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DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 12TH JANUARY, 2016

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on TUESDAY, 12TH JANUARY, 2016 at 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor John Mounsey
Vice Chair – Councillor Charlie Hogarth

Councillors John Cooke, Richard A Jones, Jane Kidd and Craig Sahman

Invitee: - Paul O'Brien

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Ros Jones, Mayor Doncaster Council

Councillor Glynn Jones - Deputy Mayor and Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Equalities, Jane Nightingale - Portfolio Holder for Housing, Pat Knight - Portfolio holder for Public Health and Wellbeing, Joe Blackham - Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Transportation and Nuala Fennelly - Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools

Councillors Kevin Rodgers, Jane Cox, Neil Gethin, Pat Haith, Linda Curran, David Shaw, Mark Houlbook, Susan Durant, Elsie Butler, James Hart, Steve Cox, Clive Stone, David Nevitt, George Derx, John Healy, John McHale and Alan Jones

Jo Miller, Chief Executive Doncaster Council

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton, Chair of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority

Andrew Gates, Head of Policy, Sheffield City Region

Nigel Brewster, Vice Chair - Sheffield City Region LEP

Dan Fell, Chief Executive Officer of Doncaster Chamber

		<u>ACTION</u>
39	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Tony Revill, Cynthia Ransome, Rachel Hodson and Jessie Credland and Sue McGuinness.	

40	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None.	
41	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made.	
42	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
43	<u>SHEFFIELD CITY REGION PROPOSED DEVOLUTION DEAL.</u>	
	<p>ORDER OF BUSINESS</p> <p>In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, the Committee agreed to the variation of the order of business that public statements were incorporated with Agenda Item 5, and Members of the public were provided with the opportunity to speak after hearing the presentations and the Committee's debate.</p> <p>The Chair explained that the Committee's role was to consider the proposed devolution agreement between the Sheffield City Region and Government and in particular, what the proposed devolution deal means for Doncaster. It was outlined that any feedback from the meeting would be forwarded to Mayor Ros Jones and circulated to all Members prior to Council's consideration of the issue in February. A number of Councillors in attendance, who was not on the OSMC were able to ask questions and contribute to the debate.</p> <p>CITY REGION PERSPECTIVE</p> <p>The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Sir Steve Houghton, Chair of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority, Andrew Gates, Head of Policy, Sheffield City Region and Nigel Brewster, Vice Chair - Sheffield City Region LEP to provide an update and overview of the deal and what it means for the city region.</p> <p>Sir Steve Houghton reminded Members of purpose of the deal and outlined some of its key features and benefits which included that it:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would unlock long-term business investment opportunities. • provide greater control over European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF). • enable a more joined up approach with the £30 million annual allocation. 	

- offer the ability to pilot the retention of 100% Business Rate growth.
- provide an ability to invest longer term.

Members were informed that taking this deal forward would act as the first step in the journey and it was vital that Doncaster remained a part of it. It was explained that the proposed deal provided financing for future opportunities to help support public services and deliver wider opportunities to the region.

Members were reminded that central government funding for public services would be reduced by 2020 when there would be then 2 main funding streams for local authorities funding; council tax and business rates. It was noted that growing business rates through investment and strategic economic growth was essential in ensuring the wellbeing of public services in the city region.

It was clarified that in the future, each local authority would be able to retain their business rate growth and in five years, would have the potential to 'pool' the finances. It was commented that by pooling finances, risk and finances attributed through growth would be spread across the region. It was added that if individual authorities were to keep their own business rate growth then there would be an increased debate on where it should be spent.

The importance of the single pot was outlined and the benefits that would be derived from it using available funds. One of the benefits included being able to profile packages and investments would be needed and more targeted to meet local needs. Reference was made to the fact that the original devolution proposal had not secured funding/responsibility that would help address improved vocational education for 16-18 year olds and 14-19 year olds in school. Members were assured that this would be pursued further, as it was clear that the problems faced with adult skills could not be addressed without entering the schools system.

In terms of the private sector perspective, Nigel Brewster informed Members that the deal presented a great opportunity that would enable new initiatives to be designed and delivered to meet local need. It was added that although the business sector recognised that this was not a perfect deal, it was a stand-alone one which had received strong support from businesses.

