

## **North of Tyne Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

11 July 2023

(1.00 - 2.00pm)

Meeting held: Armstrong Stephenson Room, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QH

### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

Chair: Councillor B Flux

Councillors C Ball, B Flux, J Harrison, L Marshall, J Montague, G Stone and L Wright

#### **1 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE 2023/24 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

Elizabeth Kerr, Principal Governance and Scrutiny Manager (NTCA), opened the meeting. She confirmed that the Chair had to be drawn from a different political party to that of the Elected Mayor.

Councillor Flux was nominated and seconded for the position of Chair.  
Councillor Wright was nominated and seconded for the position of Vice Chair.

**RESOLVED** that -

- (i) Councillor Flux was duly appointed Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24; and
- (ii) Councillor Wright was duly appointed Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

#### **2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Councillor Flux welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **3 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Seymour and Cllr Fairlie (Cllr Shatwell in attendance as substitute).

#### 4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### 5 **AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2023**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023.

#### 6 **DEVOLUTION UPDATE**

Henry Kippin (Chief Executive, NTCA and Interim Chief Executive of NEMCA) gave a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which covered a recap on the Deal, Governance, Decisions and Timeline, Transition to NEMCA and the next steps. A copy of the presentation was attached to the minutes for information.

Since the signing of the Deal a public consultation had taken place on the governance functions within the deal. The results had now been submitted to the Secretary of State in preparation of the Legal Order. The constituent authorities would be asked to approve, in principle, the Legal Order to be laid in Parliament for debate; this process would allow the election to happen in May 2024.

The LA7 leaders had taken on interim portfolios to develop the policy work. The Deal provided for a mayor and cabinet model to ensure decisions were taken collectively and would continue to work in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. The Deal itself, however, was only the starting point and it was expected that a 'trailblazer deal' would follow to deepen some of the powers and resources.

Although there was a lot of preparation work going on around the new authority with political oversight, the NTCA and NECA would continue to deliver their priorities for the year ahead.

During the ensuing discussion and in response to questions, it was noted that:

- In terms of what difference the NEMCA would make to improve transport in the region, to an extent this was set out in the North East Transport Plan. This included better access to transport, joint ticketing, the extension of some of the transport infrastructure and pushing to more sustainable bus services. The basic answer to the question was the combination of new powers and more funding. It was confirmed that Metro funding was ringfenced but still needed to be addressed through national funding sources.
- Regarding any potential influence over the bus operators, this was a question for the political team over time through the portfolio; there were a number of models to understanding bus funding and governance with both legal and commercial implications.
- It was recognised that communications and identity were a really important thing for the NEMCA to get right in terms of the actual identity, the brand and how it projected itself but also the timing of this. It would be inappropriate to come out with an identity and a brand now given that the organisation did not legally exist; in the interim the existing organisations would need to work

smartly over the next year to make sure that where priorities were coming through they reflected the collaboration of the seven and talk publicly about the collaboration that had created any outcomes or projects on a case by case basis.

- On the trailblazer deal there was a line in the Devolution Deal which committed the government to discussions with this region during this year with a view to trailblazing provisions being agreed to come forward as early as possible after the creation of NEMCA. It was also known that phase one of trailblazer negotiations with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester now provided a template; the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, at the LGA Conference, had said he was now turning attention to working with the other mayoral combined authorities.
- In relation to the operating model of the new mayoral combined authority, the job for the team supporting the transition was to deliver a mayoral combined authority that was fit for purpose to deliver the devolution deal. The constituent parts would be a mix of some of the organisations that had been delivering within the region at the moment, principally NECA and NTCA. The important thing was the delivery of the devolution deal. Henry Kippin said his job was to present a target operating model that was explicitly about using public money well to deliver the deal.
- All devolution deals had a form of finances and powers, such as adult education. In this deal on the Investment Fund there was new money coming into the region which was quite substantial. There were other areas in the deal which set out policy intent. No combined authority could work alone and the NEMCA would be as collaborative as possible.
- Dr. Kippin said the team was always looking for lessons from other combined authorities whether positive or negative about the journey towards devolution. A more sustainable model was a more collaborative model – this needed to feel like everyone’s combined authority, it was about the whole region.

