

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 15 March 2022 at 10.30 am

Meeting to be held: Collingwood Suite, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QH

Anyone wishing to attend to observe this meeting should contact K Christon no later than Friday 11 March 2022.

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## AGENDA

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	Page No
1. <b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	
2. <b>Apologies</b>	
3. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
4. <b>Agree the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021</b>	1 - 6
5. <b>Agree the action points of the inquorate meeting held on 8 February 2022</b>	7 - 8
6. <b>Housing, Land and Development Portfolio Update</b>	9 - 12

In attendance:

Mayor Norma Redfearn, Cabinet Member for Housing, Land and Development  
Vicky Cuthbertson, Housing and Land Manager

Attached: Report

7. **Levelling-up White Paper**

In attendance: Henry Kippin, Managing Director

Presentation

8. **Scrutiny Annual Report and Annual Review**

**13 - 24**

In attendance: Elizabeth Kerr, Principal Governance and Scrutiny Manager

Attached: Report and appendix

9. **Date and time of next meeting**

To be confirmed.

Contact Officer:

Karen Christon

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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 December 2021

(10.30 am - 12.10 pm)

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

### Draft Minutes

#### Present:

Councillors L Bowman, M Hall, J Hunter, L Bowman, G Stone, J Beynon and R Higgins.

#### 22 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

K Christon (Democratic Services) opened the meeting and invited committee to appoint a Chair for the meeting, in the absence of the committee Chair or Vice-Chair.

Councillor Hunter was nominated and seconded for the position of Chair for the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – that Cllr Hunter be appointed as Chair for the meeting.

#### 23 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Seymour (Cllr Beynon attending as substitute), Cllr Wright (Cllr Higgins attending as substitute), Cllr Scott, Cllr Kirwin and Cllr Fairlie.

#### 24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

#### 25 AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **NORTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP - STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN UPDATE**

The committee received a report from H Golightly, Chief Executive, of the North East LEP on the Strategic Economic Plan (copy attached to the Official Minutes).

H Golightly introduced the report commenting on: the status and independence of the North East LEP and role of the local authority as the accountable body; and progress toward the priorities outlined in the Strategic Economic Plan, the five programme areas and the Annual Delivery Plan. Reference was also made to the Regional Economy Group, established in response to the pandemic and which included wide membership from the Combined Authorities, universities, CBI and local business.

H Golightly then responded to questions/comments received from members and the following points were noted:

- Better quality jobs were identified through occupational codes and refer to jobs at managerial, professional or technical level. The target for better quality jobs was 70% and to date just over 100% had been achieved.
- It was anticipated that job targets would be achieved by 2024, subject to the impact of the pandemic. To date 70,000 new jobs had been created against a target of 100,000.
- The term 'levelling up' also applied within the region and to support this the LEP employed approximately 30 staff who provided day-to-day delivery to support skill development from early stage through to employment.
- Skills activity had an 'each and every child' approach and included work with 150 secondary schools on careers advice and guidance. A pilot had also taken place in primary schools.
- Detailed analysis of data and evidence was carried out to compare the region's position to that nationally. This was particularly important when bidding for funding and in order to ensure resources were focused where they were most needed.
- The North East LEP did not manage EU funding but had been instrumental in securing funding in 2014. It was anticipated that the Levelling Up White Paper would provide clarity on the detail of the Shared Prosperity Fund, although this was not expected to be at the same level as Local Growth Deals or previous EU funding.
- In respect of priorities beyond 2024, it was expected that the Levelling Up White paper would provide context on what would be expected. Internal work had started to take place including discussions with the Regional Economy Group and data and evidence would be analysed to determine the position of the region against a number of indicators. The next plan would cover a period of 15 years but was unlikely to provide a significant change in direction, however there may be a need to give some focus to sectors that had suffered the greatest during the pandemic.
- Investment in the East Coast Mainline was still expected, but this would not be at the same level as that proposed through high-speed rail. The North East LEP worked closely with Transport North East but was not directly involved in transport related matters.

