

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28 March 2017

(2.02 - 3.35 pm)

Meeting held Sunderland Civic Centre

Present:

Councillors: Crute, Dillon, Graham, A Lower, Meling, S Pearson and Wright

46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Armstrong, J Eagle, B Flux, R Glindon, B Pidcock and D Snowdon.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting was not quorate and that any decisions taken would be ratified at the next meeting.

47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

48 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2017

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 February 2017 and those present agreed their accuracy.

RESOLVED: That the minutes would formally be approved at the next meeting of the Committee.

Matters arising

(minute 38 refers)

It was noted that the budget for the Committee would be confirmed in the new municipal year.

49 EMPLOYABILITY AND INCLUSION THEMATIC LEAD UPDATE

Submitted: A report of the Thematic Lead for Employability and Inclusion (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Councillor Davey (Thematic Lead for Employability and Inclusion) introduced the report which provided Members with an update as to the latest progress being made in delivering the Employability and Inclusion and Skills themes of the Strategic Economic Plan for the North East, including; commencement of the Apprenticeship

Levy; development of the 'North East Ambition' career guidance toolkit for schools; a programme to provide support for long-term unemployed residents with health conditions; the Mental Health Trailblazer, and; Generation NE.

Councillor Davey also advised the Committee that the refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) had been completed, and that there had been no changes as a result of the refresh to the work programme for Employability, Inclusion and Skills.

Comments, questions and points raised by members

- Whether it would be possible for someone to come to a future meeting to talk to the Committee about the success of the Youth Employment Initiative in Durham (Durham Works).

Councillor Crute confirmed that he would be happy to support arrangements for that session to take place.

- That there should be a wider review of all of the initiatives in the region aimed at breaking down barriers to education and employment, and that these should be looked at with consideration given as to how they could be brought together more effectively.
- Members noted that there could be implications for some programmes and initiatives if the NECA were to split into two separate areas.
- Members raised the following queries in relation to Enterprise Advisors:
 - In which areas and schools were Enterprise Advisors operating;
 - How those particular schools were selected;
 - Whether there were any plans to extend the scheme to other schools and areas, and;
 - How Enterprise Advisors were recruited.

In response, officers advised that the NELEP covers the same geography as the NECA, and that the schools targeted so far had been identified in partnership with Schools North East but that the intention was to roll out the scheme more widely. A lot of the recruitment of Enterprise Advisors was done through networking with officers seeking to match the skills of the Advisors with the needs of the schools identified for inclusion. Officers agreed to share with the Committee a list of the schools already involved in the scheme and of the Advisors they have been matched with.

It was noted that the NELEP was chosen to pilot the scheme and so was slightly ahead of other parts of the country, and that the North East was leading the way generally in terms of providing careers advice with a member of the NELEP team recently winning a national award in recognition of their work.

- Members noted the success of the Mental Health Trailblazer and queried whether the success of the scheme in County Durham following its early launch there was starting to be reflected in other areas.

Councillor Davey confirmed that the scheme was proving to be successful in all areas.

It was suggested that there should be greater publicity about the scheme, promoting it as a practical tool to help those with mental health issues to get and keep a job. Members agreed that this was a good idea and noted that there should be more publicity generally of the positive things that were happening within NECA.

- Whether an update could be given on the EU funding still to be released to the region, whether there had been any impact for the region in terms of money lost as a result of Government nationalising the programmes, and if so whether it could be claimed back.

Officers advised that as a result of the refresh the SEP now lined up with all EU initiatives, and that allocations could begin to be made. It was noted that some ERDF money is still available, but that nothing could be done until the Government opened a window for applications. It was agreed that officers would circulate to the Committee a briefing note on the current position re all EU funding including any impact from nationalisation of the programmes.

RESOLVED: - That

- i. The report be received for comment and for information.
- ii. The Committee to receive further information on the Durham Works Youth Employment Initiative at a future meeting.
- iii. Further information on Enterprise Advisors to be included on the work programme for the Committee.
- iv. Information about the promotion and publicity for positive news stories within NECA would be circulated.
- v. Officers to circulate to Committee a briefing note on current position regarding EU funding.

50 **HEALTH AND WEALTH - CLOSING THE GAP IN THE NORTH EAST**

Submitted: A report of the Interim Head of Paid Service (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Helen Golightly (Interim Head of Paid Service) presented the report which provided Members with details of the feedback received from all statutory bodies to the consultation on the recommendations set out in “Health and Wealth: Closing the Gap in the North East” – the report of the North East Commission for Health and Social Care Integration – and of the high level next steps proposed.

