

MCA - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2021 AT 2.00 PM

11 BROAD STREET WEST, SHEFFIELD, S1 2BQ



Present:

Councillor Colin Ross (Chair)	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Jeff Ennis	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Dianne Hurst	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Allan Jones	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Bryan Lodge	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Jo Newing	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Thomas Singleton	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Martin Smith	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Barry Johnson (Reserve)	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Ken Wyatt (Reserve)	Rotherham MBC

In Attendance:

Dr Dave Smith	Chief Executive	MCA Executive Team
Martin Swales	Interim Director of Transport, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning	MCA Executive Team
Steve Davenport	Principal Solicitor & Monitoring Officer	MCA Executive Team
Christine Marriott	Interim Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager	MCA Executive Team
Richard Sulley	Net Zero Project Director	MCA Executive
Pat Beijer	Director of Transport Operations, SYPTE	South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
Gillian Richards		
Stephen Batey	Head of Mayor's Office	SCR Mayor's Office
Chloe Shepherd	Senior Programme Manager	MCA Executive Team
Gillian Richards	Minutes	

Apologies:

Councillor Maggi Clark	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Austen White	Doncaster MBC

101 Welcome and Apologies

As the last meeting of the Committee had not been quorate it had not been possible to elect a Chair. S Davenport asked for nominations for the position.

Cllr Colin Ross was nominated and seconded and took the Chair.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted as above.

102 **Urgent Items/Announcements**

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, conveyed congratulations to Dame Sarah Storey, SYMCA's Active Travel Ambassador, for her recent record breaking success at the Tokyo Paralympics.

The Committee had a new member from RMBC, Cllr Singleton who had replaced Cllr Emma Barley and new substitute appointments of Cllrs Osbourne and Green.

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

None.

104 **Declarations of Interest by any Members**

None.

105 **Reports from and Questions by Members**

None.

106 **Questions from Members of the Public**

The Chair reported that there was a question which had been submitted by a member of the public.

As this related to the climate emergency it was proposed to take the question at item 10.

107 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 29 July 2021**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2021 be agreed as a true record.

108 **Matters Arising/Action Register**

The Committee considered the Action Register.

MCA Bus Review – there was an update at item 11 on the agenda, with a further update scheduled for January 2022.

Evaluating outcomes and VfM from Active Travel projects – a report had been circulated via email.

Climate emergency – elsewhere on today's agenda.

South Yorkshire Renewal Fund – this had been discussed at the agenda setting meeting and it was placed on the Work Programme for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED – That the Action Register be noted.

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

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was considered.

The Chair informed members that the Forward Plan had been put together so that decisions from all the numerous Committees and Board could be seen in one place and so that the Committee could easily identify areas of interest to them.

After discussion, it was decided that for clarity, the word ‘open’ in the ‘Prohibitions, Restrictions, Exemptions’ column should be replaced with the words ‘not exempt’.

It was confirmed that any decision could be called in for scrutiny either before or after the decision had been made.

Action: Items previously designated as ‘open’ to be marked as ‘not exempt’.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

110 **Climate Emergency – Monitoring Public Engagement/Consultation**

The Chair informed the Committee that a question from a member of the public had been received and although it had arrived late he had accepted it as it related to this agenda item. The member of the public had been unable to attend but would be viewing via the webcast.

C Marriott read out the question:

“How can this Scrutiny Board be satisfied with the paper at item 10 on your agenda? There is no reference to any actions being taken in response to your engagement.

To take an example, the Climate Alliance argued strongly for urgent investment in retrofitting skills training – very poignant as the Government unveiled its Heat and Buildings strategy this week – but no such investment is being made.

We consider that the Net Zero engagement process is both genuine and actually of exceptional high quality but these engagement efforts will lack credibility if they solely relate to process but do not result in action being taken.”

R Sulley informed members that he would respond to the question as he went through the report.