- Digital inclusion was recognised as vital, including access to the internet in rural areas. The North East LEP would continue to highlight to government the importance of investment in rural and hard to reach communities but had no role beyond that.
- In respect of supporting business growth and providing business support, government funding had been provided to establish a growth hub, including an online platform that brought together all business support organisations for businesses to easily access. A small team was employed to provide one-to-one support to businesses, alongside mentoring, peer support and leadership programmes.
- The North East LEP coordinated a Tourism Group, which operated at a strategic level and considered where additional value could be added. Highlighting the qualities of the region as a great place to live and work was particularly important in attracting inward investment.
- R Hamilton advised that the Combined Authority worked closely with the North East LEP team to attract tourism to the region and currently proposals were sought from tourism organisations for new products in response to opportunities that might emerge from the low carbon agenda.

The Chair thanked H Golightly for attending and responding to the committee's questions.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## 27 **CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

Committee received a report from Cllr Johnson, Cabinet Member for Investment and Resources, which provided an update on the work and plans for his portfolio area (copy attached to the Official Minutes).

The Chair noted apologies for absence from Cllr Johnson and advised that he had offered to attend a future meeting should committee require.

R Hamilton, Chief Economist, introduced the report and referenced: the remit of the portfolio; delivery of the North of Tyne Investment Programme, including examples of the range and diversity of projects supported; the level of jobs created or safeguarded; inward investment by organisations who had also considered other locations; and the portfolio holder's role in oversight of the Investment Programme.

Responding to points raised earlier in the meeting, reference was made to the challenges of broadband connectivity by rural residents and the £12m government funding that had been secured to provide for fibre infrastructure between public buildings in Northumberland from which connections could then be made to local residents and businesses.

R Hamilton then responded to questions/comments received from members and the following points were noted:

- Care was taken to avoid double counting jobs created. However, it was acknowledged that jobs evidenced as been safeguarded or created through support provided by the combined authority, would also appear in the overall figures published by ONS and recorded by the North East LEP.

- The region needed more highly skilled jobs, but also to create jobs and opportunities across the skills and wage spectrum.
- The North Sea Weekender event was a combined authority funded project - approximately £30,000 – which provided a range of activities on the coast and sought to attract new visitors and to raise the profile of the area.

The Chair noted that the event had been included on the front page of the Sunday Times.

- It was suggested that once individuals came to the North East for work, they tended to stay. However, the region was not as good as other areas in attracting individuals in the first place. A project would be launched shortly in conjunction with a number of companies in the tech sector to promote the region and its relocation opportunities, both in respect of finding a first job but also the opportunity to develop a career.

The Chair thanked R Hamilton for attending and responding to the committee's questions.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## 28 INVESTMENT FUND UPDATE

Committee received a report from R Hamilton, Chief Economist, which provided an overview of progress of the NTCA Investment Fund and the Covid-19 Capacity Fund, as requested by the committee (copy attached to the Official Minutes).

R Hamilton introduced the report commenting on: the progress that had been made on delivery of the Investment Fund Capacity Fund; rapid deployment of grant funding through the Covid Capacity Fund to support community organisations, businesses and individuals; the number of jobs expected to be created and safeguarded; and examples of projects that had been supported to deal with specific challenges including access to equity style finance for businesses at early and growth stages and support for development of high streets in response to long term trends.

R Hamilton then responded to questions/comments received from members and the following points were noted:

- There was no indication that further support financial support would be provided by the government to deal with future issues arising from the ongoing pandemic situation, but the combined authority would be prepared to deal with them if they arose, and future support would be based on previous learning and evaluation of the current programme.
- Where Covid had resulted in a direct impact on project delivery, the combined authority had worked with projects to re-profile activity or consider alternative delivery options.
- It was acknowledged that support would not prevent the change in shopping habits and impact this has had on high streets. The combined authority would work with local authorities and would take national evidence and best practice, to make the best use of the limited funding available. Intervention would include

activity that had a long term and sustainable impact and examples might include alternative uses for empty properties or pilot activity to support small independent retailers to become established or test new business ideas.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted

## 29 2021/22 QUARTER 2 NTCA BUDGET MONITOR REPORT

Committee received a report from J Gillespie, Chief Finance Officer, which presented the second quarter monitoring report on the 2021/22 NTCA financial position (copy attached to the Official Minutes).