Comments, questions and points raised by members

- That health inequalities were a massive issue for the region, and whether bringing together the Health and Wellbeing Boards from across the NECA area on a regular basis could be worth considering to help link up the work taking place. It was noted that it could be particularly useful as there was a disalignment between the geography of the Strategic Transformation Plans (STPs) and of the NECA.
- That the shift away from collective healthcare and towards individual responsibility was worrying.
- That while Greater Manchester had been awarded responsibility for health and social care there were still concerns about the funding that went with it. It was noted that the North East had been very successful in some areas, such as preventing smoking and reducing teenage pregnancy, but that to tackle such issues properly would require both time and adequate funding to be devolved to the region.
- That in order to make the proposals set out in the report work there would be some massive issues and long term challenges to overcome.
- Members expressed their disappointment that it had not been possible for either a member of the Commission or an officer with a greater knowledge of the area of work to attend to present the report and to respond to more detailed questions.
- It was highlighted that whilst the region had one of the fastest increases in life expectancy in recent years, there were still massive discrepancies between wards.
- It was suggested that the NHS had become increasingly dedicated to things other than keeping people well or making them better, and that it would be good if a review of governance could also help to rationalise what was provided by the health service.
- It was noted that the region had a clear inheritance in terms of the health impacts of industrialisation, particularly for older people.
- The Chair suggested that Committee Members may find a video by Dr Bob Gill of interest, and also highlighted some recent training that Sunderland members had undertaken on the Gunning Principles which had been proven to be particularly useful. It was suggested that it would be helpful for the NECA O&S Committee to undertake the same training, if the budget would allow. It was agreed that officers would circulate links to both the video by Dr Bob Gill and to the Gunning Principles to the Committee.

RESOLVED: - That

- i. The report be received for comment and for information.

- ii. In consultation with Members, health partners should be invited to a future meeting to discuss details of the proposals.

51 **POLICY REVIEW - TRANSPORT RELATED BARRIERS TO EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING**

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

Karen Brown (Scrutiny Officer) presented the report which considered the response from the Leadership Board to the conclusions of a policy review on transport related barriers to education, employment and training.

Karen advised members that the Leadership Board had welcomed and accepted the recommendations of the policy review and that the majority of the recommendations were to be built into the work programme.

Comments, questions and points raised by members

- In response to a query about whether there had been a recommendation on access to healthcare, officers advised that although it was referenced in the report there had not been a specific recommendation as health had not been part of the remit of the review.
- It was noted that the region's "Access Fund" bid, intended to help maintain the Go-Smarter programme, had been declined for funding, and Members expressed their disappointment in the outcome.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and actions to be taken noted.

52 **FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

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

Karen Brown (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 the revised and updated Scrutiny Annual Work Programme for 2016/17.

Karen advised the Committee that the report to Leadership Board on the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2016, and the notes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 March, were also included.

Viv Geary (Monitoring Officer) gave a verbal update on the outcome of the Leadership Board discussion regarding the Order. She advised the Committee that the Leadership Board had been fully supportive of the concerns raised by Members, and that they had accepted all of the proposals but that they had agreed that their preference for chairing arrangements would be to have an Independent Chair and

Vice Chair and that officers had begun the process of procuring those people for the new municipal year.

Comments, questions and points raised by members

- In response to a query, officers confirmed that both the Chair and Vice Chair would be Independent.
- Members expressed their disappointment that the Leadership Board had not listened to the Committee on the subject of the Chair given how well the committee had worked together, suggested that it would be a difficult role for someone to undertake without any political knowledge, and expressed concern that it could result in the agenda being driven solely by the Chair and not by the Committee.
- In response to a query about whether the Independent Chair and Vice Chair would be paid, and where the money would come from, officers advised that this had not yet been determined but that the Governance Committee already had an Independent Chair and Vice Chair, both of whom received nominal payments.
- Whether any of the constituent authorities had Independent Chairs for their scrutiny committees.

All members present confirmed that their own authority did not have an Independent Chair of Scrutiny.

- Who the Independent Chair and Vice Chair would be answerable to, whether the appointment would be for a fixed term, and if so how long, and whether there would be a limit on the term that the Chair could serve.

Officers advised that a report to the Annual Meeting of the NECA would address all of those issues, but that the current understanding was that it would be a term of 2-3 years.

- Whether the appointment of the Independent Chair and Vice Chair would be an open and transparent process, and how it could be determined that an application was 'non-political'.

Officers advised that the roles would be advertised, that the process would be open and transparent and that there were set criteria to determine whether or not an applicant could be considered to be non-political. It was agreed that officers would provide the Committee with further details of the Independent Chair and Vice Chair posts, including a copy of the advert for the roles.

- It was agreed that the Chair should write to the Chair of the Leadership Board to acknowledge their decision and to reflect the views of the Committee.

- Members noted that it was the last meeting for the current Chair, Vice Chair and the Monitoring Officer and Scrutiny Officer and expressed their recognition and thanks for their hard work.

In return the Chair thanked the Committee for their support, and also extended thanks to all of the officers who worked to support the Committee and to all those who had attended to present reports.

RESOLVED: That –

- i. The Scrutiny Committee accepted the Forward Plan and work programme report.
- ii. Officers to provide the Scrutiny Committee with further details of the Independent Chair and Vice Chair posts, an explanation of the selection process that would be undertaken, and a copy of the advert for the roles.

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

To be confirmed at the NECA Annual Meeting.