The Chair commented that members would ensure the question was answered

during the presentation or by their follow-up questions.

Members were reminded that the paper was in response to questions around public engagement and consultation following the climate change emergency declaration from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As background, R Sulley reminded members that in January 2020 the MCA Board approved the Climate Response Framework which split the challenge into five areas which were detailed in the report.

The MCA then commissioned a report from Urban Foresight which identified 18 strategic activities which should be delivered over the next two years as part of a net zero programme. The report highlighted that a communications strategy would be vital to the long-term success of delivering against the targets set.

To do this the MCA would need to collaborate with different organisations in designing the communications messaging including pressure groups such as the South Yorkshire Climate Alliance, business membership groups and other community stakeholders. This would ensure that the messages were clear and consistent and in line with the targets.

Members noted the following activities:

- SYMCA had appointed a Net Zero Project Director (NZPD) with the aim of operationalising the Net Zero Project.
- The Mayor had taken up the role of Vice-Chair of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission.
- MCA officers were involved in formulating the action plan of the commission and incorporating the commission's findings and public input into further programme development.
- The NZPD had developed networks with interest groups to understand their concerns and regular meetings had been held with the South Yorkshire Climate Alliance.
- The business and industrial communities had been approached through specific meetings with trade association representatives and individual companies.

Where necessary or appropriate, public consultations were undertaken. It was noted that, at this point, no overarching consultation on the MCAs climate emergency response had been undertaken or was planned.

With regard to the point that was made in the public question, this related specifically to a recent meeting with representatives from Green New Deal South Yorkshire, who were encouraging local authorities and the MCA to invest in training and skills within green industries for the future.

The meeting had been productive in that Green New Deal South Yorkshire had been able to get their point across about the urgency of action and the potential for the creation of quality jobs across the region.

Officers had been able to feedback the process needed to deliver on that requirement. There were certain budgets that could be drawn on for further

education but the process was that typically the private sector would need to request that training, identify a lack of skills in a certain area and make a request to the further education colleges.

It had been identified in that meeting that the system needed looking at in that it could not respond too far into the future, it tended to respond to the immediate need rather than the potential for future need. Officers would try to understand how that imbalance could be addressed and how the market could be primed to understand what the potential future job and skills would be within their industries.

This also included housing retrofit which was a hot topic at the moment. Central government had issued a Building and Heat Strategy and there was the potential for funding for heat pumps in homes. It was recognised that the region didn't currently have the skills to deliver that.

The Committee was informed that Sheffield Hallam University had been commissioned to do some work analyse the gaps and potential opportunities within South Yorkshire to meet the green skills that would be needed.

Public consultation and engagement at the moment was targeted. As the programme was developed it may be needed to consult the public and the MCA wanted to eventually seek public views as to whether they were heading in the right direction, but not at this time.

The Chair commented that it was evident that everyone agreed that there was a climate emergency and that action needed to be taken, but this had to be done with the public and not to the public.

In answer to a question from Cllr Ennis, R Sulley agreed that pressure groups would always want the MCA and partners to do more, further and faster and it was incumbent upon the Authority to explain what could and couldn't be done and ascertain where and what there was a need to consult on.

Cllr Jones commented that communication with all groups was vital.

R Sulley confirmed that the MCA was in touch with businesses directly, meetings had been scheduled with SMEs to understand their needs and what support they may need.

The Committee also discussed how the MCA and local authorities had influence over housing stock and the work that went on with it in social housing and with partner Housing Associations and how information on funding available and the size and scale of requirements could be collated to give the private sector deliverers an idea of the size and scale of the market to come.

The Chair expressed the need to be reactive. Although there was a lot to be done with regards to the climate emergency. It was not just about retrofitting but the whole of the renewable agenda. The workforce needed to be ready when the jobs became available. It was important to energise businesses to think longer term with regard to upskilling their workforce.

