

A meeting of the: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

will be held on: **Tuesday 15 July 2025**

at: **10.00am**

in: **Armstrong/Stephenson Room, Civic Centre, Barras Bridge,  
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QH**

to consider the following

## AGENDA

Page No

1.	<b>Apologies</b> To record any apologies for absence and the attendance of any substitute members.	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> Members of the committee are required to declare any registerable and/or non-registerable interests in matters appearing on the agenda, and the nature of that interest, in accordance with the Authority's <a href="#">Code of Conduct for Members</a> .	
3.	<b>Minutes</b> To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2025 and to note the notes of the meetings of members of the Committee held on 4 March 2025 and 15 April 2025.	3 - 13
4.	<b>Appointment of Vice Chair</b> To appoint a Vice Chair for the duration of the municipal year 2025/26.	
5.	<b>Delivering for the North East: Year One Delivery and Priorities for Year Two</b> To examine the key achievements in year one of the North East Mayor and Combined Authority and the priorities for year two to deliver the short-term pledges set out in the Corporate Plan.	14 - 18
6.	<b>The regional approach to fulfil ambitions for the North East Visitor Economy</b> To examine proposals to redesign and reconfigure NewcastleGateshead Initiative Ltd (NGI) as a new regional body for the delivery of regional visitor economy activity.	19 - 31
7.	<b>Work Programme 2025/26</b> To approve an outline overview and scrutiny work programme for the year ahead.	32 - 38

<p>8. <b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>          To note that the next scheduled meeting is to be held on Tuesday 2 September 2025 at 10.00am in County Hall, Durham.</p>	
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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**4 February 2025**

(10.00am)

Meeting held in: Reception Room, Town Hall, South Shields

### Minutes

**Present:**

- Councillor Colin Ferguson (Chair)
- Councillor Les Bowman
- Councillor Rob Crute
- Councillor Richard Dodd
- Councillor John Eagle
- Councillor Steve Fairlie
- Councillor Charlie Gray
- Councillor Chris Lines
- Councillor John McCabe
- Councillor Jim Montague
- Councillor Dawn Welsh

### OSC17/02/25 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Rowntree (and her substitute, Councillor Tracy Dodds).

### OSC18/02/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### OSC19/02/25 Minutes

**Resolved** that:

1. the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 November 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
2. the notes of the meeting of members of the Committee held on 10 December 2024 be noted.

### OSC20/02/25 2024/25 Budget Monitoring Position Update

The Committee examined a report from the Director of Finance and Investment setting out a revised budget position for 2024/25 and showing the updated forecast spend for the North East Combined Authority's Corporate Budget and delivery programmes. The report had previously been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 28 January 2025.

Members asked questions of Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment, when they examined the degree to which there were likely to be variations in the Corporate Budget and programme delivery. The Corporate Budget was expected to be more predictable and stable and programme delivery was more likely to be subject to variations. A programme performance pack providing an overview of key progress updates, committed funding, forecast expenditure and forecast outputs was due to be presented to the Finance and Investment Board. Officers undertook to provide members of the Committee with a copy of the performance pack. The Committee also noted the different ways in which programmes were delivered which accounted for variations in committed spend across the 5 year programme plan.

It was **agreed** that:

1. the 2024/25 Budget Monitoring Position Update be noted;
2. the programme performance pack due to be presented to the Finance and Investment Board be provided to members of the Committee.

### **OSC21/02/25 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Committee for review and, if necessary, revision.

The Chair explained that there would be a significant period of time between the next two scheduled meetings in March and July 2025. He suggested that if members of the Committee were supportive of the idea, an additional meeting be arranged during April. This would allow time for members to review the operation of the Committee over its first year, consider its future arrangements and formulate proposals for inclusion in its annual report. In considering its future arrangements it was suggested that the Committee would need to have regard to the Government's proposals for mayoral devolution in England set out in the recently published White Paper.

The Committee highlighted the need to develop mechanisms through which it could effectively monitor the performance and outcomes of those programmes reported to the Committee. In doing so the Committee would have to be mindful that delivery of the Authority's missions was dependent on collaboration with others, for example health bodies, and so it would have to work with others to effectively fulfil its scrutiny role.

Members noted that the programme included a scrutiny exercise to review and assess the benefits of transport investment, by examining the impact of the Northumberland Line to Ashington. It was proposed that this exercise be undertaken in January 2026, after one year of the railways line's operation.

The Chair suggested that issues raised by members relating to metro stations in South Tyneside and access to the metro system for users of mobility scooters could be addressed as part of the Committee's consideration of the Local Transport Plan at its next meeting.

It was **agreed** that;

1. the work programme be updated to reflect the issues set out above; and
2. if necessary, an additional meeting of the Committee be arranged to be held in April 2025.

### **OSC22/02/25 Highways Infrastructure Funding**

The Committee met with Jonathan Bailes, Head of Transport Programmes, who provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of both the combined authority and local authorities with regards to maintaining highways. He also outlined the Authority's proposed approach to the allocation of highways maintenance funding to local authorities as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and based on the production of a Regional Transport

Asset Management Plan (TAMP). The proposed approach was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting in March 2025.

Members asked questions and made comments.

Officers clarified the division of responsibility between local authorities, who would continue to be responsible for the maintenance of critical highways infrastructure, and the role of the North East CA for allocating funding through a fair, consistent and transparent process. This process would be informed by the TAMP and would seek to reduce whole-life costs and mitigate the risk of impacting overall budgets for major interventions. Members welcomed this clarification and emphasised the importance of both the Authority and its constituent councils fulfilling their respective responsibilities. If the North East CA were to determine a region wide approach to the allocation of highways funding, members commented that it ought to ensure that; a) local authorities retain responsibility for their infrastructure; and b) all funding be allocated, in accordance with that process. Members sought assurance that highways funding could not be allocated contrary to the Authority's agreed approach. It was suggested that the Committee could play a role in reviewing the adequacy and delivery of the approach by scrutinising the allocation of funding and assessing performance data collected by the Authority for reporting to the Department of Transport. It was also suggested that the Committee should refer the matter to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each constituent council so that they may consider whether they wish to scrutinise their own authority's approach to the maintenance of highway infrastructure within this context.

The Committee also considered:

- a) the financial pressures associated with highways funding which would be subject to the Government's spending review in Spring 2025;
- b) the role for the Authority in lobbying Government and collaborating with Highways England to secure highways improvements across the region; and
- c) the opportunity for the Authority to facilitate and convene joint working between local authorities to deliver or procure highways services such as street lighting.

It was **agreed** that:

- 1. the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of both the combined authority and local authorities with regards to maintaining highways be noted and welcomed;
- 2. the Committee's comments set out above be reported to Cabinet at its meeting in March 2025, to be taken into account when it determines the Authority's approach to the allocation of highways maintenance funding to local authorities as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS);
- 3. a further scrutiny exercise to review the adequacy and delivery of the Authority's approach to allocating highways maintenance funding be scheduled for February 2026; and
- 4. the issues considered by the Committee be referred to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each constituent council so that they may consider whether they wish to scrutinise their own authority's approach to the maintenance of highway infrastructure within this context.

## **OSC23/02/25 Education Improvement Programme**

Work was underway with regional stakeholders to identify new regional priorities which would inform the strategic direction of the North East CA's education improvement programme from September 2025. Councillor Tracey Dixon, Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion and Skills, accompanied by Adrian Dougherty, Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform, and Andrew Garrad, Senior Programme manager, attended the meeting to present the emerging vision and priorities and to seek the Committee's views and comments on how the programme might be developed in the future.

The Committee were also provided with an overview of the education improvement work being delivered during the 2024/25 academic year. Work was currently being mobilised through

commissioned services and grant funded support across three interlinked objectives: a) school improvement; b) professional development; and c) responding to local priorities. There were currently 492 schools supported (from a total of 844 across the region) across 748 points of engagement.

The Committee asked a series of questions and made comments when the following issues were considered in more detail:

- a) officers assured the Committee that the Authority had worked in collaboration with the Department for Education, local authorities, academy trusts and charities to identify pressure points and gaps in provision so that the programme would avoid duplication and add value;
- b) the programme had sought to use existing data collection and evaluation mechanisms to reduce the risk of adding bureaucracy in schools;
- c) it was acknowledged that the Authority had no statutory powers in relation to education and so it had to work with others to develop and define its role within the sector;
- d) the programme's future strategic direction would take account of the aims of the new Child Poverty Reduction Unit to build a strategic, long-term and collaborative approach to addressing child poverty in the region;
- e) the Committee expressed an interest in undertaking further work to review and assess the impact of the programme on factors such as attendance, exclusions and child poverty;
- f) the programme included elements to support pastoral care and careers advice in schools;
- g) the Committee expressed its support for the Authority facilitating and encouraging local authorities to collaborate with each other and share best practice;
- h) the Authority had worked with many, but not all, multi academy trusts; and
- i) the emerging priorities for the programme included teacher wellbeing and development. It was suggested that consideration also needed to be given to the retention of teaching staff, to reduce the loss of qualified staff after years of investment and training.

It was **agreed** that:

1. the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Inclusion and the Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform, in developing the future strategic direction of the education improvement programme, be asked to:
  - a) ensure that the programme does not duplicate or replicate existing provision in an already congested education sector;
  - b) place emphasis on how the programme can help improve attendance at school, reduce exclusions and reduce child poverty; and
  - c) give consideration to the retention of teachers as well as their wellbeing and development,
2. the Committee undertake a further scrutiny exercise to review and assess the impact of the programme in September 2025 on factors such as attendance, exclusions and child poverty.

