North East Mayoral Strategic Authority

Single Assurance Framework

FINAL

September 2026

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Single Assurance Framework. Good governance and accountability are central to the culture and ways of working with the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA[1]). The North East MSA is committed to ensuring our decision making is supported by evidence, proportionate, transparent and defensible, and works effectively to support the delivery of our ambitions for North East England.

1.1.1 HM Treasury define an Assurance Framework as 'An objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an independent assessment on governance, risk management, and control processes for the organisation'.

1.1.2 This document is the Single Assurance Framework for the North East MSA.

1.1.3 This Single Assurance Framework sets out the decision-making and delivery arrangements in place within the North East MSA. It has been developed in line with the English Devolution Accountability Framework (Published 16 March 2023) issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

1.1.4 Specifically, the Single Assurance Framework describes:

- How the 'Seven Principles of Public Life' are embedded within the culture, processes, practices and procedures of the Combined Authority in undertaking its roles and responsibilities in relation to the use and administration of North East MSA funding. This applies to existing and new funding, and projects that place a financial liability on the Combined Authority.
- The roles and responsibilities of the North East MSA to ensure accountable decision making, including our processes around public engagement, probity, transparency, legal compliance and value for money.
- How potential investments will be appraised and funding allocated, and the delivery arrangements which the North East MSA has put in place.
- The process to monitor and evaluate projects and programmes to ensure that they achieve value for money and projected outcomes in accordance with the priorities of the Mayor and Cabinet and that risk is effectively managed.

1.1.5 **Compliance with the Best Value Duty**. The North East MSA is committed to fulfilling its statutory Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999 and in line with MHCLG's 'Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide for best value authorities' published in May 2024.

This duty requires the Authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

[1] The North East MSA is made up of seven constituent authorities which are the local authorities of Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

This Single Assurance Framework embeds Best Value principles through:

- **Transparent Decision-Making**: All investment and policy decisions are subject to clear governance processes, ensuring accountability and openness.
- **Value for Money**: Business cases and funding allocations are assessed against criteria that demonstrate economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in accordance with His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) Green Book guidelines.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Regular reviews of governance, risk management, and delivery performance are undertaken to identify and implement improvements.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: The North East MSA maintains active engagement with constituent councils, partners, and communities to ensure decisions reflect local priorities and deliver maximum public benefit.
- **Early Intervention and Risk Management**: Mechanisms are in place to identify and address risks promptly, supporting resilience and safeguarding public funds.

By embedding these principles, the North East MSA ensures that all activities and investments deliver high standards of governance, transparency, and value for money, in line with statutory requirements and government guidance.

1.1.6 The Single Assurance Framework operates alongside a number of other North East MSA governance and key policy documents:

- The Devolution Deal agreement, which sets out the terms and commitments agreed between HM Government and North East MSA (2023)
- The North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024
- The Constitution of the Mayoral Combined Authority
- The North East Deeper Devolution Deal (2024)
- Investment Framework 2024-2034 (interim)
- The North East MSA Local Growth Plan
- The North East MSA Corporate Plan 2024-2027
- The North East New Deal for North East Workers
- The North East Local Transport Plan
- The Performance Management Framework
- The North East Evaluation Strategy
- The North East MSA Risk Management Framework
- The North East MSA Medium-Term Financial Plan.

1.1.7 The North East MSA also operates in line with the Local Government Accountability Framework and the English Devolution Accountability Framework.

1.1.8 The Single Assurance Framework and supporting North East MSA business processes have also been developed in accordance with:

- MHCLG Accounting Officer System Statement
- HM Treasury Guide to Developing the Project Business Case

- HM Treasury Guide to Assuring and Appraising Projects: Green Book
- Orange Book (Strategic Risk)
- Magenta Book (Evaluation)

1.1.9 The Devolution Deal agreed between the then North East Combined Authority and HM Government provides the area with greater local control, flexibility and responsibility over funding streams and their outcomes.

1.1.10 The Single Assurance Framework provides a robust framework to enable the North East MSA to maximise the impact of the Devolution Deal. It is applicable to all funds set out within the North East Devolution Deal, Integrated Settlement and all other funding agreed with HM Government.

1.1.11 The Single Assurance Framework provides assurance to the Departmental Accounting Officer by explaining how funding granted or devolved to the North East MSA is allocated, and that there are robust systems in place to ensure resources are spent with regularity, propriety and value for money.

1.1.12 Within the North East MSA the Single Assurance Framework is a valuable tool enabling the development and delivery of successful programmes and projects. It provides comfort to decision makers that proposals for funding are evidence based, have a clear and tested rationale for intervention, and meet our strategic objectives.

1.2 Review of the Single Assurance Framework. This Single Assurance Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and in line with updated Government guidance included within the English Devolution Accountability Framework. The annual review will also ensure that the principles of the Integrated Settlement Policy are embedded within the Framework.

1.2.1 Any substantive changes that require amendments to the North East MSA's Constitution will be agreed by North East MSA Cabinet.

1.2.2 The review will examine the effectiveness of the North East MSA's assurance processes and consider any areas for improvement. Any changes to legal, funding, or other contextual changes that might require a change of assurance process will be taken into account, along with the impact of any other North East MSA key strategies, policies or processes.

1.2.3 Any changes that may result in a significant divergence from the approved North East MSA Single Assurance Framework will be discussed and agreed with MHCLG.

1.2.4 The Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) is responsible for ensuring that the North East MSA maintains effective governance, management and assurance arrangements and that the Single Assurance Framework operates as an integral part of the Authority's wider accountability framework. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that decisions taken under the Framework comply with the Constitution, statutory requirements and principles of good governance. Alongside the Section 73 Officer, these statutory officers provide assurance to decision-makers on legality, propriety, governance and financial stewardship. Ultimate accountability for the Framework and the stewardship of public funds rests with the North East MSA as Accountable Body, acting through the Mayor and Cabinet and in accordance with the Authority's Constitution.

1.3 English Devolution Accountability Framework. The Single Assurance Framework has been developed in alignment with the English Devolution Accountability Framework (EDAF) (2023). The EDAF sets out how Mayoral Combined Authorities will be scrutinised and held to account by government, local politicians and business leaders, and by residents and voters.

1.3.1 The North East MSA meets all requirements set out in the EDAF and will seek to adopt the principles set out in the Scrutiny Protocol (November 2023) and any further EDAF content.

1.3.2 It is recognised by the North East MSA that the provision of more powers and funding flexibilities through devolution brings to the fore the importance of continuing to strengthen governance and accountability arrangements, to ensure they are used appropriately to support regional and national priorities.

1.3.3 Further detail on compliance with the EDAF is set out in section 4.

2. The North East

2.1 The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority. The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) is an accountable public body originally established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

2.1.1 The North East Combined Authority (now North East MSA) was created in 2024 through the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024. The North East Combined Authority transitioned to the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026.

2.1.2 The North East MSA is its own accountable body for funding received from government through the 2023 Devolution Deal.

2.2 Regional and Local Leadership. The North East MSA Cabinet is the principal decision-maker and provides leadership.

2.2.1 The Cabinet comprises the following members

a. the elected Mayor (who chairs meetings of the Cabinet);
b. an elected member from each constituent council;
c. the Chair of the Authority's Business Board (who is non-voting); and
d. a representative of the Community and Voluntary Sector (who is non-voting)

2.2.2 Decisions will be made by the Mayor (in relation to mayoral functions) or the Mayor and Cabinet (in relation to non-mayoral functions) in accordance with the 2024 Order and the North East MSA constitution.

2.2.3 The Mayor will appoint as Deputy Mayor one of the constituent council members of Cabinet.

2.2.4 The North East MSA Cabinet provides the overall strategic direction for economic growth across North East England. Cabinet approves the Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out investment priorities, including priorities within the North East Local Growth Plan.

2.2.5 Portfolio areas have been identified within the Corporate Plan, with a member of Cabinet appointed as a Lead Portfolio holder. Portfolio lead roles are reviewed annually and confirmed at the North East MSA Annual Cabinet Meeting

2.3 The Strategic Framework. The North East MSA has a robust process in place to develop strategic objectives that align with its long-term vision and reflect priorities identified by government through devolution requirements, whilst considering constituent council and Mayoral agendas and the regional evidence base. The process for developing and aligning strategic objectives is governed through Cabinet-approved priorities, programme-level decision-making and outcomes-based monitoring, supported by officer and member oversight and independent assurance.

2.3.1 The Devolution Deal was agreed with Government in 2023. The previous North East CA has progressed to a Mayoral Strategic Authority, the North East MSA, with the functions and funding associated with that tier. This includes the transfer of a broad range of significant powers including those associated with employment and skills, transport, housing and investment. From

April 2026, the North East MSA entered into an Integrated Settlement, providing a consolidated, multi-year funding framework.

2.3.2 The creation of the North East Combined Authority in 2024 provided an Investment Fund worth £1.4bn over 30 years. This funding, alongside the Integrated Settlement, will enable delivery of an ambitious investment programme focused on inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

2.3.3 The Single Assurance Framework stages set out in Section 5 ensure that investment decisions align with the Combined Authority strategic objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

2.3.4 The strategic planning process will be evidence based, supported by a regularly updated state of the region assessment and consideration of the existing and future investment pipeline to ensure policy priorities reflect identified needs within the North East.

2.3.5 The North East Investment Framework 2024-2034. The North East Investment Framework sets out the vision and guiding principles to underpin the North East MSA's investments over the next ten years. This sits alongside the North East Local Growth Plan; a 10-year plan which sets out how the North East MSA will grow the economy, support businesses and improve living standards for people across the region.

2.3.6 The Investment Framework is based on the North East's assets and opportunities today, our shared long-term vision for the region and our approach to investment

2.3.7 The North East Devolution Deal includes the Investment Fund (£48m per annum for 30 years).

2.3.8 Integrated Settlement. In April 2026, the North East MSA entered into an Integrated Settlement, providing a consolidated, multi-year funding framework. This funding brings together existing funding streams, such as the Investment Zones Funding, Adult Skills Fund and the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), as well as increasing flexibility and unlocking innovation in achieving outcomes.

2.3.9 The North East MSA also has other sources of income, including funds awarded by Government outside of the Integrated Settlement, Enterprise Zone business rates and loan repayments. The devolution deal also allows the North East MSA to borrow against future income; this is an opportunity the North East MSA will be looking to utilise as required to support strategic impactful investments.

2.3.10 All decisions relating to the award of North East MSA investment funds, including through the Integrated Settlement, will follow the process as set out in this Single Assurance Framework. The North East MSA will make best use of the Integrated Settlement funding flexibilities by embedding decisions on reallocating funding between functional pillars, between capital and revenue, and across financial years within its quarterly financial and performance forecasting cycle and this Single Assurance Framework. Opportunities to apply flexibilities are identified at investment initiation or through in-year forecasting, informed by robust evidence including financial forecasts, delivery performance, risk and scenario analysis, and compliance with settlement limits. Strategic decisions on whether flexibilities should be used are taken by the MSA's Senior Leadership Team at key points in the quarterly cycle and through an annual review, while Senior Responsible Owners lead tactical development of proposals supported by Finance and assurance teams. All decisions are approved in line with existing delegations and Cabinet thresholds and are transparently recorded and reported to ensure accountability and value for money. The Integrated Settlement Programme Board provides six-monthly oversight of progress against agreed outcomes and indicators, reviewing performance, risks and delivery trajectories with central government and providing strategic assurance on Integrated Settlement delivery.

2.3.11 The North East MSA also has responsibility for the delivery of existing funds from organisations whose functions have been transferred into North East MSA.

