

Committee/Board Name and Date of Meeting:
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date:
26 October 2021

Report Title

Public engagement/consultation since the declaration of a Climate Emergency at the MCA Board meeting in November 2019

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

Director Approving Submission of the Report:
Martin Swales, Interim Director of Transport, Housing and Infrastructure

Report Author(s):
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Net Zero Project Director

Executive Summary

This report follows the request from the OSC for an update on the progress of public consultation and engagement following the climate emergency declaration. This report highlights the work undertaken so far and the networks formed.

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

The need to drive toward a low carbon economy is critical to businesses, people and places of South Yorkshire, both in terms of ongoing prosperity, future growth and most importantly to limit the impacts of anthropogenic climate change.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider and comment upon the main contents of the report including the current engagement strategy, and the increased and targeted comms during COP26.

1. Background

- 1.1 In November 2019, the Sheffield City Region (SCR) Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) declared a Climate and Environmental Emergency. In January 2020, the MCA Board approved the Climate Response Framework (CRF) which split the challenge into five areas: Leadership, Carbon Reduction, Carbon Capture, Climate Adaptation, and Climate Economy to achieve a Net Zero economy by 2040.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested a report covering:
 - Progress on engaging/consulting with the public following the MCA commitment to review and strengthen the approach to public engagement in January 2021, what actions has the Mayor taken?
 - How much public engagement has been carried out to date?
 - What elements/concerns have come out of public engagement/consultation.
 - How are you going to take account of public feedback?
 - What is the plan and vision for engaging with the public?
 - What are the Mayor's metrics around public engagement? What is being monitored and how is it measured? What are the plans for developing these metrics?
- 1.3 In 2020 the SYMCA commissioned a report from Urban Foresight identifying 18 strategic activities which should be delivered as part of a net zero programme
- 1.4 That report highlighted that a communication strategy would be vital to the long-term success of delivering against the targets set.
- 1.5 The report also identified that mixed and inconsistent messaging has been raised as a challenge by multiple stakeholders from local authorities, business and community organisations. Stakeholders are keen to play a role in achieving the Net Zero target and a coordinated communications strategy will ensure the energy of stakeholders is harnessed and deployed effectively and efficiently.
- 1.6 To do this successfully the MCA should collaborate with different organisations on designing the communications messaging, including those in the Climate Alliance and business membership bodies. This is especially the case for engaging different businesses and communities, particularly hard to reach members of the community who can be engaged by small and hyper-local groups. Local authorities will have an important part to play in communicating with their communities and promoting their own activities and programmes. However, these should relate to and align with the MCA programme campaigns and can be coordinated through councillor and officer briefings.
- 1.7 In April 2021 the SYMCA employed a Net Zero Project Director (NZPD) with the aim of operationalising the Net Zero Programme and embedding a sustainability culture across the organisation's activities.
- 1.8 The Mayor has taken up the role of Vice Chairman of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission, which aims to bring together public, private and third sector actors to support, guide and track the delivery of ambitious climate actions across the region.

- 1.9 MCA officers are also involved in formulating the action plan of the commission and incorporate both the commission's findings and public input into further programme development.
- 1.10 The NZPD has developed networks with interest groups to understand their concerns and priorities. Regular meetings have been held with members of the South Yorkshire Climate Alliance each covering a different theme, Energy, Jobs and Skills, Housing, Transport, Education. These initial meetings have now been extended to other officers in the MCA to broaden the depth of influence and collaboration.
- 1.11 The business and industrial community has been approached through specific meetings with trade association representatives, individual companies and through networks in place with other regional bodies such as the Electrical District Network Operator.
- 1.12 The NZPD recently attended a workshop with the South Yorkshire Housing Association on "Tenant Engagement and the Climate Emergency" specifically aimed at how these residents who are amongst some of the most vulnerable in the region can be supported as we transition to a low carbon economy. Both from the point of view of their housing, but also transport and job opportunities.
- 1.13 COP26 offers the opportunity to increase the profile of the work the MCA is undertaking towards a Net Zero South Yorkshire as well as gain further understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing residents and businesses through targeting communications and events
- 1.14 Where appropriate or necessary public consultations are undertaken which are specific to projects and programmes that may be considered to be part of the overall response to climate change, such as Active travel, Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) schemes etc. At this point no overarching consultation on the MCAs climate emergency response has been undertaken or is planned.

2. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

2.1 Option 1

Public consultation and engagement continues on the current basis, with widening engagement to both understand the concerns of interested parties within the communities and businesses we serve, as well as widening climate literacy within those groups.

2.2 Where public consultation is either required or adds value such as in Active Travel schemes these will continue. A communications strategy is developed as the priorities and investment strategy of the MCA continues to evolve.

2.3 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

Option 1 has the risk that the SYMCA is not seen to seek, and does not receive, opinion from interested groups and does not fulfil its duty to inform the wider public of the need for action on climate change.

- 2.4 By targeting both the outgoing message and aiming to work with groups who have knowledge, skills and campaign in the space then this risk can be mitigated to some extent.
- 2.5 **Option 2**
Develop a full consultation programme on public and business views on the SYMCA's response to the climate emergency and their priorities around carbon reduction.
- 2.6 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**
A full consultation risks stagnation in the delivery of the net zero programme ahead of the time and opportunity to develop and deliver a programme of carbon reduction activity.
- 2.7 **Recommended Option**
Option 1
3. **Consultation on Proposal**
 - 3.1 N/A
4. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**
 - 4.1 No decision required, this paper is to understand the views and opinions of the OSC
5. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**
 - 5.1 N/A
6. **Legal Implications and Advice**
 - 6.1 N/A
7. **Human Resources Implications and Advice**
 - 7.1 N/A
8. **Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**
 - 8.1 N/A
9. **Climate Change Implications and Advice**
 - 9.1 N/A
10. **Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**
 - 10.1 N/A
11. **Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**
 - 11.1 The MCA comms and marketing team are promoting the region's actions green credentials and the action we and partners are taking to address the climate emergency in the run up to COP 26. This includes hosting events in partnership with the region's local authorities to coincide with COP26 Youth and Public Empowerment day, and working with the MCA's Youth Combined Authority to highlight the importance of reaching net zero emissions, and influence the public and stakeholders to take action.