

Report to Sheffield City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting:	30 January 2020
Subject:	SYPTTE processes and responses to petitions submitted to the Mayoral Combined Authority on transport.
Purpose of the Report:	To advise Committee members of the processes in place for SYPTTE to respond to members of the public who submit collated petitions regarding issues and concerns on public transport in South Yorkshire.
The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:	Note the contents of the report and give their views on any improvements or changes required to the current process in place for the management of petitions by the Mayoral Combined Authority.
Category of Report:	Open
<p>Under the Freedom of Information Act and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, this paper and any appendices will be made available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme. This scheme commits the Authority to make information about how decisions are made available to the public as part of its normal business activities.</p>	

Summary:

The report provides a summary of the current processes to manage the receipt and response of public petitions to the Mayoral Combined Authority on transport matters. It provides statistics on the volume of petitions received and the time taken to present at a CA meeting and the time to provide a final written response.

1. Introduction/Context

Members of the public are invited to submit petitions to the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) on subjects for which the City Region is responsible. The petitions are submitted and heard, either in person by the petitioner, or presented on their behalf at the Mayoral Combined Authority Meetings which take place at Broad Street West in Sheffield on an eight-weekly cycle. To date, 11 petitions have been submitted and presented to the MCA in 2019 all of which related to public transport matters.

It is normal practice for the City Region Mayor to hear the petition in full but request that a response be prepared on their behalf by SYPTTE and issued to the petitioner in due course after the meeting has taken place.

2. Matters for Consideration

Process for Responding to Petitions

There is a process in place which manages the receipt, preparation and response to petitioners as part of the MCA Meeting cycle, an outline of which is provided below;

1. The petitioner submits the subject of the petition, associated supporting documentation and details of signatories to either SYPTTE direct or to the Mayor. This can be received either electronically (typically on email or via an online petition form) or in written correspondence.

2. If received by SYPTE, SCR Governance Team are informed who in turn inform the petitioner of the next available MCA Meeting at which it can be heard.
3. SCR Statutory Officers review the petition and decide if the petition can be accepted.
4. If accepted, the petitioner is contacted again with confirmation of the meeting date and arrangements for attendance if desired.
5. SYPTE prepare background details on the nature of the petition. It is not uncommon for the subject of the petition to be one which has been previously written to as normal correspondence between SYPTE and the petitioner; where SYPTE has been unable to meet the demands or expectations of the individual concerned they then feel obliged to seek wider signatories to their cause.
6. Where required, SYPTE will engage with public transport operators (normally commercial bus operators) as to the nature of the request and if there are options available to meet the expectation of the petition. SYPTE officers from the relevant mode of transport are also involved to ensure that information provided by both operators and petitioners is accurate and up to date.
7. The petition is presented on the day of the MCA Meeting.
8. SYPTE prepares a draft response as requested on behalf of the Mayor. This draft is quality assured by the Head of Marketing and Communications and then the Director of Customer Services. Once approved it is shared with the SCR Director of the Mayor's Office for approval.
9. The final approved response is issued to the petitioner as a letter and signed on behalf of the Mayor by the Executive Director of SYPTE.

A full copy of the process is included in the appendices.

SYPTE Customer Charter

SYPTE re-published its Customer Charter in 2019. The aim of this was to simplify the process for customers providing feedback and to make clearer obligations around how complaints are escalated and the timeliness of responses.

SYPTE's Customer Charter states that when SYPTE receive a complaint;

"We'll fully investigate your concern or complaint in a fair, honest way and provide you with a response within ten working days from the day we receive your comments. If your complaint is about a partner organisation, we will still record the complaint and handle it on your behalf, but you may receive a reply from them directly. If we can't fully answer your concern or complaint within ten working days, we'll make sure we keep you informed as to our progress and when you can expect to hear from us."

If the customer remains unhappy with the initial response, they can request that it is reviewed by a senior manager within ten working days. Finally, if they remain unhappy, they can write to SYPTE's Customer Service Director for a final review. They will receive a response within 20 working days.

Beyond this final response the only available recourse is to refer the complaint to the ombudsman, details of which are provided in the final reply.

Whilst the management of petition responses are not directly bound by the SYPTE Customer Charter escalation process or timelines for responses, we endeavour to provide a written response within the shortest timescale possible. As described earlier, you should also recall that customers are likely to have already gone through the initial complaints process prior to generating the petition.

We have provided three anonymised examples of the final responses to petitions received in the appendix.

a. Financial

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this paper. There are no costs associated with the receipt, management and response to customer petitions other than officer time to prepare the necessary information and write the response to the petitioner. This is assumed as part of

ordinary business and therefore covered by revenue budget.

b. Legal

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this paper.

c. Risk Management

There are no direct risk management implications as a result of this paper.