2.3.12 The Investment Framework includes several requirements designed to guide investments and support achievement of the North East's ambitions:

- **Regional benefit** – investments must contribute towards our vision of a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous North East, with cross-cutting and mutually reinforcing interventions across funding opportunities.
- **Value for money** – investments must make a tangible contribution to our strategic objectives and provide good value for money in terms of outputs and outcomes.
- **Social value** – investments will meet established social value requirements, as well as articulating their relationship to the strategic outcomes set out in the Investment Strategy and Assurance Framework.
- **Additionality** – investments will be in addition to existing funding available at national, regional and local levels, avoiding displacement, deadweight, leakage and substitution; the North East MSA is particularly focused on driving investment into opportunities that create opportunities across the North East.

2.3.13 The Investment Framework is explicit in that the North East MSA's Investment Fund is not to substitute or displace existing investment. The North East MSA will also strive to invest in opportunities that further attract and unlock private sector and inward investment.

2.3.14 Through the Assurance Framework stages North East MSA investments will need to demonstrate how they support the principles set out within the Investment Framework and delivery of any relevant thematic strategies and plans.

2.4 The North East Local Transport Plan 2024 – 2040. The Local Transport Plan clearly sets out the region's transport priorities up to 2040. The accompanying Delivery Plan sets out a 'live' programme of interventions that are required to deliver the vision of the plan.

2.5 The New Deal for North East Workers. The New Deal for North East Workers brings together our skills support, job creation and good employer campaigns under one focused brand, supported by our Skills and Employment strategies. This employment and skills strategy sets out the priorities and framework for funding.

2.6 The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Corporate Plan

2.6.1 The North East MSA Corporate Plan sets out the 'golden thread' from the strategic objectives and Mayoral priorities, through its overarching strategies, organisational objectives and Business Area Plans to programme and project activity directed through annual business plan activity. It brings together many different strategies and documents, including the Mayor's Manifesto and the Cabinet Portfolio Plans, in one document.

2.6.2 The Corporate Plan sets out how the North East MSA will turn our devolution deal and strategic priorities into reality through a set of five missions:

1. Home of Real Opportunity
2. A North East we are proud to call home
3. Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all
4. Home of the green energy revolution
5. A welcoming home to global trade

2.6.3 Delivery of the corporate plan is supported by a series of business plans for each area of activity.

3. Governance, Accountability and Transparent Decision Making

3.1 Introduction. The North East MSA as a Mayoral Strategic Authority is subject to the requirements of the Local Government Accountability Framework. It adheres to this framework and is supported by its governance framework, internal and external audit arrangements, existing Assurance Framework and annual reporting of its accounts and the Annual Governance Statement.

3.1.1 The North East MSA recognises and supports the English Devolution Accountability Framework and commits to building a culture of effective scrutiny and accountability through adherence to the framework.

3.1.2 In compliance with the English Devolution Accountability Framework the North East MSA has put in place this Assurance Framework to ensure appropriate safeguards and standards are in place in the development and delivery of projects and ensure appropriate stewardship of devolved funds.

3.1.3 The North East MSA meets all the standards set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 and has a robust Member-Officer Protocol in support of its Code of Conduct arrangements as set out in Part 5 of the Constitution. All Members are expected to demonstrate the Nolan Principles of behaviour.

3.1.4 Members of the North East MSA are expected to act in the interests of the North East area as a whole when making investment decisions. A variety of controls are in place to ensure that decisions are appropriate and free from bias and/or the perception of bias.

3.2 The Mayor and Cabinet. The North East MSA is the legal and accountable body for funding devolved to it. It is responsible for a range of functions including transport, skills and economic development.

3.2.1 The North East MSA Cabinet exercises all its powers and functions in accordance with the law and its Constitution. It sets the overall strategic direction for economic growth across the North East combined area, agreeing all strategies and frameworks and agrees all delegated responsibilities to conduct business.

3.2.2 Decisions will be made by the Mayor (in relation to mayoral functions) or the Mayor and Cabinet (in relation to non-mayoral functions) in accordance with the North East MSA constitution.

3.2.3 The Constituent Council Members represent the views of their local authorities at the North East MSA Cabinet whilst also ensuring that they put the needs and opportunities of the North East region at the forefront of all decisions.

3.2.4 Elections for the position of Mayor of the North East MSA are held every 4 years.

3.2.5 The North East MSA, through its Cabinet, has set clear roles and responsibilities within its governance framework when it comes to decision making in regard to strategy and budgets. This power sits within the Cabinet and is supported through the following roles and responsibilities across its governance framework.

Table 1: Strategic Role and Body

Strategic Role	Body
Set strategic objectives, vision and Corporate Plan	Cabinet
Approve strategy, key policy and frameworks	Cabinet
Set the budgetary framework and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Cabinet
Develop strategy, framework and policy proposals	Senior Leadership Team in consultation with Advisory Boards
Implement approved strategy	Senior Responsible Officers in consultation with Advisory Boards
Operational and delivery oversight and provide operational decision making	Senior Leadership Team
Undertake strategic level scrutiny	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Hold the Mayor and Cabinet to account	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Provide oversight and assurance of standards and the Constitution	Audit and Standards Committee
Provide oversight and assurance of governance, assurance, risk and supporting frameworks	Audit and Standards Committee

3.3 Induction. New members of the North East MSA Cabinet and Committees will be supported through induction training that will cover the senior management structure and their roles, the governance structures including this Single Assurance Framework, how the North East MSA is funded, its approach to risk management, the role of the Mayor, and the aims and objectives of the Combined Authority.

3.4 Code of Conduct . The codes of conduct for both Members and Officers are set out in Part 5 of the North East MSA Constitution. The Nolan principles of Public Life provide a framework for the members and officers of North East MSA and are as follows:

Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life

1. Selflessness Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. Integrity Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. Objectivity Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. Accountability Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. Openness Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. Leadership Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

3.5 Diversity. The North East MSA Cabinet and committee membership is comprised of elected representatives appointed by the constituent authorities and this membership is outside of the control of the North East MSA. The Chair of the Business Board and representation from the voluntary and community sector is appointed by Cabinet as is the membership of any advisory boards. The North East MSA is committed to taking steps to appoint a diverse membership to its boards which reflects the community it serves.

3.6 Remuneration

3.6.1 No remuneration can currently be paid by the North East MSA to its Cabinet members other than subsistence and travel expenses and a Mayoral Allowance, which can be paid in accordance with recommendations from an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The Mayoral Allowance cannot exceed the amount of the IRP's recommendation. Following implementation of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, the scope to remunerate other members may be subject to change.

3.6.2 The Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, and the Independent Person for the Standards regime, receive an allowance agreed by Cabinet on the recommendation of the IRP. This is set out in section 6 Member Allowance Scheme of the Constitution.

3.7 Audit and Standards Committee Arrangements

3.7.1 The North East MSA has established an Audit and Standards Committee, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit) Regulations 2017 and in alignment with the English Devolution Accountability Framework and with reference to CIPFA's guidance on Audit Committees.

3.7.2 The remit and operations of the Audit and Standards Committee are set out in the Part 2.5 of the North East MSA Constitution.

3.7.3 The Audit and Standards Committee is a key component of the North East MSA's corporate governance arrangements and an important source of assurance regarding the organisation's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, reporting on financial and annual governance processes and for the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by its Members.

3.7.4 The audit functions of the Audit and Standards Committee are:

- Reviewing and scrutinising the authority's financial affairs;
- Reviewing and assessing the authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements;
- Reviewing and assessing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources have been used in discharging the authority's functions; and,

- Making reports and recommendations to the North East MSA Cabinet in relation to the above points.

3.7.5 The Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee is an independent "co-opted" member (i.e. not an elected member) appointed by the Cabinet following a recruitment process. The other members of the Audit and Standards Committee are appointed by the Constituent Authorities. The appointment of members to the Committee by the Constituent Authorities must reflect political balance across the whole of the Combined Authority's area.

3.7.6 Internal Audit. Internal audit services have been established to provide a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. It enhances the North East MSA's successful achievement of its objectives, its decision-making and oversight, its reputation and credibility with its stakeholders, and its ability to serve the public interest. The internal audit provision conforms to the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) which are intended to strengthen the ability of organisations to create, protect, and sustain value by providing independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight.

3.7.7 Audit and Assurance. Essential conditions for effective internal audit, as set out in the aforementioned Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) and the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector Guidance, are in place in the organisation. Internal Audit and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee have a remit across the whole control environment for the North East MSA. This also extends to organisations to whom the North East MSA has given grants, contracts and / or partners with, and has responsibility as lead or accountable body. As such, Internal Audit and ASC have a remit across all objectives, priorities and policies.

3.7.8 External Audit. An annual external audit of the North East MSA's statement of accounts is undertaken by a registered external local auditor under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. (https://www.icaew.com/technical/audit-and-assurance/local-public-audit-in-england).

3.7.9 External auditors will undertake the audit of North East MSA's statement of accounts and test value for money arrangements in line with the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/) in line with the requirements set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015.

3.7.10 Three Lines of Defence Model. The North East MSA applies a Three Lines of Defence model in managing risk as set out in the diagram below.

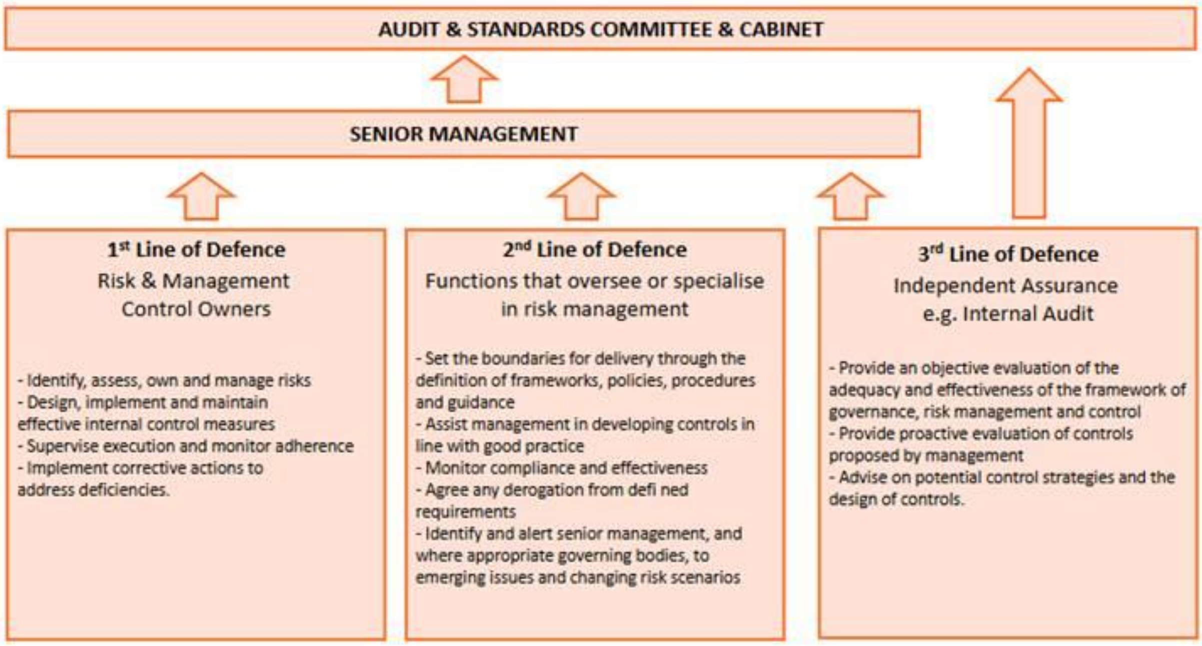

Figure 1: North East MSA Three Lines of Defence Model.

3.8 Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements. The North East MSA has established an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit) Regulations 2017 and in alignment with the English Devolution Accountability Framework.

