

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 7TH FEBRUARY 2024

<p>ITEM OF BUSINESS NO. 6.2 – MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS ON THE DISCHARGE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE JOINT AUTHORITIES AND MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY</p>

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY TO BE ANSWERED AT THE MEETING BY THE COUNCIL’S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COMBINED AUTHORITY (COUNCILLOR TOM HUNT)

Question from Councillor Douglas Johnson

What progress is being made to ensure SYMCA fully supports the development of Harmony Works, the excellent home for music education for children and young people in the city centre?

Answer from Councillor Tom Hunt

The Harmony Works project has been prioritised by SCC as part of a Programme Strategic Business Case for Gainshare investment. To progress this investment, SYMCA have been working with the team at Harmony Works to support the development of a business case to apply for £2m Gainshare funding. This is now in the assessment process. A decision on the business case is likely to be taken in the coming months through the MCA governance.

SYMCA and Mayor Oliver Coppard have also championed the Harmony Works scheme with national bodies and funders, and fully recognise the value of cultural and creative schemes to the region.

I will do everything I can to support SYMCA and the Mayor in our combined efforts to champion Harmony Works and the importance of other cultural schemes in Sheffield

Question from Councillor Glynis Chapman

I am continually sending messages about missing TM 55 Route buses from Mosborough. A vital link for people to the Crystal Peaks bus hub, shopping centre and the Super-tram network. I have sent messages direct to SYMCA and via the Members Casework system. To date I have had **only one** acknowledgement to my many messages, but no answer to my question.

On a presentation given by the SYMCA transport department we were told that the bus companies would not be paid for missing services. How is this monitored?

Answer from Councillor Tom Hunt

I have contacted SYMCA on your behalf and will ensure that a full response is provided.

SYMCA closely monitors the performance of bus companies, which includes monitoring missing services. Reporting data suggests that TM Travel's performance has turned a corner and is beginning to improve. SYMCA Transport Officers met TM Travel's management team in late January to review their rectification plans, with a view to resolving operational issues (and reinstating their lost Saturday service) no later than the start of April.

Questions from Councillor Ian Horner

1. Can Cllr Hunt detail what the Labour led MCA has done to try to alleviate the devastation caused by their Bus Cuts of November 2023?
2. Will Cllr Hunt reveal what steps the MCA is taking to deal with the reliability issues of the ageing original Tram fleet?
3. Is an order for new Trams for existing routes part of the proposed Tram Train expansion? Is that fully costed?

Answers from Councillor Tom Hunt

Question 1

Since bus de-regulation in the 1980s South Yorkshire's bus network has been run by private bus companies who choose when to run services, what services to keep going, and how much to charge for fares. When services are cut and passengers are let down, these are decisions taken by the private operators.

Nationally in 2022 the total number of miles driven by buses plummeted by 175 million compared to 2016, with over 1,000 services lost in the last year alone.

Meanwhile fares surged by 51%, almost twice as fast as wages since 2010 putting huge pressure on passengers. In addition, more than 15% of bus services have been cut in the last year alone across South Yorkshire. This is what a deregulated bus system looks like and it is why we are working to change it.

The MCA is currently going through an assessment process for a bus franchising scheme for Sheffield and South Yorkshire. This would bring regulation of our bus routes, frequencies, fares, and tickets under local public control, as Greater Manchester has done. We can't prejudge the decision, but this work is being done as quickly as possible.

In the case of Beighton, for instance, the 27-and 80 services were all run commercially by First (27) and Stagecoach (80). As you know, as private companies, we had no control over their routes and timetables for those services. When the 27-and 80 were all cut, SYMCA were able to step in to support those affected by the 27 cut, including service 29 that was cancelled.

Since the commercial cuts in October 2022, SYMCA has stepped in to fund the 21 service (operated on our behalf by Stagecoach) as a substitute for the 27 and 29 but SYMCA cannot replace both services on a like for like basis.

SYMCA was not immediately able to respond to the loss of the 80, as the same route is served by TM Travel's 30 service. By law, they would not have been able to fund a competitor service to that commercial route. This left some communities, include Southall, losing public transport options for those parts of the 80 route that the 30 didn't cover. However, since January 8th 2024, SYMCA have been able to fund an amendment to the 26 and 26a service to connect some of those communities that had been left out by private operators' decisions. Please do contact SYMCA to pass on your feedback about the services.