R Sulley agreed and commented that work was ongoing in this area. Unfortunately, apprentices could not be trained for jobs that did not exist at the moment. Therefore, there was a need for the market to think ahead of the work to be done with the private sector and delivery partners to design a suitable scheme.

Cllr Hurst asked when the point would be reached when it was known who the potential partners were and what opportunities would be available.

R Sulley replied that there wasn't an answer available as yet. This was a live problem that was currently being worked on. As soon as there was something substantial to report on, such as an action plan, this would be publicised.

Cllr Jones questioned whether there were enough resources for all the consultation needed and also suggested a newsletter as a way of communication.

Dr D Smith commented that actions to achieve the low carbon goals could not be addressed by employing more people. Much of the effort and focus came from across the SCR teams and with partnerships with local authorities and other public bodies.

He gave examples of how the MCA and the two Sheffield universities were working with the energy sector and the housing sector to stimulate markets to grow in the right direction and create new jobs.

The MCA were committed to developing the Apprenticeship Hub, the details of which were still being considered. In broad principle it was a co-ordination to link businesses seeking apprentices to those who were wanting to access the apprenticeship system. D Smith would feedback the Committee's comments with regard to green jobs and how that might be factored into the consideration of the Apprenticeship Hub.

It was noted that rather than use a newsletter the MCA used social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter to get messages across.

Cllr Johnson queried whether the MCA were missing an opportunity to go into schools to educate the younger generation.

R Sulley replied that the MCA were not directly engaged with schools but had supported a Schools Climate Conference and would look to support this again next year.

There was more that could be done, and funding had been received to run some schools street events which would entail the closure of streets around schools during opening and closing time to encourage active travel.

RESOLVED – That the Committee:

- i) Note the contents of the report including the current engagement strategy and the increased and targeted communications during COP 26.

- ii) Write to the author of the public question to ensure that a full response had been given to the question and ask whether they require to raise any further points.

111 **Bus Service Improvement Plan**

A report was considered which gave an update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

P Beijer and C Shepherd gave a presentation on the progress made to date on the Bus Service Improvement Plan which included:

- A reminder of the original findings of the Bus Review.
- A logic map indicating the context, inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts.
- The scale of the challenge.
- The vision for the South Yorkshire bus network.
- Key findings from evidence and engagement.
- Next steps.

Cllr Wyatt questioned whether any data was being captured from the Operators on the levels of cancelled services as this seemed to be a problem at the moment, particularly in the evening.

C Shepherd replied that the data was collected by SYPTE. In terms of the BSIP the importance of reliability was recognised and also the need to extend the frequency of services in the core network especially in the evening.

Cllr Wyatt requested follow up on the data if available. He also asked about the criteria for bus passes, there seemed to have been a tightening up of bus passes for those with learning disabilities and he had representations from people who were having difficulty renewing their passes. At a time when patronage needed to be encouraged this was disappointing.

P Beijer commented that she would take the question away and respond to the Committee separately on the matter.

Cllr Smith commented that the report only provided one option and he was aware that the Transport Board had been given two options and had rejected setting long-term growth targets for bus patronage.

C Shepherd would compare the two reports and report back later in the meeting.

Cllr Ennis questioned whether any opposition had been encountered from the local bus operators in playing their part in the Enhanced Bus Partnerships.

C Shepherd replied that, so far, there had been no objections from the Operators to working in an Enhanced Partnership. It had been a collaborative process and officers met fortnightly with the operators. The plan had been developed in partnership with the operators. As part of the process, there was

a requirement from DfT that the Operators and MCA produced separate wish lists of activities. When the wish lists were compared, although there were some differences, there was a lot of commonalities between the two which had helped in pulling together the plan.

Cllr Singleton queried how demand responsive transport (DRT) would work, especially in rural areas.

C Shepherd explained that there was no single model for DRT but it would be designed around the needs of the location. In general terms DRT was a flexible service that would operate within a cordoned or defined area, would be booked through a platform, for example a mobile phone app, and would react to passenger demand.