3.8.1 The remit and operations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set out in the North East MSA Constitution. It has the power to:

- Review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the Cabinet or the Mayor of their functions; and
- Make reports or recommendations to the Mayor and/or Cabinet, with respect to the discharge of their functions.
- to make reports or recommendations to the Mayor and/or Cabinet on matters that affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of the area.

3.8.2 The terms of reference for Overview and Scrutiny Committee are available in Part 2.4 of the Constitution.

3.8.3 The members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are appointed by the Constituent Authorities.

3.8.4. The appointment of members to Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Constituent Authorities must reflect political balance across the whole of the North East MSA's area.

3.8.5 Audit and Standards Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee are key parts of the overall accountability framework of the North East MSA, ensuring compliance with the requirements of the English Devolution Accountability Framework.

3.9 Finance and Investment Board. The North East MSA has established a Finance and Investment Board that is chaired by the Portfolio Lead member for Finance and Investment. The Finance and Investment Board provides advice to the Mayor and Cabinet, or designated officer in line with agreed delegations, on investment decisions.

3.9.1 The core roles of the board are:

- In accordance with the Single Assurance Framework, consider new funding applications and project variations and make recommendations to the Mayor and/or Cabinet, or designated officer, on investment decisions.
- Play a key part in the overall assurance arrangements of the North East MSA through delivery of its functions.
- Assess investment proposals against strategic fit with the North East MSA's Investment Framework ensuring the golden thread.
- Scrutinise the technical review of applications and project appraisals to provide assurance around value for money, due diligence, transparency and equity.
- Oversight of performance and management of strategic risk at a programme level.
- As appropriate, act as a sounding board to provide strategic advice and guidance to the North East MSA on the development of external bids for additional funding, where the North East MSA will be the accountable body.

3.10 The Business Advisory Council. Cabinet is also supported by a Business Advisory Council, made up of representatives of business interests in the area.

3.10.1 The Business Advisory Council provides:

- Strategic business advice to the Mayor Strategic Authority Cabinet, Mayor, Committees and officers across all policy areas.
- Advice on the development and shaping of economic strategy and oversight of progress on implementation, on behalf of the Cabinet who decide on and own the strategy.
- Represents business across the North East MSA area.

3.10.2 In line with the policy priorities of the Devolution Deal and existing regional strategic plan, the Business Advisory Council will show:

- Ambition and Influence – ensuring the region has bold private sector leadership at the forefront of its decision making, reflecting the opportunities and ambition of the region and the challenges the Devolution Deal seeks to address.
- Inclusion and Collaboration – ensuring the whole region is appropriately represented, and that businesses of all types and sizes feel well represented, well served and able to champion the work of the North East MSA over time.
- Clarity of Purpose – ensuring the Board has a clear mandate so it can work proactively, confidently and with integrity alongside the North East MSA Mayor and Cabinet to champion the needs and potential of regional businesses and the economy.

3.10.3 The Chair of the Business Advisory Council attends Cabinet as a non-voting member.

3.10.4 The membership of the Business Advisory Council, the Chair and membership roles and responsibilities are reviewed as appropriate to ensure they reflect the requirements of the North East MSA and represent the business voice of the region.

3.10.5 The Business Advisory Council is an important forum for collaboration between the public and private sectors, working to improve the economy across the North East.

3.11 Portfolio Advisory Boards. A number of other politically led advisory boards are in place. These advisory boards play an important role in bringing together key stakeholders to support and advise the Cabinet in steering and delivering the North East's Strategies and programmes. They support policy development and delivery across the North East MSA portfolios and are as follows:

- Transport Advisory Board
- Finance and Investment Board
- Home of Real Opportunity Advisory Board
- A North East we are Proud to Call Home Advisory Board
- A Growing and Vibrant Economy Advisory Board
- A Welcoming Home to Global Trade Advisory Board
- Home to the Green Energy Revolution Advisory Board

3.11.1 The Portfolio Advisory Boards are chaired by the Portfolio Lead Member, appointed by the North East MSA's Cabinet.

3.11.2 The membership of the Portfolio Advisory Boards, as well as the North East MSA Cabinet chairing of the boards through Portfolio Lead positions, ensures a cross-thematic approach to Combined Authority strategy and activity, tackling silo considerations.

3.11.3 These Advisory Boards alongside those identified above create the following governance arrangements for the North East MSA:

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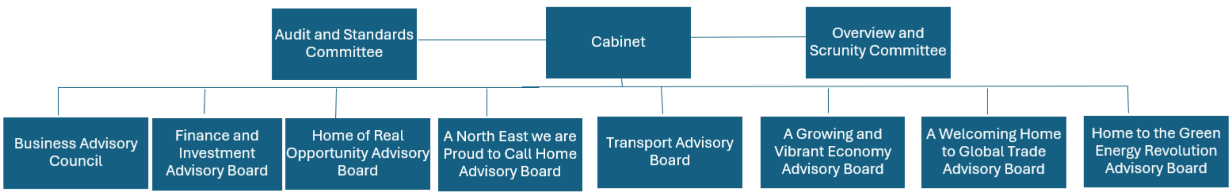

Figure 2: North East MSA Advisory Boards

3.12 Statutory Officers

3.12.1 Head of Paid Service.

It is the role of the Head of Paid Service, also referred to as the Chief Executive, to ensure that all of the North East MSA functions are properly coordinated, organising staff and appointing appropriate management.

3.12.2 At the North East MSA the Chief Executive fulfils the role of the Head of Paid Service. The Head of Paid Service discharges the functions in relation to the Combined Authority as set out in section 4, Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

3.12.3 The duties and responsibilities of the post include but are not limited to:

- The statutory responsibilities of the Head of Paid Service to manage the budgets and funding allocations available to the Combined Authority, in partnership with the S73 officer.
- Leading the Corporate Management team to deliver the strategic direction for the Combined Authority as outlined by the Mayor and Cabinet.
- Coordinating strategy development and delivery ensuring a joined-up partnership approach to deliver the aspirations of the North East MSA.
- Championing the delivery of the strategic priorities of the North East MSA and its Corporate Plan and put in place the resources necessary to achieve the efficient and effective implementation of the North East MSA's programmes and policies across all services and the effective deployment of the authority's resources to those ends.
- Advising the North East MSA Mayor and Cabinet on all matters of general policy and matters upon which their advice is necessary, with the right attendance at all Cabinet and other meetings as appropriate.
- Advising the elected Mayor on the delivery of strategic priorities.
- Representing the North East MSA at local, regional and national level in partnership with the Mayor.
- Acting on advice given by the Monitoring Officer on any situations that could put the North East MSA in jeopardy of unlawfulness or maladministration.
- Exercise urgency powers to make decisions in emergency situations.

3.12.4 The Head of Paid Service is also responsible for securing and maintaining effective arrangements for the delivery of the Integrated Settlement. This includes agreeing outcomes and priorities with central government, overseeing local delivery and value for money, ensuring that appropriate governance, assurance and performance arrangements are in place, and maintaining the Authority's single assurance framework, internal control processes, and organisational capability and capacity in line with Integrated Settlement policy requirements.

3.12.5 Section 73 Officer.

The North East MSA has appointed a statutory Chief Finance Officer under section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985, to administer the financial affairs of the North East MSA. At the North East MSA, the Director of Finance and Investment fulfils the role of the Section 73 Officer.

3.12.6 The Section 73 Officer is responsible for providing the final sign off for funding decisions.

3.12.7 The responsibilities of the Director of Finance and Investment reflect those documented in the CIPFA published document 'the roles of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government' which details 5 key principles:

1. The CFO is a key member of the leadership team, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the authority's Policy aims sustainably and in the public interest.

2. The CFO must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer-term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the authority's overall financial strategy.
3. The CFO must lead the promotion and delivery of the whole authority of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently and effectively. This includes overall responsibility for ensuring value for money.
4. The CFO must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose.
5. The CFO must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

3.12.8 The Director of Finance and Investment is a member of the North East MSA Senior Leadership Team and has oversight and an ability to influence all major decisions of the Combined Authority.

3.12.9 The Director of Finance and Investment has ensured that the North East MSA has robust systems of internal controls and appropriate separation of duties to ensure the legality and probity of financial transactions.

3.12.10 These processes are set out in the North East MSA's Financial Regulations (Part 4 of the Constitution) and the Contract Standing Order. Other policies such as the Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy (Part 5.4) are also included in the Constitution and published on North East MSA's website.

3.12.11 Monitoring Officer.

A statutory Monitoring Officer has been appointed and discharges the functions in relation to the North East MSA as set out in section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Assistant Director Legal and Governance is the statutory Monitoring Officer and a member of the North East MSA Senior Leadership Team.

3.12.12 The responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer regarding the Single Assurance Framework include:

- Maintaining an up-to date version of the Constitution and ensuring that it is widely available for consultation by members, staff and the public.
- Ensuring lawfulness and fairness of decision making
- Supporting the Audit and Standards Committee and contributing to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct.

3.12.13 The Monitoring Officer and their legal team review all reports to ensure legal implications are correctly identified before they are presented to the Cabinet, its Committees and constituted boards.

3.13 Processes and Procedures

3.13.1 Whistleblowing. The North East MSA has a Whistleblowing Policy in place to enable and encourage employees to raise concerns about possible wrong doing by the North East MSA and/or contractors without fear of reprisal or detriment.

All staff employed by the North East MSA are made aware of the whistleblowing policy which is set out in Section 5.5 of the Constitution.

3.13.2 Complaints Process. A procedure is in place to ensure that any complaints relating to the arrangements, processes or decision making associated with a project is dealt with fairly and effectively. The Combined Authority is open to hearing from anyone who wishes to contact it and the Corporate Complaints Procedure sets out the matters that will and will not be dealt with under the complaints process. The North East MSA's Code of Conduct for Members also includes a process for dealing with complaints of alleged breaches of the Code by Members.

3.13.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The North East MSA has set out its Equalities Objectives 2025-2028 which apply to all employees and anyone who works with the Combined Authority. These cover the work and outputs of the Cabinet, Committees, Advisory Boards, and groups, and are updated on an annual basis. The objectives will drive the North East MSA's efforts to create a more inclusive, fair, and forward-thinking North East, one where opportunity is open to all and where we can all take pride in calling the North East home.

The equality objectives have been designed to reflect the role the North East MSA plays as:

- an employer
- a commissioner, and
- a convener.

The North East MSA is fully committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty and to fulfilling its statutory duties towards its employees and residents with regards to equality and inclusion. Before making and implementing decisions, policies, plans, practices and procedures, the North East MSA will show due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Where decisions have the potential to impact people differently based on protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

3.13.4 Gifts and Hospitality. The Code of Conduct for Members and the Code of Conduct for Officers regulate the acceptance of gifts and hospitality by members and officers respectively.

3.13.5 Registration and Declaration of Interests. The North East MSA's Codes of Conduct for Members and for Officers set out clear procedures for dealing with any conflicts of interest which may arise when carrying out the business of the North East MSA.

All Members and Officers are required to declare interests they are aware of, and this is recorded centrally on a register in the North East MSA. This information is reviewed and updated annually. In addition, Constituent Authority members will have completed their Local Authority's Register of Interest. All North East MSA officers are required to declare any interests they have in contracts.

The codes of conduct and protocols can be found in Part 5 of the Constitution.

3.13.6 Freedom of Information. As a public body, the Combined Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Data Protection Act 2018, which includes the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The North East MSA will hold records and will deal with statutory information requests. Applicants are made aware of their right to access information through the North East MSA, which will deal with this request in accordance with the relevant legislation.

As described below the North East MSA aims to publish as much information as possible, reducing the need for Freedom of Information requests.

