

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10 July 2017

(10.01 - 10.48 am)

Meeting held Gateshead Council, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH

Present:

Chair: D Taylor-Gooby

Councillors: R Crute, J Eagle, N Weatherley, A Lower, O Avery, R Glindon, R Dodd, J Amar, Wright, D Snowdon, A Batey and K Stephenson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Flynn and Graham.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Eagle declared an interest as an employee of Nexus and informed Committee that dispensation had been granted for him to take part in discussions of transport related items but he would not be voting in decision making.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28 MARCH 2017

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 March 2017. It was noted that Councillor Graham had also been present and officers agreed to amend the minutes accordingly. The minutes were otherwise agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 March 2017 be amended to show Councillor Graham's attendance, and be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, & OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Submitted: A report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Viv Geary (Monitoring Officer) presented the report which provided Members with the proposed Terms of Reference for both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Sub-Committee.

Members were reminded that there had been a material change in the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the introduction of new Government regulations in May 2017 that included provision for call-in of decisions made by the Combined Authority. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made recommendations to the Leadership Board in March 2017 on revised governance arrangements that would meet the new requirements, including the establishment of a Sub-Committee specifically to deal with any call-in.

Comments, questions and points raised by members

- Members who were newly appointed to the Committee, and had not been part of previous discussions about the revised governance arrangements, queried why it was necessary to have a Sub-Committee to deal with call-in.

Officers advised that there were tight timescales involved in the process, as a meeting was required to take place within 14 days of any decision being called-in. If it were not possible to hold a meeting within those timescales then the call-in would lapse, and the decision would proceed to implementation. Officers also clarified that only members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were able to call-in decisions, and that the four (or more) members who called a decision in would be excluded from sitting on the Sub-Committee.

- Some Members expressed concern that the timescales imposed could mean that the process was likely to fail, and asked whether it would be possible to amend the Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee.

Officers advised that the Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee had been derived from the recommendations put forward to the Leadership Board by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that they met all of the requirements for call-in, and that they were not intended to create a barrier but to allow for efficient and effective management of the process. It was suggested that the process should be monitored for a reasonable period of time to assess the effectiveness of the process. Members would however have the opportunity at any time to review and to consider appropriate amendments to the Terms of Reference if and when any issues were identified.

- Whether there had been any progress with appointment of an Independent Vice-Chair for the Committee. Members expressed concern that it was taking so long for someone to be appointed to the role.

Officers advised that the role had been originally advertised alongside that of the Chair, and that there had been substantial interest, but that it had not been possible to find someone who met all of the required statutory criteria so the role was being re-advertised.

It was highlighted by a Member that the advertisement currently on the NECA website referred only to a Chair, and not to a Vice-Chair. Officers agreed to review the website content.

- What the process had been for the appointment of the Independent Chair of the Committee.

The Chair explained that he had applied for the position after seeing an advertisement in a newspaper, and had been interviewed by officers of the Combined Authority. Officers further clarified that the position had been widely advertised, in line with Government regulations, and that the Chair had met all of the required criteria for the role.

RESOLVED: - That

- The report be received
- The Committee considered and agreed the Terms of Reference.

5 **FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Nicola Laverick (Policy and Scrutiny Officer) presented the report which provided Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Forward Plan for the current 28 day period and to endorse the Scrutiny Annual Work Programme for 2017/18.

Nicola drew Members attention to the following additional items that were still to be scheduled on the Work Programme: National Audit Office Case Study report; Final Report DCLG Inquiry Overview and Scrutiny; Health and Wealth report. Members were also reminded that they could request any additional items they would want to see added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That Committee accepted the Forward Plan and endorsed the work programme for 2017/18.

6 **TRANSPORT PLAN FOR THE NORTH EAST**

Submitted: Report of the Lead Chief Executive for Transport (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Ian Coe (Principal Transport Planner) presented the report which provided an update on development of a Transport Plan for the NECA area, and advised Members that the NECA had a statutory duty to produce a Transport Plan (replacing the existing plans for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear) but that there was no set timescale in which it had to be completed. Next steps for production of the Plan were set out in the report, including a proposal for a workshop session for members of Overview and Scrutiny.

Ian Coe also drew Members attention the fifth bullet point in paragraph 2.1 of the report and clarified that the Transport Thematic Lead Update report would be brought to the 14 December meeting of the Committee.

Comments, questions and points raised by members

- How realistic the proposals for promotion of the freight sector, set out in the Transport Manifesto, were felt to be and what the likelihood was of being able to achieve the ambitions stated.

Members were advised that it was necessary to have aspirational plans in place that the NECA could refer to in order to demonstrate strategic fit for any future funding opportunities, and also to ensure that NECA could compete for funding against ambitious proposals from other combined authority areas. It was acknowledged that some proposals may not be realistic in the short term, but officers explained that the Transport Plan was intended to cover the next 20 years.

- Why there was no reference made to air quality in the 'Bus Services' section of the manifesto. Members expressed concern that older fleet vehicles were being moved out of London and up to the North East, and suggested that there should be a minimum air quality standard imposed on service providers.

Officers explained that since the publication of the Transport Manifesto in December 2016 the Government had published a report on air quality, to which the NECA had responded. Members were advised that the issue had moved up the agenda as a result and would be made much more prominent in the full Transport Plan with a range of options explored.

- Whether the NECA had an accurate record of licensed taxis across the area and an understanding of the scale of unlicensed taxis operating.

Officers explained that there would be no proposals in the Transport Plan around taxi licensing as it was the responsibility of each constituent authority and not of the NECA. Members were advised that officers dealing with taxi licensing did hold regional meetings.

- That it would be important to consult as widely as possible on the Transport Plan. The difficulties of consulting in rural areas and with hard to reach groups, including those without access to a computer or to the internet, were noted. Members suggested that the NECA should be innovative in the ways in which it consults on the plan, and that there should be specific proposals for how to consult with the disabled and with young people.

Officers explained that detailed proposals for consultation would be brought to Members for their approval and that the proposals would reflect consideration given to accessibility issues, in terms of both geography and digital connectivity. Members were advised that Transport officers were working with Communications officers from all seven authorities, and with experts from Newcastle University, to draft the consultation proposals. It was noted that there had been positive feedback from disabled people's organisations about consultation that had taken place on the Transport Manifesto, and that strong links had since been developed with young

peoples' organisations which officers hoped to build on. Officers highlighted that details of the budget allocated to consultation were included in the report.

- Whether any feedback had been received from Government on the Transport Manifesto, particularly since the election in June 2017.

Officers advised that while Government Departments had been invited to respond to consultation on the Manifesto they had not done so, but that this was not considered to be surprising and that a formal response to consultation on the full Plan was more likely.

RESOLVED: That Committee received the report and noted its contents.

7 **DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 13 September 2017 at 2.00pm; to take place at North Tyneside Council (Quadrant, The Silverlink North).

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