Cllr Jones questioned where the role of Traffic Commissioners sat within the BSIP.

P Beijer replied that the Traffic Commissioners would continue to play a part in the ongoing operations of the bus service network. They played a key role in the registration of bus services or the de-registrations of bus services and it was anticipated that this role would continue under Enhanced Partnerships.

The Chair commented that the Committee would like to understand how an Enhanced Partnership would differ from the previous voluntary partnerships and the Committee on previous occasions had expressed a desire that an Enhanced Partnership was seen as a stepping stone and not the end result as there was a collective belief that a franchise type agreement would give more certainty to the quality of bus services in future,

C Shepherd replied that there were legal differences between the voluntary and enhanced partnerships and franchising and felt the question would be best answered outside the meeting with support from the legal team.

S Davenport commented that an Enhanced Partnership, once agreed, was a legally binding arrangement between the Authority and the operators whereby both parties had to fulfil certain legal obligations.

The previous voluntary partnerships, which had a certain amount of success, were completely voluntary and were not legally binding.

All these partnerships had to pass competition test and there were certain things that could not be done, for example around fare structures, but there were more measures that could be taken under an enhanced partnership provided they passed the competition test.

With regard to fare structures, the Chair commented that one of the concerns raised in the Bus Review was the need to have a simplified fare structure between the operators. And questioned whether an Enhanced Partnership would be able to address this issue.

S Davenport confirmed that the issue could potentially be addressed under the Enhanced Partnership.

The Chair commented that reduced patronage was still a concern and also highlighted the problems around driver shortages. There would also be a report to a future meeting on the success, or otherwise of the 25% reduction in fares over the summer.

D Smith informed the Committee that with regard to the question posed by Cllr Smith concerning decisions made by the Transport Board, it was not possible for an officer to comment on a decision made by another body. It would be possible to have a discussion with the Chair of the Transport Board about the rationale for the decision and report back.

Cllr Smith accepted this but questioned why no long-term targets were set for patronage as suggested in option 2 of the report. The general public would expect the BSIP to be a long-term plan and on reading the document it seemed there wasn't one.

D Smith explained that officers could not speak for members who had made the decision but could explain the advice given by officers to the Transport Board.

C Shepherd explained that the options related to the mandatory targets for the BSIP. The BSIP focused on the shorter term and set targets for 2024/25 around journey times, reliability, passenger numbers and passenger satisfaction. Longer term aspirations for these areas could be found in the Transport Strategy.

The advice given to the Transport Board was in regard to passenger numbers and how the figure was arrived at. Declining trends pre-Covid were discussed and the position when the BSIP started next year was considered, including the 2-year recovery period and how challenging that would be.

D Smith informed the Committee that the short term goals were to ensure the BSIP was submitted on time by the end of October and take the report to the November meeting of the MCA to start the process of the Enhanced Partnership. These were all on target.

RESOLVED – That the Committee:

- i) Note the content of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and that it would be submitted to government by 29 October 2021.
- ii) Express the view that long-term goals should not be lost sight of and that the BSIP should be a stepping-stone to consider much more radical changes to bus services in the future.

Mayoral Scrutiny

A report was submitted which provided the Committee with an update on the key priorities that the Mayor had set with the Executive Team for the remainder of the financial year and on which the programmes of activity were underway.

The report included updates on:

- Public Transport
- Active Travel
- Environment and Net Zero
- Skills and Education
- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Levelling Up and securing further resources to deliver
- South Yorkshire Renewal Fund
- Organisation

Cllr Wyatt conveyed congratulations to the Mayor for his role, as an MP, in securing the debate in Parliament on levelling up. The Committee needed to keep track of progress of the concept and how it was working in practice across South Yorkshire.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their contributions to the meeting and noted that it was the first time the Committee had achieved 100% attendance.

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date