It should be noted however that should the petitioner not be satisfied with the final response they receive, they may choose to engage with local or national media organisations in an attempt to further raise the profile of their cause.

If this were the case, there may be reputational risks for the Mayor, SYPTTE and the City Region to manage so careful consideration as to the nature of the response should be given prior to issuing.

d. Environmental

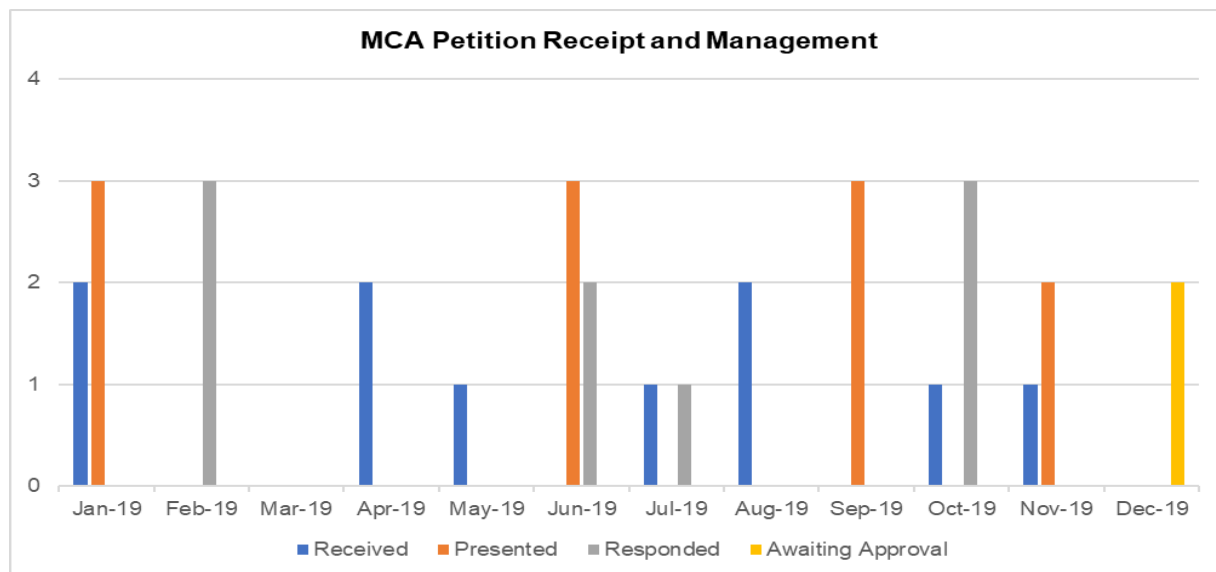
There are no direct environmental implications as a result of this paper.

e. Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment is not required in relation to the content of this paper.

f. Performance Management/Measuring Outcomes

Performance of the process is monitored on receipt and management of specific petitions and the adherence to the process. Below is the latest status of petitions received, heard by the MCA and responded to by month. The two petitions heard in the November MCA are awaiting final approval by SCR officers at time of writing (December 2019).



On average it takes 33 days between receipt of the petition and it being presented at the MCA Meeting, and a further average of 26 days between the MCA Meeting and the final response being issued.

A summary of the petitions received, and time taken between receipt of petition and issuing of final response can be found in the appendix.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

At present no alternative approaches have been considered as to how to manage the receipt and response of petitions. Committee Members are encouraged to provide suggested improvements to the existing process, or if they feel an entirely new process is required, are asked to provide details on review of this paper.

4. Issues the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider ...

Committee Members are asked to consider if the current process in place for receipt and management of petitions (at least in relation to public transport) is fit for purpose.

Given the existence of the SYPTE Customer Charter and published timescales for responding based on stage of escalation, should give their views on applying an equivalent customer-facing service level agreement for response between the petition being heard by the MCA and a final response being issued. If this is deemed appropriate, Members are asked to give their views as to what timescale is reasonable (noting that SYPTE currently apply 20 working days to its final stage escalation).

Further consideration could be given to the engagement with the petition pre- and post-presentation at the MCA Meeting. At present, no formal face to face meeting takes place between either SCR or SYPTE officers, public transport operators and the petitioner. Should this be expected, it should be recognised that this would have resource implications for one or both organisations and may extend the timescales in which a final response can be provided.

5. Recommendations

That Committee Members give their views on any improvements or changes required to the current process in place for the management of petitions by the Mayoral Combined Authority.

6. Appendices/Annexes

Appendix A: Process Map – Processing Public Transport Petitions at MCA Meetings

Appendix B: Summary of MCA Petitions

Appendix C: SYPTE Response to Chapeltown Petition

Appendix D: SYPTE Response to Burngreave Petition

Appendix E: SYPTE Response to Maltby Petition

The following section is a legal requirement

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Other sources and references:	
N/A	