



## Three policy priorities for Sheffield City Region

March 2018

### Introduction

The first metro mayor of Sheffield City Region will need a vision for the city region and clear, strategic, deliverable policies to meet it. The challenge and workload will be considerable, with powers and expectations ranging from delivering policy to establishing the institutions and capacity for effective city-region governance. This briefing offers three priorities that address the biggest issues facing Sheffield City Region.

A ‘quick win’ will help the mayor to set the tone for delivery right from the start. Delivering results quickly will build trust, and show what the metro mayor is able to do for the city region. The best quick wins in these circumstances are high profile and of value to citizens.

Strategic decisions form the framework for delivering the metro mayor’s vision. As such, the mayor will have the power to take the decisions that will make the most of the new geography of governance. While the mayor will be keen to show progress towards their vision, strategic decisions will often take longer to show outcomes, therefore careful evaluation is needed to allow for flexibility and to demonstrate the effects.

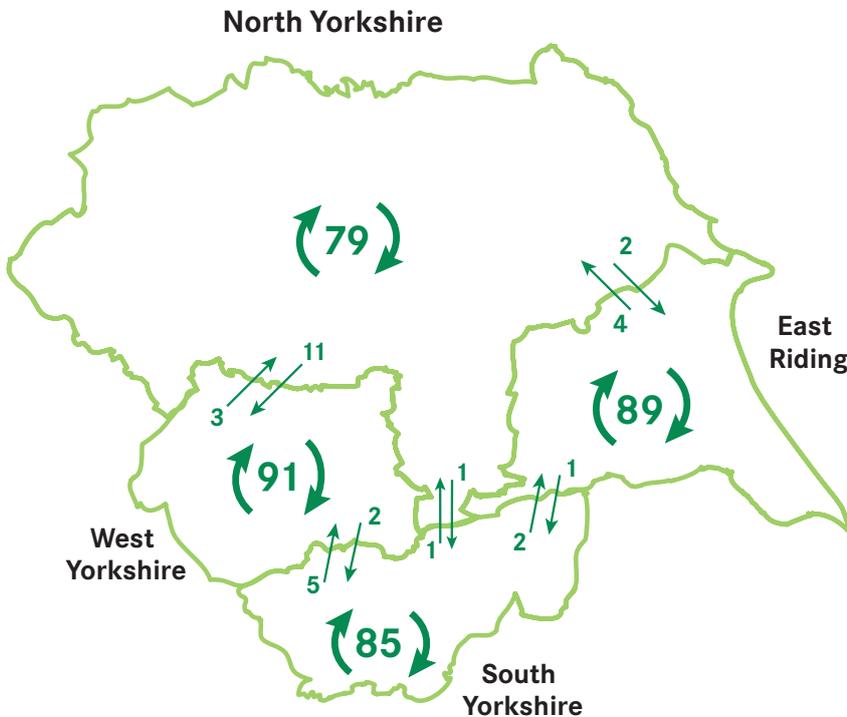
A long-term vision for the city region will be the key election platform – it is what the mayor is working towards while in office. This should be ambitious, but reflect the real needs and potential of the city region. Some aspects of the vision will be achievable within the mayor’s term in office, while others will build momentum or signal a change in direction. It is important to be clear and strike the balance of where each policy lies on this spectrum.

### Why Sheffield City Region?

The goal of devolution is to pass down economic powers to the geography that people live and work their lives over. Figure 1 shows the commuting patterns between South, West, East and North Yorkshire. It reveals that there is very little movement between these areas on a daily basis, with most people working in the same city region that they live in.

**Figure 1: Commuting patterns between city regions in Yorkshire**

- ↻ Percentage of residents who live and work in the same sub region
- ↔ Percentage of residents who work in a different sub region



Source: Census 2011

The county of Yorkshire has a very strong cultural identity. And this won't change – sub-regional mayors won't threaten the future of the Tour de Yorkshire, while it makes sense to continue to market the region as a whole to tourists. But it doesn't operate as one single economy, instead being comprised of at least four separate ones.

