

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

APPROVED MINUTES

20 December 2018

(10.02 - 11.32 am)

Meeting held Committee Room, Town Hall, Westoe Road, South Shields, NE33 2RL

Present:

Independent Members D Taylor-Gooby (Chair) S Hart (Vice-Chair)

Councillors J Wallace, W Flynn, D Snowdon, M Clarke and P Wood

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Patterson (Durham), Crute (Durham), Eagle (Gateshead), Kilgour (South Tyneside) and Oliver (Sunderland).

The Chair noted that the meeting was not quorate, and that as such the Committee would not be able to make any decisions, but that it could comment on the reports and make recommendations.

It was agreed to defer consideration of the minutes of previous meetings to the next meeting, and to amend the order of the agenda to take item 5 (Budget Proposals 2019/20) before item 4 (Governance Changes and Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements).

21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

22 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 15 MARCH 2018

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

23 NOTES OF INQUORATE MEETING HELD ON 16 JULY 2018

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

24 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2018

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

25 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20

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

Paul Woods (Chief Finance Officer) presented the report which sought the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposals for the setting of the 2019/20 NECA Budget.

In response to comments, questions and points raised by Members the following was noted:

1. There were no proposals to remove tolls from the Tyne Tunnel, as had recently been announced for the Severn Bridge. An economic case would need to be made to justify the removal of tolls, and there would then be a question about who would take on the cost of annual maintenance. The current position was that the people who chose to use the Tunnel, and benefited from it, should be the ones to pay.

TT2 had a 30-year concession to operate the Tyne Tunnels, and received a share of the income from tolls to cover the construction costs of the second tunnel. If tolls were abandoned compensation would have to be paid to TT2 to replace this.

Members were advised that the North East Joint Transport Committee Tyne and Wear Sub-Committee would be looking at whether tolling arrangements for the Tunnel could be made easier, for example by having no barriers or cash payments but instead using number plate recognition. If this was to be implemented a decision would be required about how much the penalty for non-payment should be and it was noted that very clear signage would be put in place to advise users of the options and timescales for payment and of penalty charges for non-payment.

2. The Transport Levy was split in three (Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear) to reflect the difference in costs between urban and rural areas – and within Tyne and Wear distribution was based on population – but contributions to support the North East LEP, the Invest North East England team and the corporate costs of NECA were split evenly between the constituent authorities. This approach was agreed by the Leadership Board when NECA was first created to reflect that all constituent authorities had an equal vote and equal representation.
3. The cost of Concessionary travel was not within NECA's control – there was a statutory obligation to refund operators for the cost of the Scheme. Over the previous 12 months reduced usage had resulted in some savings in the cost of concessionary fares, and smart data had enabled the negotiation of better deals with operators with multi-year settlements and fixed costs.
4. When the Government raised the age at which women were entitled to receive the State Pension this had a knock-on effect on eligibility for concessionary travel. At the time Nexus and the Tyne and Wear Sub-Committee considered

whether an interim arrangement could be put in place within Tyne and Wear to mitigate against this, but it would have resulted in increased budget costs and as there had been no appetite for increased contributions from the constituent authorities the only other option would have been to look at reducing other services.

It was something that could be considered again in future by the Tyne and Wear Sub-Committee, with the North East Joint Transport Committee making any decision about whether to implement such a scheme. If it was to cover all seven authorities Durham and Northumberland would need to agree.

It was noted that a Scrutiny working group could be established to carry out an in-depth review of concessionary fares, but that it may be an item better suited for the Joint Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

5. Members suggested that there should be substantial monitoring of the Metro replacement project to ensure that it stayed on schedule, following previous issues with other major projects such as the Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnel. It was noted that the aim would not be to criticise Nexus but to support them in delivering the project.
6. Members were advised that work was ongoing to investigate the possibility of extending the Metro system, and what bids for could be made for money to support that. A bid was also to be submitted by the North East Joint Transport Committee for over £200m from the Transforming Cities Fund and a report setting out the details of that would be available in January.

The Chair thanked Paul Woods for the report.

RECOMMENDED – That:

- i. The report be received, and comments noted.
- ii. The Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider carrying out an in-depth review of concessionary fares.

26 **GOVERNANCE CHANGES AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS**

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

Peter Judge (Monitoring Officer) and Nicola Laverick (Policy and Scrutiny Officer) presented the report which provided an update on recent governance changes and sought Members' views on Overview and Scrutiny arrangements moving forward.

In response to comments, questions and points raised by Members the following was noted:

1. It was suggested that there should be a review and refresh of the Decision-Making Protocol to clarify the relationship between the Overview and Scrutiny

Committees of the NECA and the Joint Transport Committee, and that this should be an item for consideration at the next meeting.

2. Members were reminded it had previously been agreed that a workshop would be set up once membership of the reformed NECA had been confirmed which would focus on transport issues and the new governance arrangements. It was suggested that the invitation to attend this be opened up to all members of NECA committees.
3. Members were reminded to let officers know if they had any concerns about decisions that were being made, either by a Committee or under Delegation.
4. Whether or not to call-in a decision was a matter for individual Members to determine. If a decision was called-in the Call-In Sub-Committee would meet to determine whether or not to recommend that the decision be reviewed by the decision-maker. The Call-In Sub-Committee would be comprised of a panel of four Overview and Scrutiny Committee members and would be required to meet within a period not exceeding 14 days of the request to call-in the decision.

The call-in procedure had been discussed and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the appointment of the Independent Chair and Vice-Chair, with the aim of expediting the process to avoid unnecessary delays in implementation of decisions.

RECOMMENDED – That:

- i. The report be received, and comments noted.
- ii. The update to the NECA website regarding special notice provisions be noted.
- iii. The draft Overview and Scrutiny report template be approved.
- iv. A workshop be arranged for Members of all NECA committees to focus on transport issues and new governance arrangements.

27 NECA FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted: Report of Monitoring Officer and Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to 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 discuss items for the Work Programme for 2019 and into 2020.

It was suggested that the proposed workshop on transport issues and new governance arrangements should take place in early February.

It was noted that Nicola would be moving on to a new job in January. The Committee thanked Nicola for her work as Policy and Scrutiny Officer and offered their congratulations on her appointment to her new role.

RECOMMENDED – That:

- i. The report be received, and comments noted.
- ii. Officers to seek availability for a workshop in early February.

28 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 14 March 2019 at 10.00am.

29 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 15 MARCH 2018

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

30 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 20 SEPTEMBER 2018

Consideration of this item was deferred to the next meeting.