

Mayoral Combined Authority Board

Monday, 05 June 2023

Pathways to Work Commission



Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Governance
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

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Executive Summary

The paper summarises the work programme and key lines of enquiry of the 'Pathways to Work' Commission being led by Barnsley MBC in partnership with the MCA.

The Commission is an independent Commission for Barnsley with one key line of enquiry:

"How does Barnsley enable all of our working age population, particularly those currently outside the labour market, achieve pathways to employment?"

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

The Commission will focus on the economically inactive population of Barnsley and enabling those furthest from the labour market to achieve pathways to employment. Through analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, an exploration of the lived experience of those who are economically inactive and hearing evidence from a range of stakeholders, the Commission will

develop an understanding of the barriers people experience and how these can be overcome. This will ensure people can be more ready for, get into and progress in work.

It is intended that the learning from this Commission will have these benefits:

- For businesses: in attracting new people to the workforce and supporting improved retention.
- For people: It should enable Barnsley and South Yorkshire businesses, agencies, and organisations to develop supportive policies and practices which create pathways back into work for this population.
- For places: Should the learning from the Commission be scaled up and adapted for South Yorkshire's places, it should increase the labour market, boost productivity in our places and increase our GVA for the region. It should also attract a greater diversity of people into the workforce from our communities.

Recommendations

That the MCA Board:

1. Notes the purpose and makeup of the Commission,
2. Notes the Mayor sitting as a full member of the Commission, providing a wider South Yorkshire perspective and championing the Commission's finding with Central Government.
3. Note the opportunity to apply the learning from Barnsley to South Yorkshire as a whole and scaling up potential solutions which emerge through innovative pathways to work programmes.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

None.

1. Background

1.1 The 'Pathways to Work' Commission was conceived by Barnsley Council to address the issue of its economically inactive population which stood at 23.9% of the working age population in the Jan – Dec 2022 year.

1.2 The aims of the Commission are to:

- Build up a comprehensive picture of the challenges the economically inactive are facing in their lives and their barriers to accessing employment, as well as acquiring a richer understanding of their personal situations, circumstances and aspirations.
- Analyse the policy landscape and interventions at a local, regional/sub-regional/national level to deepen our knowledge of how these different contexts overlap in Barnsley.
- Hear and gather evidence and fresh ideas from a range of sources on 'what works' to support people furthest from the labour market into employment. This will include evidence from other places and effective models developed in the UK and internationally.

- Review previous investments made in Barnsley and South Yorkshire over the last ten year period to analyse the conditions which have made previous investments successful or unsuccessful and what supports sustainable change.
- Work with the private sector to create an employment model to address economic inactivity in Barnsley.
- Recommend and invest in new pilots, trials and interventions based upon UK and international best practice to be ‘tested’ as part of the legacy of the ‘Pathways to Work’ Commission.

1.3 The Commission will run for twelve months from June 2023 to June 2024 and will have the following key lines of enquiry:

- Who is economically inactive in our borough and why?
- What distinguishes those who want a job from those who do not want a job? How do these two different self-identified groupings experience issues such as access to childcare, health restrictions, flexibility to work, work patterns and transport? What incentives and disincentives exist for these individuals to be more engaged in the labour market? What practical and employment support do people feel they need to move back into work and how would they like to see such support made available?
- What policies (national, sub-regional and local) are impacting on those who are economically inactive and causing these changes in their willingness and ability to work?
- What evidence do we have with regards to the types of support and initiatives have a lasting impact on the readiness and ability of people to return to and remain in work? What can we learn from these programmes to build a model? How would this model or models work to be effective for people and businesses?
- How would this learning from Barnsley be applied to other places and scaled up across South Yorkshire?

1.4 The Commission is made up of the following experts:

- Oliver Coppard, South Yorkshire’s Mayor
- Dan Jarvis, MP Barnsley Central
- Torsten Bell, CEO, Resolution Foundation, an economic thinktank
- Sue Pember, Director of Policy and External Relations, HOLEX (national professional body for adult education)
- Cath Sleeman, Head of Data Discovery at NESTA
- Valerie Hannon, Co-founded of the Global Education Partnership
- Nicki O’Connor, Strategic Partnership Manager (North West), Department for Work and Pensions

The Commission will also have representation from the private sector so the business voice can be strongly influential.

The Chair of the Commission will be Alan Milburn.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Data for Barnsley (Nomis Dec to Jan 2022) that 23.9% of the borough's population are economically inactive. It is likely this is due to ill health in some instances, mental health issues and other factors. A further 16.2% are retired (5,900). Over 16% of this group (6,000) people are interested in getting into work but lack the resources, skills and pathways to do so with the remaining 83.8% of these (30,600) declaring they don't want a job.

2.2 Levels of economic inactivity have increased not just in Barnsley but also across South Yorkshire, and this has become a major national policy issue which is impacting on our economic productivity and prosperity

The Commission is looking to understand these issues and the potential of those currently inactive to be more economically productive and participate more actively in the economic growth of the Barnsley borough.

2.3 South Yorkshire stands to learn from this 'deep dive' being conducted in Barnsley. While each of the four places which make up South Yorkshire have distinctive challenges, there is much similarity and cross-over in the labour markets of each.

