance structures were in place to ensure accountability and that the Mayor has the most effective decision-making process. Ultimately, he would wish to see a situation where the Mayor is responsible and accountable for the delivery of bus services at a local level, being accountable to elected Members and the public.

The Mayor stated that he welcomed scrutiny and wished to work with the Committee in future.

S Edwards stated that he would explore why Councillor Baker had not received a response in relation to the issues she had raised.

ACTION: S Edwards

If Members had any further issues, they could be passed directly to S Edwards.

Councillor Dale asked how the public would be consulted with moving forward. She also asked if a commitment could be made at today's meeting that the public would be responded to in a timely manner and listened to whilst planning services. Significant changes had occurred to services due to the Covid-19 pandemic which had made it very difficult for the public to find out what the changes are and the rationale behind those changes.

M Lynam replied that there had been a fantastic response to the public survey which had been carried out as part of the Bus Review. Due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic he acknowledged that, undertaking any public consultation would be challenging. The MCA would explore the use of digital platforms but would need to consider these very carefully.

Councillor White noted that the Review had made reference to bus services often being delayed due to vehicles parking in bus lanes. He asked what plans were in place to start enforcing bus priority measures.

S Edwards replied that the approach varied in each area and was enforced by each individual council. Councils were actively trying to pursue this by camera enforcement in bus lanes. He too shared this concern, especially when it caused difficulty to operators who were trying to run services on time.

Councillor White suggested that there needed to be a co-ordinated approach across the four local authorities.

S Edwards agreed to follow-up with the local authorities outside of today's meeting.

ACTION: S Edwards

Councillor Steele asked how the Bus Review would be enforced to protect the environment and what level of investment would be required.

M Lynam replied that this was a very difficult and complex issue regarding how buses are currently funded. As such, the infrastructure and investment required would need to be followed-up as part of the next stage of work.

Councillor Ross suggested that it would be appropriate for the MCA to join together the different streams of work currently taking place regarding climate change and energy efficiency. There were operators in South Yorkshire currently using hydrogen and electric buses to improve, not only the quality of their fleet, but also the environment.

S Edwards added that the DfT were expected to publish a National Bus Strategy during the Autumn, which would provide the MCA with an opportunity to commence lobbying Government for funding.

Councillor Ennis asked for clarification how the Bus Improvement Board would operate.

M Lynam replied that he would shortly be meeting with the Chair of the Bus Improvement Board, Sarah Norman (Chief Executive, Barnsley MBC) to agree the Board's Terms of Reference and membership. A report would be submitted to the MCA's Transport and Environment Board at the end of October for approval.

The membership of the Board would contain nominated senior transport leads drawn from the Local Authorities, SYPTE and the MCA Executive Team. There would also be the need for the Board to engage with bus operators. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this work would be the MCA's Director of Transport, Housing and Infrastructure. The Board would report directly to the Mayor and the Chair of the Transport Board.

Councillor Ennis stated that, it was also important to involve the Trade Unions and Transport User Groups in delivering better bus services throughout South Yorkshire. He asked how the Bus Improvement Board would engage with Trade Unions and Transport User Groups.

M Lynam agreed to follow-up this question with Sarah Norman.

ACTION: M Lynam

Councillor Ross queried which Board would be responsible for the governance and scrutiny of the Bus Improvement Board's aims, objectives and timescales. He also queried how the Bus Improvement Board would fit in the MCA's governance structure, following the demise of SYPTE.

M Lynam outlined the MCA's current governance structure. It was noted that the Transport and Environment Board (Chaired by the Mayor) was the main Board where decisions are recommended and then fed through to the MCA for ratification. Following the integration of SYPTE into the MCA, there would be a requirement to examine the legal undertakings which the Board currently fulfils.

S Davenport added that, the Transport Board would most likely be responsible for implementing delivery. The MCA would have overall responsibility and the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee would hold the MCA accountable for delivery.

Councillor Ross commented that the integration of SYPTE into the MCA relies on Parliamentary progress. He asked if there were any obstacles to making progress.

S Davenport replied that the MCA had formally endorsed the integration of SYPTE into the MCA at its meeting held on 21 September 2020. SYPTE would be dissolved and its assets, contracts etc. would be transferred to the MCA. Officers had written formally to the Secretary of State's Office to open formal liaison to discuss how they wished to proceed and the likely Parliamentary timescale to make the Order. Currently, there were no obstacles. It was acknowledged that, due to Brexit, there could be a delay in Parliament agreeing the Order.

S Davenport agreed to keep the Committee updated on progress.

D Smith added that, Officers would shortly start to progress the integration agenda over the coming months, subject to legalities. He expected the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take a keen interest in the integration.

Councillor Ross was reassured to note that progress could be made prior to legal sign-off.

Councillor Ross thanked Mayor Jarvis and Clive Betts MP for attending today's meeting. He also thanked the Transport Commissioners and the Board for the work which had been undertaken.

Councillor Ross concluded the meeting stating that, there was no doubt of the Committee that bus services in South Yorkshire are inefficient, and this was prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ticketing and reliability are major factors. However, the cyclic nature of buses means that services become more unreliable leading to people using cars, which leads to congestion and pollution. By using the opportunity to break the cycle, South Yorkshire needs a public transport system which is fully integrated with the tram and train network, which people use as a first choice, rather than last resort moving forward.

RESOLVED – That Members:

1. Noted the findings of the Bus Review and the proposed recommendations.

Noted the MCAs agreed 7-point improvement plan and associated delivery arrangements.

49 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the SCR Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held on Thursday 29 October 2020, at 2:00 pm.

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

Signed _____

Name _____

Position _____

Date _____