Question 2

On 14 November 2023, the MCA Board considered the Outline Business Case for tram fleet and infrastructure renewal. This Business Case will support the securing of renewal funding required for a full programme of renewals running to 2032, replacing all life-expired assets at a total cost of £596m.

£100m has already been allocated for immediate repairs and renewal as part of the 2021 City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, and this includes a programme of refurbishing the existing tram fleet to allow it to remain operable until a wholesale fleet renewal programme is implemented.

In March 2024, the Supertram network will return to public control. At the MCA Board on 9 January 2024, the Board considered a Business Plan for South Yorkshire Future Trams Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the MCA. Improving reliability, including through the ongoing programme of renewals, will be one of the company's key operational goals for 2024/25.

Question 3

The tram renewal Outline Business Case considers the current tram network only, including a new order of trams for the existing network.

The November 2023 MCA paper noted that a separate tram vision exercise would be undertaken to consider opportunities for extension. This work is being undertaken now.

Conversations are ongoing with the Department for Transport about opportunities to make more use of South Yorkshire's pioneering tram-train technology, including through the ongoing development of business cases as part of the Restoring Your Railways programme.

Questions from Councillor Brian Holmshaw

1. Are ward Councillors being engaged to identify potential sites in their areas to support for nature restoration as part of the South Yorkshire Region Local Nature Recovery Strategy?
2. Are community organisations being engaged and asked to identify potential sites to support for nature restoration as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?
3. Please provide a list of the stakeholders that, on behalf of Sheffield City Council, the Combined Authority are working with on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?
4. When will the Local Nature Recovery Strategy be publicly available to examine?
5. When will a draft be available for Sheffield city councillors to scrutinise?

Answers from Councillor Tom Hunt

Question 1

The local knowledge of ward councillors will be an important part of the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

I am really keen to hear ideas from you and other local councillors. It would be great to hear your ideas about potential sites. I will ask that council officers make all councillors aware as to who they should contact and how they help shape the plans.

Within the formal process of the LNRS development, key milestones and consultation periods have been set out by SYMCA in order to fulfil the duties it holds as the Responsible Authority to DEFRA.

Sheffield City Council, alongside the other SY Local Authorities, Natural England and the Peak District National Park are known officially as 'Supporting Authorities'. Officers and external experts appointed to the Advisory Panel will be fully involved at all stages of the process - informing and shaping the strategy.

SYMCA is in the final stages of appointing consultants who will lead on the drafting of the LNRS, taking the lead in engagement events, mapping and building the robust evidence base to inform areas of ecological priority. Over the coming months the strategy will start to take shape, building on a lot of work we've already done through our policy and practical work. Drafting will be taking place over the summer.

Question 2

Yes, this will form a crucial part of the stakeholder engagement events that will take place in the first half of 2024. Exact details of events and ways to engage will be set out shortly by the successful organisation appointed to lead on this on behalf of

SYMCA and the supporting authorities. If you've got ideas for community organisations in your ward that should be engaged, please get in touch and I will ensure that their details are passed onto the relevant officers at SYMCA.

Question 3

SYMCA is currently working with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, City of Doncaster Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield City Council, the Peak District National Park and Natural England. SYMCA's wider working group includes the Don Catchment River Trust, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission

Officers from SCC's Ecology, Planning and Parks and Countryside service sit on the 3 Working Groups that are involved with shaping the LNRS, alongside other organisations who have regional and environmental expertise such as the Don Catchment River Trust, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission. As a supporting Authority, SCC's Head of Planning sits on the Steering Group alongside the other Supporting Authorities.

Extensive stakeholder mapping has taken place which will be taken forward by the successful organisation leading on engagement in the coming months. In order for the LNRS to be a success, the groups to be engaged are varied and vast. They include landowners of all kinds, from all sectors with varied interests, businesses, ecological and environmental experts, local groups, members and NGOs.

Question 4

Based on the current timeline that has been provided by SYMCA a period of public consultation will take place between late September and early November 2024. The final Strategy will then be presented to the MCA Board in early 2025, however a general election may impact the timeline.

Question 5

As above, the public consultation will take place in late September and SCC councillors will be able to scrutinise the draft LNRS. We anticipate opportunities to share content from Members, particularly those on the relevant Policy Committee, in the lead up to this public consultation.

The Nature and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group within the Communities Parks and Leisure Policy Committee has held multiple sessions over the last 6 months, involving local partners and council officers from across the organisation. I hope the recommendations of this group will be shared with all councillors to learn more about what we are doing as a council to support nature recovery in the city - of which the LNRS plays a key role.

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