K Laing, Strategic Finance Manager, introduced the report indicating that the budget reflected the capacity required to deliver the investment funding, plus support services and accommodation. Reference was made to:

- an increase in staffing, which had been fully funded through investment fund workstreams and reflected the capacity needed to deliver the programme;
- a one-off contribution from the Mayoral Capacity Fund, the balance of which had been set aside for election costs in 2024;
- expenditure through the Investment Fund, which was expected to increase in line with project profiles;
- £12m expected expenditure of the Brownfield Housing Fund to deliver housing on brownfield sites; and
- an expectation that the £22m Adult Education Budget would be achieved.

K Laing, J Gillespie and R Redfern then responded to questions/comments received from members and the following points were noted:

- The papers should indicate a £600,000 balance from the Mayoral Capacity Fund, which would be held in reserve for the 2024 election as there was no government contribution toward costs incurred in holding the election.
- There had been no inflationary increase to the Investment Fund allocation from government.
- Covid had limited direct impact on the combined authority. However, projects had reported difficulty with recruitment and this was being risk monitored, particularly in respect of providers funded through the Adult Education Budget, where it was a challenge for them to change their delivery.
- During the pandemic staff productivity at the combined authority had remained high and this was being monitored to ensure staff did not work long hours.
- The investment fund allocation from government would not take account of inflation and new and innovative ways of delivering the fund within the financial envelope would need to be considered.
- The Brownfield Housing Fund had been overprogrammed to offset the late allocation to the combined authority in 2020. £5m had been carried forward from year 1 into year 2 and there was a good pipeline of projects and level of project expenditure.

The combined authority would seek to ensure a good working relationship with government departments to maximise the opportunity for flexibility in funding, to ensure that all resources could be spent.

**RESOLVED** - that the report be noted.

30 **2022-2026 NTCA BUDGET PROPOSALS**

Committee received a report from J Gillespie, Chief Finance Officer, which presented the initial draft budget for the North of Tyne Combined Authority for 2022-23 and the medium-term financial plan for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26 (copy attached to the Official Minutes).

J Gillespie introduced the report indicating that the budget included a refresh of proposed investment and any assumptions that had been made, including the impact of inflation on projects. These were risk monitored and variations made where needed.

Responding to a query, J Gillespie confirmed that in respect of the Transport Levy, the combined authority's role was only to collect the levy and pass it on and agreed that officers would consider how this could best be described in the budget papers.

The Chair highlighted that the committee had the opportunity for further discussion on the budget proposals, including to hear feedback from the consultation, at a budget workshop in January.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

31 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted as 8 February at 10:30am, venue to be confirmed.



## North of Tyne Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee (not quorate)

8 February 2022

### ACTION LIST

**Present:** C Seymour (Chair), L Wright, M Hall, L Bowman, J Beynon

**1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**2 APOLOGIES**

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**4 AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2021**

Action:

- i. No matters of accuracy noted – minutes to be deferred to the next meeting for agreement.

**5 EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND SKILLS PORTFOLIO UPDATE**

Action:

- i. Information to be provided to a future meeting in relation to children not attending school as a result of the pandemic, including those who have never attended, and alternative provision that is in place.

**6 ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET UPDATE**

Action:

- i. Details also to be provided on the number of learners who had completed courses (table 3, page 29).
- ii. Details to be provided on the extent of community learning and the venues it is delivered from.

**7 EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT UPDATE**

Action:

- i. The next performance report to include information on support for school readiness.

**8 POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION UPDATE**

**9 QUARTER 3 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

10 **CABINET'S RESPONSE TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS**

11 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Action:

- i. Venue for the next meeting on 15 March 2022 to be confirmed.

### Cabinet Member Briefing

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has invited the Cabinet Member for Housing, Land and Development to provide the committee with an update on the work and plans of their portfolio area.

This briefing at the 15 March 2022 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting will be from Mayor Norma Redfearn, Cabinet Member for Housing, Land and Development and Deputy Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

The following pages provide a brief overview of the portfolio, followed by an update on some key delivery priorities.