Full details of the North East MSA's Freedom of Information requests procedures can be found on the North East MSA Website.

3.13.7 Transparency Code. The North East MSA has in place robust transparency and engagement arrangements. The Constitution sets out how agendas, minutes and papers will be made available to the public and when.

The North East MSA will ensure it adheres to the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), building on existing good practice from across our constituent authorities. Information is published on the Authority's website. The North East MSA's Publication Scheme commits the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The scheme has been prepared using the guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

3.13.8 Treatment of Risk. The North East MSA recognises that effective risk management is an integral part of good corporate governance. A key role of the Assurance Framework is to ensure that risk is identified, monitored and managed appropriately, in accordance with HM Treasury Orange Book. This is both at a Strategic level (risks facing the organisation) and at a programme and project level.

A Risk Management Framework has been developed to provide visibility of risk at strategic, operational and programme levels to ensure consistency in approach across the North East MSA in how risks are identified, managed, monitored and escalated.

The North East MSA's Risk Management processes are regularly reviewed to ensure they still meet the Authority's needs as it grows and develops, and also to align to any updated guidance or identified best practice.

The North East MSA's Risk Management Framework is agreed by the Mayor and Cabinet, with Audit and Standards Committee monitoring the risks on a quarterly basis.

The SROs in the business areas have responsibility for the identification and management of programme and project level risks, supported by the Risk Team based within the Finance and Investment Directorate who have a role in the collation and reporting of risk at all levels. The Senior Leadership Team (which includes the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer review programme and corporate risks regularly, advising the Finance and Investment Board and Cabinet accordingly. Audit and Standards Committee receive regular reports in respect of Strategic Risks in their advisory role to Cabinet.

At the project level, all projects outline in detail any identified risks as part of the full business case development and due diligence processes. Grant funding agreements require funding recipients to maintain an ongoing risk register and submit updated risk assessments including mitigations on a quarterly basis as part of the monitoring and reporting process.

3.13.9 Publishing Meeting Minutes. The schedule of meetings for the calendar year is agreed at the Annual Meeting and published on the North East MSA website.

The North East MSA's Cabinet, Audit and Standards Committee, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings take place in public (although the public may be excluded for confidential matters). Cabinet meetings are livestreamed on the internet.

Agendas for Cabinet and committee meetings are published on the North East MSA's website five clear working days in advance of the meeting.

Where agendas contain commercially sensitive information or are otherwise subject to one of the exemptions under the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A, they are categorised as an exempt item and not published. Advice will be provided by the Monitoring Officer on whether the item should be classified as exempt, but Members have to make a decision to go into a private session unless an item has been declared confidential by the Government in which case it must be dealt with in private.

Decisions of meetings are published within three working days, and draft minutes of the meeting are published as soon as possible after meetings on the North East MSA's website. Minutes of the meeting are formally agreed at the next meeting of the Cabinet or the committee and published as part of the Agenda pack.

3.13.10 Publishing Decisions. In the interests of increasing transparency and accountability, the North East MSA has committed to publish a Forward Plan of key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet at least 28 days before the decision is made, and up to 6 months in advance, to enable members of the public the opportunity to view them. Officer key decisions are also published on the Forward Plan.

All decisions are published in accordance with the transparency arrangements set out in the Constitution.

The North East MSA ensures compliance with Government guidelines on publication.

3.13.11 Corporate Policies. Other corporate policies relating to Modern Slavery, Environmental, Social Value and Privacy will be published on the North East MSA Website.

4. English Devolution Accountability Framework

4.1 Introduction. The Single Assurance Framework must demonstrate robust assurance, project appraisal and value for money processes that satisfy the requirements set out in the English Devolution Accountability Framework.

4.1.1 The North East MSA is the accountable body for funding received from Government through devolution.

4.1.2 The Combined Authority is a local authority for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972 (and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009) and is the Accountable Body for public expenditure that supports the North East MSA's Vision and Corporate Plan, facilitating collective decision making between constituent council partners.

4.1.3 As set out in the Constitution, the North East MSA has appointed statutory officers and the Section 73 Officer will ensure that resources are used legally and appropriately, and that they will be subject to the usual checks and balances by making sure there is a sound system in place for financial management. The Monitoring Officer will ensure that all legal responsibilities are adhered to by the North East MSA.

4.1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrangements for the North East MSA are set out in Section 2.4 of the North East MSA Constitution. The Audit and Standards Committee arrangements are set out in Section 2.5 of the North East MSA Constitution.

4.1.5 Section 3 describes the governance framework and details of accountability and decision-making arrangements that enable and support the effective engagement of constituent authorities, local partners and the public to help inform key decisions, budget proposals and strategy development.

4.1.6 Section 3 also sets out the roles and responsibilities within decision making at the North East MSA.

4.1.7 The Single Assurance Framework is a significant part of the overall Accountability Framework for the North East MSA.

4.2 Ensuring Value for Money. The North East MSA has appropriate arrangements in place to independently verify its accounts through external audit to ensure it is compliant the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. These arrangements are supported through the Audit and Standards Committee which reviews and scrutinises the North East MSA financial affairs, ensures appropriate corporate governance and risk management, and assesses whether it is delivering value for money.

4.2.1 The Single Assurance Framework sets the framework for the North East MSA in making value for money judgements of potential investments. All business cases seeking approval are assessed through the Single Assurance Framework process and are evaluated against HM Treasury's 5-case business model set out in HM Treasury's Green Book. This ensures that business cases receive robust scrutiny, ahead of investment or commercial decisions being made.

4.2.3 Arrangements regarding Value for Money for Department of Transport projects and Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) compliance are set out in section 8.

4.3 Enabling the Business Voice. The North East MSA has a Business Advisory Council that is integrated into its governance arrangements.

4.3.1 The North East MSA recognises the importance and added value that engaging with a wide range of partners and stakeholders brings. A variety of engagement mechanisms are used to realise the opportunity, capturing a broad set of views and perspectives from across all sectors, enabling groups and individuals to influence strategy and policy development as well as active engagement in the delivery of our projects and programmes.

4.4 Local Scrutiny and Checks and Balances. The North East MSA meets all the requirements set out in chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 and has in place a robust Code of Conduct.

4.4.1 The North East MSA meets the requirements set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and is committed to continuing to review and improve our approach, consulting with other MSAs to identify best practice.

4.4.2 In addition to a comprehensive induction, ongoing training and development is provided to the Audit and Standards Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These arrangements are set out in section 3.

4.4.3 The North East MSA approach to Overview and Scrutiny build upon the statutory guidance, the Scrutiny Protocol and guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, and best practice from other MCAs.

4.5 Accountability to Government. This Single Assurance Framework sets out the North East MSA approach to ensuring appropriate safeguards and standards are in place in the development and delivery of programmes and projects, and to ensure appropriate stewardship of devolved funding.

4.6 Accountability to the Public. The Governance Framework of the North East MSA is designed with clear roles and responsibilities to enable transparency and understanding of the Cabinet, Advisory Board and Committee activity. Multiple levels of accountability exist to enable and support the strategic objectives setting, performance, decision-making accountability, and operational delivery and oversight.

4.6.1 Section 3 sets out details on governance, accountability and decision-making, with further detail in the Constitution.

4.6.2 The North East MSA will actively engage with the local press and through social media to promote its activity, meetings of the Cabinet and Committees and opportunities for public involvement.

4.6.3. The Mayor provides democratic leadership for the North East MSA and engages with residents, stakeholders and partner organisations through formal consultation exercises, public engagement events, media channels, stakeholder forums and partnership networks. The public are invited to put questions to the Mayor through a range of engagement opportunities, including monthly Mayor Meets public events and regular radio phone-in sessions, which provide residents with a direct opportunity to raise local and regional issues, ask questions and receive responses from the Mayor. The Mayor is directly accountable to the electorate and is subject to established governance, transparency and scrutiny arrangements which support effective public accountability and engagement.

4.7 Commitment to continual enhancement of Accountability Arrangements. The North East MSA will continue to review and set out how it will further strengthen its accountability arrangements for future devolved funding and powers, engaging directly with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

5. Single Assurance Framework (Lifecycle Process)

5.1 Introduction. The Single Assurance Framework (SAF) sets out the framework to be applied throughout the lifecycle of programmes and projects. It sets out the systems, processes and protocols designed to provide the North East MSA with a consistent approach for appraisal, assurance, risk management, performance, monitoring and evaluation.

5.1.2 The SAF sets out the key processes for ensuring accountability, probity, transparency and legal compliance, also ensuring value for money is achieved across its investments. It provides assurance to decision-makers and Government that all the North East MSA investment proposals meet the expected standards.

5.1.3 The SAF will be applied across the lifecycle of all projects and programmes that will incur a financial liability on the North East MSA.

5.1.4 The SAF is designed to be used as guidance to project developers and sponsors to understand the processes associated with the application and the route to approval of all external funding opportunities.

5.1.5 Where financial liability is placed onto the North East MSA, the SAF is applicable throughout all stages of the project or programme lifecycle: initiation, development, approvals, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

5.1.6 The SAF provides consistency of approach for assurance, independent appraisal, and informed decision making across all funding pots. Furthermore, it allows proportionality to be applied for the development of business cases through defined development routes. The SAF does not apply to projects or programmes that are defined as corporate, continuous improvement or Business as Usual (BAU) activity.

5.1.7 The SAF works to the following definition of programmes and projects:

A SAF Programme/Project – Projects and Programmes which follow the SAF are focused on achieving positive outcomes for the local community. They are typically funded by external sources such as devolution deals and bid applications/grant awards from Central Government, for example the Investment programme, where the North East MSA is the accountable body. The SAF is applied flexibly and proportionately, dependent on the level of risk associated with the Programme/Project. The SAF enables an independent assessment and appraisal of an investment opportunity. Programmes and Projects following the SAF route should ensure a strong strategic fit to the Corporate Plan.

The SAF does not apply to Corporate Projects

A Corporate Project – A Corporate project is created to address an internal business need, benefitting the organisation, for example a change to the operating systems of an organisation. Risk management should be considered with risks reviewed as part of the activity. Once a corporate project is complete it may become Business as Usual (BAU). Corporate projects will be supported by specialists across the North East MSA including Finance, Project Management, Human resources and Legal as appropriate, to strengthen the case for funding and, the identified benefits and support effective delivery.

5.1.8 The SAF has been developed to a set of design principles, these are:

- Provide financial and governance protections for the stewardship of public funds.
- Ability to deliver at pace with agile processes that can be responsive to opportunities.
- Provide clarity to sponsors, partners and applicants.
- Provide assurance to support decision-makers.
- Improve standards of project/ programme initiation, development and approval.
- Effectively manage programmes and projects.
- Drive golden thread (strategic fit) across all aspects of process.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities.
- Manage political and reputational risk.
- Support securing additional funding for the region.
- Ensure robust scrutiny, ahead of investment decisions being made.

5.1.9 The SAF sets out the rising scale of assurance that is required against an increasing scale of value in business case approvals, alongside appropriate processes for risk profiling of a project, guidance on business case development and the documentation required for approval consideration.

5.1.10 Out of Business area second line defence assurance and appraisal is incorporated into the SAF alongside guidance, templates and criteria to ensure a consistency of approach, development and consideration through the lifecycle.

5.1.11 The North East MSA ensures that all funding decisions are based on impartial expert advice and are evidence based.

5.1.12 This section details the SAF processes and procedures that are in place to ensure robust decision-making on investments with funds devolved to the North East MSA.

5.2 Value for Money. As an investor of public funds, the North East MSA has a responsibility to ensure that its decisions deliver best value for the taxpayer, and therefore all investment opportunities and Business Cases must include an assessment of Value for Money.