If the devolution of economic powers is to be as effective as possible at creating more and better jobs for the people of Yorkshire, then they have to be passed down to the level that the region's economies operate over. If not then we risk moving one-size-fits-all policies made in Whitehall to similarly ill-fitting policies made at the Yorkshire level.

### Policy priority 1: A quick win

#### Tackle dangerous air quality to improve the health of residents

- **Introduce a clean air charge** to tackle poor quality in parts of the city region where it is most acute.
- **Use new franchising powers to take control of city-region bus services** to better serve the population and reduce car journeys, congestion and emissions.

## Introduce a Clean Air Charge to reduce pollution and fund greater active travel alternatives

Poor air quality kills, and it is a particular issue in parts of Sheffield City Region. Sheffield and Rotherham have been identified by the government as two of 28 local authorities in breach of the EU limits for NO<sub>2</sub>, and must come forward with a final Clean Air Plan by December 2018. The risk is that these plans won't be far reaching enough, as they shy away from addressing the major source of transport NO<sub>2</sub> emissions, private vehicles.<sup>1</sup>

Sheffield City Region LEP has a higher share of commuting by car than other northern LEPs. In contrast to a decline nationally, this share grew from 2001 and 2011 to reach 71 per cent<sup>2</sup>. As the draft Transport Strategy states, 'this reliance on car travel could have adverse implications on the economy and quality of life, through congestion costs, worsening air quality, increasing carbon emissions and rising obesity levels (due to lack of walking and cycling).'

Whereas some of the city region's other challenges, such as low wages and low skills, will require a longer term response, tackling air quality represents a quick win and progress can be made in the first term.

The metro mayor should use their direct mandate to enact the most effective, long-term sustainable and economically and socially beneficial policy – a Clean Air Charge (similar to London's Toxicity Charge) on more polluting vehicles entering the most congested and polluted parts of the city region. The high levels of commuting across local authority boundaries within the city region mean that many residents of Doncaster and Barnsley will directly benefit from cleaner air at work and quicker commutes. To ensure this is a quick win, **this policy should be part of the winning candidate's manifesto.**

The charge would reduce congestion and address NO<sub>2</sub> emissions from day one. Added to this, higher levels of active travel that the charge will incentivise – walking, cycling and public transport usage – will support greater personal fitness across the city region, and add to the public health benefits of lower NO<sub>2</sub>.

## Use new powers to franchise city-region bus services to improve public transport alternative

While trams and trains get the headlines and attention, buses remain the most used mode of public transport in every single UK city. They connect people to work, businesses to customers, and pupils to school. In South Yorkshire the number of bus trips per head has fallen from 87.4 per year in 2009/10 to 72.6 in 2016/17, in line with falls across the country. This drop translates into nearly 15 million fewer journeys by bus – more than the total ridership of the Sheffield Supertram, which carried 12.6m passengers last year and has also seen declining ridership over the last decade.

The metro mayor will be starting in a better position with bus services than the other mayors who were elected in May 2017. TravelMaster allows smart tickets to be used across operators and modes within one or all authorities in South Yorkshire. And for under-18s using bus and/or trams, the GetAbout ticket is less than half price.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Sheffield's Clean Air Strategy*, Sheffield City Council, December 2017 <https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s29124/Clean%20Air%20Strategy%20Dec%20Cabinet%202.pdf>

2 p.22 *Sheffield City Region Transport Strategy 2018-2040 (Draft for consultation)*, Sheffield City Region, November 2017 <http://sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SCR-Transport-Strategy-Consultation-Draft.pdf>

3 See <http://sytravelmaster.com/our-products/>

But more can be done. In particular, **the mayor should take advantage of the powers in the Bus Services Act 2017 to introduce franchising of routes**, and invest revenues<sup>4</sup> from the Clean Air Charge into supporting and improving this network.

Franchising will allow greater coordination of routes and services to suit communities. With full understanding of ridership and revenues on different routes (through better data collection) the metro mayor should seek to offer services to connect people more quickly and affordably to job and training opportunities across the city region, as well boosting health, environmental and social outcomes.