Transitioning from current arrangements to new arrangements

Members were informed that the Sheffield City Region powers would be rolled out from April 2016 although the directly elected Mayor would not be elected until 2017. Members were informed that there would be in place a spending plan, strategic plan, performance plan, Annual Business Plan as well as a 5 year programme with its own milestones, clear objectives, outcomes and outputs.

In terms of the accountability arrangements, Members were assured that there would be strong performance management arrangements in place as well as a high level of openness and transparency through both the Sheffield City Region and local authority's own robust overview and scrutiny process. It was noted that the Sheffield City Region's own overview and scrutiny function would be made fit for purpose for any new arrangements.

It was stated that the proposed arrangement would need to ensure effective prioritisation across the Sheffield City Region, to ensure that there was a clear economic return.

Public Consultation

Members were informed that the consultation was open until the 15th January 2016 and the agreement proposed was subject to consultation with residents and businesses and the endorsement of the deal by each of the nine local authorities.

In regards to how feedback from the consultation exercise will help shape the future devolution deal, Members were informed that negotiations were still underway with the Government and may be influenced by such feedback. Members were told that the feedback would be fed into each local authority and responses would be made public. Assurances were made that the process would remain fully transparent and open and that the local overview and scrutiny function will play its part in what the City Region was doing for Doncaster and the public would be a part of that. It was noted that other combined authority arrangements were being looked at in terms of how they were undertaking overview and scrutiny

The Committee was informed that Doncaster was doing as much as it could to raise awareness about public consultation. It was outlined that this had been done through a number of avenues which included Full Council and Cabinet and also through local media and public events at the Frenchgate Centre.

Communication and Monitoring of Deal

Concern was raised about how well the public understood what the deal actually was and what it meant for Doncaster. The Committee recognised that there was a need to ensure a greater public understanding of the concept of the SCR and the role of the Elected Mayor. It was acknowledged that Elected Members, partnerships and the private sector, all had key roles in providing clarity and ensuring that there was an understanding of the arrangements to support wider public understanding and engagement. The importance of working together to help build the concept and 'fit' together rather than operate individually to support public understanding was stressed.

It was acknowledged that a well informed and effective communication exercise would need to be undertaken and a Communication Strategy developed to encourage public participation. Concern was raised about the challenges of ensuring the public understood the difference between the the local authority Mayor and the City Region Mayor". It was envisaged that there would be a combined election in 2017 for the Doncaster Mayor and City Region Mayor. It was recognised that effective communication, publicity, support and resources would be needed particularly for Doncaster to ensure the electorate was clear on the functions carried out by the two Mayors. .

The Committee also received assurances that mechanisms would be put in place to ensure that Elected Members were kept informed and updated on the SCR's activities through minutes of meetings, briefings and updates on the SCR website. It was also noted that copies of the meetings could be included in the Council Agenda similar to that with the Sheffield City Region minutes.

Elected Mayor for SCR and Constitutional Changes

Members recognised that electing a Mayor for the Sheffield City Region was an essential requirement of the proposed deal. Concern was raised that the elected Mayor may have powers to act autonomously and against the wishes of other SCR members. It was recognised that the flexibility to write its own Constitution and the Combined Authorities' powers of veto would help ensure decision making was spread more equitably across the SCR encouraging decisions to be made through consensus rather than the wishes of one individual.

It was clarified that the constitutional arrangements would be developed with the wider local authority Members subject to the devolution deal being agreed. It was explained that the current devolution deal would not lead to a loss of power by any of the constituent authorities. Potentially there would be further opportunities for more devolution and at this stage consideration would need to be given on how this might impact on the Constitutions of each of the member Councils.

In terms of what role and influence the non-South Yorkshire authorities' would have, Members were informed that there were 5 non-South Yorkshire authorities. It was explained that as part of the devolution bill going through parliament that consideration was being given to non-constitutional authorities to be allowed to join.

Resources to deliver

Members raised concern about what additional costs and resources would be needed to undertake the activities and achieve the ambitions

detailed in the draft agreement the SCR. In terms of administrative and back office support, it was outlined that where possible SCR functions would be supported as resourcefully as possible rather than this being duplicated. However, there would be a need to ensure the SCR was effectively supported by high quality staff.

