



North East Combined Authority

**DURHAM • GATESHEAD • SOUTH TYNESIDE • SUNDERLAND**

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 27 July 2023 at 2.00pm

Meeting to be held at: Whickham Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, NE8 1HH

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## AGENDA

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Page No

**1. Apologies for Absence**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Please remember to declare any personal interest where appropriate both verbally and by recording it on the relevant form (to be handed to the Democratic Services Officer). Please also remember to leave the meeting where any personal interest requires this.

**3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 March 2023** **1-6**

Minutes for approval as a correct record.

**4. Establishment of a Working Group** **7-12**

**5. Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update** **13-20**

**6. Date and Time of Next Meeting:** 14 December 2023 at 2.00pm.

Contact Officer: Toby Ord  
Tel: 0191 424 7541  
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### North East Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### DRAFT MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

16 March 2023

(2.00pm – 3.05pm)

Meeting held at: Committee Room 1A, Durham County Hall, DH1 5UZ

#### Present:

Independent Members: Mr D Taylor-Gooby (Chair)

Councillors: Deinali, Eagle, Elmer, Hartnack, Snowdon, Robson, Watson  
(Councillors Robson and Watson attended as a member of public)

#### Also Present:

Gavin Armstrong (Policy and Scrutiny Officer, NECA) and Toby Ord (Strategy and Democratic Services Assistant, NECA)

#### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hall, Cllr Kilgour, Stephen Gwilym, Simon Hart and Nicola Robason.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared an interest in Item 4 as a former member and supporter of the North East Assembly Campaign in 2003. As no decisions were to be made, there was no subsequent inhibition to discuss the report.

#### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

## 4 NORTH EAST DEVOLUTION – UPDATE

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

Gavin Armstrong delivered the report on behalf of the Monitoring Officer which outlined the 'minded to' Devolution Deal previously approved by the seven relevant Authorities.

It was noted that following the conclusion of the public consultation, results will be processed internally by each Authority, who will then decide how they wish to progress. Results will ultimately be relayed back to the Secretary of State in a formulaic report which is likely to influence any proposals along with other components outlined in the 'minded to' deal. A final decision will need to be made, then once agreed proposals will be put to Cabinet, legal components will be enacted, NECA and NTCA will cease to exist at the very moment NEMCA is created. It was added that Officers will be working on this transition immediately, though discussions are currently ongoing in the to lay groundwork.

Following questions from a member, it was clarified that NECA's budget is relatively small – 90% of staff fall under Transport North East, while only three staff members are employed directly by NECA. Staffing arrangements will be transferred over to the new Combined Authority, and all NECA functions will be assimilated into the new Authority.

This opportunity was denoted as an exciting prospect, with exciting times ahead for the region as the door opens to a plethora of new funding avenues.

Councillor Elmer added that NECA's current value is in it's strategic focus on the local area and queried whether these functions would be assumed by the Mayor's Office within the new Authority, though it was clarified that the current structure is unsure at present. Discussions regarding the structure of Scrutiny Committees are ongoing, with the necessity for a separate Scrutiny Committee for each aspect of the Authority's functions, such as transport, being likely. The Mayor and Cabinet will most likely be the ultimate decision making body similar to other regions nationwide. The overview and scrutiny function will be written into the order.

Councillor Eagle expressed concerns over the uncertainty regarding the situation, particularly in the way of funding, querying whether funding supplied to the new Combined Authority will be new money, or rather reallocated from other sources. He added that the Committee needs clarity on what this means for NECA, how powers will be transferred, and how democratic the Mayoral process will be. It was noted that the Mayor won't possess overarching veto powers – while there will be an ability to conduct a

strategic plan in consultation with Cabinet, there won't wide-ranging autocratic powers. Cabinet could overturn decisions should they so desire.

Councillor Robson added concerns over an inability to access online consultation tools for certain members of the public, to which the Chair concurred, adding that there was an in-person consultation which he attended held in County Durham, though this was difficult to access, especially for those with no access to private travel.