## **OSC24/02/25 Supporting People with Disabilities, Health Conditions and Additional Barriers to Seek Sustained Employment**

The Committee met with Councillor Tracey Dixon, Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion and Skills, Adrian Dougherty, Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform and Ruth Gaul, Principal Programme Manager, to examine and comment on how the Authority could support people with disabilities, health conditions and additional barriers to seek sustained employment.

The Committee were presented with a report setting out the national and regional policy context, the challenges in the North East labour market, the current support available to residents and details of new integrated, innovative regional employment support including:

- a) Connect to Work, the first major element of the Get Britain Working Strategy, to help connect local work, health and skills support and provide a coherent, systematic, and joined up approach to maximise the benefits available for individuals and local communities; and

- b) Economic Inactivity Trailblazer. In December 2024 the North East CA had been identified as a Trailblazer to bring together health, employment, and skills services to improve the support available to those who are inactive due to ill health and help them return to work.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and to comment on these initiatives to help shape and influence the Authority's approach. In doing so the Committee:

- a) highlighted the importance of working with employers and organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry, Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to address the stigma associated with long term absences from work;
- b) referred to the current challenges in the education sector caused by a loss of learning and social skills during the Covid pandemic and suggested that the Authority's strategies and programmes to support people into work would need to begin to prepare for the needs and demands of young people currently in education;
- c) explored in more detail how neuro-diverse people could be supported into employment;
- d) highlighted the importance of childcare in supporting people to return to work;
- d) acknowledged the role of the public sector in taking a lead as major employers through their equality, diversity and inclusion policies; and
- e) reiterated the need for the Committee to monitor the performance and outcomes of the Authority's programmes.

It was **agreed** that:

- 1. the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Inclusion and the Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform, in developing the Authority's programmes to support people into employment, be asked to give particular consideration to:
  - a) working with employers and employer organisations to address the stigma associated with long term absences from work; and
  - b) the needs of young people currently in education who may in the future experience different challenges in securing employment due to a loss of learning and social skills during the Covid pandemic;
- 2. the Committee undertake a further scrutiny exercise in February 2026 to review and assess the development of Connect to Work and the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer.

## Meeting of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**4 March 2025**

(10.00am)

Meeting held in: Quadrant, North Tyneside

### Notes

Present:

- Councillor Les Bowman
- Councillor Rob Crute
- Councillor Richard Dodd
- Councillor Steve Fairlie
- Councillor Stuart Green
- Councillor Chris Lines
- Councillor Jim Montague
- Councillor Shane Smith
- Councillor Dawn Welsh

In attendance: Councillor Brian Gallacher

The following items of business were discussed by members and substitute members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when there were an insufficient number of members present to conduct a quorate meeting of the Committee. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Tracy Dodds, John Eagle, Colin Ferguson, Charlie Gray, Andrew Guy, John McCabe, Dominic McDonough, Antony Mullen and Claire Rowntree.

### 1. North East Strategic Place Partnership

Members met with Heather Orton, Principal Housing Infrastructure Manager, Peter Mennell, Director of Housing at North Tyneside Council, and Matthew Bell from Homes England, to examine the development of the North East Strategic Place Partnership (SPP) and comment on its future strategic direction. Dame Norma Redfearn DBE, Cabinet Member for Housing and Land, had also been invited to attend the meeting but had submitted her apologies for absence.

The SPP had been established as part of the “trailblazer” deeper devolution deal to provide a framework for greater collaboration and unlock housing delivery and place-based growth. Officers presented details of the SPP’s strategic objectives, its priority focus areas, governance arrangements and examples of delivery including Forth Yards, Newcastle and the Sunderland Riverside regeneration.

Members asked a series of questions and made comments when the following issues were discussed in more detail:

- a) the extent to which the development of brownfield sites would deliver the Government’s housing targets,
- b) the relationship between local plans, to be determined by constituent councils on how the housing targets would be delivered, and the SPP, whose focus would be to support the delivery of housing according to local priorities and by unlocking challenging sites,



- c) the risk of the growth and overdevelopment of some towns leading to a change in their shape and size and damaging the vibrancy and cohesiveness of communities,
- d) a need for growth and house building in rural, coastal and former industrial areas to sustain communities and services,
- e) the opportunities to set regional design standards and to work with developers to deliver high-quality homes and
- f) the capacity of the SPP to support house building on small sites, for example redeveloping derelict clubs, churches and office blocks.

## **2. Mayor's Local Transport Plan**

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) set out the North East CA's transport priorities up until 2040, including plans to deliver the Mayor's manifesto commitments for transport and a list of proposals to create a fully integrated green transport network that works for all. Members of the Committee had previously commented on the draft LTP and the proposed approach to an extensive public consultation exercise at its meeting on 8 October 2024. Since then, the LTP had been subject to consultation between 4 November 2024 and 26 January 2025.

Members met with Philip Meikle, Assistant Director of Transport, who presented details of the response to the consultation, its findings and next steps. A reshaped version of the LTP had been produced to reflect feedback received during the consultation which had highlighted:

- A need for greater reference to how transport can support economic and housing growth sites;
- Requests to include taxis as part of the integrated transport network;
- A need to better align the LTP with the North East CA missions and the North East Local Growth Plan;
- Calls for stronger references to freight; and,
- The need to prioritise maintenance and resilience of existing transport assets.

The reshaped LTP would be presented to the Cabinet on 18 March 2025 to be endorsed prior to publication as the finalised plan.

During their discussion members:

- a) expressed their support for a fully integrated public transport system including integrated ticketing and fares,
- b) suggested that all residents living within the North East CA area should be eligible for the Metro Gold Card at the same cost. Officers undertook to provide members with clarification regarding the current eligibility and costs,
- c) welcomed the proportion of consultation responses received from women and examined in more detail the extent and nature of engagement with young people,
- d) queried how the needs of people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act had been given due regard and how the LTP aligned with the Authority's emerging equality objectives and
- e) explored with officers the opportunities within the region to improve freight connectivity, including improved connections with the airport, ports and the rail network.

## **3. Leamside Investment Corridor**

In January 2025, Cabinet had agreed to allocate £500k from the Authority's Investment Fund to develop a Leamside Investment Corridor Strategy. The strategy would set out plans for a broad, ambitious vision for the area around the line; one that was about place-based growth, regeneration, better access to skills and employment, the potential for a new town and/or other significant new housing, and the opportunity to realise significant government and private sector investment. Members met with Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment, and Ian Freshwater, Senior Economic Development & Regeneration Officer, to comment on the proposal and help inform and shape the strategy at its very early stages of development.

In challenging the feasibility of re-opening the Leamside Line, Members noted that the Authority had committed £8m to prepare an Outline Business Case incorporating detailed design work and costings for the first phase of the re-opening which would form an extension of the metro system from Felling to South Hylton via Washington. Further work to prepare a Strategic Business Case for the re-opening of the southern leg of the line to Tursdale Junction had commenced and had received support from the Department of Transport, Homes England and other partners as an ambitious scheme of national significance and a catalyst for growth in the region. The business case process and the development of a Leamside Investment Corridor Strategy would be about testing the feasibility of the ambitious, long term plans for the area.

Members offered a range of comments and questions when the following issues were considered in more detail:

- a) the need for local transport connections between the Leamside Line and the centre of Washington,
- b) the importance of improved transport connections to the North East,
- c) the challenges in developing parkway railway stations on the East Coast Main Line,
- d) the nature and range of passenger and freight rail services which could be operated on the line,
- e) the opportunities to unlock significant levels of new private sector investment and
- f) the opportunities to connect key economic sites and communities in County Durham.

#### **4. Equality Objectives**

Members met with Emma Patterson, Policy Development Officer, Leigh Mills, Head of Skills and Inclusion, and Robin Fry, Inclusive Economy Adviser to examine progress made towards delivery of the Authority's Equality Objectives for 2024/25 and to comment on the plans for setting longer term objectives for 2025-2028. The new equality objectives were due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting in June 2025.

In considering the proposed longer term objectives members commented on:

- a) the need to reduce transport related social exclusion to improve transport for all users and allow older and disabled people to travel safely,
- b) the importance of collaborating and sharing data with constituent councils to avoid duplication and to utilise existing activity and knowledge and
- c) their wish to receive details of the action plan to be formulated once the Cabinet approves the Authority's Equality Objectives and to receive an annual report on delivery of the objectives.

#### **5. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

Members reviewed the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

Following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, it was proposed that an informal meeting of members of the Committee be held on Tuesday 1 April 2025 at 10.00am to review the operation of the Committee and to formulate an annual report. A meeting of the Committee to approve the annual report had provisionally been arranged to be held on Tuesday 15 April 2025 at 10.00am in Newcastle Civic Centre.

Members expressed concern that a meeting on 15 April 2025 could be inquorate because it fell within the pre-election and Easter holiday periods. Officers undertook to check the availability of members and consult with the Chair and Vice Chair before confirming arrangements for the next meeting.

## Meeting of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**15 April 2025**

(10.00am)

Meeting held in: The Pandon Room, Civic Centre, Newcastle

### Notes

Present: Councillor Colin Ferguson (Chair)  
Councillor Les Bowman  
Councillor Richard Dodd  
Councillor Steve Fairlie  
Councillor Charlie Gray  
Councillor Chris Lines  
Councillor John McCabe  
Councillor Claire Rowntree  
Councillor Dawn Welsh

The following items of business were discussed by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when there were an insufficient number of members present to conduct a quorate meeting of the Committee. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Rob Crute, John Eagle, Jim Montague and Antony Mullen.