5.2.1 The SAF has been developed in line with HMT's Green Book guidelines, which require project managers to build in Value for Money processes throughout the development and approval stages. In addition, the North East MSA requires all Business Cases be developed in line with HMT's Five Case Model.

5.2.2 The range of toolkits (HMT Green Book, DfT Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG), MHCLG Appraisal Guidance and so on) are used to demonstrate the economic, social and environmental benefits and cost over an appropriate appraisal period in order to assess the Value for Money of a Programme or project.

5.2.3 The delivery, and costs, of outputs must be quantified within all applications for funding. Assessing Value for Money will be done in accordance with Government guidance.

5.2.4 The use of options consideration for Value for Money is key, to assist a do minimum option will always be included in business cases to provide an essential benchmark that can help reveal the real value of additional changes.

5.2.5 The Senior Responsible Officer responsible for programme/project development will review and document that they are satisfied with the Value for Money assessment within a business case. This element will also be scrutinised by the Section 73 Officer as part of the SAF process prior to final approval of funding and award of contract.

5.2.6 The SAF supports the North East MSA in making judgements about the Value for Money of potential investments. All business cases seeking approval are assessed through the SAF process and evaluated against HMT's 5-case business model highlighted within the Green Book (2022).

5.2.7 For transport schemes, the North East MSA will ensure that modelling and appraisal is sufficiently robust and fit for purpose for the scheme under consideration, and that modelling and appraisal meets the guidance set out in DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG); this is further set out in section 8.

5.3 Single Assurance Framework Entry points. There are two entry points into the SAF through:

- The Corporate Plan (and supporting Medium-Term Financial Plan)
- In-Year Proposals. This includes new funding opportunities (further devolved funding) and new policy priorities enabling the North East MSA to respond to economic opportunities and/or shocks at a national or local level.

5.3.1 The development of concepts, and external funding opportunities are Business Area led with support provided from the North East MSA Programme Assurance Team in terms of coordination, providing advice and guidance. Collaboration and co-design will play an intrinsic role in the North East MSA's approach, working closely with delivery partners and stakeholders throughout the development process.

5.3.2 **The Corporate Plan.** The North East MSA Corporate Plan is developed through an extensive strategic planning process; the robust processes that are in place to develop the strategic objectives (that align with the long-term vision) are referenced in section 2.

5.3.3 The Corporate Plan sets out the 'golden thread' from the strategic objectives and Mayoral priorities, through its overarching strategies, organisational objectives and Business Area Plans to programme and project activity directed through annual business plan activity.

5.3.4 The purpose of the Corporate Plan is to:

- Articulate the North East MSA's priorities so that partners and stakeholders understand the key areas of focus.
- Provide strategic context for the North East MSA as an organisation so its plans and operational activity are aligned to the overall vision and priorities agreed by its Cabinet.
- Enable oversight and review of performance against priorities. To support this the Corporate Plan seeks to demonstrate how deliverables contribute towards delivering the overarching North East MSA policy aims.

5.3.5 There may be instances where items drawn down from the Corporate Plan for business case development require the approach of issuing a call/ expression of interest prior to Business Case development.

5.3.6 **New Funding Opportunities**. It is possible in-year that there may be further unexpected funding opportunities that need to be pursued. This could be a result of new or changes to Government initiatives and priorities or where there is a need to address emerging priorities. Initially these opportunities will be discussed by the Senior Leadership Team and involve engagement with the Mayor and Cabinet.

5.3.7 Where such opportunities arise an Initiation Case Paper will be produced in line with phase 1 of the SAF. As necessary and appropriate, processes will be expedited to enable funding to be accessed quickly.

5.3.8 **In-Year Proposals.** Constituent Authorities, partners and the North East MSA can submit in-year concept proposals that are not included within the Corporate Plan. These in-year proposals will require the completion of an Initiation Case Paper and appropriate political endorsement in alignment with the requirements set out in Phase 1 of the SAF.

5.3.9 In certain circumstances, the North East MSA may ask applicants to complete an Expression of Interest or issue an Open Call for proposals as to how to deliver a particular objective, prior to completion of a business case.

5.3.10 **Open Calls/ Expressions of Interest**. The purpose of an Open Call proposal/ Expression of Interest would be to confirm that the proposal is consistent with the strategic context set out in the North East MSA Vision and the strategic objectives within the Corporate Plan, outline the rationale for intervention, set out the primary benefits associated with the intervention and identify a proposed preferred option with costs based on an appraisal of the available options. All open calls are developed in line with the North East MSA's internal Assurance Principles; they are required to be undertaken in a manner which ensures an open and transparent process. A standard open call template document is used to meet the specific standards required by the North East MSA and to enable a consistent approach in the development of the call documentation. A proportionate Technical Appraisal, led by the Programme Assurance Team, is undertaken prior to the award of funding for all successful bids. Appraisals are completed ahead of panel consideration to inform decision-making. Where application volumes are high, appraisals may be undertaken on a shortlist of the highest-scoring bids following an initial assessment, with shortlisted projects progressing to decision in line with the Single Assurance Framework.

5.3.11 **Business Case Development Fund**. The North East MSA has a Business Case Development Fund for the development of early-stage projects, or the additional capacity required to access funding to deliver activity which has potential to contribute towards the North East MSA's strategic objectives. Proposals seeking support from the Business Case Development Fund are invited to complete a bespoke application form.

The Diagram below provides an overview of the Single Assurance Framework Process:

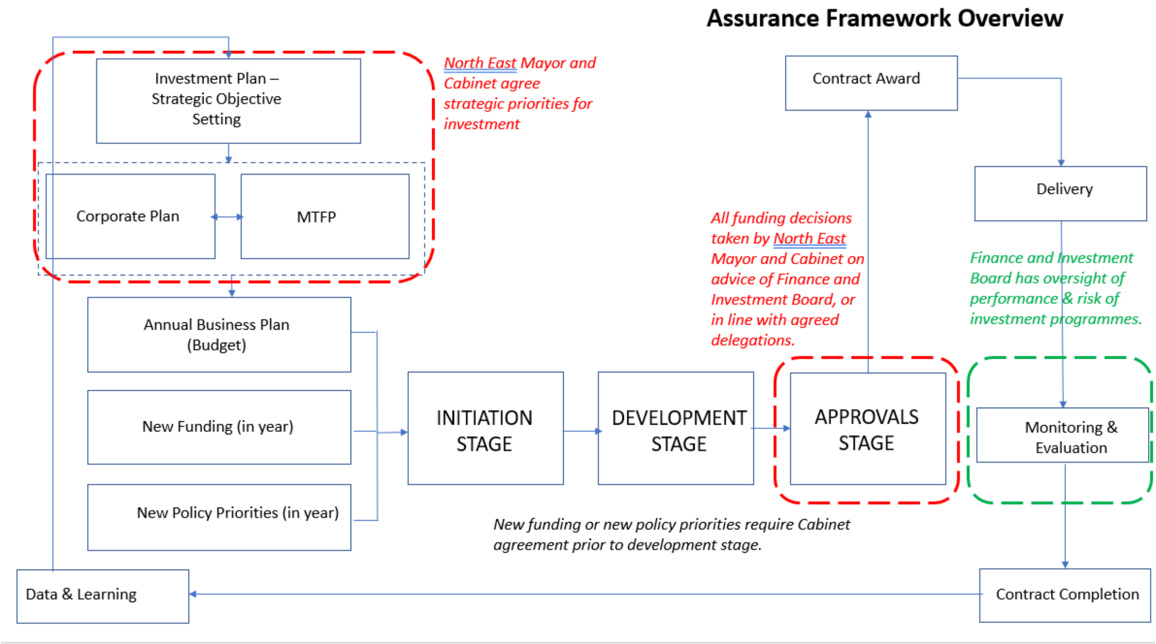

Figure 3: Overview of the Single Assurance Framework Process

5.4 Phase 1: Concept to Pipeline Approval (Initiation Phase)

5.4.1 Purpose. The purpose of the Initiation Phase is to provide early assurance that investment proposals meet strategic objectives, have sufficient resources and appear to meet the necessary requirements to deliver compliantly prior to the development of a full business case.

5.4.2 The initiation stage provides the opportunity for early engagement across the North East MSA, providing the appropriate support and guidance to ensure high-quality project/programme development in line with agreed standards.

5.4.3 All investment proposals are required to complete an Initiation Case Paper which will provide a summary of the proposed investment. The content and approach to engagement will be proportionate to the scale of investment.

5.4.4 The Initiation Case Paper requires key information including a brief description of the proposal, the need for intervention/ case for change, the outputs (including when, how and who will deliver them), and the associated benefits. It also includes strategic fit and initial equalities, finance and risk detail. The proposed approach to evaluation should also be considered at this stage and will form the project/programme logic model.

5.4.5 The Initiation Case Paper provides a consistent entry point into the Single Assurance Framework that provides the required information to enable early assessment, prioritisation and consideration of the investment proposal.

5.4.6 The process for initiation ensures early engagement with the core areas of the North East MSA to enable subject matter expert input from an early stage from the relevant North East MSA business areas, Legal and Finance.

5.4.7 This stage provides preliminary assurance that proposals are in line with strategic priorities, legally compliant, and as to the availability of resources and budget. It also identifies the most appropriate route for the approval of funding.

5.4.8 Strategic Investments will be considered by the Senior Leadership Team, including representation from Finance and Legal, prior to being accepted onto the Investment Pipeline.

5.4.9 Programmes or projects that have gone through the strategic planning process and have been identified for inclusion within the Corporate Plan are then added to the Investment Pipeline, they can be drawn down for business case development in line with the annual business plans and funding availability.

5.4.10 Projects and programmes coming forward of a lower value (below £500,000) and included within the Corporate Plan, will not be required to go to the Senior Leadership Team but will be reviewed by the SRO for the business area, finance and legal prior to inclusion on the Investment Pipeline and progression to phase 2: Development.

5.4.11 For project or programme proposals not included within the Corporate Plan, they will be considered by the Senior Leadership Team within the context of Corporate Priorities and the Medium-Term Financial Plan in order to make recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet endorsement will be required prior to acceptance onto the Investment Pipeline and progression to phase 2: Development.

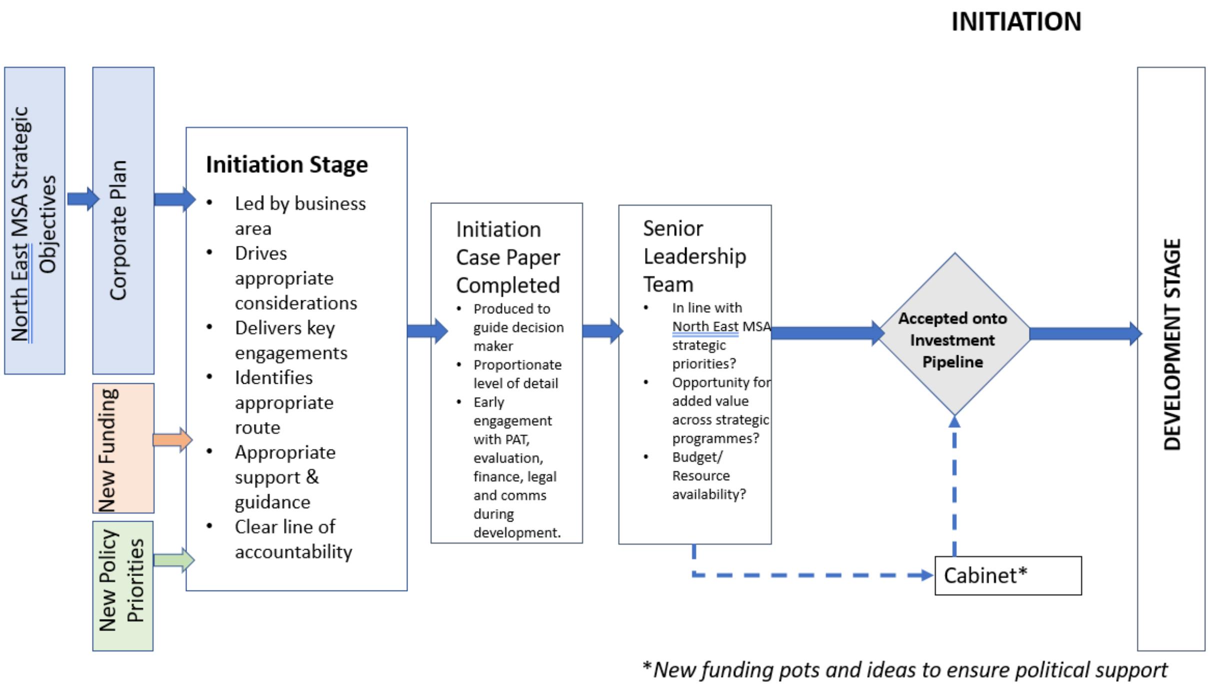

Figure 4: Initiation Process

5.4.12 The North East MSA records all project activity where projects are in a stage of development and delivery. The pipeline will set out details of the project along with the stage it is at, and whether external funding is bid for or offered by sponsoring Government department.