The Chair continued, adding that the Mayor of the new Combined Authority is a representative of the area; an ambassador who has powers to lobby in the regions favour. Using Andy Burnham of Greater Manchester and Steve Rotherham of the Liverpool City Region as examples, the Chair reminded the Committee that the potential candidate is likely to be a figurehead for the North East who may possess the ability to open up new opportunities for the region. With many up and coming areas within the North East such as Newton Aycliffe and Sunderland, candidates won't just be centralised around Newcastle.

Members expressed further concerns regarding the Mayor and Cabinet exercising their powers to serve their own priorities. The new Combined Authority was said to run the risk of gifting power to a single person or group without sufficient reason to believe they will exercise it responsibly. It was added that as opposed to regional devolution, the move is in the nature of regional centralisation.

Following a query from the Committee, Gavin Armstrong clarified that money for transport grants comes directly from the Government, whereas other funding such as industrial grants are attained through the LEP.

**AGREED – That:**

- i. the report be noted.

**5 WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

In absence of the Vice-Chair, the Chair opened up the discussion, giving a brief update on the current progress of the Working Group.

Due to a lack of significant activity in NECA's recent history, it was noted that there hasn't been much to scrutinise. Subsequently, the Chair and Vice-Chair felt that it would be appropriate for the Committee to conduct some of and investigation into how adult health and wellbeing effects individuals in

the North East, proposing to look at how our own public health and social service sectors can work better together. It was noted that prospective work has attracted interest from experts on health inequalities, as well as Director of Public Health for Gateshead, Alice Wiseman.

Gavin Armstrong picked up the discussion, adding that the previously large remit has now been narrowed to something the working group can apply focus to. Current aims are to progress tangible work which can be produced within the next year and be delivered to the new Combined Authority with ease. Gavin stressed that the Committee must be clear about the roles, responsibilities and what is desired from the work. Work will commence in April 2023.

The Chair warned the committee of studying too broadly, adding that should anyone wish to remain or join the working group, they should contact Toby Ord to register interest.

Councillor Robson expressed concerns over the possibility of overlapping work with other bodies in the region, though it was clarified that the group is liaising with other Authorities and Institutions to avoid conflation.

Following a query from Councillor Deinali, it was noted that mental health problems will also be a part of the study – mental health problems were a key issue noted by the Director of Public Health. The effects on ability to work encompasses all aspects of health.

Councillor Elmer questioned whether the overarching purpose of the remit is to assess how health and wellbeing is impacting economic development within the region, though the Chair was quick to refute this, noting that the value and the focus of the study is resident wellbeing. Continuing, Councillor Elmer added that health and wellbeing is a benefit to the economic area. He also added that housing and particularly private rentals can be a detriment to public health, with houses being built with a lack of room or green spaces. It was stated that rentals are being marketed whilst covered in harmful mould, asserting that 40% of hospital cases wouldn't be here today if we improved public health. Councillor Robson added that licencing authorities are currently examining existing housing standards off of the back of Councillor Elmer's comments.

Gavin thanked both Councillors, adding that such discussions will be useful in evidence gathering sessions.

**AGREED – That:**

- i. the report be noted.

## 6 FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer gave his routine work programme update, asking Members to take the written report as read, and reminding them that this is a living document. Should anything be requested to be added, removed or altered in any way, the Scrutiny Officer should be contacted.

The Chair requested whether the Digital Inclusion update can be brought to the front of the queue, though it was noted that Michelle Rainbow and her colleagues from INEE will return to the Committee soon.

### **AGREED – That:**

- i. the report be noted.

## 7 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

20 July 2023 at 2.00pm.  
(To be agreed at AGM)





### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 27 July 2023

**Subject:** Establishment of a Working Group

**Report of:** Policy and Scrutiny Officer

#### Executive Summary

This report provides members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a background on earlier work to understand the current threats and pressures, and mitigations, to the delivery of strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosper and to deliver on economic development and regeneration ambitions.

The report recommends that a new working group is established to examine adult well-being and health and its relationship to individuals' ability to work in the North East.

The results of this work will form part of the evidence base for the ongoing project throughout the year. The key dates and phases of work are outlined in the paper.

#### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and agree to the establishment of a working group.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 1. Background Information

- 1.1 At the 7 July 2022 the Committee discussed growing pressures within the recruitment and retention areas that support our essential services especially, but not limited to, the health and social care sector.
- 1.2 The Committee agreed that the Vice-Chair and officers establish a Committee working group to look into the broader issue of understanding current threats and pressures, and mitigations, to the delivery of strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosper and to deliver on economic development and regeneration ambitions.

#### **Working group activity - Background**

- 1.3 The Committee working group met on 21 July 2022 to confirm the process and requirements of the work to understand the current threats and pressures, and mitigations, to the delivery of strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosper and to deliver on economic development and regeneration ambitions.
- 1.4 The working group noted that with the region considering how best to recover from the multiple impacts of the COVID pandemic on the region it is important to take a system-based approach and look at the interdependencies that can be best used for improvements. And that the focus would be on creating a Partnership understanding of current threats and pressures with a view to encouraging greater collaboration and reduce potential for unintended consequences.
- 1.5 The working group confirmed the key lines of enquiry and types of evidence that will be used as well as key officer support. It was confirmed that the group would draw on as much information as possible from existing pieces of work to avoid 'reinventing the wheel' while acknowledging the need to examine evidence with the appropriate lens for this piece of work.
- 1.6 The working group discussed key risks to the project and the proposed governance of the group. The working group agreed that it should be chaired by the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that there should be regular updates to the full committee.
- 1.7 Since this discussion senior officers from across the region have met to determine common areas of priority that will help address health inequalities in the region and agree key areas of joint action collectively which could focus on community wealth building, mental health.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 1.8 Discussions with regional officers

Since the last OSC meeting the Chair and Vice Chair have met with Cllr Graeme Miller (NECA and Sunderland City Council Leader) and Patrick Melia (NECA Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council). At this meeting the potential value of the project was supported with an endorsement of the challenges faced and how they need to be addressed in a collaborative manner across the region. It was clear from this meeting, and others with regional leads from Economic Development and Public Health and Children’s and Adults Services, that in order for tangible and actionable recommendations to be made to a potential new MCA there was a need to focus the scope of the working groups work while continue to acknowledge the importance of related issues (and how they could be looked at by a future OSC).

1.9 Given these discussions the Committee agreed to revise the scope of project to “An examination of adult well-being and health and its relationship to individuals’ ability to work in the North East”.

1.10 The projects working principles and approach to working previously agreed remain unchanged.

1.11 Table 1 below outlines the timing to the phases of work for the project.

It is expected that phases will need to run concurrently with feedback loops informing further questions and evidence as the project progresses. It is also expected that informal meetings will be held with the committee where the working group reports back on the projects progress.

*Table 1 – Timing to phases of work*

Date	Area of evidence	Completed by	Deliverable
1. Evidence Gathering	Ongoing	July to Dec 2023	Update to formal OSC in Dec 2023
2. Evidence Analysis	Starting	July to Dec 2023	Update to formal OSC in Dec 2023

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3. Conclusions and draft reporting	Yet to start	Dec 2023 – March 2024	Presentation, discussion and endorsement at informal committee meeting
4. Presentation to Leadership Group/ handover to NEMCA	Yet to start	April/ May 2024	

### 2. Timing of evidence sessions

As noted earlier, recent discussions have identified how large and complex the original project scope was. As such, there has been the need to pause work on the evidence gathering phase of the project. However, there is still a commitment to collecting relevant information to inform the projects ultimate recommendations. Table 2 below outlines a draft schedule of evidence sessions.

*Table 2 – Timing of evidence sessions*

Phase	Area of evidence
TBC September 2023	Public Health
TBC September 2023	Skills/ Economic Development
TBC October 2023	Academic perspective
TBC November 2023	NHS & Social Care

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **2. Proposals**

2.1 There are no proposals

### **3. Reasons for the Proposals**

3.1 Not applicable

### **4. Alternative Options Available**

4.1 Not applicable

### **5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation**

5.1 The Committee working group will continue to meet as the project progresses and will provide updates to each formal Committee meeting.