#### **1. Overview of the Housing, Land and Development Portfolio**

- 1.1. The Housing, Land and Development portfolio is an important strategic priority for NTCA. Its focus is on creating the conditions for more and better new homes to be built across our region, and to provide opportunities for innovation, creative design and greater investment and capacity to accelerate delivery.
- 1.2. The mandate for the portfolio comes from the original North of Tyne Devolution Deal, which set out a goal to increase the number of net new homes from a baseline of 1,800 a year up to 3,000 a year by 2032.
- 1.3. Our approach is collaborative and proactive – the NTCA team works hand-in-glove with our Local Authorities and Homes England, with regular advice and oversight from a Housing, Land Board comprised of senior level private, public and social sector partners. Appropriate governance of this work is ensured by Mayor Redfearn as portfolio holder (and Housing and Land Board Chair), and NTCA Cabinet.
- 1.4. There has been a strong focus over the last 12 months on turning our ambition into deliverable schemes that support both the North of Tyne's Housing and Land objectives in the Corporate Plan as well as our cross-cutting themes. Key achievements include:
  - Ongoing delivery of a five year, £31m Brownfield Housing Fund of which £12.5m has been legally contracted. The NTCA were awarded an additional £8 million of Brownfield Housing Funding in the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022.
  - Further calls to bring forward sites to ensure there is a robust and deliverable pipeline of sites for the Brownfield Housing Fund inviting proposals from Registered Providers and developers. This work has put the NTCA in a strong position following the announcement of additional funding.
  - Developing a strong strategic partnership with Homes England, underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding, that sets out a prioritised work plan which includes the development of a joint pipeline of sites across the North of Tyne and the potential to unlock further resources and capacity.
  - Production of an Infrastructure Vision for North of Tyne – which will facilitate the development of robust infrastructure investment plans for three economic corridors – Northumberland Line, Arc of Energy Innovation and the Urban Core.

- Research to inform Housing Retrofit delivery models which will support our Low Carbon objectives.
- Exploring issues associated with affordability of housing across the North of Tyne and identifying how existing models can be adapted to address these challenges.

The following sections focus in particular on our policy work, the brownfield housing programme, the development and implementation of our Memorandum of Understanding with Homes England, the infrastructure vision and the Northumberland Line.

## 2. Policy Focus

- 2.1 Over the last 12 months, significant policy and research work has been undertaken on **housing retrofit**. The Energy Savings Trust were commissioned to profile the current housing stock, identify retrofit measures required to achieve net zero, explore funding models and estimate the impact on skills requirements across the North of Tyne Combined Authority. The findings of the research identified the need for scalable delivery models and investment packages across the different tenures and further work is to be undertaken on developing investable delivery models.
- 2.2 In November 2021, the **High Street Challenge Fund** Cabinet Report set out the rationale to invest in High Streets to ensure that they evolve to meet changing consumer behaviour and reflect the needs of their local communities. The £6 million High Street and Towns Innovation Programme will be invested in one High Street/Town in each Local Authority. To ensure the investment achieves the scale of ambition of Cabinet the programme has the following three key pillars:
- Leadership and partnership - Each high street will develop a compelling shared vision for the future, with strong strategic leadership to make the vision a reality. A High Street Transformation Board will provide the essential focal point for a joined-up approach, harnessing all the resources and skills available towards the achievement of the shared vision.
  - Investing in a model for change - The Programme will develop and test new models for high street transformation, learning from evidence of what is working in other areas, while capitalising on the distinctive strengths and opportunities of each individual high street.
  - Stimulating long-term investment - The NTCA investment will enable high streets to develop Strategic Investment Plans to deliver the vision, create compelling new projects and investment propositions to introduce new end uses. These plans and propositions will prepare the ground to stimulate and attract the long-term investment needed to achieve genuine change.
- 2.3 The testing of new delivery models will enable similar initiatives to be rolled out across the North of Tyne's and enable us to access funding such as the soon to be launched UK Shared Prosperity Fund and private investment.
- 2.4 There are a number of challenges associated with **affordability of housing** across the North of Tyne. To understand the extent of these challenges – including for our key workers and those seeking their first home – we will review local evidence together with national policies and delivery models. This important piece of research will also look at best practice, including across the other combined authorities to inform how models can be adapted or new ones developed to improve the affordability of houses.

## 3 Brownfield Housing Fund

- 3.1 This year has seen significant efforts on ensuring the delivery of the Brownfield Housing Fund which has recently increased from £23 million to £31 million following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper.

