

## **Sheffield City Partnership – Looking to the future**

This paper asks the Board to consider its role in Sheffield, with particular reference to driving the city's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. It sets out:

- a number of questions that the Board might wish to consider in this respect;
- assets that the Board have to work with in developing the future approach;
- developments that are relevant for consideration.

### **Context**

The State of Sheffield 2020 report has set out clearly the impact of Covid-19 on Sheffield, and the scale and nature of the challenge involved in recovery. What it does not provide is a clear direction on what the city, and the organisations within it, should “do”. The question is: whose role is this, and what needs to happen to ensure it is done well?

### **What are we trying to achieve?**

Ultimately, the SCPB is focused on the success of Sheffield as a whole. This suggests that if the role of the Board is anything, it is to reflect on what the State of Sheffield is telling us, to think through how Sheffield can best recover and succeed in the future, and what needs to be done collectively to get there.

However, this can't be isolated from organisational aims and priorities, and it is important that those round the table see that the Partnership is beneficial in supporting them and their agendas. A successful city should translate into benefits for the organisations in it, but this is not given, with **how** that success is achieved a critical factor. There may also be something to be said for the Board as a space for these issues to be worked through as well.

### **For Sheffield to be a success everyone needs to contribute: how do we ensure this?**

For the city to deliver on a successful recovery from Covid-19 and develop a platform for future success, it will be essential to have a collective view of what we are trying to achieve, and willingness to work together to do it. This combination of collective vision and collaboration to achieve it is the essence of partnership.

However it is important to note that SCPB is not the only place where discussions of this nature take place. Discussions around economic recovery are taking place within business forums; the Health & Wellbeing Board are discussing the health of the Sheffield population in this context; individual organisations are developing their own plans; and local political leadership will have their own views.

It is important to recognise the legitimacy of each of these spaces and the validity of their discussions, and to take a hierarchical view that any one perspective should be prioritised over the others would be a mistake. But it is also important to recognise that there must be connectivity between these discussions, so that the activity that derives from them lines up

coherently and the city gains maximum value. It is essential that we avoid partnerships working in silos; historically we have tried to address this through communication between supporting officers. There may be a need for closer integration than this.

### **What is the role of SCPB in this?**

Currently, SCPB remains the only place where statutory, private, and voluntary, community and faith sectors come together and talk to each other. This gives it a unique place in the city's governance. However it is also important to recognise that it is also only a partial representation of agencies in Sheffield: consideration might be given to the difference between "Sheffield City Partnership" and "Sheffield City Partnership Board".

With this in mind, Sheffield City Partnership could be conceived as a partnership of partnerships, encompassing the various places where strategic conversations take place. Reflecting the points above about ensuring these places are not silos, thought could be given to how we ensure the boundaries between them are permeable, so that (for example) conversations with a focus on Economic Growth are influenced by conversations focused on Health & Wellbeing, and vice versa.

As well as officer conversations, this permeability could be provided by ensuring a small degree of cross-membership between Boards to allow conversations in one place to be properly reflected in another in a way officer discussions do not allow. It would be critical to avoid a situation where memberships are replicated – the aim would be to have something that could be conceptualised as overlapping circles (e.g. Olympic Rings).

With this view, SCPB could be the place where the final joining up happens, where the shared vision for the recovery of the city, owned by everyone, is agreed.

In this, it is important to be clear that the Board has no formal powers, and so cannot "do" anything by itself. This remains the preserve of sovereign organisations within their own governance structures. This points to three things:

1. The importance of operating with consent, Board members owning the outcome of discussions and taking them back into their organisations;
2. The importance of having people involved who have the ability to influence their own organisations; and
3. The importance of local political leadership involvement in SCPB conversations.

### **How do we ensure that recovery benefits everyone?**

In this, the principles set out in the Framework for Inclusive & Sustainable Economy remain relevant. It is possible this may need refreshing in the light of Covid-19, or that what is required is refreshing the necessary actions with recovery in mind.

Representation is crucial in this: city recovery must be for everyone, and this requires everyone to be able to input. This cannot just be about Board membership: it needs to be about how we engage with the city as a whole.

### **What assets have we got to build on? And what other developments should we be aware of?**

We have a number of assets on which to build:

- **SCPB** – the partnership board remains a well developed and understood part of the city’s governance structure; as noted above it remains the only place where all sectors and statutory agencies in the city come together, and has been a crucial factor in improving city relationships over the last 20 years;
- **Anchors Group** – work had begun on developing an Anchor Organisations group earlier this year but was put on hold due to the pandemic. There is potential for a group of this nature to be a place where the “doing” happens in response to Board conversations and agreements, and it could therefore be useful tool to drive change;
- **Public Service Network** – this was developed with Public Health support to bring new thinking into the city and build cross-organisational relationships below the Executive level. It has also been on hiatus due to the pandemic but is valued by those involved;
- **Framework for the Inclusive & Sustainable Economy** – the Board’s work in this space remains relevant for the post-Covid world and the framework has buy-in across the city as a strategic document;
- **Health & Wellbeing Board** – there is significant overlap between the approaches set out by SCPB and HWBB, and the latter represents another route to drive change;
- **Refocus of Economic Plans and Partnerships** – work is underway to refresh and repurpose the City Growth Board, to develop a more effective ways of working collaboratively to address systemic economic challenges. A new economic partnership of leaders from public, private and voluntary sector organisations will aim to forge constructive linkages across the Sheffield City Region to build synergies, and draw in trusted partners with specific knowledge, experience and expertise to facilitate delivery of better economic outcomes for more people across the city.

### **What needs to happen, when?**

This paper was written as South Yorkshire had just been put into Tier 3 restrictions, which have now been superseded by a national lockdown. This is expected to last for a minimum of 28 days, but it seems likely that it will be longer.

Realistically, recovery cannot start until Sheffield is out of Covid-related restrictions. This is both a curse and a blessing: it will impact the city’s residents, its economy and its institutions, but gives us time to think through the future so we are in a position to hit the ground running at the first opportunity.