## Policy priority 2: A strategic aim

### Develop a spatial plan that sets out the roles of different parts of the city region

- A spatial plan allows the metro mayor to be bold and strategic about the future growth of the city region, making best use of the land available, especially within its city centres.
- It also provides a clear signal to both public (e.g. NHS, universities) and private sector stakeholders the approach that will be taken to development in the area, increasing certainty.

### Identify the roles that different parts of the city region play as locations for businesses and homes

In recent years, the parts of the UK that have been successful have been the ones that have been best able to attract investment from higher-skilled businesses. This has been a problem in Sheffield City Region – in terms of manufacturing, the share of jobs that are high-skilled lag the English and Welsh average (in spite of the high-skilled activities of the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre),<sup>5</sup> while at 8.9 per cent, the share of all jobs in knowledge-intensive business services jobs is below the British average of 13.6 per cent. The result is that both productivity and wages lag the national average.

These businesses look for very specific locations within city regions. High-skilled services businesses in particular have increasingly located in successful city centres in recent years because of the benefits that such a location provides to these types of businesses. The relative lack of success that the centres of Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster have had at attracting in such businesses in recent years has undermined the ability of the city region as a whole to attract jobs in these higher paying jobs.

A spatial plan that sets out the different roles that different parts of the city region play in the economy, be that residential or commercial, will be crucial in identifying how land will be best used. Within this there should a specific focus on making the city centres of the city region more attractive places to do business, so as to improve the ability of the area to attract in higher-skilled service activities in the future.

### Send a signal to stakeholders

While the mayor has little control over the activities of many stakeholders operating in the city region, be that the NHS or private businesses, a spatial plan clearly sets out what the mayor is aiming to achieve, which improves the chances of all parties being aligned in their activities. This clarity is something that the mayor can provide much more easily than council leaders because of the strategic nature of the role and the wider geography that it covers.

<sup>4</sup> If 5,000 cars paid £5-a-weekday on average (varying according to emissions) to drive into Sheffield City Centre, this would raise around £6m pounds to fund improvements to bus services across the city region

<sup>5</sup> Source: Census 2011

## Policy priority 3: A longer term vision

### Address skills deficits

- Improve the skills of those with few or no qualifications to improve their chances of employment and the city region's attractiveness to business investment.
- Evaluate the outcomes of policies to refine future policy approaches to make them more effective.

### Improve the skills of those with few or no qualifications

The biggest factor in attracting higher-skilled businesses to a city region is the availability of higher-skilled workers for these businesses to employ. On this measure the Sheffield City Region does not perform well. In 2016, 30.9 per cent of residents had a degree, compared to 38 per cent nationally. And 9.3 per cent of residents had no formal qualification at all, compared to 8.3 per cent in Great Britain as a whole.

The clearest role for the mayor is to improve the skills of those with few or no qualifications, rather than focus on more mobile graduates. This should take three strands.

Firstly, s/he should improve the takeup of early years education. The Government currently offers free early years education to two year olds from deprived backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> Using administrative data, those eligible for, but not currently benefiting from this support, should be identified and encouraged to do so.

Secondly, while having no formal powers over schools, the mayor should use the influence afforded to his or her office to encourage schools to focus on improving numeracy and literacy attainment. These skills act as the building block for further skills development and all schools across the city region should be preparing their pupils for the world of work by teaching them these skills.

Thirdly, use the devolution of the adult skills budget to better target those already of working age that don't have the necessary skills to get on in the world of work. Again, this should have a focus on numeracy and literacy skills. To identify these individuals, the mayor should work with local housing associations – half of all social housing tenants in the city region who are in work are in low-skilled occupations<sup>7</sup> – and business. S/he should then work with both bodies, be that either through using some of the skills budget to support the employment and skills activities of housing associations, or part-funding skills courses for businesses, to improve the core skills of residents.

### Evaluate the policy and improve it

To ensure resources are allocated most efficiently, the metro mayor should put in place an effective evaluation system that includes a control group and sets specific goals, and allows for failure as well as success. This will be key to finding the best outcomes and will make best use of scarce resources for what is a priority across the city region.

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<sup>6</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2017), State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain, London: The Stationery Office

<sup>7</sup> Source: Census 2011

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