



## Meeting report - High Street Forum

Arundel Suite, Millennium Gallery

10.00am to 11.30am, Wednesday, 24 September 2024

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Standing call to action: Forum members are asked to amplify the message, raise the profile of the forum within your own networks and be an ambassador for the group to help attract, recruit and retain participants.

This month we were delighted to welcome 48 attendees to our January High Street Forum from businesses including: 35 George Street, Barclays Bank, Birds Opticians, British Heart Foundation, China Red, Cubana, Hamilton Communications, Leopold Square, Lush, M&S, Metrobank, The Montgomery Theatre & Arts Centre, Nat West, New River REIT, The Nottingham, The Old Shoe Bar, Orchard Square, Royal Bank of Scotland, Savills Barbershop, Sheffield Cathedral, Sheffield Museums, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Subway, Taylor Taylor Hairdressing, Utilita Energy Hub, Virgin Money, Sheffield Walking Tours, South Yorkshire Police and Sheffield City Council officers.

Managed by Sheffield BID and chaired by BID Director Lee Appleton (New River's Centre Manager for The Moor), these meet ups take place monthly.

## Discussion points covered in the meeting 24.01.24

### Actions from the previous meeting

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**Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)** – The draft order has been produced by Sheffield City Council. It will be heard at a Council committee meeting on Monday, 29 January. The Council committee will agree whether to progress this to a public consultation before the local elections in May. The full timeline is not known, but if consultation is successful, the order could be implemented as early as this summer. Enforcement proposals are to be considered and issues around dispersal will also feature as part of consultation.

The conditions of PSPO cover a ban on street drinking / drug use / urination and defecation / aggressive begging / loitering.

Adverse behaviour is affecting the visitor experience and this impacts on many businesses in Sheffield city centre. A show of hands indicated many in the room today remained receptive to and in favour of the PSPO.

### Meet the Mayor / Q&A – Oliver Coppard, South Yorkshire Mayor

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Opening remarks:

Oliver was elected Mayor of South Yorkshire in May 2022. He is expecting to face an early election in May 2024 for a further two-year term after successfully lobbying for the Mayor's office to take on the responsibilities of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Oliver outlined that the Mayor's remit includes public transportation, setting terms of tendered services and addressing inadequate capacity in the transport infrastructure.

He confirmed the Tram service will come back into public ownership later this year.

Ed Clancy (former Olympic Championship Cyclist) is also on board as South Yorkshire's Active Travel Commissioner.

The South Yorkshire economy is not productive enough and the Mayor's mission is to restore pride and prosperity back into South Yorkshire. Oliver wants to see South Yorkshire stand on its own two feet and be proud.

He explained that he was a "local lad, born and bred" and lives in Sheffield. He understands the importance of retail, culture and the night-time economy in place making. He outlined his work in Barnsley (worked there for ten years) and his passion for the regeneration of Barnsley town centre that the Mayor's office has assisted with. He acknowledged we need the same in Sheffield and need to build on the brilliant assets already in place in Sheffield city centre.

We then moved into a Q&A session with questions from the floor.

**A question was asked about the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and how its intention was to drive investment in South Yorkshire.**

Oliver described how the Mayoral Combined Authority was built on back of LEP and was driving strategy. Once an elected Mayor's role was put in place through the earlier devolution process, the LEP was disbanded, and the team employed in a different way. A new business advisory board (BAB) has been established. and its inaugural meeting took place in November 2023. BAB is focused on growing South Yorkshire's economy and driving business growth. It is made up of some of region's business leaders who will work with the Mayor to challenge and champion success. BAB is co-chaired by Louisa Harrison-Walker, representing the three South Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce. Its role is to shape thinking on short and long-term issues of importance to businesses and the region's economic future, ensuring these are considered by the Mayoral Combined Authority to inform decision making. A new Mayoral Economic Advisory Council (MEAC) has also been set up.

**A question was asked about Sheffield City Council's growth plan which is due to be published in July. Will the mayoral plan be the same and is it about vision or delivery?**

Oliver said the plan for growth across South Yorkshire is the next step on the journey. Major themes include jobs, special growth and a vision of Sheffield's "spine" that feeds into Rotherham. The plan for growth will be consulted upon before delivery. South Yorkshire needs a change around partnership working which was not good enough before. He gave an example of a comment from Barnsley Council's CEO that partnership working had never been better in the past 20 years. South Yorkshire was one of the first investment zones announced in July 2023 and was given £160 million to spend over 10 years.

