May 2020

Mayor's Update

Purpose of Report

To provide LEP Board Members with an update on key Mayoral activity relating to the economic agenda.

1. **The Covid-19 pandemic**

   Since the LEP's Board last meeting at the beginning of March our daily lives have changed beyond recognition as the nation and world has been gripped by the struggle against the Covid-19 pandemic.

   As the greatest challenge we face, our response to the coronavirus will define our society for years and decades to come. Future generations will judge us by our actions, and we cannot and must not be found wanting.

2. **The response effort**

   I am doing everything I can to keep our economy afloat. I have brought together our key regional stakeholders and anchor institutions to forge a collective economic response to the crisis through the South Yorkshire Economic Recovery Group.

   I am working around the clock to ensure South Yorkshire has what it needs to respond to the virus. We are in close contact with the Local Resilience Forum, Integrated Care System, Public Health England, Police and Government and want to reassure everyone the best preparations are being made.

   The activity I have undertaken to support our response to the crisis includes:

   Supporting the NHS and social care sector

   - Campaigned for the NHS and its hard-working staff to get the equipment and support they need during the pandemic, and pressed for free parking for NHS key workers.

   - Lined up South Yorkshire's industry to help with the production of PPE and hand sanitiser for the NHS and social care sector.

   Backing business and our workers

   - Put more resource into Growth Hub, to ensure South Yorkshire businesses can access advice and support during COVID-19.

   - Written to 7,500 South Yorkshire businesses to make them aware of the support on offer from Government. Launched an online social media awareness campaign – providing businesses with targeted, more detailed support on the Government schemes relevant to them.

   - Created a [dedicated webpage](#) which consolidates all available support and information for

businesses and the self-employed.

- Lobbied the Government for additional support for small businesses, who currently fall between the gaps of their rescue packages in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

- Secured Government backing to support local newspapers with a public information advertising campaign during Coronavirus.

- Asked Government to make import tax payments more flexible so that businesses like Distinction Doors in South Yorkshire can continue to receive orders from overseas and keep people in work.

- Begun looking at the scope for flexing the 'Skills Bank' initiative to offer additional training for businesses that need help to stabilise and move, for example, to online operations.

- Raised the issue of workers' rights and social distancing guidelines for warehouse and distribution staff in South Yorkshire directly with the Business Secretary.

Kept South Yorkshire moving

- Secured a deal with Department for Transport and Operators to ensure Supertram remains operational despite low patronage – ensuring key workers can continue to get to Sheffield's hospitals. Total investment in South Yorkshire's transport network worth £11m.

- Secured new funding to support active travel as Covid-19 lockdown measures are eased, making it easier for more people to cycle to work, instead of returning to their cars.

- Committed to maintaining pre-COVID levels of concessions for bus operators until at least June 2020.
- Extended concessionary travel to over 65s to ensure they can access supermarket grace shopping periods.

Supporting the Combined Authority's work to create prosperous places

- Lobbied the Government to release devolution monies and provide greater flexibility on existing funds to provide instant support to those affected by COVID-19.

- Making the case for changes to Government's Green Book, to ensure that more investments are made in South Yorkshire and the North.

- Lobbied the Government for additional support for anchor institutions in South Yorkshire, including our Universities and our local authorities.

- Deferred loans for three major companies to ensure cash flow, protect jobs and provide certainty.

- Maintained a commitment to a £5m loan to Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

3. **The recovery and renewal effort**

I welcome the commitment from the Prime Minister to work closely with Mayors to lead the country out of the coronavirus pandemic. We must build on these constructive discussions with Government to ensure Mayors have a strong mandate to transform our economy and society. The scale of the underlying challenges to be overcome, so it's vital Mayoral Combined Authorities have meaningful powers and resources to build a brighter future and truly level up.

Covid-19 and the associated lockdown has shone a spotlight on some of the uncomfortable truths by which our society has operated. Every death from this virus is a tragedy, but the latest data from the Office of National Statistics shows the disproportionate impact on the country's most

deprived communities[1].

This will mean that we need to think beyond merely 'recovering' from this crisis. Our combined efforts therefore also need to be about renewal and resilience. We have a once in a generation opportunity to build a better Britain; one that is economically robust, socially just and which addresses the climate emergency.

South Yorkshire stands ready to not just close these divides but play a leading role in transforming our region and nation. My Economic Recovery Group brings together the region's major institutions, including the private sector, business bodies, universities, trade unions, local authorities and community groups to lead our fightback to the pandemic.

The Mayoral Combined Authority has a vital role to play, both in the response to the Coronavirus pandemic and in the South Yorkshire we rebuild – together – in its aftermath.

---

[1]

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsinvolving covid19bylocalareasanddeprivation/deathsoccurringbetween1marchand17april