

MCA - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

THURSDAY, 29 JULY 2021 AT 2.00 PM

SHEFFIELD CITY REGION, 11 BROAD STREET WEST,
SHEFFIELD, S1 2BQ



Present:

Councillor Jeff Ennis	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Dianne Hurst	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Allan Jones	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Colin Ross	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Ken Wyatt (Reserve)	Rotherham MBC

Officers in Attendance:

Dr Dave Smith	Chief Executive	MCA Executive Team
Dr Ruth Adams	Deputy Chief Executive	MCA Executive Team
Steve Davenport	Principal Solicitor & Monitoring Officer	MCA Executive Team
Stephen Batey	Head of Mayor's Office	SCR Mayor's Office
Christine Marriott	Scrutiny Officer	MCA Executive Team
Gillian Richards	Minutes	

Apologies:

Councillor Emily Barley	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Bryan Lodge	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Jo Newing	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Martin Smith	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Austen White	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Ian Auckland	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Penny Baker	Sheffield City Council
Councillor Tracey Wilson	Rotherham MBC
Gareth Sutton	MCA Executive Team

87 Welcome and Apologies

S Davenport informed members that the meeting was not quorate.

Apologies were noted as above.

88 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

As the meeting was not quorate this item was deferred to the next meeting of

the Committee.

S Davenport asked for nominations for a Member to Chair the meeting.

Cllr Ross was nominated and seconded and took the Chair.

89 **Urgent Items/Announcements**

Cllr Ross welcomed Cllr Hurst to her first meeting. Cllr Ross asked that a letter of thanks for their contribution to the Committee be sent to outgoing Members Cllrs Steele, Baker, Elliott and Lofts.

Action: Letter of thanks to be sent to Cllrs Steele, Baker and Lofts.

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

None.

91 **Declarations of Interest by any Members**

None.

92 **Question and Answer Session with Mayor Jarvis**

Mayor Jarvis gave an update on MCA issues.

- Covid infections had been rising steeply across the region but the vaccine had made a huge difference in weakening the link between infections and hospitalisations. South Yorkshire still had 230,000 unvaccinated adults which was approximately 20% of the region's adult population.
- There is a real issue was staff absence across all sectors due to people needing to self-isolate.
- The latest numbers showed that £45.6m of Additional Restrictions Grant funding had been moved into the South Yorkshire economy in just 231 days. This was expected to reach almost £50m before the scheme ended.
- The Government had announced unwelcome changes to healthcare boundaries with Bassetlaw being removed.
- Work was ongoing to translate the broad principles of the Bus Review into a practical roadmap.
- Public transport patronage was still way below what it was pre-pandemic.
- The MCA had recently agreed to discount all Travelmaster bus and tram fares by 25% in an attempt to boost patronage. This was in addition to discounted fares for 18-21-year-olds.
- Mask wearing requirements are still in place in bus interchanges; this is the only part of the network under the MCA's control.
- There was still great uncertainty over the eastern leg of HS2, of Northern Powerhouse Rail and the direct connection to Manchester Airport.
- Longer term work on the Bus Service Improvement Plan remained a priority and was on track to deliver the Plan by the end of October.

- On that basis, a decision about operating structures and whether or not to proceed to franchising would be made no later than early 2022.
- Negotiations were proceeding for the Enhanced Partnerships.
- Decarbonisation was a key issue. The MCA had moved to the second round of the competition for ZEBRA funding to buy new zero carbon buses.
- The Government had confirmed revenue funding until April 2022 to keep Supertram going.
- The MCA had submitted a full £50m bid to the Levelling Up Fund and were preparing another large bid for the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund.

The Chair thanked Mayor Jarvis for the update.

Cllr Jones commented on the Government's recent decision to nationalise Forgemasters and questioned whether the same could be done to buses.

Mayor Jarvis welcomed the Government's decision on Forgemasters which would secure the future of the business.

Currently the MCA were working through the process that would deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan in October for which real resource would be required; it was not yet known what the National Bus Strategy would unlock. In the end, whatever the MCA decided to do, a way had to be found to pay for it.

The process that had led to Manchester's decision to move to franchising had taken a number of years and used a significant amount of public resource. He assured members that everyone was working tirelessly to produce the best possible plan for the region's buses.

Cllr Wyatt queried whether there were any proposals for the expansion of tram/train.