**A question was asked why the Supertram charge was no longer a £2 pound fare, why the bus service was so terrible and the impact of red routes.**

Oliver said 1985 saw the privatisation of buses. Private companies decided on fares and routes. These were commercial decisions and companies compete around routes and costs. Rural communities saw lesser impact and where bus companies did not want to operate, the Mayoral

Combined Authority (MCA) could step in. From 2019 to present, less served communities costs rose from £7 million to £21 million. MCA is not able to support as he would like and wants to bring back the buses under public control. This could take two years. The next stage is an audit process due early 2024 and this will determine if public ownership is the right decision. The £2 pound tram cap – little money from government for revenue funding - the question is are we funding bus routes or fares.

**A question was asked about the benefits of integrating the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) powers into the Mayor's office.**

Oliver explained that the role of PCC is currently standalone with the remit to provide strategic vision for the police. Integrating the PCC function with the Mayor's office allows for more control over the future. With devolution it makes sense for metro mayors to have PCC powers. It makes devolution more tangible. A mayor provides face to face presence and impact. The aim is to employ a deputy who would manage the PCC role and powers.

Oliver expanded further, highlighting the Manchester example of taking the transport network as a "place" in its own right.

Oliver described that he is chair of the Integrated Care Partnership. He recognises the stretch on police who deal with mental health issues and will fight for money and investment in police.

He said that integration of powers would save c.£2 million on election costs by combining the election of the PCC and the mayor into one election. Public consultation is currently underway which ends 31 January 2024.

Oliver encouraged everyone to look at the consultation and take part – details can be found here: [South Yorkshire police and crime commissioner functions transfer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/south-yorkshire-police-and-crime-commissioner-functions-transfer).

Government is listening to this and only takes 30 seconds to do. It's really important; it's not a referendum but a view on merit. All four local authorities and politicians agree. We need more police on the High Street. This is a way to achieve it. The term of the current Police and Crime Commissioner, Dr Alan Billings, ends on 2 May 2024. It's important to demonstrate to government that we are serious about devolution and taking control. There are massive benefits to being able to manage the public estate.

**Another question posed around Investment zone – lacking access to capital.**

There is a Memorandum of Understanding with Aviva and the mayor's office has signed a growth deal with South Yorkshire Pension's Authority. Oliver is talking to others about access to capital. He recognises the problem around this. Investment in Northern Gritstone (founded by the universities of Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester) has provided funding for start-up/spin out companies with the first three of these in Sheffield. Overall, not enough has been done about telling a good news story.

He feels that South Yorkshire used to be proud of its industries, with a background of great jobs, history, legacy and when this was lost, it lost purpose and a sense of pride. The Advanced Manufacturing and Research Centre (AMRC) is recognised globally and its success is being duplicated in St Louis in the US. We've also got to be cockier and prouder about the development of Sheffield city centre.

**A question was asked about the redevelopment of Barnsley and its success in driving out anti-social behaviour (ASB) from the town centre. The retailer, British Heart Foundation, is working with vulnerable volunteers and has been having real issues with ASB. As a result, the retailer is considering moving out of the city centre. What else can be done to resolve the ASB problem?**

Oliver talked of the benefits of joining up services to look at all the problems: housing, policing, economic growth, care etc – a whole system approach to address these causes. He recognised the police were starved of resources and there is still a job to do.

**A question was asked about a “wet” area for street drinkers. A central place to support street drinkers. It was suggested Leeds already has one. Is there a plan in place for this here?**

**Another question outlined the perception that Leeds sees very little of what we face here in Sheffield city centre. What is Leeds doing that Sheffield is not?**

Oliver acknowledged that this seems to have gotten worse recently, and it can feel a bit intimidated in the city centre. He talked about the need to deal with it seriously, learn from best practice from other Mayoral authorities and ask the hard questions. He talked about how policing and the integration of services could support this.

There is a clear distinction between rough sleepers, street drinkers and aggressive beggars. Many do have homes and shelters to go to.

Gayle Kirby from the Council’s Community Safety Team addressed the group and talked about the partnership efforts around the street cohort – engage, educate, enforce. She outlined the production of the business guide to tackling ASB and its use, business self-empowerment and importance of businesses reporting issues. There is more street outreach taking place around those with complex needs to understand what is needed and what support is required. There is regular police work on hotspot areas in the city centre with key partners engaged. There is problem-oriented-policing (POP) plan in place for the city centre which is managed by the city centre neighbourhood police team. It links in with partners, including Sheffield BID, and is reviewed regularly. Its key focus of late has been managing the ASB group that migrated from Exchange Street, through Castlegate, into High Street and then Esperanto Place and Arundel Gate.

