

MCA - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

THURSDAY, 19 JANUARY 2023 AT 2.00 PM

SOUTH YORKSHIRE MCA, 11 BROAD STREET WEST,
SHEFFIELD, S1 2BQ



Present:

Councillor Colin Ross (Chair)	Sheffield City Council
Councillor John Clarke	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Jeff Ennis OBE	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Dianne Hurst	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Allan Jones	City of Doncaster Council
Councillor Bryan Lodge	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Joe Otten	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Ken Wyatt	Rotherham MBC

In Attendance:

Steve Davenport	Director of Law and Governance	SYMCA Executive Team
Gareth Sutton	Chief Finance Officer/S73 Officer	SYMCA Executive Team
John Dowie	Executive Director of Infrastructure and Place	SYMCA Executive Team
Roger Wilde	Senior Development Manager (Education & Skills)	SYMCA Executive Team
Ellen Hinsley	Minute Taker	SYMCA Executive Team

Apologies:

Councillor Thomas Collingham	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Jane Kidd	City of Doncaster Council

48 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and apologies were noted as above.

49 Urgent Items/Announcements

None.

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

None.

51 **Declarations of Interest by any Members**

Cllr Ennis declared an interest in agenda item no. 9 as a Member of the Board of Trustees of the National Horseracing College.

52 **Reports from and Questions by Members**

Cllr Jones questioned the possibility of additional scrutiny committees being set up to cover each Thematic Board to ensure that all decisions being made were scrutinised appropriately.

(Cllr Lodge joined the meeting.)

ACTION: The Director of Law and Governance advised that theoretically additional scrutiny committees aligned to each Board could be established and could be considered as part of the annual governance review to determine if appropriate/feasible. The matter would be reported back by the Scrutiny Officer at the next meeting.

53 **Questions from Members of the Public**

None.

54 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 20 October 2022**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 be approved.

55 **Matters Arising**

The Chair noted that with regards to minute no. 47, an email had been circulated, providing information on the numbers of bus stops with real time display units. Further information on their distribution across the region had been tabled at the meeting and he was therefore happy to close the action.

The remaining outstanding items were due to be considered at the March meeting.

RESOLVED that the Action Log be noted.

56 **Skills Strategy**

The Senior Development Manager (Business & Skills) provided a progress report on the development of a long term Skills Strategy.

The Education, Skills & Employability Board had commissioned the Strategy in January 2022. Since then, a series of sessions themed around the journey through education, training and work had been undertaken to identify key priorities for the Strategy. These included:

- Information, advice and guidance on careers;
- Sustainable funding;
- Collaboration across sectors;

- Locally delivered and driven;
- Learner focussed;
- Meaningful employer engagement.

The information generated was currently being collated to create a framework and delivery plan which would be tested throughout their development. Local authorities would be engaged to ensure alignment with local education, skills and employability plans. It was anticipated that a first draft would be completed by May 2023.

In response to questions, the Committee was informed that the MCA was working to align the Skills Strategy with local authorities' independent versions to ensure a common thread throughout South Yorkshire. It was also clarified that education and skills providers would be consulted on the draft version and any feedback received would be incorporated into the final Skills Strategy.

As a Member of the Board of Trustees, Cllr Ennis requested that the National Horseracing College be consulted at the draft stage of the Skills Strategy.

ACTION: The Senior Development Manager (Business & Skills) to ensure that the National Horseracing College be consulted at the draft stage of the Skills Strategy.

The number of young people not currently in any form of education or employment and the level of economic inactivity across the older generation were significant issues, both of which had worsened since the Covid pandemic. Another concern was the high proportion of those in low-skilled, low-paid work who did not go on to progress. A key feature to address this in the Skills Strategy was around the provision of careers information and guidance to support people in their development and career progression.

The Chair observed that it would be important to ensure that the provision of training courses matched the opportunities available.

ACTION: The Senior Development Manager (Business & Skills) to incorporate the Committee's comments into the Skills Strategy, particularly with regards to aligning training courses with available opportunities and the needs of employers.

The MCA's work in other areas such as net zero, digital literacy and inclusion were comprised within the Skills Strategy. The intention was to ensure that key areas became integral and inherent across all aspects of the MCA's work.