Mayor Jarvis replied that the MCA believed in tram/train capability and that it had huge potential but the reality was that the Integrated Rail Plan was still awaited which would provide clarity on the Government's intentions for investing in the rail network for the north of England. In the absence of clarity it was difficult to make plans.

S Edwards commented that preliminary work had been done to look at where tram/train could be a feasible alternative, but this could not be taken any further until there was clarity.

Cllr Ross commented on the importance of park and ride facilities when looking at proposals for the expansion of tram/train or extra stations on the rail network to avoid congestion as an unintended consequence.

Mayor Jarvis agreed and the MCA would work with local authorities to secure satisfactory outcomes.

Cllr Hurst commented on the skills gaps that were evident and the importance of SME's to economic recovery who had reported they were experiencing

taking up apprenticeships.

Mayor Jarvis replied that he believed the skills agenda was fundamental to economic success in South Yorkshire. This importance was properly reflected in the Strategic Economic Plan and the Renewal Action Plan.

The MCA had made a decision to create a Renewal Fund which would mean resources and flexibility to invest in people and businesses. Work was ongoing on the Adult Education Budget which had recently been devolved to the MCA. The Authority's Education, Skills and Employability (ESE) Board was also heavily involved in the skills agenda.

D Smith commented that the ESE Board had recently approved a scheme to establish an Apprenticeship Hub for South Yorkshire which was intended to provide support to smaller businesses to access apprenticeships. This was in the early stages of development and officers would be happy to report back to the Committee on progress in the future.

The Chair welcomed this suggestion and asked that it be logged as a future agenda item.

Action: C Marriott to add progress on Apprenticeship Hub to the OSC Work Programme.

Cllr Ennis commented that the MCA was investing £358m in 2021/22 through the South Yorkshire Renewal Fund with four different funding stream areas, all of which had been allocated differing amounts. He asked if there was any flexibility in the fund if one area was proving to be much better value for money than others.

Mayor Jarvis replied that the Government had imposed certain restrictions on how the money could be spent and there was strict criteria on how funds were allocated, within this it was intended to be as flexible as possible.

D Smith commented that the critical issue was that the powers that came with devolution and the powers to create a Renewal Investment Strategy (which would become live in April 2022) would mean that there would be the flexibility to team and ladle pots of money in an efficient and effective way that currently could not be done.

The real advantage came with the Mayor's approach to an investment strategy by the use of the Gainshare devolved funds was that it allowed much more strategic decisions to be made and to adhere to the Authority's long term plans.

The Chair commented that the statistics the Mayor had mentioned regarding the take-up of the Covid-19 vaccine were quite worrying and asked what steps would be taken to improve this and whether there were any specific areas of communities that needed targeting.

Mayor Jarvis replied that he had weekly meetings with Sir Andrew Cash to discuss the numbers and he received regular briefings from Public Health

England.

He reiterated what an outstanding job the NHS had done in rolling out the vaccination supported by a large number of volunteers.

In terms of the question, the Mayor would get the latest figure from the NHS and communicate them to Committee members along with whether there were any specific cohorts of the population who were not vaccinated or any geographical hotspots. At this point the general message was that every adult who had not come forward for the vaccinations should do so immediately.

Action: Mayor Jarvis to inform OSC of latest vaccination figures.

In answer to a question from the Chair, D Smith explained that the Additional Restrictions Grant funding had been used to assist businesses who had been affected by the Pandemic but had not been eligible for support from the national support fund. These had been, in the main, SME's whose businesses were allied to the leisure industry e.g. wedding photographers.

Cllr Ennis questioned whether it was known how many businesses and/or jobs had been saved by these grants.

D Smith replied that he did not have the exact figures to hand but would be happy to circulate them to Members after the meeting.

Action: Details of jobs/businesses saved by the Additional Restrictions Grant to be circulated after the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Mayor for his attendance at the meeting and looked forward to further updates in the future.

The Mayor reiterated his thanks to the Chair for his agreement to bring an urgent item to the recent MCA meeting which had allowed a timely decision on a reduction in bus fares to be made.

93

South Yorkshire Renewal Fund

F Kumi-Ampofo gave a presentation on the South Yorkshire Renewal Fund which covered:

- What was the South Yorkshire Renewal Fund (SYRF) and why it was needed.
- A new way of working – principles and what would be different.
- The prize on offer and the current position.
- The key political drivers guiding the approach and what was already in place.
- The timeline – what was needed to be achieved by April 2022 and the process to get there, plus next steps.