Future Opportunities and Risk

Members were informed that once the deal had been agreed then there would be opportunities to seek greater powers for example those of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire Service and NHS and Social Care and more learning and skills funding.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Also welcomed to the meeting were Mayor Ros Jones, Jo Miller, Chief Executive and Dan Fell, Chief Executive Officer at Doncaster Chamber who were in attendance to provide an understanding of what the deal means to Doncaster.

Mayor Ros Jones explained the importance of the deal and stressed the opportunities that would be provided to grow Doncaster as a key player within the region. It was outlined how the deal would enable the region to work towards schemes such as raising aspirations of the young people which was below standard at this current time and this would be a major benefit to Doncaster. Reference was made to major regeneration projects that were already being taken forward in Doncaster and had been supported by the current SCR arrangements which included FARRS, developing the urban centre and DN7. Members were reminded of the LEP commitments made to delivering 12,000 jobs by 2024 and the need to grow our infrastructure and economy to deliver this. It was stressed that to not accept the proposed deal would create the biggest risk to the economy of Doncaster and the wider Sheffield City Region.

Dan Fell, Chief Executive Officer of Doncaster Chamber made reference to the excellent achievements that had taken place in Doncaster in terms of regeneration. Members were reminded of the regeneration work already being delivered across the Borough that included new National Institute for Infrastructure, National Rail Training college and surpassing the target for apprenticeships. It was acknowledged that the proposed deal would offer further opportunities for Doncaster to build on the positive work already undertaken. Emphasis was given to the commitment and support to the deal from the Doncaster Chamber and the private sector. It was viewed that the deal provided Doncaster with an opportunity to provide additional resources that could not be realised unless it entered into the agreement. It was commented that the view of the Chamber was that local businesses were generally supportive of the opportunities offered by the proposed deal.

Jo Miller, Chief Executive stressed the potential the deal gave to Doncaster and highlighted what could be achieved by working together for job growth, GDP and developing young people.

It was recognised that one of the key issues within Doncaster that the devolution could address would be deprivation. It was accepted that deprivation was caused by many factors and that employment, skills and education were key elements in helping families and communities to aspire and help reduce the impacts of deprivation.

A Member enquired how the SCR would encourage public and private collaborations with Doncaster's schools and businesses to address poorly resourced issues such as the low skills base in Doncaster. The Committee was told that it was about how we identify and commission programmes that would benefit and suit the needs of Doncaster. It was acknowledged that such collaborations would need support from the private sector. It was recognised that partnership working within Doncaster was starting to work well with positive outcomes.

In summarising the outcome of the discussion, the Committee identified the following issues;

- that the proposed deal was an important step in seeking further devolution and demonstrating that the SCR could effectively manage its business and deliver significant economic improvements.
- that the proposed deal would offer further opportunities for Doncaster to build on the positive work already undertaken by the SCR CA such as developing effective relationships with the private sector and gaining approval for and delivering major infrastructure projects.
- that the proposal would seek to incorporate strong accountability arrangements including a robust Overview and Scrutiny process, a high level of transparency, accountability and opportunities to engage and take account of the views of the public.
- that whilst supporting the view it was not necessary to elect a Mayor for the success of the SCR, Members recognised that it was an essential requirement of the proposed deal.
- that although the election of a Mayor of the SCRCA was a prerequisite to the devolution proposal, there was a need to ensure a greater public understanding of the concept of the SCR and the role of the Mayor.
- that the SCR would need strong performance management arrangements in place to ensure clear understanding of stated objectives
- it was acknowledged that the proposed agreement was subject to approval by the relevant local authorities and further legislative changes were needed to implement the proposal.
- It was recognised that the SCR would need to be effectively

supported by corporate and back office staff, whilst acknowledging the importance of having the right number and calibre of staff.

- assurances were sought that measures and activities would be identified to ensure those living in the most deprived areas were able to benefit from the employment and economic opportunities created.

The Committee agreed that any recommendations, comments or feedback would be forwarded to the Mayor for consideration to help inform Council when it considers the proposed agreement in February 2016.

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked all Members and attendees for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee unanimously supported the proposed devolution agreement.