

Report to Sheffield City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting:	11 th April 2019
Subject:	South Yorkshire Bus Review
Purpose of the Report:	To provide an update the Scrutiny Committee on the South Yorkshire Bus Review being led by Clive Betts, MP
The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:	Note the Terms of Reference (Annex A) and; offer any views on the suggested key lines of enquiry (outlined under 'matters for consideration')
Category of Report: Open	
Under the Freedom of Information Act and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, this paper and any appendices will be made available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme. This scheme commits the Authority to make information about how decisions are made available to the public as part of its normal business activities.	

Summary:

This briefing report provides Scrutiny Committee Members with an update on the South Yorkshire Bus Review that is being led by Clive Betts, MP, on behalf of the Mayor. Specifically, it provides information on:

1. the recent history of bus services in South Yorkshire;
2. the approach to the review including key lines of enquiry; and
3. an indicative timeline for the review.

It also gives Committee members the opportunity to offer any views on the suggested key lines of enquiry.

1. Introduction/Context

Recent history of bus services in South Yorkshire

In England, bus services were deregulated in 1986 following the introduction of the Transport Act 1985 – except for those in London which remained regulated. Over the last 25 years annual bus journeys per person in cities outside of London have fallen by 40% and the trend of declining patronage is replicated in South Yorkshire. Additionally, car usage in South Yorkshire is increasing, which runs counter to national trends. However, 82% of all public transport journeys in South Yorkshire are undertaken by bus and many people (particularly those on low incomes) rely on bus services for their primary mode of transport.

As a result of deregulation, bus services in South Yorkshire are operated commercially under bus partnership arrangements which were introduced between 2012 and 2017. This means that decisions about how the system operates are taken in consultation between operators, South

Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) and local authorities – and the public where appropriate.

Whilst offering benefits, there are arguably some limitations to the current partnership arrangement. For example, the approach does not extend to decisions on setting fares and as the membership is voluntary, operators can still push through changes that may negatively impact the overall level of service.

In 2017, the Government introduced the Bus Services Act, which presents local and combined authorities with new powers including an enhanced framework for authorities to work in partnership with operators to set a shared vision for their area in addition to franchising provisions.

2. Matters for Consideration

Approach to the bus review

Dan Jarvis, Sheffield City Region Mayor, has invited Clive Betts MP to lead an independent commission reviewing the provision of bus services across South Yorkshire with a view to bringing forward evidenced, practical, ambitious recommendations for improvements to encourage patronage, improve viability and ensure the bus system is fit for the 21st century.

The review is part of the Mayor's broader 'Vision for Transport' (adopted by the Mayoral Combined Authority in December 2018) which aims to transform the City Region's transport network so as to improve the quality of life for all and support sustainable economic growth.

The Chair is in the process of identifying a small number (c.6 - 8) of commissioners to join the review, who will contribute a range of thinking and support him carrying out the programme of work, leading to an interim and subsequently a final report containing conclusions and recommendations. The intention is to establish a balanced, expert panel who will bring insight from a range of perspectives – the members of the commission need not all have expertise in the sector.

Terms of Reference for the review have been agreed with the Chair (*Appendix A*) and while it will be for the Commission to determine *how* it wishes to operate - within agreed parameters - the following key lines of enquiry have been suggested in the first instance:

- The current condition of the commercial and community bus transport sector in South Yorkshire including reasons for the decline in registered bus services and passenger numbers,
- The social, environmental and economic impacts of this decline, and
- The steps that should be taken to ensure commercial bus and community transport services meet the needs of South Yorkshire residents.

The commission's role will also be to review evidence, interview stakeholders in closed sessions and occasionally meet in public and conduct fieldwork visits.

Indicative timeline

The Commission is expected to be in place and an interim set of findings will be presented by the commission to the Mayor in October 2019, leading to the submission of a final report containing findings and recommendations for improvement at the end of the year.

a. Financial

There are no financial implications from this paper/presentation

b. Legal

There are no legal implications from this paper/presentation

c. Risk Management

There is a risk that the public and bus operators perceive the review as having a pre-determined outcome – i.e. franchising. This misconception is addressed as part of the communications campaign, and a response it outlined in the frequently asked questions document (*Annex B*).

d. Environmental

There are no environmental implications arising from this paper/presentation

e. Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment will be completed as part of the options analysis that will inform the recommendations made by the commission.

f. Performance Management/Measuring Outcomes

This section is not applicable for this update paper

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

This section is not applicable for this update paper.