5.4.13 The Senior Leadership Team will receive a monthly report on the Investment Pipeline for review and to hold the relevant SRO to account for progress. This also provides opportunity for the Senior Leadership Team to advise on who the lead SRO is where business case development crosses several Business Areas**.**

5.5 Phase 2: Business Case Development

5.5.1 Purpose. The purpose of the business case development phase is to produce a comprehensive case for funding in line with HMT Green Book principles. The business case will be subject to a technical appraisal undertaken from outside the Business Area, to provide assurance to decision makers that investment proposals meet the agreed standards and compliance requirements, in line with recognised best practice.

5.5.2 This stage needs to be repeated whenever a business case is developed and requires approval. Support and guidance through this stage is provided by the Programme Assurance Team whose expertise includes assurance and appraisal.

5.5.3 The business case is developed (or managed where development is led outside the North East MSA) by the sponsoring Business Area, ensuring that its content meets the required standard defined within the North East MSA guidance in addition to meeting the requirements of the SAF and HMT's five case model Green Book compliance. It should also seek alignment to Policy Aims and Objectives, whilst meeting any funding requirements and/or milestone dates/requirements.

5.5.4 Where delivery partners are external to the North East MSA, they will be supported through the process by the lead Business Area within the North East MSA. The delivery partner will use the appropriate business case guidance and templates provided, subject matter experts and technical appraisers.

5.5.5 The subject matter experts to be engaged in the development stage include the Programme Assurance Team for assurance and appraisal, the Evaluation Team, Finance, Legal and Procurement who should all input into the business case, and its review prior to approval.

5.5.6 The lead Business Area is responsible for ensuring they or any partner meet deadlines, engage the appropriate subject matter experts and technical appraisers, and adhere to required formats when developing a business case.

5.5.7 The Programme Assurance Team can provide advice on the requirements of the SAF if needed, at the start of and during the Business Case development stage. Sponsors must ensure their business case is developed and is aligned with any external development and assurance requirements (driven by Government Departments), with the aim to eliminate duplication of effort.

5.5.8 Where projects are funded through multiple streams, the proportionate SAF approach will be agreed by the appropriate delegated authority and implemented.

5.5.9 Early engagement with the Programme Assurance Team will ensure the required assurance and appraisal is undertaken and ensure that any recommendations can be addressed, and business cases updated within the timescale agreed.

5.5.10 Business Cases. The business case templates and criteria are designed to ensure necessary compliance, drive standards of project development and better enable delivery. They are important as projects will only deliver intended benefits if they have been developed appropriately, proportionately and to a high standard with appropriate scoping, planning and costs justified from the outset. These business cases will require detailed evidence on the options, designs, delivery and outcomes of the project, along with strategic fit and value for money information to enable informed decision making. The business case will include a developed logic model and evaluation plan to support effective evaluation.

5.5.11 As stated above, business cases will set out the options available. This will be done in line with Green Book principles and include appraisal of shortlisted options including a do minimum option.

5.5.12 The do minimum option achieves the proposal's objectives and goes no further in generating additional benefits. It may or may not be the option eventually chosen, but it is essential because it provides an important benchmark that can reveal the real value of additional changes.

5.5.13 Business case development expertise can be provided by the Programme Assurance Team and/or procured externally to ensure HMTs five case model is adhered to. The North East MSA's Evaluation Team also supports the development of the evaluation section of the business case, including advising on and shaping proportionate evaluation plans as part of this process. All business cases must be prepared using the North East MSA templates and according to the following elements:

Table 2: Business Case Five-Case Model

Five Case Model	Description
Strategic Case	The strategic case sets out the rationale for the proposal; it makes a compelling case for change at a strategic level. It should set out the background to the proposal and explain how the project provides fit with the North East MSA's strategic objectives, as well as any relevant local and/or national strategic priorities.
Economic Case	The economic case is the essential core of the business case and should be prepared according to HMT's Green Book guidance. This section of the business case assesses the economic costs and benefits of the proposal to society as a whole, and spans the entire period covered by the proposal.
Commercial Case	The commercial case is concerned with issues of commercial feasibility and sets out to answer the question "can the proposed solution be effectively delivered through a workable commercial deal or deals?". The first question therefore is what procurement does the proposal require, is it crucial to delivery, and what is the procurement strategy?

Financial Case	The financial case is concerned with issues of affordability, and sources of budget funding. It covers the lifespan of the scheme and all attributable costs. The case needs to demonstrate that funding has been secured and that it falls within appropriate spending and settlement limits.
Management Case	The management case is concerned with the deliverability of the proposal and is sometimes referred to as a programme management or project management case. It confirms that the capacity is available and proportionate to the delivery requirements. The management case will also reflect the approach to evaluation. It must clearly set out management responsibilities and governance and reporting arrangements. If it does not, then the business case is not yet complete. The Senior Responsible Officer should be identified.

5.5.14 The Initiation Case Paper is the central document from which the business case is built, each case is expanded throughout the development process to include further detail proportional to the scale of the investment. As appropriate, information to reflect key criteria for specific funding is also included.

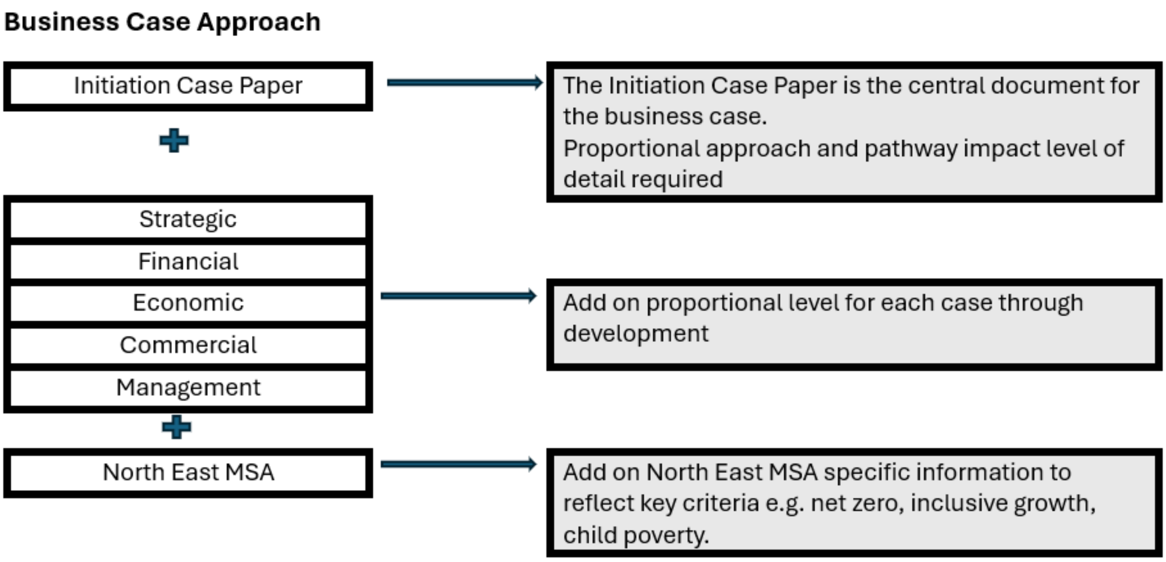

Figure 5: Business Case Approach

5.5.15 Technical appraisal. All business cases will be subject to a technical appraisal against the five cases and additional criteria (as required). Objective appraisals will be undertaken outside of the business area leading on the development of the investment proposal ensuring a clear separation of duty. In some instances, for example particularly high value, contentious or novel investments, appraisals may be undertaken by external technical experts appointed by the North East MSA.

Where appropriate for the scale of funding and type of activity, the appraisal will assess the Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR)). This assessment will be provided to support the decision-maker. In principle, projects demonstrating a positive BCR will be prioritised. When assessing the BCR the

North East MSA will use the following scale for non-transport-related schemes. (Note: In the case of transport schemes, the Department for Transport's Value for Money Framework will be used to identify the Value for Money category of the scheme.)

- BCR < 1: Poor VfM
- 1 ≤ BCR < 1.5: Low VfM
- 1.5 ≤ BCR < 2: Medium VfM
- BCR ≥ 2: High VfM

An assessment of the non-monetised benefits will also be included and taken into account as part of the appraisal recommendation BCR will be used as an indicator of value for money but will not be used as an arbitrary tool for decision making. A BCR of below 1 does not automatically make a proposal poor value for money and a wider range of factors, including non-monetisable benefits, risks, and contribution to strategic and place-based objectives will be used to assess value for money, alongside the BCR.

5.5.16 A proportionate approach is taken to the overall level of appraisal to reflect the financial ask.

5.5.17 Subject to SRO agreement, following review of the completed technical appraisal, investment proposals will progress to the approval stage.

5.5.18 The business case development process operates as follows:

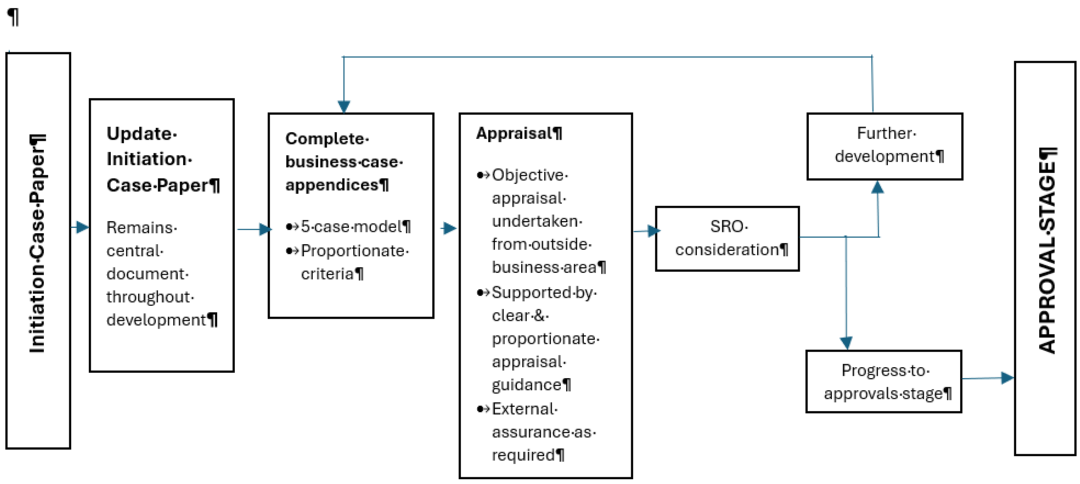

Figure 6: Business Case Development Process

5.6 Phase 3: Approvals/Decisions

Purpose. The purpose of the approvals/decisions phase is to take funding decisions on business cases developed following the principles set out above, in line with the North East MSA's Constitution.