- 3.2 £12.4 million has currently been awarded to schemes that were on the initial pipeline including The Rise, North Shields Masterplan and Bellingham Mart. The Brownfield Housing Fund will be used to acquire and remediate sites as well as provide infrastructure and utilities. Our funding has unlocked Homes England and private sector investment and a number of the sites including Newbiggin and Bellingham Mart will provide affordable houses.
- 3.3 An additional call for sites to be included on the Brownfield Housing Fund pipeline was undertaken in summer 2021. Due diligence is being undertaken to ensure new schemes that are allocated funding can deliver against the programme's objectives by March 2025. The call has put the North of Tyne Combined Authority in a strong position to deliver the additional funding that has subsequently been awarded.

#### **4 Strategic Partnership with Homes England**

- 4.1 A key priority has been building on our already strong relationship with Homes England. The development of our strategic partnership has led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, with a Joint Action Plan which sets out how we will work together. This has been cited elsewhere as an example of best practice.
- 4.2 We are working with Homes England and our Local Authority partners to develop a joint pipeline of housing sites and to identify what investment is required to unlock their development. Both organisations have supported schemes by providing funding to support the deliverability of housing sites through market assessments, infrastructure plans, design and site investigation work for key schemes including Forth Yards and North Shields. This joined up approach will strengthen our case for future funding programmes – for example sites in North of Tyne to be considered as one of the 20 priority areas for investment that was announced in the Levelling Up White Paper.

#### **5 Joint Infrastructure Plan**

- 5.1 The development of a Joint Infrastructure Vision for the NTCA was one of the Devolution Deal priorities. The central aim of the Infrastructure Vision is to maximise the impact and outcomes of future investment, recognising that with transformational infrastructure comes new opportunities to innovate and maximise the area's economic growth. This in turn will help attract funding – both private and public – by creating the conditions for strong strategic, cross-boundary alignment that connects priorities and helps to focus on the priorities of the NTCA.
- 5.2 The Infrastructure vision sets an ambition that the North of Tyne will be nationally and internationally recognisable as the Heart of Global Britain, at the centre of the UK's net zero transition, delivering inclusive and sustainable growth, with strong connections to Scotland, the wider North East, UK and beyond.
- 5.3 Focussing on transport, housing, economic and digital infrastructure, with green, inclusive economic growth as a cross-cutting theme significant added value can be realised by focusing infrastructure investment on both a number of cross-NTCA wide activities (retrofit, EV charging, rural growth) and in three strategic economic corridors, the Arc of Energy Innovation -from Ashington to the banks of the River Tyne, the Northumberland Line and the Urban Core of Newcastle City Centre.
- 5.4 The vision will be translated into the development of a deliverable joint pipeline, capacity and resourcing plan for each of the strategic economic corridors and the connections between and the identification of appropriate delivery mechanisms to enable this work to be taken forward.

#### **6 Next Steps**

- 6.1 Over the next year, there will continue to be a strong emphasis on delivery ensuring that priorities identified are progressing toward development and that the working relationship

we have outlined continue to add value.

- 6.2 A central ambition of our work is proving the Combined Authority is a capable delivery body by delivering opportunities provided through Government funding and ensuring that homes are built as quickly as possible, which will help us to unlock additional investment post March 2025. We will continue to ensure the programme is transparent, collaborative and enjoys the full support of Cabinet and Investment Panel, led by Mayor Redfearn as portfolio holder.



**Subject:** Annual Report and Review

**Report of:** Elizabeth Kerr, Principal Governance and Scrutiny Manager

### Report Summary

The purpose of this report is twofold. To begin with it presents the Committee's Annual Report for submission to Cabinet. It then provides the Committee with a review of the decisions taken under any of the urgency provisions this year and the use of Call-In.

### Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Make any comments/suggestions on the draft Annual Report and agree its submission to the Annual Meeting of Cabinet in June 2022;
2. Note the report and make any recommendation(s) as appropriate on the information provided.