The Chair thanked Henry Kippin for the very helpful update.

## 7 **NTCA ANNUAL REPORT AND CORPORATE PLAN**

Committee received a report and presentation from Henry Kippin which set out the NTCA’s Annual Report 2022, endorsed by Cabinet at its March meeting, detailing the Authority’s achievements and the work of the Mayor and Cabinet over the last year and also the Corporate Plan 2023/24 endorsed at the Annual Meeting in June.

The Corporate Plan this year was deliberately for one year and talked about following through on the strategic commitments and recapped on the funding.

During the ensuing discussion and in response to questions, it was noted that:

- The judgement at this point in the cycle was a one year plan was appropriate as the NTCA could not set out the outcomes and delivery priorities for NEMCA. Looking back over the last two/three years setting out this work, the year three worked tracked well with what was said three years ago.
- The staff were really excited about the transition. The foreword emphasised making sure that the team built on the strong legacy, to make sure people were supported and continuing with collaborative approach.

- Janice Gillespie commented that there was a risk that the external auditors would not like the one year plan but there was a strong narrative which described why this approach had been taken. Also the budget and financial plan gave a steer of the commitments the authority had already made. There were a number of projects and programmes which would continue in the new combined authority.
- The Housing and Land Board and the outcomes the Board was committed to delivering, in particular discharging the brownfield funding from government, were on target. The broader long term target needed to be considered in the round; a strategic housing pipeline and programme would be developed for the LA7 and a context where the government would be refreshing the housing mandate so some of the targets might change.
- The NTCA was not a planning authority and could not second guess housing policy decisions of local authorities. Its role was to apply specific funding to support the acceleration of those plans where it could and in line with the strategic principals of the combined authority.

The Chair made reference to perception issues and housing numbers recently announced in Cambridgeshire and thanked Henry Kippin for the report.

**RESOLVED** – That the North of Tyne Combined Authority Annual Report 2022 and Corporate Plan 2023/24 be received and committee members comments noted.

## 8 **2022/23 BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT**

Janice Gillespie (Director of Finance) presented the report to inform Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the provisional 2022-2023 outturn position of the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) including the Corporate Fund, Investment Fund, Adult Education Budget, and Brownfield Housing Fund. The outturn position would be subject to external audit as part of the Audit of the 2022-23 Statutory Accounts and therefore the figures in the report would remain provision until the completion of the accounts.

The North of Tyne Combined Authority became the Accountable Body for the North East LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and Invest North East England (INEE) from 1 April 2020. This report also included the 2022/2023 Outturn position for the North East LEP and Invest North East England in addition to reporting on the Accountable Body Budget.

**RESOLVED** – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report on the 2022-23 NTCA provisional outturn position, including the North East LEP and Invest North East England 2022-23 outturn including the North East LEP and Invest North East England 2023-24 budget which would presented to Cabinet on 6 June 2023.

## 9 **AGREEMENT OF WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Committee received a report from Elizabeth Kerr which set out the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's provisional work programme for the 2023-24 municipal year.

The Committee was asked to agree the provisional work programme for the year ahead, noting that it could change throughout the year to respond to matters as they

arose. In doing so, the Committee was invited to make any recommendations considered appropriate.

During the ensuing discussion it was noted that:

- Officers would look to bring information on the Adult Lifelong Learning programme to a future meeting.
- As Committee received a report on housing at its last meeting, the report would be circulated to the new members by email.
- Information on the work being undertaken to examine the achievements and lessons learned from the work of NTCA since 2018 would be submitted to the October meeting of the committee to give it the opportunity to steer the direction of that piece of work.
- Information on the progress of work by NTCA would continue to be shared via the regular briefings emailed to all committee members.

**RESOLVED** – That the Committee agreed the provisional work programme for the year ahead subject to the comments above, noting that it could change to respond to matters as they arose.

#### 10 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 1:00pm at Newcastle Civic Centre.