4. Issues the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider

- Note the Terms of Reference
- Provide any views on the key lines of enquiry

5. Recommendations

This section is not applicable for this update paper

6. Appendices/Annexes

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

The following section is a legal requirement

Report Author:	Jo Kaczmarek
Job Title:	Bus review secretariat
Officer responsible:	Ruth Adams
Organisation:	Sheffield City Region Executive Team
Email:	Jo.Kaczmarek@sheffieldcityregion.org.uk
Telephone:	07892 763491
Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at:	
Other sources and references:	

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Mayor is launching a time limited commission to examine all aspects of the South Yorkshire bus transport system and services with a view to identifying and recommending improvements that will benefit users as well as supporting the broader sustainability of the bus transport sector.

2. Purpose

The Bus Review is being undertaken to provide the Sheffield City Region Mayor with independent evidence on:

- The current condition of the commercial bus and community transport sector, including the reasons for the decline in both registered bus services and bus passenger numbers;
- The social, environmental and economic impacts of this decline in bus services and passenger numbers; and
- The steps which should be taken to ensure commercial bus and community transport services meet the needs of residents.

Key lines of enquiry (KLEs) flowing from the above will be for the Chair and Commission to determine having additional regard to the Mayor's transport ambition as articulated in the Sheffield City Region Transport Vision and related Transport Strategy. The review will consider:

- Trends in bus use and factors contributing to these trends;
- How to increase bus patronage - generally and in relation to different demographic groups including: young people, the elderly, minority ethnic groups; key workers; those on low incomes, those with mobility issues;
- How to improve provision for potentially isolated residents and communities;
- How to improve 'quality' of services with an emphasis on the bus user experience;
- How to improve 'connectivity' (as described in the Transport Vision) within the region;
- The commercial operation of the bus sector; including the responsibilities of key actors; strategic planning and regulatory matters;
- Adequacy of funding and best approaches to securing future investment in the sector and ensuring sustainability; and
- What can be learnt from other city/city region approaches to any/all of the above.

3. The Review Panel: Chair and Commissioners

The Review will be chaired by Clive Betts MP. The Chair will lead the work of the Review to ensure that it independently considers all the evidence available to fulfil its purpose. The Chair will be supported by a small panel of independent Commissioners. The appointment of these Commissioners will be determined by the Chair taking into consideration advice from MCA officers (who will provide a Secretariat function – see below). The ambition will be to appoint a 'balanced panel' comprising a range of independent experts and informed user voices and having regard to diversity criteria.

Stakeholder groups, such as transport operators, will not be directly represented on the Commission – though their informed views will be sought and given full consideration in evidence gathering.

Officials will support the Chair throughout the appointments process.

4. Timescales and Meeting Frequency

It will be for the Commission to determine how it wishes to operate (within budgetary constraints) and the frequency of its meetings with a view to completing its work in approximately 9 months.

The Commission will determine how it wishes to gather evidence and the balance of meetings to be held in private and public.

An interim report on the emerging findings of the Review should be provided to the Mayor six months into the Commission. This will be used as a basis of discussion with the Mayor. A final report should be published at the end of the full term of the inquiry.

5. Review outputs

The output of the Review should be a report that:

- Summarises the evidence available in relation to the three areas set out in section 1.
- Draws conclusions on what this evidence is saying in terms of the performance of the bus network.
- Makes recommendations to the Mayor on the actions he should take to address this issue.

6. Secretariat Support

The Review will be supported by a small secretariat function provided by the Sheffield City Region Executive. Working with the Chair, the function will be responsible for:

- Organising meetings of the Commission and providing secretariat support;
- Supporting evidence gathering activities, including any call for evidence;
- Supporting stakeholder engagement processes in concert with the Chair and Panel; and
- Bringing together the interim report and report of the Review outcomes.

Subject to discussion with the Chair, the work of the Secretariat may be supplemented with specialist technical analysis. This will help bring together the evidence received and support the panel in its interpretation and the development of conclusions.

A budget (to be determined) will be made available for the Review to meet the costs of dedicated secretariat support, additional specialist analytical support, and external travel and events.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is a review of bus services needed?

A: Outside of London, annual bus journeys in cities have fallen per person by 40% over the last 25 years. The trend of declining patronage is replicated in South Yorkshire. There is a need to identify and understand the underlying bus patronage in the region while at the same time identify the appropriate models of bus operation that can help achieve wider transport aspirations.

Q: How does this relate to the Mayor's Vision for Transport?

A: In December 2018 Mayor Dan Jarvis launched a new transport vision that aims to build a transport system that works for everyone. At the heart of the vision are active travel, improved public transport and reduced journey times. 82% of all public transport journeys in South Yorkshire are undertaken by bus and therefore improvements to bus services identified through this review are a key focus for improved public transport and ensure the whole system is fit for the 21st century.

Q: Who is the independent chair of the bus review?

A: The Mayor (Dan Jarvis) has asked Clive Betts to independently chair the review in order to fully examine all aspects of bus services in South Yorkshire. Clive is a Member of Parliament for Sheffield South East and is also chair of the Housing, Community and Local Government Select Committee.

Q: Why has an independent chair been appointed to oversee the bus review?

A: The Mayor (Dan Jarvis) has asked Clive Betts to independently chair the review so that he can impartially examine all aspects of bus services in South Yorkshire. While the manifesto stated that the Mayor "can and will consider using regulatory powers to improve bus services" there is a need to consider all options before deciding on whether to exercise these powers. An independent chair is well-placed to put forward evidence and recommendations to the Mayor for him to decide what improvements are needed.

Q: When will the review be finished?

A: It is anticipated that a report will be considered by the Mayor at the end of this year.

Q: What issues will be considered as part of the review?

A: The review will examine a wide number of issues concerning bus services across South Yorkshire. They include but are not limited to:

- Current passenger and usage trends
- How to increase passenger numbers – particularly in relation to different demographic groups such as the elderly, minority ethnic groups, those with mobility issues and those on low incomes
- What the access, quality, frequency and connectivity challenges people face
- How to improve connectivity within the region
- How improved services can be delivered and what resources are required to implement them
- What we can learn from other areas of the country and about wider ways of incentivising bus travel

Q: How can I submit evidence to the review? How can I tell you what I think?

A: The review will include a call for evidence whereby members of the public, bus operators, community and transport interest groups and any other organisations will be able to submit evidence on the issues that are being examined. Details of the call for evidence are being finalised and will be published on the Sheffield City Region [website](#). In the meantime, people can use the SY Bus Review email address: SYBusReview@sheffieldcityregion.org.uk

Q: Is this a foregone conclusion? Will the Mayor be using powers under the Bus Services Act 2017 to take over regulation of the buses in South Yorkshire?

A: The Mayor recognises the importance of looking at regulation of bus services and the role which it can play. However, before going down the regulatory route we must comprehensively understand the nature of the problems faced by bus users, prospective users and operators alike and explore all options for improvement.

Q: What is bus service franchising?

A: The Bus Services Act 2017 gives Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) the power to enact bus franchising. Franchising allows MCAs to determine the details of the bus services that needed to be provided – including where they run, when they run and the standards of the vehicles. The Bus Services Act 2017 also gave MCAs the power to introduce ticketing schemes whereby an MCA can specify the establishment of multi-operator and multi-modal ticketing and the technologies to be accepted on services.

Q: Why is the review just of bus services across South Yorkshire?

A: The Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority (SCR MCA) is made up of four local authority constituent members: Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. These four local authorities make up the South Yorkshire region. The SCR MCA can exercise powers to make decisions about transport, economic development and regeneration. There are five local authorities represented on the MCA as non-constituent members: Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, Derbyshire Dales, Bassetlaw and Bolsover. The SCR MCA cannot exercise powers in relation to the non-constituent members.

Q: Will the review hold bus operators to account for improvement or changes to specific services?

A: The review will examine a broad range of issues including passenger trends, challenges people face and ways to increase patronage numbers. Evidence will be gathered in several ways including a call for evidence. Public and interest groups may wish to submit specific information as part of the call for evidence about bus routes or services in South Yorkshire that could be improved. The chair of the review will consider all the evidence received in totality and use it to make recommendations about how to improve bus services across South Yorkshire. These may relate to specific services and routes or systemic improvements.