The Chair thanked F Kumi-Ampofo for the presentation and asked for questions from Members.

Cllr Jones expressed concern that he could see the income to support investment but could not see what the expenditure would be to secure the investments, in other words how much would borrowing to support investment cost.

The Chair questioned what safeguards were in place to prevent the build-up of large amounts of debt.

F Kumi-Ampofo explained that a lot more detail around MCA responsibilities, safeguards and governance arrangements would be provided in due course. It was the beginning of the process to agreeing a Borrowing Cap with Treasury and then the agreement would need Parliamentary approval.

The Chair commented that this would have to be returned to over time when more information was available to receive further assurance.

D Smith commented that as negotiations moved forward with HM Treasury more details and the terms of any borrowing would be provided to the Committee.

Cllr Ennis commented that of the four political drivers that had been identified it appeared that 'equity' would be the most difficult to achieve and questioned how this could be achieved across the four local authorities who each had their own differing agendas.

F Kumi-Ampofo agreed that this would be challenging and work would be needed to move mind-sets from calculating what would be a 'fair share' to focus on priorities and outcomes for each area whilst ensuring the MCA was investing in projects that were aligned to the MCA's objectives and outcomes.

Cllr Hurst questioned the investment principles in particular sustained investment and how social impact could be measured.

It was agreed there was no easy answer to this. The Finance Director was working on a paper to look at the position the MCA should consider taking on a case to case basis when investment opportunities arose. For example in some cases the MCA could act as the funder and in others the financier.

Details were still being worked through and would be provided in due course – this would include a 'toolbox' of financial options.

The Chair questioned how the effectiveness of investments would be measured.

F Kumi-Ampofo explained that the MCA had approved a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Gainshare came with conditions including evaluation and review points where the MCA had to work with Government to evaluate impacts.

Work was ongoing to develop a 'Data and Intelligence Hub' which would be a real life platform which would use a series of measures and indicators to assess performance and effectiveness.

In answer to a question from the Chair, D Smith confirmed that the strategy allowed for long-term investment and had moved away from funds having to be spent within a certain time limit.

The Chair thanked F Kumi-Ampofo for the presentation.

94 **Reports from and Questions by Members**

None.

95 **Questions from Members of the Public**

None.

96 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 25 March 2021**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 March 2021 be agreed as a true record.

97 **Matters Arising**

None.

98 **OSC Action Register Update**

The Committee received updates on actions from previous meetings.

Action 2 – Workshop on the Assurance Framework.

Update: Virtual workshop arranged for 10th August 2021.

Action: C Marriott to update the Action Log as “Action Complete”.

Action 4 – Evaluating Outcomes and Value for Money from Active Travel Projects.

Update: Report not yet available.

Action: C Marriott to chase.

Action 5 – Recommendation by OSC to include a Climate Change Impact Assessment on MCA reports.

Update: Amended template was implemented in June 2021.

Action - C Marriott to update the Action Log as “Action Complete”.

Action 6 – Monitor public engagement and consultation in addressing climate change challenges.

Update: OSC to discuss further at Work Programme meeting on 02.09.21.

Action 7 – OSC to receive quarterly performance reports from Mayor Jarvis regarding evaluation/priorities for 2021.

Update: To discuss further at Work programme meeting on 2 September 2021.

Action 3 – Request information regarding the petition received at the January 2021 MCA meeting regarding customer service attitudes/

Update: Report was currently in draft form and would be shared with the Chair when complete.

Action 3 – Integration of MCA and SYPTE – to determine cost of the Strategic Partner.

Update: R Adams had supplied the information to Members via email.

Action - C Marriott to update the Action Log as “Action Complete”.

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

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was considered.

No questions were raised by Members.

C Marriott informed the Committee that a further Forward Plan of Key Decisions would be published on Tuesday of the following week.

This would be discussed further at the next agenda setting meeting.

100 **Work Programme Meeting**

It was noted that the next Work Programme meeting would be a virtual meeting on 2 September 2021.

The Chair commented that it was unfortunate that the meeting had not been quorate. He had noticed that there were some vacant substitute positions and requested Members to try ensure that these positions were filled.

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

Signed

Name

Position

Date