5.6.1 The approvals/decisions phase has been designed to ensure an ever-increasing level of assurance can be provided the North East MSA relevant to the level of financial commitment. To support this and achieve better informed decision making the SAF has been developed to enable:

- Appropriate front end initiation process through the project initiation process that drives strategic fit.
- Proportionate business case development process that meets national and North East MSA standards of best practice.
- Appropriate use of expertise within Business Areas to support business case development.
- A clear approach to the evaluation of activity, with a dedicated Evaluation Team supporting evaluation-related elements of the business case.
- A skilled Programme Assurance Officer to provide support and guidance throughout the SAF.
- Use of out of Business Area/second line of defence assurance principles and processes to undertake proportionate appraisal.
- Technical officer support through Technical Officers Group (TOG) to focus Finance and Investment Board and Cabinet considerations and inform the decision-making process.

5.6.2 The approvals/decisions process is therefore supported through delivery of the following elements of assurance prior to entering the approvals/decisions phase:

1. Front end project/programme initiation process that seeks Senior Leadership Team support, ensures involvement of relevant business areas from an early stage.
2. Delivers a Principle of Approval by ensuring the North East MSA Cabinet provides an approval for concept to enter the business case development phase either through inclusion in the Corporate Plan or via approval of in-year proposals.
3. Delivers business cases that must be developed in line with HMT's Green Book and North East MSA standards regarding strategic fit that drive value for money considerations and quality of content within business cases.
4. Delivers second line defence appraisal of business cases in line with HMT Green Book principles.
5. Delivers an objective appraisal report from the Programme Assurance Team on all business cases to inform the North East MSA SRO in progressing them to the approvals phase and assuming responsibility for their content.

5.6.3 The approach is designed to enable:

- Decision-makers at all levels to base their decisions upon objective, evidence based out of Business Area findings and recommendations, in turn driving better decision-making.
- Increased Director (SRO) ownership and accountability.
- Increased Statutory Officer involvement or accountability.
- Increased levels of assurance and appraisal support and guidance
- Approvals based on proportionate financial delegation i.e. a request of £100,000 will not be scrutinised to the same level as a request for £5 million.
- The time taken to reach an approval decision being reflective of the financial ask.

5.6.4 The business case approvals phase begins following successful progression through the SAF phase 2 development, which requires a Director (SRO) decision to progress the business case into the approvals/ decision stage.

5.6.5 Decision Routes. The required decision route is dependent on the level of financial approval that is required. In principle, the approach to business case approval decisions will be as follows:

- Under £500,000 Chief Executive, also known as the Head of Paid Service (HoPS)
- £500,000 to £1 million and under: Chief Executive decision in consultation with the Technical Officers Group
- Over £1 million and up to and including £5 million: Chief Executive decision in consultation with Finance and Investment Board.
- Over £5 million: Cabinet decision

5.6.6 These decision routes are supported by Technical Officers Group (TOG) who provide technical test and challenge of business case proposals and make recommendation to the Chief Executive, Finance and Investment Board and North East MSA Cabinet where the value of the funding ask is over £500,000.

5.6.7 TOG members will be expected to not only push the key lines of enquiry relevant to producing a quality business case but also in ensuring that agreed priorities of the North East MSA have been adequately addressed.

5.6.8 The Finance and Investment Board will consider the advice provided by TOG in coming to a decision on approval for business cases between £1 million and £5 million. Business cases over £5 million must be approved by the North East MSA Cabinet, to support Cabinet the Finance and Investment Board will consider such approvals first and make a recommendation on approval to Cabinet.

5.6.9 These decision processes also involve an option of escalated progression to support the decision-maker if they have any concerns regarding a business case approval that has a significant reputational and/or political risk. In such circumstances approvals can be escalated to Cabinet for final approval in line with the approval requirements set out in 5.6.

Business Case Decision Process:

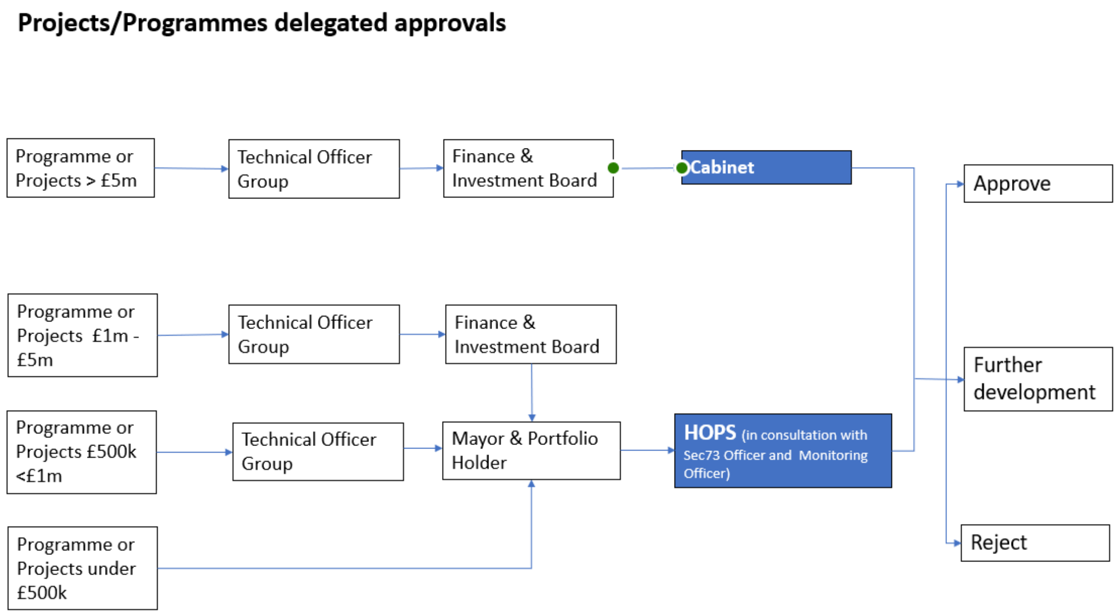

Figure 7: Projects/Programmes Delegated Approvals

Formal decisions by the North East MSA to commit funding on the basis of a business case approval will be made in accordance with the North East MSA's constitution by the Mayor and Cabinet or by officers under delegated powers.

5.6.10 The required SAF documentation. The process illustrates that the level of approval required is determined by the level of financial commitment, the following diagram provides an overview of the documentation required depending on the approval route taken:

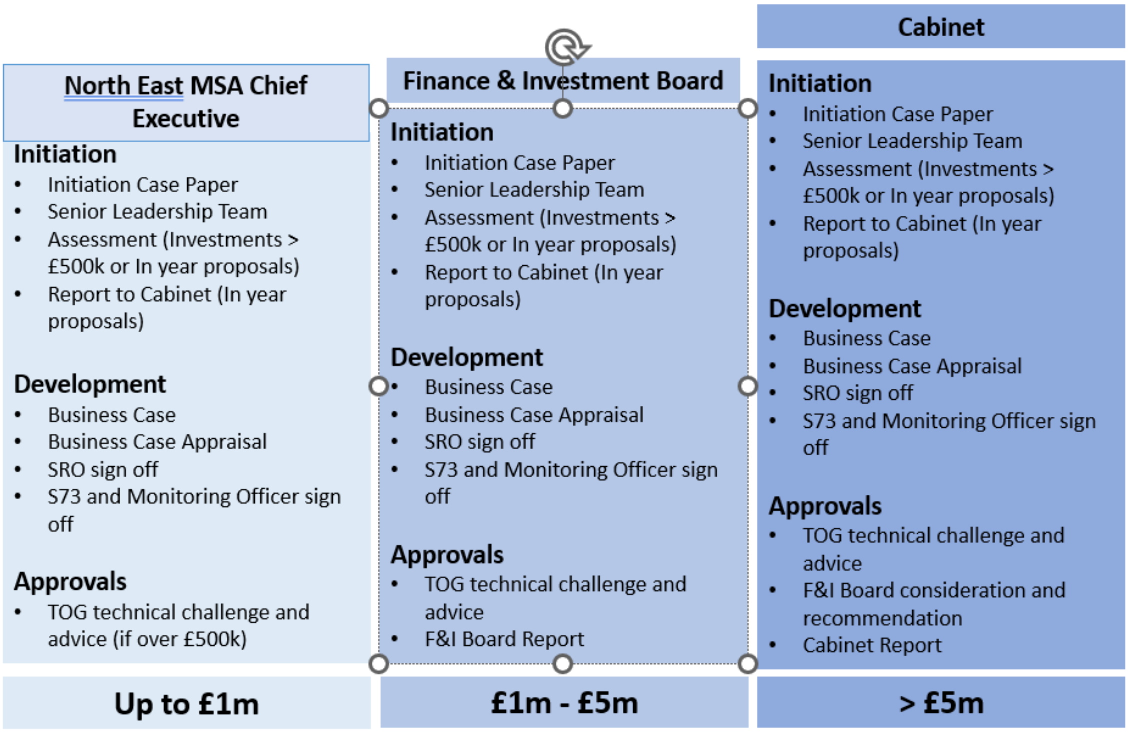

Figure 8: Required Single Assurance Framework Documentation

5.6.11 **Business case decisions up to £500k** are approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the S73 Officer and Monitoring Officer, under the Cabinet approved delegated authority. Business cases are progressed for approval following sign off by the relevant North East MSA Director (SRO), who approves the business case as complete and takes on responsibility for its progression through the decision phase.

The Chief Executive will then consider the business case for decision under delegated authority.

5.6.12 **Business case decisions over £500k and up to £1 million** are approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the S73 Officer and Monitoring Officer, under the Cabinet approved delegated authority. Business cases are progressed for approval following sign off by the relevant North East MSA Director (SRO) as described above. Business cases are initially reviewed by TOG to deliver a technical assessment, test and challenge the proposal. The TOG will provide the Chief Executive with a summary on each business case proposal, noting observations to consider, including the strengths and weaknesses of a proposal, observations on the level of investment risk, key lines of enquiry to follow up on and providing any recommendations for improvement or to mitigate risks. This may lead to conditions to be added to funding agreements, conditions for withdrawal of support, additions to evaluation plans.

The Chief Executive will then consider the business case for approval under delegated authority.

5.6.13 **Business case decisions over £1 million and up to and including £5 million.** As set out above approvals over £1 million and up to £5 million in value are initially reviewed by TOG, who will provide the Finance and Investment Board with a summary on each business case proposal as described in 5.6.12. This may lead to conditions to be added to funding agreements, conditions for withdrawal of support or additions to evaluation plans.

The Finance and Investment Board will then consider and, subject to their endorsement, make a recommendation to the Chief Executive to approve through delegated authority.

5.6.14 **Business case decisions over £5 million.** For decisions over £5 million the process is as described in 5.6.13 with the Finance and Investment Board making a recommendation to Cabinet rather than the Chief Executive. The Cabinet will then take the final approval decision.

5.6.15 This process does not confer any assurance that all business cases will receive an approval decision. In circumstances where a business case is not recommended for approval decision, it will either be referred back for further development or formally declined.

5.6.16 The Department of Transport approval of a business case will normally be required for any transport schemes retained by the Department.