RESOLVED that the progress of the development and timeframe of the Strategy, be noted.

(The Senior Development Manager (Business & Skills) left the meeting.)

South Yorkshire Renewal Fund

The Committee received an update on the South Yorkshire Renewal Fund which was to be financed by the Gainshare settlement.

Gainshare provides more flexibility than other funding streams as it comes with fewer conditions and provides an opportunity for the MCA to be more proactive and ambitious. In addition, the MCA had been granted powers to borrow for all its functions which would allow the MCA to better time investment.

The MCA has taken the decision to phase the Gainshare investment and is currently in the midst of an interim step, which had been agreed to develop four Place Plans and a regional plan. In order to support delivery, £24m had been committed to the Project Feasibility Fund. A further £26m was also made available to ensure that ready capital schemes could be progressed.

Gainshare funded activity is reviewed by Government every 5 years, with the MCA due to have its first review in 2025.

The Committee welcomed the update and commended officers for the clear vision that had been set out.

Members discussed some of the disparities between the different Devolution Deals and noted that South Yorkshire had missed out on some benefits such as business rates retention. The timing of the South Yorkshire Devolution Deal during the first national lockdown had also been unfortunate, with the MCA initially reacting to the impacts of the pandemic. The MCA was now working hard to redress some of these issues and drive long term, meaningful change for the region.

The Executive Director of Finance & Investment advised that where possible the MCA would seek a return on investments and recycle these monies back into the system to fund further projects. He added that consideration would need to be given to inflation and the balance between the time value of money against interest costs.

The Chair requested that strong governance arrangements be put in place for any funding being delegated to local authorities in order to ensure any schemes brought forward were of a high quality.

ACTION: The Corporate Director Policy to attend a future meeting to discuss how success will be measured using the Outcomes Framework and key metrics.

ACTION: The Executive Director of Finance & Investment to provide the Committee with regular updates on the South Yorkshire Renewal Fund and the projects coming forward.

RESOLVED that the Renewal Fund Update be noted.

Home to School Transport Update

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place introduced an item on Home to School Transport.

Following the withdrawal of school services by First South Yorkshire, the MCA Board had approved the use of £5.1m of reserves to protect school bus

services until July 2024. However, this would be unsustainable longer term. It was essential that consideration was given to how to transition from the current funding arrangements to a future sustainable model.

The reduction in school services was inextricably linked to the challenges facing the wider bus network in South Yorkshire which had been in decline for several years. The situation had been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic with patronage yet to recover and operators struggling commercially.

The MCA had committed support to the wider network until July 2023 while Government funding was only confirmed until the end of March 2023. He cautioned that difficult decisions would need to be made whether Government continued their support or not. In recognition of the seriousness of the situation, the MCA Board had recently agreed to increase the transport levy by 2%. The MCA was also highlighting the scale of the problem with Government at every opportunity.

(Cllr Ennis and Cllr Wyatt left the meeting.)

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place reminded the Committee of the public consultation of bus priorities that had taken place the previous year which would be used to inform any decisions taken by the MCA.

ACTION: The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place to report back to the Committee with any developments on Home to School Transport at future meetings.

RESOLVED that Members consider the points raised and provide officers with any comments thereafter.

59

Transport Update

The Committee was provided with an update on other transport matters.

The Executive Director of Finance & Investment apprised Members of the current situation at Doncaster Sheffield Airport where interested investors were continuing to engage with Peel Group. The possibility of a compulsory purchase order was also being explored by Doncaster MBC.

The Executive Director of Infrastructure & Place advised that work with bus operators was ongoing to improve customer experience. Reliability and punctuality had improved but was not yet meeting targets. First were implementing a system to enable 'tap on' and 'tap off' across Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield which would simplify ticketing. The MCA was also continuing to work through the statutory process required for franchising.

(The Director of Law and Governance left the meeting.)

Although the £2 fare had surpassed expectations, this was largely through the transfer of existing passengers to the single fare ticket rather than an increase in overall patronage.

RESOLVED that the Transport Update be noted.

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

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date