It is therefore anticipated that the learning from the Commission will be broadly transferable across South Yorkshire.

2.4 This work builds on the South Yorkshire Mayor's commitment in his Manifesto 'Our Future: Rebuilding the Pride, Purpose and Prosperity of South Yorkshire' to:

- Work with our higher and further education institutions and skills providers to develop new routes to adult education that are more flexible and more accessible,
- Consider the challenge of productivity, how to provide relevant skills training, and how to drive-up employment and working standards in South Yorkshire while increasing jobs growth.

It also aligns with the emerging South Yorkshire Skills Strategy which is being produced by the MCA in collaboration with its Local Authority partners and a wide range of South Yorkshire employers, businesses, agencies and stakeholders.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

For the Mayor to be involved directly in the Commission to shape its enquiry, contribute to the overall strategic direction and feed in directly into the recommendations.

3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations:

The risk is that that the Mayor is viewed as favouring one part of the South Yorkshire Combined Authority over the other three areas. However, this is mitigated by having the support of the other Local Authorities and for the knowledge and learning taken from the commission to be shared with other constituent members of SYMCA. This option does present a unique opportunity however in that it opens the door for the Mayor to ensure that the insights and

discoveries of the Commission can be shared with and potentially applied across South Yorkshire in the future to address worklessness and productivity challenges. It also creates a possibility for the Mayor to engage the public (particularly in Barnsley) in conversations around economic inactivity which he can feed into the Commission as evidence. Participation in the Commission also enables the Mayor to have access to a pool of renowned expertise and knowledge in this area that he may not otherwise be able to access.

3.3 **Recommended Option**

Option 1 is recommended due to:

- Its alignment with the Mayoral Commitments in the Manifesto,
- The deep dive approach in Barnsley which gives it a forensic focus, rather than attempting to tackle this issue across all of South Yorkshire,
- The opportunities it affords for learning from the Commission and Barnsley that could be applied across the wider geography of South Yorkshire,
- The possibilities it provides for public engagement on this theme, to evidence the Mayor's concern for this issue and his ambition to find innovative solutions.

4. **Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 Consultation on the proposal has taken place with the Barnsley 2030 Partnership Board and Inclusive Economy Board, the Mayor of South Yorkshire and the MCA Executive Officer team. The proposal also has the full support of the Leader of Barnsley MBC who sits on the MCA Board.

4.2 A Stakeholder Reference Panel from Barnsley will be convened to advise and support the panel, made up of a wide range of stakeholders from the area who work in the employment & skills, health and wellbeing, voluntary and community, and business sectors. They will help to focus the explorations of the Commission, submit evidence and shape the findings and recommendations of the Commission.

The Commission will also undertake an extensive programme of community and business engagement with residents, organisations and businesses to attract evidence for the hearings of the Commission and will seek out the voices and experiences of those who are 'seldom heard' and most marginalised.

The Mayor will work with MCA officers and other South Yorkshire partners to bring a regional perspective into the stakeholder engagement, whilst still recognising that the primary focus of the Commission will be on Barnsley.

The findings of the Commission and its journey will be shared at a conference / sharing event when the findings and recommendations have been published. This will be hosted for a wide range of South Yorkshire and national stakeholders.

5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Should the MCA support the proposal, the first inception meeting of the Commission will take place in mid-June 2023.

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- 5.2 The Commission will be wholly run and managed by a small team in Barnsley MBC who will liaise closely with colleagues in the MCA. This will ensure optimal involvement on a range of areas including; skills and employment, economic development, business engagement, communications and PR and communications.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

- 6.1 There may be a request for a proportion of the costs of the Commission to come from the MCA, but this request will be for a relatively modest amount of money.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

- 7.1 No legal implications arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

- 8.1 No immediate HR implications.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

- 9.1 As stated above, the Commission will seek to engage the disengaged and those who are furthest away from the labour market and to create pathways for and with them into employment.

The Commission will work with the Mayor to ensure that the perspectives of Barnsley's diverse communities are embedded into the enquiry. An Equalities Impact Assessment would be carried out on all programmes developed through the Commission which will be scaled up across South Yorkshire.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

- 10.1 In South Yorkshire we are all working towards a fair and just transition and looking to protect our environment for future generations as well as tackle the Climate Emergency. While the work of the Commission doesn't directly address this challenge, we need to consider the opportunities presented by the Green Economy in all our work and the skills that will be needed by people to participate actively in the new green industrial revolution. This should be a constant theme and thread in the dialogue of the Commission.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

- 11.1 It is proposed that the sharing event be live-streamed so there will be IT implications associated with that. This will be organised by BMBC.

- 11.2 It is possible the Mayor may wish to hold an online or live-streamed public conversation in Barnsley on this theme to gather evidence to feed into the Commission's hearings.

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 Consultation has taken place with the Assistant Director Communications at SYMCA.

12.2 A detailed comms plan would be agreed between the MCA Comms team and BMBC, in addition to agreed Communications protocols being put in place to respect the ownership of the Commission.

List of Appendices Included:

A SYMCA & BMBC Pathways to Work Briefing Slides.

Background Papers

None.