### **6. Potential Impact on Objectives**

6.1 No direct impact on objectives

### **7. Financial and Other Resources Implications**

7.1 No financial or other resource implications are identified at this stage.

### **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from these recommendations.

### **9. Key Risks**

9.1 There are no key risks associated with the recommendations made in this report.

### **10. Equality and Diversity**

10.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

### **11. Crime and Disorder**

11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **12. Consultation/Engagement**

12.1 On-going consultation takes place with Officers and Scrutiny Members.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 Not applicable

### 14. Appendices

14.1 Not applicable

### 15. Background Papers

15.1 NECA OSC 7 July 2022 - Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update

### 16. Contact Officers

16.1 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

16.2 Email: [gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk](mailto:gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk)

Nicola Robason, Deputy Monitoring Officer

Email: [nicola.robason@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.robason@southtyneside.gov.uk)

Telephone Number: 0191 424 7186

### 17. Sign off

- 17.1
- ✓ Head of Paid Service
  - ✓ Monitoring Officer
  - ✓ Chief Finance Officer

### 18. Glossary

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 27 July 2023

**Subject:** Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update

**Report of:** Policy and Scrutiny officer

#### Executive Summary

This report provides members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to consider the items on the Forward Plan for the current 28-day period and discuss items for the Work Programme for 2023/24.

#### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- i. Review the current Forward Plan and consider which items they may wish to examine in more detail;
- ii. Suggest any items for the Work Programme for 2023/24 that Members would wish to explore in more detail, either at the Committee or via a 'deep dive' or working group.
- iii. To agree to the establishment of a working group to look into the following issue. Understanding current threats and pressures, and mitigations, to the delivery of strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosper and to deliver on economic development and regeneration ambitions.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 1. Background Information

- 1.1 The Forward Plan is a document which NECA is required to maintain under the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017. The Forward Plan is published on NECA's website and lists the decisions that the North East Combined Authority intends to take in the coming months and must include all decisions to be made in the next 28 days.
- 1.2 The Forward Plan template contains specific information relating to each decision, including the date the decision will be made, a brief explanation of the topic, the consultation to be undertaken, and contact details of the author. The Forward Plan template has recently been updated and includes further information including if the decision is a 'Key Decision' and if an item will be discussed in private.
- 1.3 Details of each decision are included on the Forward Plan 28 days before the report is considered and any decision is taken. This supports the transparency of decision making within the Combined Authority and allows members of the public to see the items that will be discussed. There are special procedures for circumstances where publication for the full 28 clear day period is impractical or where there is special urgency. Both of these procedures involve the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

### Role of Overview and Scrutiny

- 1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee examine any decisions of the North East Combined Authority – be that by the principal decision-making body or a committee or officer holding delegated authority. This Scrutiny occurs in public and ensures democratic and public accountability.
- 1.5 One of the main functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the review and scrutiny of 'Key Decisions' made by the NECA Leadership Board and Officers of the Combined Authority. The relevant regulations set out a test for what should be considered a Key Decision – being those which are most significant in financial or other terms. This is explained in the Decision-Making Protocol adopted by the Committee on the 15 March 2018. At the inaugural meeting of the NECA Leadership Board on the 13 November, following the governance changes, it was agreed that the Decision Making Protocol would remain in place:

<https://northeastca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/NECA-Decision-Making-Protocol.pdf>



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.6 It is NECA's practice to include formal decisions on the Forward Plan to maximise the opportunity for review and scrutiny. In considering items in the Forward Plan, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should determine which areas scrutiny can add most value to in relation to the decisions being made.

1.7 The Forward Plan at the date this paper was issued is published at:

<https://www.northeastca.gov.uk/committee-meetings/forward-plan>.

### Update on Requests for Special Urgency / General Exception

1.8 In accordance with the Decision Making Protocol, it was agreed by Members that the request of any Short Notice Procedure that involved the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be reported at the next Committee. The table below shows the number of requests made since the last meeting was held:

Type of Short Notice Procedure	Number of Requests since previous Committee
Requests for Special Urgency	0
Request for General Exception	0

1.9 The table above reflects that there have been no requests for general exception and no requests for special urgency since the last Committee.

### 1.10 Annual Work Programme

1.11 The most recent version of the work programme has been compiled to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to consider items that they have requested.