### 1. Background Information, Proposals and Timetable for Implementation

#### 1.1 Annual report

- 1.1.1 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Good Scrutiny Guide and the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny Committees refer to an Annual Scrutiny Report. Whilst the context of the reference relates to local authorities and the importance of ensuring that Council and not just the Executive are aware of the work of Overview and Scrutiny, for Combined Authorities the Statutory Guidance states:

"In order to maintain awareness of scrutiny at the Combined Authority and provoke dialogue and discussion of its impact, the business of scrutiny should be reported to the Combined Authority board". (paragraph 11 j, page 10)

- 1.1.2 It was agreed as part of the Committee's work programme for 2021/2022 that an annual report of the work of the Committee would be produced for the last meeting of the municipal year. It is expected that this report will be submitted to Cabinet as part of the Annual Meeting in June to maintain its awareness of the activity of the Committee.
- 1.1.3 The report is intended to illustrate to the public and Cabinet the Committee's approach to its work this year, how it has developed and the impact it has made. The report is attached at appendix A.

#### 1.2 Review of decisions

- 1.2.1 In accordance with the Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol, decisions taken under any of the urgency provisions are reported to the last committee meeting of the municipal year.
- 1.2.2 No urgent decisions were made by NTCA or the North East LEP in 2021/22. This is considered to be an illustration of the effectiveness and efficiency of the current processes and procedures.
- 1.2.3 No Call-In requests were made in the year and it is considered that the use of the operation and provisions relating to Call-In and urgency is suitable and is being used for its intended purpose.

## **2. Equalities Statement**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is mindful of its duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty and when undertaking scrutiny of a particular topic looks to see that any policy/event/decision eliminates discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advances equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and fosters good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and also considers the implications for people from different socio-economic backgrounds/low pay as a protected characteristic.

## **3. Inclusive Economy Statement**

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is mindful of the NTCA's inclusive economy ambitions and the five characteristics of an inclusive economy: participation; equity; growth; stability and sustainability and when undertaking scrutiny of a particular topic looks to see that any policy/event/decision has taken these fully into account.

## **4. Climate Change Statement**

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is mindful that the NTCA's and the three constituent Local Authorities have declared a Climate Emergency and when undertaking scrutiny of a particular topic looks to see that any policy/event/decision has taken climate change fully into account.

## **5. Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.1 The Chair and Vice Chair have been consulted on the production of the annual report and are consulted on key decisions which are being taken without 28 days notice; 'general exception' and 'special urgency' decisions. This process is set out in the NTCA Constitution.

## **6. Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22

## **7. Background Papers**

Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol  
NTCA Constitution  
Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Good Scrutiny Guide  
Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny Committees

## **8. Contact Officers**

Elizabeth Kerr, Principal Governance and Scrutiny Manager  
[elizabeth.kerr@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk](mailto:elizabeth.kerr@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

John Softly Interim Monitoring Officer  
[John.softly@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk](mailto:John.softly@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

## **9. Glossary**

NTCA North of Tyne Combined Authority





**March 2022**

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## Foreword from the Chair

Welcome to the 2021-22 Annual Report from the North of Tyne Combined Authority. This report highlights the work carried out by the committee over the last year, in what was another coronavirus pandemic affected year.

In June 2021 the committee met face to face for the first time since the first lockdown began in March 2020 and continue to do so, we were still socially distanced, masked for protection from the virus and greatly benefitted from the vaccine made available for the whole Kingdom.

As a new member it was an honour to be elected as Chair and I thank Gregah Roughead for his dedication and high standards set as founding and former Chair and to all former, present and substitute members for their work and commitment. As Chair I am grateful to Councillor Linda Wright, as Vice Chair, for her support during the year and thank the officers of NTCA and those from our constituent local authorities and partner organisations for their work and support.

The work and dedication during these early years of the Combined Authority has resulted in NTCA having effective governance with a proactive and collaborative Cabinet-Scrutiny relationship. Despite the political differences on committee we have worked well together on the work of the NTCA and represent the three local authorities.

The attendance and engagement of members has been good across the year, with substitute members ably filling in when required. Unfortunately, we have had our first inquorate meeting, in February 2022. Whilst this was disappointing, we were only one member short, and it is not expected to become a regular issue.

We are approaching an interesting time in the life of the NTCA in light of the Levelling Up White Paper and our work next year will play an important part in its evolution and next steps. Whatever structural changes or devolution deals are proposed for the region, it is our job to ensure those would benefit all our communities in the North of Tyne area.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Catherine Seymour". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councillor Catherine Seymour  
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members 2021/22



Cllr Les Bowman  
Northumberland County  
Council



Cllr Stephen Fairlie  
Newcastle City Council



Cllr Margaret Hall  
North Tyneside Council



Cllr Janet Hunter  
North Tyneside Council



Councillor Joe Kirwin  
North Tyneside Council



Councillor Paul Scott  
Northumberland County  
Council



Cllr Catherine Seymour  
(Chair)  
Northumberland County  
Council



Cllr Greg Stone  
Newcastle City Council



Cllr Linda Wright  
(Vice Chair)  
Newcastle City Council

## The Scrutiny Year

Scrutiny at a combined authority level will necessarily look and feel different to local authority scrutiny due to the strategic nature of the Combined Authority and the role of the Mayor. North of Tyne has one Overview and Scrutiny Committee which can investigate, influence, report and recommend ways to strengthen policies, improve services, ensure best value for money and secure long-lasting positive benefits for local people.

Councillor Catherine Seymour was appointed the Chair of the Committee at the beginning of the municipal year and in June 2021 the committee met face to face for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic restrictions began in March 2020. All the committee meetings this municipal year have been face to face.

The work programme agreed by the committee at its June meeting has been met, including reports on the COVID-19 response and recovery plans, Co-Production, the Green New Deal and the Citizens Assembly outcomes; the work of the North East LEP; the Investment Fund, budget monitoring and the budget proposals; the first full year of the devolved Adult Education Budget and its achievements and outcomes; the Gateway Review; the Poverty Truth Commission and updates on the work of the Inclusive Economy Board and the Housing and Land Board.

Members of the committee have been kept informed of progress of the work of the NTCA, other meetings in the region and matters of interest by monthly Scrutiny Briefings. As the committee has five meetings a year this is particularly useful in keeping members informed between formal meetings.

Attendance at the meetings in the year has been good with the participation of substitute members when required, however there was the first inquorate meeting in the lifetime of the committee on 8 February 2022. The meeting only needed one more member to attend to be quorate and whilst noted, it is not anticipated to be a regular occurrence.

Members received a refresh of Treasury Management training in January 2022 and completed a short survey on how they viewed the NTCA. Responses were received across Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Standards Committees, with all questions averaging a score above 4 out of 5. It was noted that for the question *Members are respected by officers and are properly informed about programmes and projects* all responders marked a 5. Of course, not all responses scored so highly and, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, we will take steps to improve these for our next survey.

Members of the public, Councillors or officers can make suggestions for issues to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future by emailing the team at [scrutiny@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

Details of all matters considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be viewed on the NTCA website at <https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/who-we-are/committees/>

## Holding Decision Makers to Account

The Elected Mayor, Jamie Driscoll, attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October to provide an update on the delivery of his commitments. This meeting was themed on climate change and carbon reduction and included reports on the Green New Deal and the Citizens Assembly on Climate Change.

There are also regular meetings between the Mayor and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

At each meeting of the committee this year a Cabinet member has attended to provide an update on their portfolio area of work and the agendas for these meetings have been focused on areas within their portfolios.

Each report to the committee includes a paragraph which demonstrates how the project/policy/decision relates to or impacts on NTCA's inclusive economy ambitions; equalities; climate change; and consultation and engagement. All additional information requested at meetings has been provided in a timely and comprehensive manner and officers who have attended the meetings or been requested to provide information have actively engaged with the committee and the scrutiny process.

### Pre-scrutiny work

#### NTCA Gateway Review

In October 2021 the committee were taken through the Gateway Review Process by the NTCA Principal Investment Programme Manager and the Chief Finance Officer. NTCA's first Gateway Review is due to be complete by end of March 2023 and will focus on the Investment Fund and not include the other devolved funds. Members were taken through the evaluation, analysis, challenge and approval process and the delivery milestones. The committee approved the approach and timescales as presented and looked forward to receiving further reports as the work progressed.

#### The NTCA Budget 2021-2022

In accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules of Procedure (Part 3.2 of the Constitution) Cabinet must present to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the budget setting process, the initial proposals and have regard to any recommendations and/or observations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when finalising the Authority's budget.

At its October 2021 meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget Process which provided information in relation to the proposed 2022-26 Financial Planning and Budget process, including the development of a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the development of the detailed budgets for 2022-23 and the timetable for key decision milestones and dates for the setting of the budget.

Cabinet met on 30 November 2021 to consider the initial draft budget for NTCA for 2022/23 and the medium-term financial plan for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26. On 7 December 2021 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to receive the draft budget proposals and accompanying information which included a draft budget in

respect of the Corporate Budget, Investment Fund, Adult Education Budget and the Brownfield Housing Fund. As NTCA is the accountable body for the North East LEP and Invest North East England (INEE) the report also included those proposals.

As part of its scrutiny of the proposals the committee held a workshop in January 2022, attended by the Chief Finance Officer. Information on what had changed since the December meeting was presented and the members discussed the proposals and asked questions.

The committee acknowledged the challenge of engaging the public with the NTCA's budget proposals and welcomed the Chief Finance Officer's assurances that it was also important to the team. Members made suggestions on how this could be improved, including seeking support from the local authorities, as they have an existing engaged audience, by including a link to the NTCA budget proposals on their website. Overall the committee was satisfied with the budget proposals and made no recommendations on the individual elements.

At Cabinet on 25 January 2022 Cabinet agreed with the committee that a good way to broaden the number who saw the proposals would be to include information on each of the constituent authorities' own websites. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to take this proposition forward as part of next year's consultation programme.

## Relationship Building

By the end of the municipal year, the Chair and Vice Chair will have met informally with the Mayor on six occasions to discuss the Forward Plan and the work of the NTCA. This regular discussion helps to keep the committee informed of progress being made on projects between formal meetings and creates a good working relationship between scrutiny and the executive.

As the Accountable Body for the North East LEP, the Chair, Lucy Winskell O.B.E, and the Chief Executive, Helen Golightly, have both shown a willingness to share information and present to the committee when required and attended the December meeting of the committee.

The work of the Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) has begun this year with the aim of exploring and responding to the unique effects of economic exclusion in the North of Tyne as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It is expected that the PCT will run for two years and Children North East are the delivery partners for the project. Members of Overview and Scrutiny have had the opportunity to connect community organisations that they may work with/be aware of to the PTC to ensure NTCA gets a broad representation of the reality of the area's residents' daily lives. The networks and relationships subsequently built with those organisations will help inform all future work as part of the co-production, co-design approach that NTCA is taking.

## Looking Forward

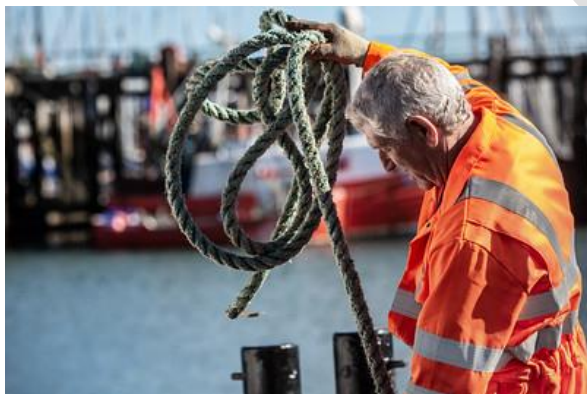
An increasingly important barrier to delivering an inclusive economy for all North of Tyne residents is the high rate of child poverty in our area, 22% of children in the North of Tyne live in poverty with more than half of those children in working households – families without the financial resilience to cope with economic shocks. In June 2021, Cabinet approved investment in the development and delivery of a Child Poverty Prevention programme to address some of the symptoms and root

causes of child poverty in the area. The programme is intended to run until July 2023 and has three stated goals. The committee is very interested in this important work and will be monitoring its progress during 2022-23.

The publication of the Levelling Up White Paper at the beginning of February 2022 and its announcement of new funding and powers from Government is an important milestone in the development of the NTCA. The committee received a presentation on the White Paper from the NTCA Managing Director at its March meeting and will use that as a springboard to inform its work programme for 2022/23.

Once the committee membership is appointed for 2022-23 a workshop will be held to discuss the work programme and ways of working for the year ahead and set its own priorities.

## Useful Websites



[North of Tyne Combined Authority](#)

[Centre for Governance and Public Scrutiny](#)

[Local Government Association](#)

[North East Combined Authority](#)

[The North East Local Enterprise Partnership](#)

[Levelling Up White Paper](#)

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