#### 1. Previous Meetings

With reference to the notes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025, a member thanked officers for providing clarification regarding the current eligibility and costs associated with the Metro Gold Card and he reiterated his view that all residents living within the North East CA area should be eligible for the Gold Card at the same cost.

#### 2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2024/25

Members were presented with a draft Annual Report 2024/25. The report documented the role played by the Committee during its first year of operation in reviewing and scrutinising the decisions taken by the North East Mayor and the North East CA Cabinet, monitoring delivering of its programmes and contributing to the development of its policy and strategies. The report incorporated a self-assessment against the 18 key principles of good scrutiny contained in the Scrutiny Protocol for English Institutions Exercising Devolved Powers.

The Scrutiny Protocol stated that the annual report should be published to broadcast the work of the Committee demonstrating how its work influences the Authority's goals, priorities and outcomes. The Protocol also stated that the report should be formally considered by its constituent members. Accordingly, members agreed that the Annual Report be presented to Cabinet at its meeting in June 2024. It was also agreed that the report be referred to the Audit and Standards Committee to provide assurance on how the Committee was performing its functions.

Members discussed how the Committee's work should complement that of the constituent council's scrutiny committees rather than create duplication. To this end, the Chair was willing to meet with council scrutiny committees to discuss how respective work programmes could be interconnected on issues such as the Local Transport Plan and Local Growth Plan.

It was acknowledged that recent meetings of the Committee had been inquorate. Given the importance of devolution to the region and the critical role of the Committee within the Authority's governance arrangements, members highlighted the need for the appointment of a pool of engaged members and substitute members.

### **3. English Devolution White Paper**

Alan Reiss, Director of Operations, met with members to discuss the likely implications of the proposals contained within the English Devolution White Paper. The Paper had been published in December 2024 setting out proposals to widen and deepen devolution across England, providing powers and funding and hardwiring them into the way Government worked. The Government intended to bring forward an English Devolution Bill to deliver its vision as set out in the White Paper. Members asked that they be provided with regular briefings on the development and implementation of the Government's devolution policies outlined in the White Paper.

During members' discussion the following issues were considered in more detail:

- a) It was proposed that strategic authorities would be required to develop a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). This would provide the North East CA with an opportunity to work with its constituent councils and neighbouring authorities to develop a plan for the delivery of infrastructure across the regional economic geography. The SDS would not replace but would guide the preparation and updating of local plans by local planning authorities.
- b) Strategic authorities would be positioned as convenors of public service reform, bringing together local authorities, public service providers and other stakeholders to drive people-centred services. There were opportunities for the North East CA to work in partnership with other public service providers where their policy objectives aligned. For example, working together to address the broader social determinants of health, moving away from traditional forms of service delivery to a holistic approach, organised around service users. The North East Mayor was currently unable to exercise the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority because the respective geographies did not align, but this was not a barrier to working in the spirit of what is proposed in the white paper.
- c) The White Paper contained proposals to strengthen the role and functions exercised by Mayors in Mayoral Strategic Authorities. This was because some Mayors had experienced challenges in obtaining the unanimity required among members from constituent councils to agree key strategic decisions. Mayors would also be able to appoint Commissioners to support the delivery of key functions. These appointments were intended to complement not replace the allocation of portfolios to elected members of the Authority. It would be a matter for the Mayor and Cabinet to determine the governance arrangements of the North East CA once the relevant legislation was in place.
- d) The Government was exploring a local public accounts committee model to provide scrutiny of local public spending and match the deeper devolution of powers with a proportionate level of accountability. Members expressed concerns regarding the risk of a local public accounts committee duplicating the work of overview and scrutiny committees and highlighted the need for clarity in its role and responsibilities.
- e) Members explored with officers how the proposals contained in the White Paper may be progressed and shaped by decisions to be taken by Government as part of the Spending Review.

At the conclusion of the discussion members of the Committee asked that, in responding to whatever finally emerges as an enhanced devolution framework, the Mayor, Cabinet and the Authority as a whole continue to give due regard to the voices of its constituent councils. The North East CA was not a typical combined authority as it had a unique and complex economic

geography. Its strength was based on the seven local authorities coming together to address these complex issues. The quality of its work would only be enhanced by allowing constituent councils to continue to represent their own geographies, needs and voices.

### **3. Creating Real Opportunity: North East Local Growth Plan**

Members met with Rob Hamilton, Head of Innovation and Strategy, to examine the Interim Local Growth Plan. The Plan set out the Authority's key priorities for the region, illustrating how it would grow the regional economy and improve living standards. It would help guide future investment decisions and be used in discussions with Government ahead of the Spending Review and the introduction of a single integrated financial settlement in 2026/27. The Plan had been developed in consultation with local authorities, national government, and regional stakeholders and approved by Cabinet for the purposes of consultation with Government and stakeholders. Members of the Committee were invited to comment on the Interim Plan prior to Cabinet approving the final version later in 2025.

Members commented on the following aspects of the plan:

- a) Members welcomed the development of the Local Growth Plan and the Authority's vision for economic growth which would be aligned with the Government's Industrial Strategy. The Plan covered a 10 year period but the Mayor and Cabinet could review and refresh the plan if necessary to respond to changes in the global economic climate.
- b) The Plan stated that if the North East were to grow at the same projected rate as the fastest growing G7 economy today the economy would be £13.1bn larger by 2033. This aspiration was linked to the Government's national target. Members queried whether this was the limit of the Authority's aspirations or whether activity should be focussed on closing the gap in performance compared to other regions in England.
- c) Members highlighted the need to create long term sustainable high value jobs to tackle the underlying structural problems in the local economy. There were opportunities to create these types of jobs in the offshore, electric vehicle and creative industries.
- d) Further work was to be undertaken with members of the Authority in determining objectives, performance indicators and targets. Members commented that clear, measurable and time-based objectives were required so that outputs and outcomes could be monitored. Each business case for investment would identify measures and performance would be tracked, publicly reported and open to scrutiny. It was suggested that comparative metrics be adopted as they would mitigate against the impact of global factors beyond the control of the Authority.
- e) The Plan identified £14bn of current investment opportunities, which included up to £10bn investment in a data centre campus in Cambois, Northumberland.
- f) Members asked for further evidence of the £14bn turnover and 48,000 jobs in the defence and space industries based in the region and the expected growth in the UK defence sector by over next five years to £87bn.
- g) The Plan stated that economic inactivity in the North East was high and rising and that by reducing inactivity linked to ill health to national levels would mean 45,000 more economically active people in the North East. Members referred to the increasing levels of obesity and other health issues among children which were likely to lead to increased levels of inactivity in working age people in the future. The underpinning determinants of ill health among children required attention by the Authority working with its partners as part of the public service reform agenda. It was suggested that this topic should form part of the Committee's future work programme.
- h) The Plan included a section on supporting growth within the foundational economy. Members expressed an interest in examining this aspect of the Plan in more detail as part of its future work programme.
- i) Global supply chains were being reshaped by rising trade protectionism and members explored with officers the likely effects of US trade tariffs for the region and the opportunities to grow exports to new markets particularly in the offshore and pharmaceutical sectors.

The Chair thanked officers for presenting details of the Local Growth Plan and asked that members' observations as set out above be given consideration in preparing the final version.

**Title:** Delivering for the North East: Year One delivery and Priorities for Year Two  
**Report of:** Alan Reiss, Director of Operations

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## Report Summary

This report provides an overview of the Authority's key achievements since its establishment and the election of the North East Mayor in May 2022, and outlines the priorities for year two to deliver the short-term pledges set out in the Authority's Corporate Plan. Henry Kippin, Chief Executive, together with his team of Directors, will attend today's meeting to discuss these matters. This information may be helpful to the Committee in guiding the determination of its own work programme for 2025/26.

## Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to examine the Authority's key achievements during its first year of operation and the priorities for year two and identify any topics for inclusion in its work programme.

### A. Context

#### 1. The North East Mayor and Combined Authority

- 1.1 The North East Combined Authority began its work on 7 May 2024 as a new strategic body, led by the first elected Mayor for the whole region with a manifesto dedicated to creating the infrastructure of opportunity through a plan to end child poverty and to create and connect people to good jobs. The work of the Combined Authority is underpinned by strong devolution deals with Government.
  - 1.2 The vision and priorities of the CA are set by the Mayor and Cabinet, and delivered through the five key missions agreed and set out in the Corporate Plan:
    - To create the home of real opportunity
    - To be home to a growing and vibrant economy for all
    - To be the home of the green energy revolution
    - To make the North East a place we are proud to call home
    - To be a welcoming home for global trade.
  - 1.3 Effective delivery requires excellent partnership working in order to improve the lives and prospects of people in our region. The Combined Authority works closely with organisations and people from all across the region, including the seven partner Local Authorities, local businesses and the private sector, health trusts, emergency services, voluntary organisations, colleges and our four universities.
- #### 2. Key delivery achievements of the first 12 months
- 2.1 The first year of the Mayor and Combined Authority has been marked by both the achievement of immediate impact on the lives of people in the North East, alongside developing plans and investments that will lay the foundations for further improvements in outcomes over the short, medium and longer term.

## 2.2 Highlights include:

- **Agreement to make around £500 million of public investment** in the North East, including transport, housing, skills, culture and child poverty prevention.
- Creation of the UK's first **Child Poverty Reduction Unit**, the co-development of a regional Child Poverty Action Plan to be launched this summer and delivery of 1,000 baby boxes to families with new babies, supported over 4,500 pupils across the region to take part in extra-curricular activities, with £1.5m in annualised benefit gains for families as a result of advisors in schools and communities.
- Launch of the **Mayor's Childcare Grant**, which will provide support of up to £6,800 to families in County Durham with at least one child under five, before potentially being expanded.
- Delivery of Round 1 of the **Mayor's Opportunity Fund** which awarded 22 grants totalling £264,210 to grassroots organisations providing small-scale community projects. Round 2 will launch in June 2025, investing £225,000 more in grassroots organisations and small charities that help to tackle poverty and increase opportunity for people living in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Committing investment to deliver **800 new homes**, with 2,200 more in the pipeline, while agreeing the North East Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England to speed up regeneration.
- Approved Investment Fund, Investment Zone and Trailblazer programmes which will create nearly **3,000 jobs and back almost 650 businesses to grow** in the region.
- Began delivering Skills Bootcamps and Adult Skills provision which will support over **52,000 people with skills**, training and back to work support.
- Providing £18m funding to **revitalise South Shields Town Centre** through the relocation of South Tyneside College and its world-famous marine school to a central site.
- Approval of £17m funding to support **jobs and local communities** through a new Environmental Stewardship, Coast and Rural Growth Investment Plan.
- Launch of the North of England's **first Carbon and Nature Marketplace**, opening the way for North East firms to use carbon credits to fund environmental schemes close to home.
- Publication of the Mayor's **Local Transport Plan** following consultation with over 16,000 members of the public supporting the ambition to create a safe, fully-integrated and green public transport network. The first two years of the plan will see £800 million of investment into the region's transport network.
- Beginning the process to **bring buses back into public control**, through the start of a programme to assess the benefits of franchising.
- Starting the work to bring **Metro to Washington** through £8m funding for a detailed business case and technical and environmental studies along the northern part of the Leamside Line and out from South Hylton in Sunderland.
- Sustainable transport funding of more than £200m approved for projects including a new Shields Ferry landing, new ticket gates for Metro stations, **100km of improved walking, cycle and wheeling routes** and delivery of **20 new zero emission buses**, with a further 75 buses on order.
- Keeping the cost of bus travel low: Young people aged 21 or under have made **22.8 million journeys at £1 single and £3 all day fares** guaranteed by the Mayor in the last 12 months. More than 6.2 million adults have taken advantage of the £2.50 maximum 'Mayor's Fare' for bus travel in the region subsidised since January 2025.
- Extending **Kids Go Free on public transport** across all school holidays until 2026, in a deal with bus operators to ease the cost for families and inspire visits to town centres and visitor attractions.
- Funding the £15.8m installation of up to **1,000 new EV charging points** over the coming years, focused on rural villages and housing estates without off-street parking but spread throughout the region

- Publication of the interim **Local Growth Plan**, which sets out our ambitions to drive investment and jobs, both in six key sectors and across the foundational economy.
- Setting up the £70m North East Investment Fund to back small businesses and help them grow, with a target to **invest in 470 firms and create 2,300 new jobs** over 15 years, as part of our wider jobs creation programme
- Securing **£50m of investment** from Japanese car firm Jatco, adding to our world-leading strengths in advanced manufacturing, car making and electric vehicles
- Secured investments into the region which will create **over 2,000 jobs**
- Championing regional culture and creative industries through a cultural events programme, including landing the **MOBO Awards and Mercury Music Prize** in the region and attracted a new national Centre for Writing.

- 2.3 Despite being in its first year, the position, potential and effectiveness of the North East Combined Authority has been recognised by the Government identifying this as one of only four areas of the country with an “Established Mayoral Strategic Authority”. This paves the way for access to the full range of funding, flexibilities and powers available through an Integrated Financial Settlement from 2026-27. This success reflects the work carried out by partners and regional leaders in establishing a new Combined Authority at pace and bringing together predecessor organisations to create the new strategic body.
- 2.4 As a convenor, the North East CA has harnessed the collective knowledge, experience and resource available across the region, through nurturing existing relationships and building new ones to drive forward delivery to achieve the missions sets out in the Corporate Plan.
- 2.5 Our Advisory Boards, made up of people from across the private, public and voluntary sectors provide inclusive forums to help shape and inform the design of delivery programmes, ensuring our investments have measurable impact.
- 2.6 The creation of the Business and Economy Board, among these, ensures the private sector and academia are able to provide insights and guidance to the Mayor and Cabinet on how best to deliver the five missions set out in the Corporate Plan, and recognises the essential role that the private sector has to play in the economic growth of the region.

### 3. Delivery Priorities for Year Two

- 3.1 In the second year, delivery of the region’s five missions will continue, alongside preparing for the implementation of the Integrated Settlement in 2026. Priorities include:
- Launch of a five-year **Child Poverty Action Plan** setting out how the North East CA will use the collective levers and resources available to prevent and reduce child poverty.
  - Launch of the **New Deal for North East Workers** including the implementation of Shine, which will provide support for employers of all sizes to be recognised for their good work credentials or work towards improvements through a tiered assessment and reward system.
  - Delivery of the £50m **Connect to Work** scheme to help thousands of people with disabilities and health conditions get into work.
  - Launch of a **High Streets Commission** exploring and testing the best ideas to revitalise our town and city centres with the people who live there.
  - **Making public transport easier to use** through the roll out of new smart payment technology across bus, Metro and rail through the Smart Travel Evolution Programme.
  - Progressing the **next steps of our programme to reform buses**, including completing our Franchising Scheme Assessment ahead of public consultation.
  - Deliver improvements to access and information, as well as **new shelters at bus stops** across the region in a programme which will eventually reach 639 locations.
  - Advance the introduction of new Metro trains with half the new fleet (23 trains) to be carrying passengers by spring 2026, with the remaining 23 entering service by the end of 2026.



- Finalisation of the region's **Local Growth Plan** and associated support for major inward investment.
- Delivery of a revised approach to **boost tourism and create new jobs** as we seek to double the size of the visitor economy in the next 10 years.
- Progressing the next stage of **major regional investment programmes** including the Leamside Investment Corridor, Durham Investment District, Tyne Economic Corridor as well as support for our core and emerging strengths in green energy, advanced manufacturing and automotive, and AI.
- Launch of the North East **offshore wind programme**, including the delivery of the £1m Technology Innovation in Green Growth for Offshore Renewables programmes.
- Step-up delivery of the £69m Capital Regeneration Programme and £49m Brownfield Housing Fund Programme which will see more **new quality and affordable homes** start to be built.
- Build on our robust evidence base to develop a **Homelessness prevention blueprint**.
- Launching a region-wide one-stop-shop warm homes service, including a £1million fund, to provide advice and the opportunity to apply for a loan to 800+ residents. Bringing together key regional stakeholders to form a Warm Homes North East Taskforce that will develop the long term strategy and action plan to ensure we tackle cold, damp homes and fuel poverty, and prepare for devolved funding for retrofit by 2028.
- Develop a **Spatial Development Strategy** for the region that helps to enable our growth priorities and infrastructure requirements underpinning our Local Growth Plan.
- Design localised provision of high quality **all-age career guidance** for local residents.
- Launch of the £10 million North East CA Economic Inactivity Trailblazer to develop and test new and innovative ways to address the persistent challenges of economic inactivity. The aim of this activity is to harness untapped human potential to help grow our economy, raise living standards, reduce child poverty and create opportunities from which everyone can benefit.

## **B. Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives**

1. The delivery of activities, interventions and programmes set out above will help the North East CA achieve five missions set out in the corporate plan which will provide opportunity for all residents in the North East.

## **C. Key risks**

1. There are no additional risks arising from this report. All risks associated with the delivery programmes set out above are managed in accordance with the North East CA's Risk Management Framework.

## **D. Financial and other resources implications**

1. There are no additional financial or resourcing implications arising from this report. All investment of North East CA funding is approved through the processes set out in the Single Assurance Framework.

## **E. Legal implications**

1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **F. Equalities Implications**

1. For all programmes and projects, the North East CA have fulfilled our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty and paid due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. In June 2024, the North East CA established an

ambitious set of interim Equality Objectives, which have underpinned the significant strides the North East CA has made toward embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. The North East CA will shortly launch its ambitious three-year equality objectives, which will drive efforts to create a more inclusive North East, where opportunity is open to all.

**G. Consultation and engagement**

1. There has been substantial consultation and engagement on the programmes set out above, including through the consultations on the Local Transport Plan and Local Growth Plan.

**H. Appendices**

None

**I. Background papers**

[North East CA Corporate Plan](#)  
[The Interim North East Local Growth Plan](#)

**J. Contact officer(s)**

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**K. Glossary**

North East CA – North East Combined Authority

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 July 2025

**Title:** The regional approach to fulfil ambitions for the North East Visitor Economy

**Report of:** Phil Witcherley, Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration

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## 1. Report Summary

The visitor economy is an important sector for the North East's economy. The region's interim Local Growth Plan outlines an ambition the scale of the tourism economy in the North East over the next ten years. This report provides information for scrutiny committee to examine proposals agreed at the June North East Combined Authority Cabinet meeting to develop a new regional body for the delivery of regional visitor economy activity.

## 2. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to:

- a) examine the proposed regional approach to fulfil ambitions for the North East Economy; and
- b) provide officers with any comments and observations which may help inform and shape the development of a regional visitor economy body.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 In determining its work programme for 2024/25, the previous Cabinet Member for Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport suggested that the Committee consider options for the delivery of a tourism and visitor economy strategy for the region.
- 3.2 At its meetings in March and June 2025, Cabinet agreed high-level principles underpinning a new regional approach and later agreed to evolve the existing NewcastleGateshead Initiative Ltd (NGI) Ltd into a new regional tourism organisation with £1.55m of funding from the North East CA Investment Fund to support its transition to a new regional body delivering regional visitor economy activity.
- 3.3 Cabinet will receive a further report later this year regarding the outcome of organisational development work to develop an operating model appropriate for the efficient and effective delivery of its functions, proposed next steps and implications for further future investment.
- 3.4 The report to Cabinet setting out these proposals is attached as Appendix A. Cabinet agreed the recommendations (minute C10/06/25). Phil Witcherley, Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration, will attend today's meeting to present details, answer members questions and receive feedback.

## 4. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 4.1 This proposal directly addresses the strategic priorities of the Combined Authority as outlined in the North East Deeper Devolution Deal, the Local Growth Plan and the Mayoral Manifesto.

## 5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.2 The approach outlined provides the opportunity to build on the successful launch in September 2024 of the Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework, which sets out a shared understanding for regenerative tourism in North East England to drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth, including generating social benefits and driving value for local people and places as well as incoming visitors to the region.

## **6. Consultation and Engagement**

- 6.1 In developing the proposals set out in this paper engagement has been undertaken with the following groups and organisations: LA7 Chief Executives; LA7 Economic Directors; Newcastle Gateshead Initiative Ltd Board and Senior Leadership Team; Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) boards and visitor economy businesses in those areas, visitor economy businesses and stakeholders in local authorities not currently covered by an LVEP, Visit England, and the Department for Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport.

- 6.2 Key comments arising from the consultation include the following:

- there is support for a ‘hub-and-spoke’ regional partnership model, with recognition of the need to respect and work with local distinctiveness;
- the new Regional body should integrate with wider growth and regenerative priorities, requiring a clear approach in respect of roles across partners;
- strong support for regional coordination in key ‘value-added’ areas as represented within the core functions set out above;
- strong endorsement of the need to build a strong and inclusive regional identity building on and working with established local brands;
- the new body should be demonstrably new and regional in its governance and organisational design.

- 6.3 There is broad consensus on forming a regional tourism body “as an opportunity to transform and enhance the visitor economy across our wider area, strengthen coordination, elevate the region’s brand, and build on our collective competitiveness in domestic and international markets.” There was also clear and consistent messaging on the need for “strong collaboration between public and private stakeholders”, with clear approaches set out in terms of governance and structure, including effective methods of engagement and inclusive participation.

- 6.4 Highlighting a phased approach over the longer term, there was also recognition of the need to set our clear functions, activities and key performance indicators, with the new Regional body positioned to respond to “global uncertainties, including economic fluctuations, climate change, and shifting visitor expectations”, requiring strategic responses if the region is to “remain adaptable and resilient”.

## **7. Appendices**

Appendix A – Report to Cabinet 10 June 2025

## **8. Background Papers**

The following background documents have been used in the compilation of this report and are available for inspection either by clicking on the links below or by contacting the report author:

- Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme
- Report to Cabinet – 10 June 2025

## **9. Contact Officers**

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**Title:** The regional approach to fulfil ambitions for the North East Visitor Economy

**Report of:** Phil Witcherley, Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration

### **Purpose**

The North East Mayor is committed to making tourism and the visitor economy a core part of the region's growth plans, creating new jobs and opportunities for local people and helping businesses across the region grow. The Combined Authority's interim Local Growth Plan sets out the ambition to double the size of the North East's visitor economy over the next ten years.

The North East boasts world-class visitor attractions and a diverse tourism offer, including two World Heritage Sites, unspoilt natural beauty, stunning beaches and coastlines, vibrant city centres, historic towns and a compelling gastronomic, cultural and sporting offer.

Local authorities market and support their own areas, in some cases through Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), undertaking destination development and management, sector convening and business support. There is, however, no single company or agency which currently has a role to promote and support the whole offer for the region, providing the scale and impact to compete in a national and global market and so grow the visitor economy as the Local growth Plan sets out.

Cabinet agreed in March 2025 that the North East CA should develop proposals, in collaboration with industry and partners, to build on existing structures including the current Destination Development Partnership (DDP) pilot, Destination North East England, which has been managed by Newcastle and Gateshead Initiative (NGI) Ltd since 2022. The focus should be to embed a strategic regional tourism function and shape and enable the delivery of a ten-year strategy for the visitor economy.

Since March, the North East CA has consulted on our vision for the visitor economy with more than 300 stakeholders in the sector on the best ways to support and add value to the work of local authorities at a regional level. This report sets out the results of this engagement and proposed next steps, including the financial, and operational implications for the CA and partners. Its focus is on the following functions:

- National and international marketing to grow the region's visitor economy.
- Strategic place marketing.
- Co-ordinated regional delivery supporting the conventions market internally and working with the tourist and investment trade community externally.
- National engagement and sector advocacy and partnerships, including partnerships with other parts of the North of England.
- Skills development for tourism and hospitality and increasing opportunities for local people.

Across all of these activities, it is proposed that a redesigned and reconfigured Newcastle Gateshead Initiative Ltd (NGI) will deliver for the whole of the North East CA area, while also allowing for specific and more focused activity where this may be agreed and funded by an SLA through a council or industry sector partner.

The proposal is that:

- North East CA replaces Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council as a member of NGI to oversee its transformation to a fit-for-purpose, redefined and renamed organisation that delivers the regional ambitions set out at March Cabinet and in the Interim Local Growth Plan.
- £1.55m funding is provided from the North East CA Investment Fund to support (a) the operating costs of NGI as a re-purposed organisation for the remainder of FY 2025/26, and (b) capacity for external independent expertise to carry out an organisational review and develop a transition plan, including establishing a long-term approach to governance and a corporate identity that accurately reflects a regional remit. This will ensure the new organisation is financially sustainable, delivers value for money, achieves efficiencies, and carries the confidence of all public and private sector partners.
- North East CA funding is focused on the transition of the organisation to become a regional visitor economy body; any local activity undertaken by the company will be funded separately via SLAs for the relevant local authorities/areas where there is agreement in place to do so.
- A further report will be brought to Cabinet later in 2025 to outline a proposed long-term budget for the new company that builds on and secures the in-principle commitments set out in this report.

Cabinet is asked to endorse this direction of travel and approve this approach to allow for the new regional role of the company to be implemented from July 2025.

## **Report Summary**

In March 2025, Cabinet requested that proposals be developed, in collaboration with regional partners, to set out how the growth potential of the visitor economy can be unlocked in all parts of the region by building on the existing DDP pilot (Destination North East England) and by strengthening the regional infrastructure and capacity needed to accelerate progress.

The March Cabinet paper set out the high-level principles underpinning the new regional approach, identifying the potential scope and functions required, and next steps for stakeholder engagement and input. A significant level of engagement has been undertaken since the Cabinet in March, comprising meetings, workshops and webinars respectively with more than 300 industry partners, LVEPS, and Local Authority partners. The outcome of this engagement and feedback has directly shaped the proposals and approach in this report. It is anticipated that engagement will continue as the new regional approach establishes itself.

The report covers the following elements:

- the regional context and the opportunity to grow and develop the regional visitor economy;
- the objectives for a strategic regional tourism function that will be delivered by a revised and re-designed NGI Ltd accountable to the Mayor;
- the core functions that will be delivered to achieve the agreed strategic objectives from inception and start in the summer 2025;
- a proposed approach to organisational development in year 1 (FY2025/26) to ensure the company is 'fit-for-purpose', provides value for money, and is structured to deliver with the confidence of all partners now, with the potential to take on additional functions in future years;

- a commitment, following organisational development, to finalise and agree a multi-year programme of activity to target the ambitions outlined in the Local Growth Plan;
- the associated costs, timeframe and investment required for the above.

This approach is consistent with the CA's Corporate Plan, which commits to strengthening our regional identity and progressing a North East identity that enables the realisation of the potential of our remarkable creative, cultural, heritage, sporting and visitor economy assets. The new regional approach will directly contribute to Mayoral commitments and the CA's missions and the Interim Local Growth Plan.

## **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the content of this report and agree the proposed approach.
2. Agree that the North East CA shall become a member of a repurposed NGI Ltd in place of the existing local authority members.
3. Agree to provide NGI Ltd with £1.55m of funding from the North East CA Investment Fund to support the transition to a new regional body, based on a redesigned NGI, delivering regional visitor economy activity on the basis set out in this report and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor, to finalise the terms on which this grant funding is to be provided.
4. Receive a further report later this year regarding the outcome of the organisational development work described in this report, proposed next steps and implications for further future investment.

## **A. Context**

### **1. Background and policy context**

- 1.1 The mayor's manifesto, North East devolution deals and interim Local Growth Plan prioritise growing the visitor economy and recognise the benefits that a thriving culture and events scene provides in terms of regional profile and jobs growth.
- 1.2 In 2022 the region was chosen to deliver the first regional tourism Destination Development Partnership Pilot, receiving £2.25m from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to attract more visitors, create new visitor experiences and target new domestic and international visitor markets. The DDP, in addition to creating a pilot that disseminates best practice and learning and creating a co-ordinating framework for the regional visitor economy, also sets a regional 10-year ambition of doubling the size of the visitor economy and growing its cumulative economic impact to over £10bn.
- 1.3 The DDP provides regional coordination and strategic planning on regional issues such as availability of accommodation and the environmental sustainability of the sector. This arrangement has to date supported regional working at a deeper level in order to realise the sustainable economic and social benefits of the visitor economy across Newcastle, Gateshead, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Durham, and Sunderland.
- 1.4 In March 2025, Cabinet requested that proposals are developed, in collaboration with partners, that set out how the region can deliver on the growth potential of the regional visitor economy by building on the existing Destination Development Partnership (DDP)

pilot (Destination North East England) and in doing so build the regional delivery capacity needed to accelerate growth and collaboration, drawing on the region's wider assets and infrastructure that contribute to and support the region's visitor economy.

- 1.5 The Interim Local Growth Plan therefore sets out the scale of the visitor economy and its contribution regionally, and the assets and infrastructure that help to underpin this. Specific opportunities are identified to help capitalise on these assets and generate significant sustainable growth, including:
- changing international perceptions of regional peripherality;
  - creating a more integrated and mixed visitor package and offer including sustainable 'products';
  - improving pathways into employment and skills development
  - developing flagship attractions, venues and assets, including an International Conference Centre and a Centre for Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality; and,
  - strengthening event infrastructure, utilise technology and increase expertise to attract and host further world-class events;
  - significantly increasing the number of international visitors (both leisure and business) and the duration – and therefore spend – of their visits.

In responding to these opportunities we will support our mission to become 'a home to a growing and vibrant economy for all' and 'a welcoming home to global trade'.

- 1.6 Embedding and deepening these regional activities will enhance business competitiveness, workforce skills, and sector resilience across the North East's visitor economy. This will work in tandem with the activities delivered by Local Authorities and industry partners at a local level, including destination development and management, sector convening and business support. Additionally, this will sit alongside the development of a regional events strategy, the Region of Sport programme and creative industries growth plans, in particular screen and music, all key pillars to the overall regional approach. Through deeper partnership development and a focus on key functions, this will stimulate economic growth by supporting SMEs to improve productivity, facilitating job creation, and strengthening supply chains across hospitality, cultural, and creative industries. Alongside this, by leading national and international marketing campaigns, cultivating strategic relationships with global travel trade partners, and presenting a unified, compelling brand narrative for the region, a new regional approach will raise the North East's international profile, attract greater volumes of international visitors, and position the region as a globally recognised, competitive visitor destination.

### **The value and potential of the North East Visitor Economy**

- 1.7 The North East's distinctive visitor economy offer spans over 500km of coastline, two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Northumberland National Park, historic castles and cathedrals, leading football teams, an international cricket ground, and diverse and distinctive cultural and heritage venues. The region also boasts key infrastructure to support the sector including Newcastle International Airport, which generates over £1bn in economic impact annually, the Port of Tyne ferries, and critical linkages via rail and road. The visitor economy is a significant source of employment in the North East, supporting 91,000 jobs across 7,205 businesses, 99% of which are SMEs. The tourism sector contributes £6.1 billion to the regional economy.



- 1.8 In addition to being a major source of employment and economic value, the visitor economy sector directly supports the North East's pride in place by showcasing the region's cultural identity, heritage, and natural assets to residents and visitors alike. It plays a central role in shaping perceptions of the region, fostering community cohesion, and enhancing quality of life. Investment in the visitor economy also acts as a catalyst for wider regeneration and place-making, attracting inward investment, stimulating local supply chains, and encouraging innovation across creative, leisure, and service industries.

## **2. Core Functions for a regional approach to the visitor economy**

- 2.1 In March Cabinet approved the principles below which have guided the development of these proposals for new regional capacity and organisation:
- Value and capacity should be added to local delivery, with the main focus being on enabling regional opportunities for impact at scale.
  - Strategic and operational accountability will be to the Mayor and Cabinet
  - There should be a clear leadership role for local stakeholders and wider industry, including private investment and amplification of the role of the private sector.
  - Focus should be on the delivery of amplified and aggregated regional benefit.
- 2.2 The existing NGI's activities will be evolved to focus on increasing demand for the visitor economy whilst addressing constraints and improving the labour market for the sector. Core functions will include delivering a fully integrated Regional Destination Development Partnership operating effectively as a 'hub and spoke' model bringing together local and regional endeavours, with the strategic capacity to lead national and international marketing campaigns, shape sector-wide strategies for attractions, accommodation and environmental sustainability underpinned by high quality data and evidence, and represent the North East in national partnerships, policy forums and advocacy efforts.
- 2.3 NGI Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council are currently members of the company (which is akin to being a shareholder in a company limited by shares). There are also a number of private sector organisations who are members of NGI Ltd. The management of the company is generally conducted by the board of directors which includes representatives of both councils and also the private sector organisations. As part of the proposals set out in this report, it is intended that the North East CA would become a member of NGI Limited and the 2 councils would cease to be members.
- 2.4 The re-purposed NGI Ltd will assume a core set of immediate 'day 1' functions from its start in summer 2025, with the ability and scope to add additional functions over time based on the need and the capability to deliver.
- 2.5 The functions the re-purposed NGI will undertake as the new 'Regional body' at its start are set out in the table below. Regional funding will therefore not be provided to support any non-regional activity undertaken by the 'Regional body'. Local activity will instead be funded via SLAs with the relevant local authorities/areas where it is appropriate and where there is agreement in place to do so. A clear set of key performance indicators will be aligned to the core functions, with appropriate capacity and resource allocated to deliver against them.

- 2.6 The table below identified the core functions for the regional body with examples of how this will operate with local activities, and as referred to above, to deliver a fully integrated Regional Destination Development Partnership operating as a 'hub and spoke' model that brings together local and regional endeavour.

Function 1: National and international marketing activity	<p><b>Regional body:</b> Enhanced/extended marketing team manages key markets, plans and delivers long term activity and bespoke campaigns, e.g screen tourism, Nordic campaign in partnership with transport operators</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> campaign development partner; provides local intelligence, amplifies information dissemination; provides training and support for local business</p>
Function 2: Strategic Place Marketing	<p><b>Regional Body:</b> enhanced/extended marketing team commissions perceptions research &amp; brand mapping, develops regional narrative and brand propositions that utilise and amplify local brands and assets, deploys bespoke campaigns/collateral at regional-level national and international events, e.g. UKREiiF</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> jointly develops regional brand propositions, manages local brands, works in partnership with the regional body at regional-level national and international events including with local content and contributors.</p>
Function 3: Convention Bureau and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) strategy	<p><b>Regional Body:</b> Reshaped team delivers convention Bureau for whole region including existing local platforms such as Meet in Durham; develops a holistic Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) strategy, manages institutional relationships</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> develops offer in partnership, local liaison, training and business support</p>
Function 4: National sector advocacy, partnerships and policy development;	<p><b>Regional Body:</b> Holds relationships with national and international governments and agencies, co-ordinates agreed national advocacy, convenes and co-ordinates new pathfinder or policy initiatives</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> Local intelligence and knowledge development, driven by local sector convening, jointly agrees advocacy and policy initiatives, and contributes content.</p>
Function 5: Regional Skills and Centre for Excellence in Tourism & Hospitality	<p><b>Regional Body:</b> Co-ordinates strategy, connectivity with regional skills strategy, leads on major projects (e.g centre of excellence)</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> holds delivery relationships with providers, co-ordinates and provides local intelligence, local employer liaison.</p>

- 2.7 To ensure that the repurposed organisation has the capability and capacity to deliver the above functions, there is recognition of the need to ensure 1) the organisation is structured correctly for the longer term and 2) that a period of time in FY2025/26 is provided to enable an effective transition for this purpose. It is therefore proposed that, in addition to funding being provided to support the above regional functions, additional investment is provided to enable capacity for external independent expertise to carry out an organisational review and development. This is to ensure there is an effective transition to perform the regional functions, including establishing a long-term approach to governance. This will ensure the new organisation is financially sustainable,

demonstrates and delivers value for money, and carries the confidence of all public and private sector partners.

- 2.8 Following a period of stabilisation and redesign of the current organisation to fulfil the 'day 1' functions above, and following the organisational development review, the organisation should be assessed for a further process of mobilisation of new functions, as follows:

Function 6: Major Events Bureau	<p><b>Regional body:</b> new team Co-ordinates bidding for major events, investment partner for regional events, manages &amp; co-ordinates event evaluation including social value, builds long term relationships with rights holders, co-ordinates and attracts investment for longer term infrastructure growth including skills, clash diary/scheduling overview, co-ordinates marketing</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> Event management and delivery, event-specific promotion, ensuring strategic fit with local place priorities, relationship management with funders, artists/practitioners, venues and local infrastructure.</p>
Function 7: Experience Infrastructure (sectoral, visitor attraction, accommodation, environmental sustainability)	<p><b>Regional body:</b> Co-ordinates research, strategy, gap analysis and long-term priority pipeline; attracts investment,</p> <p><b>Local Activity:</b> destination management, manages development pipeline, holds relationship with development partners, ensures strategic fit with wider regeneration, place-making and sustainability strategies</p>

- 2.9 In establishing each or any new function, or the expansion of any existing functions, a case will be made for the associated investment and the return on that investment.

### 3. Consultation and engagement

- 3.1 In developing the proposals set out in this paper engagement has been undertaken with the following groups and organisations: LA7 Chief Executives; LA7 Economic Directors; Newcastle Gateshead Initiative Ltd Board and Senior Leadership Team; Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) boards and visitor economy businesses in those areas, visitor economy businesses and stakeholders in local authorities not currently covered by an LVEP, Visit England, and the Department for Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport.
- 3.2 Key comments arising from the consultation include the following:

- there is support for a 'hub-and-spoke' regional partnership model, with recognition of the need to respect and work with local distinctiveness;
- the new Regional body should integrate with wider growth and regenerative priorities, requiring a clear approach in respect of roles across partners;
- strong support for regional coordination in key 'value-added' areas as represented within the core functions set out above;
- strong endorsement of the need to build a strong and inclusive regional identity building on and working with established local brands;

- the new body should be demonstrably new and regional in its governance and organisational design.
- 3.3 There is broad consensus on forming a regional tourism body “as an opportunity to transform and enhance the visitor economy across our wider area, strengthen coordination, elevate the region’s brand, and build on our collective competitiveness in domestic and international markets.” There was also clear and consistent messaging on the need for “strong collaboration between public and private stakeholders”, with clear approaches set out in terms of governance and structure, including effective methods of engagement and inclusive participation.
- 3.4 Highlighting a phased approach over the longer term, there was also recognition of the need to set out clear functions, activities and key performance indicators, with the new Regional body positioned to respond to “global uncertainties, including economic fluctuations, climate change, and shifting visitor expectations”, requiring strategic responses if the region is to “remain adaptable and resilient”.

#### **4. Current status of NGI Ltd**

- 4.1 The existing DDP, operating as a partnership of LVEPS and Loca Authorities, is operated by NGI Ltd, a company limited by guarantee. Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council are currently members of the company (which is akin to being a shareholder in a company limited by shares). There are also a number of private sector organisations who are members of NGI Ltd. The management of the company is generally conducted by the board of directors which includes representatives of both councils (as well as the Chief executive of the North East CA) and also the private sector organisations.

#### **5. Implementing the transition**

- 5.1 As set out above, the intention is that NGI Ltd is repurposed to carry out a wider regional remit than it currently does. In order to ensure that NGI Ltd is capable of taking on this wider role, it is recognised that NGI Ltd will require funding to stabilise its existing activities and provide capacity to implement the required changes. It is therefore proposed that the North East CA provide £1.55m of funding for FY 2025/26. The breakdown of this funding is set out in the financial implications section of this report. It includes £250,000 to fund external consultancy work to develop an operating model appropriate for the efficient and effective delivery of functions, and a transition plan to move to that model. This will also identify longer term investment requirements, income generation, and expenditure. It will also consider whether any changes to the existing constitutional arrangements of NGI Ltd would be appropriate and the implications of NGI Ltd taking on the wider role.
- 5.2 Whilst it is proposed that the North East CA becomes a member of NGI Ltd (and replace the existing local authority members, ie Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council), it is not intended to make any changes at the present stage to NGI’s existing governance arrangements. However, the funding agreement between the North East CA and NGI Ltd will set out the outputs which the North East CA expects to achieve in return for the funding support it is providing. Any future funding for NGI Ltd beyond that set out in this report will be dependent on the North East CA being satisfied as to the proposed

operating model for the repurposed NGI Ltd and the future financial ask of the North East CA.

**B. Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives**

1. This proposal directly addresses the strategic priorities of the Combined Authority as outlined in the North East Deeper Devolution Deal, the Local Growth Plan and the Mayoral Manifesto.
2. The Deeper Devolution Deal explicitly highlights the region's ambition to develop the cultural, creative, tourism, heritage and sport sectors on a regional basis. Establishing a Regional Destination Development Partnership and Marketing Agency would operationalise this commitment by providing a strategic, coordinated approach to sector development across the North East. It would strengthen the coherence of the regional offer, enhance national and international visibility, and improve the ability of the sector to attract visitors, investment, and talent, delivering on the aspirations set out in the Deal.
3. Building on this foundation, the interim Local Growth Plan, conceives of the visitor economy as central to the mission to develop 'a North East we are proud to call home'. This mission seeks to create an inclusive and thriving region by removing barriers to opportunity, enhance quality of life, and strengthening local pride. The establishment of the Regional body will support this mission by significantly increasing the volume of workforce and business support delivered in partnership with local partners, and by stimulating visitor demand through the cultivation of a compelling and cohesive brand narrative for the North East. In doing so, it will help realise the full potential of the visitor economy to change international perceptions of the region, strengthen sustainable and networked infrastructure, deepening civic pride and reinforcing the North East's reputation as a vibrant and welcoming place to live, work and visit.

**C. Key risks**

1. High-level risks comprise:
  - Financial: Delay in funding approval impacting on deliverability and commencement of activities in the timeframe proposed.
  - Financial: Lack of investment impacting on quality of delivery and impact delivered from across core functions, impacted by inability to secure match funding from public and private sources.
  - Legal: Inability to configure and implement a clear governance approach to support the ambitions and functions set out for the redesigned Regional body.
  - Operational: Loss of staff expertise and/or failure to recruit to key positions and functions.
  - Operational: Reduced or insufficient coordination between activities and functions at local and regional levels.
  - Operational: Mission-creep resulting in too many functions or activities being undertaken impacting on strategic objectives and related KPIs.
  - Reputational: Inadequate or poorly executed communications and advocacy impacting engagement and confidence from partners.

## D. Financial and other resources implications

1. The financial profile for establishing and implementing the proposed approach through to 31 March 2026 is as follows:

	To March 2026 (£)
<b>Income</b>	
Partnership Fees	259,272
Destination Development Partnership (DCMS)	421,188
MIPIM	182,000
North East CA	1,555,751
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,418,211</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Staff Costs	1,136,156
Overheads	153,063
Programme/Activity Costs	878,992
Strategic Transition and Organisation redesign costs	250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,418,211</b>

2. The strategic transition, comprising an organisational review and development of communication and marketing assets, will be undertaken in the current year, with a budget of £250,000 to procure an external expert to undertake work to design an operating model that supports the agreed strategy and objectives of the organisation, associated organisation design appropriate for the efficient and effective delivery of functions, and a transition plan to move to that model, in addition to support updated marketing and communications to reflect the redesigned regional body. This will also clarify longer term investment requirements, income generation, and expenditure.

	FY25/26	Total (£)
NECA Investment Fund	1,555,751	<b>1,555,751</b>
Additional Income	862,460	<b>862,460</b>
Total	2,418,211	<b>2,418,211</b>

3. Investment and funding requirements from the North East CA for future financial years will be provided in a subsequent Cabinet report in 2025, building on the above investment for the current financial year.

## E. Legal implications

1. The comments of the monitoring officer have been included in this report.

## F. Equalities Implications

1. The North East CA follows the Public Sector Equality duty and this report has due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.
2. The approach outlined provides the opportunity to build on the successful launch in September 2024 of the Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework, which sets out a shared understanding for regenerative tourism in North East England to drive

sustainable and inclusive economic growth, including generating social benefits and driving value for local people and places as well as incoming visitors to the region.

**G. Appendices**

None.

**H. Background papers**

[March 2025 Cabinet paper](#) – ‘Delivering our Ambition for the Regional Visitor Economy’, pages 534-539

**I. Contact officer(s)**

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**J. Glossary**

DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DDP	Destination Development Partnership
LVEP	Local Visitor Economy Partnership
NGI	NewcastleGateshead Initiative

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 July 2025

**Title:** Work Programme 2025/26

**Report of:** Michael Robson, Senior Governance Officer and Scrutiny Officer

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## Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider and determine its outline work programme for the year ahead.

## Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- a) consider the outline Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A and subject to any changes members wish to make, adopt the programme for the year ahead;
- b) agree that the work programme be presented to each meeting to provide members with a regular opportunity to review and revise the programme as necessary; and
- c) authorise the Chair and Vice Chair to review and revise the programme as necessary between meetings so that the Committee's may react and respond to changing circumstances.

## 1. Background Information

- 1.1 The North East CA (Combined Authority) is required to appoint an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to:
  - a) Review or scrutinise decisions made, or other actions taken, by the Cabinet or the Mayor in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the Cabinet's or the Mayor's responsibility.
  - b) Make reports or recommendations to the Cabinet or the Mayor (as appropriate) with respect to the discharge of their functions or on matters of strategic importance that affect the North East CA area or inhabitants.
  - c) Review the performance of the Cabinet and Mayor against objectives within their strategies and policies.
  - d) Facilitate the exchange of information about the work of the Cabinet and the Mayor and share information and outcomes from reviews.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Authority's Constitution, the Committee is responsible for determining its own work programme, having taken advice from relevant officers. When considering its work programme, the Committee must:
  - a) determine whether an issue is more appropriately dealt with by one of the constituent councils or by some other organisation or in some other way and will not duplicate the work of existing bodies or agencies.
  - b) take into account the resources available to support that programme and avoid establishing priorities for which the costs exceed the likely benefits.
  - c) Avoid initiating enquiries at a time, or in a manner which disrupts the effective and efficient operation of the Authority, or unnecessarily delays the conduct of its business.
- 1.3 Government Guidance states that the Committee should have a clear process by which it develops its work programme, who it will engage as part of its work programme and prioritises what it should



undertake further inquiry on. In considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the Committee should consider might include:

Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?

How could we best carry out work on this subject?

What would be the best outcome of this work?

How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?"

- 1.4 With due regard to these principles, an outline work programme has been prepared in consultation with the Chair of the Committee who in turn has sought advice from the Authority's senior officers. This is attached as Appendix A.
- 1.5 The outline programme is based on:
  - a) the Committee holding seven public formal meetings during the year;
  - b) each Cabinet Member attending the Committee during the year to present and discuss progress on specific priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and falling within their portfolios;
  - c) providing the Committee with opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny so that members may help shape and influence policy development before Cabinet makes its decisions;
  - d) those scrutiny exercises previously agreed by the Committee; and
  - e) making provision for further additional scrutiny activity which may be undertaken during informal briefings, task and finish groups and standing sub-groups.
- 1.6 Members are invited to consider and comment on the outline programme and to identify their priorities for inclusion in the work programme. In doing so Members may also wish to consider the factors set out in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 or any other selection criteria it may wish to apply to ensure that the work programme will have impact and add value.
- 1.7 It is proposed that Member's feedback from today's meeting be considered by the Chair and Vice Chair with relevant officers and further work be undertaken to develop the work programme, so that it clearly sets out scrutiny's role within the authority, reflects Members' priorities in terms of the areas it wishes to scrutinise, identifies the proposed scrutiny methods and the desired outcomes of each exercise. Further work could be undertaken to engage with Cabinet, the Audit and Standards Committee, officers, partners, and the public to identify other issues.
- 1.8 The work programme should remain robust and flexible enough so that the Committee can react to changes within the Authority and so scrutiny can be undertaken on policy development as it evolves. It is therefore proposed that the work programme be presented to each meeting to provide members with a regular opportunity to review and revise the programme as necessary and the Chair and Vice Chair be authorised to review and revise the programme between meetings so that the Committee may react and respond to changing circumstances.

## **2. Potential Impact on Objectives**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an important role to play in the delivery of the Authority's plans, policies and programmes set out in its Corporate Plan, both in terms of ensuring there is transparency and accountability in decision making and also by making a positive contribution to the formulation of future policies and strategies.

## **3. Equalities Implications**

- 3.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising out of the recommendations in this report. However the Overview and Scrutiny should be mindful of its Public Sector Equality Duty and consider whether what is before them 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. The Committee should also note that the North East CA has adopted equality objectives to reflect its different roles as an employer, a commissioner, deliverer of services and a civic leader.

## **4 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1 The development of the overview and scrutiny function within the North East CA and its work programme has been subject to discussions with the Chair of the Committee and the Authority's senior leadership team.

## **5. Appendices**

Appendix A – Proposed Work Programme 2025/26

## **6. Background Papers**

[North East CA Constitution](#)

[Scrutiny Protocol for English institutions with devolved powers - GOV.UK](#)

[Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK](#)

## **7. Contact Officers**

Michael Robson, Senior Governance Officer & Scrutiny Officer, [Michael.robson@northeast-ca.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.robson@northeast-ca.gov.uk)

## **8. Glossary**

OSC – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The North East CA has appointed an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable local councillors, on behalf of their communities, to scrutinise and challenge the Cabinet and the Mayor and to consider matters of importance to residents within the Authority's area with a view to influencing their decisions. Effective scrutiny arrangements are an essential component of local democracy, enhancing accountability and transparency of decision making.

This work programme sets out how the Committee intends to fulfil this role. The programme will be regularly reviewed and refreshed by the Committee so that it can react to changes within the Authority and so scrutiny can be undertaken on policy development as it evolves.

When deciding whether an item should be included in the work programme, the Committee should consider the following evaluative questions:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?"

Anyone who has any suggestions for inclusion in the work programme can contact:

Michael Robson

Senior Governance Officer

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## Part A – Formal Committee Meetings

15 July 2025 – Newcastle Civic Centre		
Scrutiny Exercise	Lead Officer/Member	Background Notes
<b>Annual Report</b> To receive an annual report from the Chief Executive on the key achievements in year one of the North East CA, the priorities for year two to deliver the missions set out in the Corporate Plan and how the Committee can contribute to this work.	Henry Kippin Chief Executive  All Directors	A progress report was considered by <a href="#">Cabinet on 10 June 2025</a> .
<b>The Regional Approach to Fulfil Ambitions for the North East Visitor Economy</b> To examine proposals to redesign and reconfigure NewcastleGateshead Initiative Ltd (NGI) as a new regional body for the delivery of regional visitor economy activity.	Henry Kippin Chief Executive  Phil Witcherley Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration	
<b>Work Programme</b> To approve the overview and scrutiny work programme 2025-26.	Michael Robson Scrutiny Officer	

<b>2 September 2025 – Durham County Hall</b>		
<b>North East Mayor</b> To meet with the North East Mayor	Kim McGuinness North East Mayor	
<b>Education Improvement Programme</b> To review and assess the impact of the programme on factors such as attendance, exclusions and child poverty.	Adrian Dougherty, Head of Public Services Innovation Andrew Garrad, Senior Programme Manager	Previously examined by Committee in February 2025.
<b>21 October 2025 – Gateshead Civic Centre</b>		
<b>Transport</b> To examine delivery of transport priorities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus Improvement and Reform</li> <li>• New smart payment technology</li> <li>• The extension of the Metro system</li> <li>• Expanding EV public charging network</li> </ul>	Councillor Martin Gannon Cabinet Member for Transport  Tobyn Hughes Director of Transport	<a href="#">Transport Plan</a>
<b>Integrated Settlement, Outcomes Framework and Readiness Assessment</b> To examine the latest performance information, consider preparations for an integrated settlement in 2026/27 and discuss future reporting arrangements to the Committee.	Councillor Michael Mordey Cabinet Member for Finance and Investment  Mags Scott Director of Finance and Investment	
<b>Unlocking Finance for North East Businesses to start, and to grow</b> To receive a progress report in relation to the management of the funds in 12 months time.	Rob Hamilton, Head of Strategy and innovation	Previously reported to the Committee on 5 November 2024.
<b>9 December 2025 – Venue tbc in Ashington (possibly Town Hall), Northumberland</b>		
<b>Inward Investment</b> To examine the region's approach to attracting inward investment into the North East England.	Councillor Glen Sanderson Cabinet Member for a Welcoming Home to Global Trade  Phil Witcherley Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration  Guy Currey, Head of Inward Investment	<a href="#">Home - Invest NEE</a>
<b>Northumberland Line</b> To undertake a site visit and travel on the Northumberland Line to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn more about the development and construction of rail schemes from members of the Northumberland County Council's project team talking through the key features of the scheme and lessons learnt; and</li> <li>• review and assess the benefits of the investment in the transport infrastructure</li> </ul>	Northumberland CC Project Officers	

<b>13 January 2026 – North Tyneside</b>		
<b>Offshore Wind Industries</b> To examine investment in infrastructure, innovation and skills to drive forward the North East offshore wind industry and create new jobs and careers.	Karen Clark Cabinet Member for Home to the Green Energy Revolution	
<b>Retrofit</b> To consider the long term strategy and action plan to tackle cold, damp homes and fuel poverty, and prepare for devolved funding for retrofit by 2028.	Phil Witcherley Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration	
<b>Revised Budget and Corporate Plan Proposals</b> a) To consider the revised Budget & Corporate Plan proposals; b) To make any recommendations and/or observations to the Mayor/Cabinet.	Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment  Alan Reiss Director of Operations	
<b>10 February 2026 – South Tyneside</b>		
<b>Child Poverty Reduction</b> To examine the five-year Child Poverty Action Plan setting out how the North East CA will use the collective levers and resources available to prevent and reduce child poverty.	Councillor Tracey Dixon Cabinet Member for the Home of Real Opportunity  Charlotte Carpenter Director of Skills, Inclusion and Public Sector Reform	
<b>New Deal for North East Workers</b> To review and assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the development of Connect to Work and Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programmes</li> <li>SHINE Employer Accreditation Scheme</li> <li>Regional Skills Strategy</li> <li>Design of all-age career guidance</li> </ul>		Connect to Work and Economic Inactivity Trailblazer previously considered Feb 2025.
<b>Highways Maintenance Funding</b> To review the adequacy and delivery of the Authority's approach to allocating highways maintenance funding be scheduled for February 2026.	Jonathan Bailes Head of Transport Programmes	Minute OSC22/02/25 refers
<b>31 March 2026 - Sunderland</b>		
<b>New and Affordable Homes</b> To examine delivery of regeneration and brownfield land programmes to build more quality and affordable homes and the development of a Spatial Development Strategy.	Councillor Andrew Husband Cabinet Member for A North East we are Proud to Call Home  Phil Witcherley Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration	
<b>Foundational Economy</b> The Local Growth Plan includes a section on supporting growth within the foundational economy. At their meeting on 15 April 2025 members expressed an interest in examining this aspect of the Plan in more detail as part of its future work programme.	Councillor Karen Kilgour Cabinet Member for a Home to a Growing and Vibrant Economy  Phil Witcherley Director of Economic Growth and Regeneration	John McCabe, Chair of the Business Board and/or Rhiannon Bearne NECC are willing to attend.

July 2026		
<b>North East Mayor</b> To receive an annual report from the North East Mayor on the key achievements in the past year and the priorities for the next year as set out in the Corporate Plan.	Kim McGuinness North East Mayor  Henry Kippin Chief Executive	

2026-27		
<b>Bus Reform</b> To consider the outcome of the Bus Franchising Assessment.	Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport  Lucy Keating, Head of Bus Reform	Bus Reform Options were previously considered in Oct 2024.
<b>Metro Expansion and Leamside Line</b> To consider the Outline Business Case for the Washington Metro Loop and the Strategic Outline Case for the re-opening of the southern section of the Leamside Line.	Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport	

## Part B - Informal Briefings

July to October – Remote on Teams		
To meet informally with each of the Cabinet Members to receive an overview of their portfolios.		
December 2025 – Venue tbc		
<b>Initial Budget Proposals</b> To receive a briefing from officers in relation to the Cabinet and Mayor's initial budget and Corporate Plan proposals.	Mags Scott Director of Finance and Investment  Alan Reiss Director of Operations	To prepare members to undertake the more formal scrutiny exercise in January.
tba		
<b>Devolution Bill</b> Members have asked that they be provided with regular briefings on the development and implementation of the Government's devolution policies outlined in the White Paper.	Alan Reiss Director of Operations	

## Part C – Training & Development

17 June 2025 – Remote on Teams	
For all members to be delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to support elected members with continuing to develop their skills and knowledge of scrutiny in a combined authority.	
11 July 2025 – Remote on Teams	
For new members to introduce them to the operation of the North East CA, its purpose, missions and governance arrangements.	