Oliver recognised all the efforts and provision of help although he still thinks there is a resourcing challenge that needs addressing. There needs to be leadership challenge and lead from a political perspective to manage this. Accountability and responsibility are a good thing for South Yorkshire. It needs someone at the front, in charge and who can put things in place as Andy Burnham has done in Manchester.

The mayor needs our support to do this,

We look forward to Oliver returning to a future High Street Forum.

### **Business health check**

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A couple of national headlines were highlighted:

- **Shock drop in December retail sales caps off difficult year** (worst decline in two years).
- **Hospitality businesses generated year-on-year sales growth of 8.8% in December 2023**, according to consumer intelligence research.

Businesses in attendance indicated the Christmas trading period had been as expected or better than expected, whilst two retailers indicated a poor trading period. Footfall on The Moor was up 9% overall compared to 2022 although November and December saw the largest decline (-10%) and this was attributed to no Christmas Lights Switch On and the exceptionally poor weather. The opening weekend of what should have been the Lights Switch On saw a 50% increase in visitors on the Saturday but lost momentum on the Sunday.

Orchard Square reported a strong performance in November and December, although its hospitality tenants fared much better than retail (which aligned to the national headline). Orchard Square has seen a strong start to the New Year. M&S said Christmas was strong for their food offer, but clothing did not perform as well. M&S received 10% more online orders than instore.

More generally it was felt that the construction works on Fargate and the surrounding areas had pushed more custom to The Moor.

Overall, city centre footfall between 25 November and 24 December was down -5.6% on the previous period in 2022.

### **Events – 2024 programme**

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Attendees were signposted to that the city centre events programme for 2024 which can be found at [City centre events 2024](https://www.sheffieldcitycentre.com)  ([sheffieldcitycentre.com](https://www.sheffieldcitycentre.com))

This is a useful resource that is updated regularly. Please do share with colleagues and utilise it for your own awareness and planning needs.

In addition, the City Centre Management Team at the Council also circulate a monthly “consents” list – this highlights all the main events that have been given permission. Many of our members are already on the circulation list but Sheffield BID will ensure the Council mailing list includes all those present today.

Another useful resource is Marketing Sheffield’s website [www.welcometosheffield.co.uk](http://www.welcometosheffield.co.uk).

### **Priorities for the year ahead**

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There was a short group work session to generate discussion between attendees about the priorities, needs and wants for the year ahead.

Discussion points covered:

- More digital marketing and greater social media activities to publicise instore/venue events, offers, promotions etc. The Moor, Orchard Square and Leopold Square have a social media agency for tenants. Sheffield BID aggregates local social media content, posting to [www.sheffieldcitycentre.com](https://www.sheffieldcitycentre.com), and regularly boosting content through paid promotion. What more can be done for businesses without a local social media presence.
- More visibility around what is going on – events etc. Content is addressed in the section above – how can communication channels be improved to relay information to busy venues.
- Transport - buses and trams. Need accessible bus stops for people with disabilities. Signage for bus stops is poor. Access / exits to road systems from car parks is becoming an issue.

- ASB. Intimidation by certain groups remains an issue. Older people are just not coming into the centre anymore. Retention of staff is an issue. More wardens and city centre ambassadors are needed.
- Construction work. Information around disruption and timelines has often proved inaccurate or out of date and no one is held responsible for the impact this has on businesses. It needs more accountability. Recognition that the Council needs to leverage its influence with contractors here. What are the plans from Urban Splash – all seems to have gone quiet.
- Lack of parking provision and cost remains an ongoing issue.
- There needs to be better wayfinding as the centre is hard to navigate.
- Entry and exit routes into the city centre. The bus lane on Arundel gate is pointless and it is having an impact on visitor numbers and a desire/willingness to return.
- There are many issues in the city centre which are in opposition to what is needed to build a residential community here, it is not just an issue for businesses and trade.

### **Any other business**

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- New store openings include Cream and other niche retailers not replicated at Meadowhall, which is a positive. A summary of recent/planned openings can be found here, in Sheffield BID's year of change feature: [A year of change in Sheffield city centre](#) ✨
- An enquiry was made about the availability of figures on reduction in air quality. Sheffield BID (Darren) will raise the matter at the City Centre Problem Solving group to get an update.

### **Future meetings / dates for the diary**

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- The matter of future meetings was discussed. We want meetings to be valuable and informative. We will continue with guest speakers as its important to hear from business leaders, investors and other stakeholders.
- The presence of a well-attended High Street Forum is gaining recognition across different stakeholders and we need to keep the momentum going. The group is a credible voice and should be heard.
- Members are invited to feedback on frequency and locations.
- A date for the next High Street Forum will be communicated soon.