1.12 The work programme is also designed to give an overview of all performance, decision-taking and developments within the NECA, as well as being focused and flexible to allow for new issues and recognising the capacity of the scrutiny committee to respond in a timely way to emerging developments throughout the year. The Plan allows the Committee to take a longer-term view than the Forward Plan, adding a longer-term perspective to the Committee's work. Advantages of a longer-term perspective is the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of matters and to allow for more constructive engagement and scrutiny.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.13 Members are also invited to comment and give consideration to any additional items they would wish to consider on their Work Programme or those decisions where they can add value.

1.14 The proposed work programme included in appendix 1. It should be noted that the work programme covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude 'deeper dives' providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates. These topics can be raised with the Chair and Scrutiny Officer at any time.

### 2. Proposals

2.1 Committee Members are invited to review the Forward Plan for the current 28-day period – giving consideration to any items they may wish to examine in more detail – and to suggest any items for addition to the Annual Work Programme for 2023/24.

### 3. Reasons for the Proposals

3.1 To provide an opportunity for Committee members to input on any additional items as part of continued planning for the Work Programme for 2023/24.

### 4. Alternative Options Available

4.1 Option 1 – The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may review Forward Plan and suggest additional items for the Work Programme.

Option 2 – The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may choose not to review the Forward Plan or consider any additional items for the Work Programme.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

### 5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

5.1 In considering the Forward Plan, Members are asked to consider those issues where the Scrutiny Committee could make a contribution and add value.

5.2 If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee determines to review or scrutinise a decision notified in the Forward Plan, a meeting of the Committee will be arranged to allow scrutiny members to carry out their role in a timely manner.

5.3 The work programme will be refreshed and updated at each meeting of the Committee throughout the year.

### 6. Potential Impact on Objectives

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6.1 Development of a work programme and review and scrutiny of decisions in the Forward Plan will contribute towards the development and implementation of the policy framework of the NECA, the Joint Transport Committee and the North East LEP as well as providing appropriate challenge to decisions making.

### 7. Financial and Other Resources Implications

7.1 No financial or other resource implications are identified at this stage.

### 8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from these recommendations.

### 9. Key Risks

9.1 There are no key risks associated with the recommendations made in this report.

### 10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

### 11. Crime and Disorder

11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### 12. Consultation/Engagement

12.1 On-going consultation takes place with Officers and Scrutiny Members across the NECA in regard to the items for the Annual Work Programme as Appendix One.

### 13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 The proposals consider the wider impact and take into account the Principles of Decision Making as set out in the NECA Constitution. They allow Members consideration of the items on the Forward Plan and allow them the opportunity to have an overview of all performance, decision making and developments across NECA.

### 14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – Annual Work Programme Update

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### 15. Background Papers

15.1 None.

### 16. Contact Officers

16.1 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

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Telephone Number: Tel No: (0191) 4247537

16.2 Nicola Robason, Deputy Monitoring Officer

Email: [nicola.robason@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.robason@southtyneside.gov.uk)

Telephone Number: 0191 424 7186

### 17. Sign off

- 17.1
- ✓ Head of Paid Service
  - ✓ Monitoring Officer
  - ✓ Chief Finance Officer

### 18. Glossary

18.1 NECA - North East Combined Authority

North East LEP - North East Local Enterprise Partnership

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Appendix One

#### Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24

##### Standing Items for each Committee Meeting:

- Declaration of Interest
- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- NECA Forward Plan and Work Programme Report

##### Source of work programme and items of importance:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee obtains work programme items from the following sources:

- a) Items submitted by Members of the Committee (and including items referred by other members of the Combined Authority);
- b) Suggestions from NECA Chief Officers; Patrick Melia – Head of Paid Service, Nicola Robason – Deputy Monitoring Officer and Paul Darby – Chief Finance Officer
- c) The Budget and Policy Framework; Transport Plan and Strategic Economic Plan
- d) The Forward Plan;
- e) The Thematic Leads;
- f) Evidence for any policy review work of relevance to NECA

##### Items for future consideration (2022-2023)

Meeting Date	Subject
27 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment of OSC Working Group</li></ul>
14 Dec 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report back from Working Group</li></ul>



North East Combined Authority

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## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

It should be noted that the work programme above covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude 'deeper dives' providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates.