

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**2 September 2025**

(10.00am)

Meeting held in: Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham

### Minutes

**Present:**

- Councillor Colin Ferguson (Chair)
- Councillor Mark Burrell
- Councillor Dot Burnett
- Councillor Steve Cox
- Councillor Richard Dodd
- Councillor Barry Elliott
- Councillor Steve Fairlie
- Councillor David Francis
- Councillor Jim Montague
- Councillor Tom Redmond
- Councillor Adrian Schulman
- Councillor Dawn Welsh

#### **OSC9/9/25    Apologies for Absence and Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Nick Brown (Councillor Tom Redmond was present as substitute)  
Councillor Tracy Dodds (Councillor Mark Burrell was present as substitute)  
Councillor Linda Wright (Councillor Steve Fairlie was present as substitute)  
Councillor John McCabe  
Councillor Claire Rowntree

#### **OSC10/9/25    Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **OSC11/9/25    Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 July 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### **OSC12/9/25    North East Mayor**

The Committee met with the North East Mayor, Kim McGuinness, to discuss her vision and priorities for the region and to consider the progress made by the North East CA since its establishment and her election in May 2024.

During the discussion members of the Committee asked questions on a range of topics including:

- a) the Authority's key achievements in its first year of operation including production of a Child Poverty Action Plan and New Deal for North East Workers, securing a £1.8bn transport settlement from Government, the launch of a Nature and Carbon Marketplace, delivery of a programme of cultural events and securing investment to deliver more affordable and social housing,
- b) how job creation in the green economy could be made accessible and equitable across the region,
- c) examples of investment by the Authority in areas north of the Tyne,
- d) the timescale for the completion of roadworks on the A1 western by-pass through Gateshead,
- e) the distribution of the Authority's investment, projects and programmes across the seven constituent council areas and in areas of greatest need. A member asked for supplementary information on the range of support offered to children and families in Blyth as part of the Child Poverty Action Programme.
- f) the need for effective communications to promote the region and the work of the Authority,
- g) whether there were sufficient opportunities for young people who may not have obtained qualifications at school to return to academic studies later in life,
- h) the distinction between town centre high streets and smaller local community centres and how the High Streets Commission, established by the Authority, might lead to significant and transformational investment in town centres,
- i) the likely impact of the £1.8bn transport settlement for the region in terms of constructing and maintaining important transport infrastructure in the region, including the Tyne Bridge, Swing Bridge and the Metro extension to Washington,
- j) the opportunities for the region to develop, and benefit from, the growing green economy, particularly the offshore wind industry and associated manufacturing such as high voltage cable production for under-sea electricity transmission
- k) progress in relation to the Stack development in Bishop Auckland. Officers undertook to provide members with supplementary information on the latest position.
- l) the measures being taken to increase a sense of safety on the transport network,
- m) the role and responsibilities of the Authority and all elected members in addressing community tensions,
- n) progress in relation to the development of the Gateshead Quays, and
- o) transparency and accountability regarding the performance of the Metro. The Mayor indicated that whilst performance information was already available on the Nexus website, arrangements were being put in place to report performance to Cabinet twice per year.

The Chair thanked the Mayor for attending the meeting and answering questions from members of the Committee. The Mayor thanked the Committee for its work and commented that she valued her regular meetings with the Chair of the Committee and members' views and comments on all topics.

The Chair asked that where members had asked for supplementary information this be circulated to all members of the Committee.

### **OSC13/9/25 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The current work programme was presented to the Committee to enable members to review its contents, suggest items for inclusion and, if necessary, agree any changes.

It was reported that the Committee may establish temporary working groups to consider specific issues in more depth and to report back to the Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair had considered the possibility of appointing two separate temporary working groups to review delivery of the Child Poverty Action Plan and Programme and contribute to the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy. Members of the Committee expressed their support for the appointment of the temporary working groups. Further work would be undertaken with lead officers to formulate a detailed scoping document for each exercise setting out objectives, lines of enquiry, methodology

and timescales and to obtain a commitment from members and substitute members of the Committee to undertake the work. The scoping documents would be presented to the Committee for approval.

It was also proposed that the meeting to be held on Tuesday 9 December 2025 be re-scheduled to Monday 8 December 2025 to enable the Committee to undertake a site visit of the Northumberland Line and enable the Leader of Northumberland Council and the Cabinet Member for a Welcoming Home to Global Trade, Councillor Sanderson, to attend the meeting in Ashington Town Hall.

It was **agreed** that:

1. a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee with a proposal to appoint two temporary working groups in relation to the Child Poverty Action Programme and the Spatial Development Strategy; and
2. the meeting in December be rescheduled from Tuesday 9 December 2025 to Monday 8 December 2025 in the Town Hall, Ashington.

### **OSC14/9/25 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held on Tuesday 21 October 2025 at 10.00am in the Civic Centre, Gateshead.