5.7 Integrated Settlement Flexibility and Virement

5.7.1 The Integrated Settlement provides the MSA with flexibility to manage a consolidated, multi-year funding settlement across agreed policy areas, enabling resources to be aligned to local priorities and strategic objectives. Subject to compliance with statutory requirements, conditions of grant and the agreed Outcomes Framework, funding may be reprofiled or vired between programmes and funding lines within the Integrated Settlement, including between revenue and capital where permitted. All use of flexibility will be exercised in a proportionate and transparent manner, supported by appropriate governance, assurance and decision-making arrangements set out in this Single Assurance Framework, with material changes subject to the relevant approvals and reporting mechanisms.

5.7.2 The North East MSA will manage funding virements under the Integrated Settlement through an evidence-based process embedded within its quarterly forecasting cycle and Single Assurance Framework. Virements may include reallocations between programmes or pillars, reprofiling between financial years, and limited movements between capital and revenue budgets, within Integrated Settlement limits. Proposals are identified at investment initiation or through quarterly forecasting, endorsed by Senior Responsible Owners, assessed by Finance and the Programme Assurance Team, and gated by the Senior Leadership Team to confirm the appropriate approval route. All virements are approved in line with existing delegated authorities and Cabinet thresholds, recorded in a central Flexibility Register, and reported through quarterly budget monitoring and performance reporting to ensure transparency, accountability and strategic alignment. This process has been agreed by MHCLG as part of Investment Readiness, the use of funding flexibilities will be reported to Government through the Integrated Settlement Programme Board.

5.8 Adult Skills Fund

5.8.1 As of April 2026, the Adult Skills Fund forms part of the North East MSA's Integrated Settlement.

5.8.2 **The New Deal for North East Workers** sets out the strategic vision and priorities for all employment and skills funding and programmes.

5.8.3 **Annual Assurance Report** - The North East MSA produces an Annual Assurance Report on the delivery of its Adult Skills Fund functions in line with wider monitoring and evaluation requirements and the English Devolution Accountability Framework. This is reported to Skills England by 31 January each year.

5.8.4 The North East MSA will also submit its Annual Assurance Statement to Skills England in July each year following consideration by the Home of Real Opportunity Advisory Board and Finance and Investment Board.

5.8.5 **Local Skills Implementation Plan (LSIP)** - Alongside the New Deal for North East Workers, the Local Skills Implementation Plan also sets out the current and future skills needs of the region and how local provision can help people develop the skills they need to get good jobs and increase their prospects. The North East MSA works with the designated Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) in the North East MSA area, utilising and sharing local labour market intelligence and analysis to inform the commissioning approach for the Adult Skills Fund. The North East MSA also ensures that the Adult Skills Fund responds to the employer feedback contained within the LSIPs for the region.

5.9 Subsidy Control.

5.9.1 The North East MSA will ensure that all public funded programmes and projects are delivered in line with Subsidy Control law. This will include assessing all applications against the relevant requirements (which at this time are primarily set out in the Subsidy Control Act 2022 as clarified in the Statutory Guidance) and where necessary making referrals to the Competition and Markets Authority prior to an award being made.

5.9.2 All grant funding agreements will contain appropriate legal conditions on Subsidy Control. Where a misuse of a subsidy is identified, the North East MSA may exercise its right under Section 77 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

5.9.3 Subsidy Control will be considered as part of the decision-making process. The Combined Authority will conduct appropriate legal due diligence should it determine that the characteristics of the proposal require additional scrutiny, including if a proposed measure is novel, contentious or repercussive.

5.9.4 Records of compliance will be kept. The transparency requirements set out in the Subsidy Control Act 2022 will be satisfied, in line with the relevant timescales.

5.10 Management of contracts and funding awards.

5.10.1 Following Approval, the Programme Assurance Team will send out a Grant Funding Agreement, which includes the following: Project Name, Applicant, Maximum Funding contribution (£), with details regarding when payment is to be issued, what is eligible expenditure, commencement and completion dates. This will be subject to review and sign off by the North East MSA Legal team prior to issue.

5.10.2 The Funding Offer Letter will also set out the monitoring and evaluation requirements and process to be followed.

5.10.3 Contracts for Investment Funds are managed within the Programme Assurance Team.

6. Delivery, Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Release of Funding. The North East MSA S73 Officer inputs into all funding decisions and must be satisfied prior to funding being released in line with appropriate conditions.

6.1.1 Funding claims submitted to the North East MSA are checked against the approved project baseline information, which is included within the original funding agreement/contract including financial profiles, outputs and outcomes. Subject to a satisfactory review, payments will be released quarterly in arrears unless otherwise agreed.

6.1.2 A mechanism for 'claw-back' provision is to be included within funding agreements/contract to ensure funding is spent only on the specified scheme and linked to the delivery of outputs and outcomes.

6.1.3 Sample testing of invoices against expenditure and sample testing to verify outputs forms part of the monitoring process. This is part of the programme assurance role of the North East MSA.

6.2 Performance Reporting. The North East MSA's Performance Management Framework works in close alignment with the Single Assurance Framework to ensure there is a consistent, streamlined and joined-up approach to performance. The framework sets out our performance management approach, governance and processes.

6.2.1 The English Devolution Accountability Framework (EDAF) provides guidance on how Mayoral Combined Authorities should be accountable to local scrutiny, the public and UK Government. Our Performance Management Framework supports us to comply with the standards in the EDAF, and how the North East MSA is committed to delivering good governance and strong measures of accountability.

6.2.2 The performance management framework includes how we are accountable to:

- Local Scrutiny – through corporate performance reporting, Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and committee reporting, directorate business plan reporting and project reporting.
- The Public – through Committee Meetings, Social and Digital Media, communications providing a high-level overview of key investment projects, including case studies of the impact they are making.
- UK Government – through reporting to various Government departments including MHCLG, the Department for Education and the Department for Transport.

6.2.3 The North East MSA is committed to implementing an organisation-wide performance management culture and embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

6.2.4 Within 10 years, the North East MSA will have made progress against the five key Missions set out in its Corporate Plan:

1. Home of real opportunity
2. A North East we are proud to call home
3. Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all
4. Home of the green energy revolution

5. A welcoming home to global trade

6.2.5 The North East MSA's Performance Management Framework sets out how we will do this, by putting our missions at the heart of everything we do; and how we will measure success.

6.2.6 The Performance Management Framework shows how the outputs and outcomes in our existing strategies, including the Mayor's Local Transport Plan and our Local Growth Plan, support the missions.

6.2.7 The Performance Management Framework also supports the successful delivery of the Integrated Settlement by setting out the relationship between the outcomes the North East MSA will deliver with this funding, and those delivered through other investment programmes.

6.3 Risk Management. The North East MSA's Risk Management Framework forms part of the Single Assurance Framework, to ensure there is a consistent, streamlined and joined-up approach to managing risk.

6.3.1 The Risk Management Framework has been based upon the principles of the HMT Orange Book (2023); these are governance, integration, collaboration, processes, and continual improvement. The objective of the framework has been to adapt these principles to the North East MSA's ways of working, ensuring compliance with our Single Assurance Framework.

6.3.2 The Orange Book states that, in successful organisations, risk management enhances strategic planning and prioritisation, assists in achieving objectives and strengthens the ability to be agile to respond to the challenges faced. Risk management, is therefore an essential and integral part of the North East MSA's planning and decision-making, enabling us to successfully meet our objectives.

6.3.3 The Risk Management Framework includes:

- Our Corporate Risk Appetite
- Escalation procedure
- Roles and Responsibilities
- The various levels of risk management at a Corporate, Service/Programme and Project level.
- Our processes and tools within our risk procedure document.

6.3.4 The North East MSA is committed to implementing an organisation wide risk management culture that demonstrates high levels of risk maturity and best practice in the identification, evaluation and effective management of risk in respect of current activities and new opportunities, including the continued monitoring of risk for long-term flexible funding.

6.3.5 The Chief Executive working closely with the Director of Finance and Investment is accountable for ensuring that Corporate Risk Management is being completed to the appropriate standard in line with the Risk Management Framework. This includes ensuring risks are captured and updated and that mitigating actions have been completed. The Senior Leadership Team will formally review strategic and programme level risks quarterly. Directors, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service are accountable for the service level risk registers within their remit, and project managers for project level risks.

6.3.6 The Director of Finance and Investment's team will ensure these reviews are effectively managed and coordinated, as well as collating information to support effective decision-making and developing the associated risk reports. They will support the Audit and Standards Committee and other governance forums to consider the management of risks, and how risk is integrated with discussion on other matters.

6.3.7 The Audit and Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the North East MSA's Risk Management Framework and Procedures and the Corporate Risk Register, to ensure that risk management is being undertaken to the appropriate standard and in line with the Risk Management Framework.

6.4 Change Requests and Funding Clawback. Change Control is the process through which all requests to change the approved baseline of a project or programme are captured, evaluated, and then approved, rejected or deferred. A change request form is required when the tolerances that were set out in the approved Business Case are or will be breached. This included changes to Time, Cost and Scope.

6.4.1 All early warnings and project change requests must be clearly documented, with evidence of approvals and notifications saved where applicable and recorded.

6.4.2 Approval routes should always be led by the funding amount and proportionate; this means change requests do not need to be approved by the 'original approver'. For example, a project requests a minor time extension, and no additional funds are required. The original business case may have been approved by Cabinet but there is no need for Cabinet to be sighted on a 'minor' change as this could delay project progress and cause further time delay while they wait for the next bi-monthly Cabinet meeting.

6.4.3 Where an increase in funding is required, this will need to go to the appropriate Board for consideration or Cabinet for approval, in line with agreed delegations.

6.4.4 Early warning notifications should be reported to the Senior Leadership Team at the earliest opportunity, who will escalate as appropriate.

6.4.5 Change tolerances above those detailed within the approved business case and/or above the tolerance levels set out in the North East MSA's internal Project Change Request guidance must be considered for approval by the Finance and Investment Board.

6.4.6 Funding clawback and recovery processes for underperforming projects are to be clearly addressed in the funding agreement/contract.

6.5 Monitoring and Evaluation. The North East MSA Evaluation Strategy has been developed in accordance with HMT's Magenta (Guidance for Evaluation) and Green (Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation) Books. The overall approach to monitoring and evaluation is underpinned by the following principles:

- Reporting requirements are locally defined and reported to the Senior Leadership Team in a consistent fashion.
- Evaluation is meaningful and proportionate.

- Data is collected once and used many times to inform other critical documents, such as the Business Planning process and Annual Report
- Baseline information is consistent across key initiatives.
- Monitoring and evaluation are a core part of all activities.
- Lessons learned are used to inform future policy, projects and programmes, especially in the strategic planning process.

6.5.1 All projects that go through the SAF, will have an effective evaluation plan which will form an important component of the business case. This will help assess the effectiveness and impact of investing public funds, and the identification of best practice and lessons learnt that can inform future delivery. Project monitoring is carried out in line with the North East MSA's own Assurance Principles, supported by a suite of guidance documents, including Contract Management Guidance.

6.5.2 The evaluation plan will guide the collection of data from individual projects and will be designed to ensure that it meets the requirements of both the North East MSA and Government. This aims to ensure that these commitments are delivered by setting out the approach, principles, role and responsibilities for the evaluation of projects and programmes both in the Devolution Deal and within any wider North East MSA activity.

6.5.3 The evaluation plans will be proportionate and in line with the latest government department guidance where relevant. For example, all transport schemes (over £5m) will follow Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance for Local Authority Major Schemes. The draft plans are created by the project manager and then consulted upon with the Programme Assurance Team and Evaluation team, to ensure consistency, quality of plans and value for money for any planned external consultancy to support evaluation as applicable. Plans are then signed off as per the governing arrangements for that specific project.

6.5.4 **Tiered Evaluation Approach** The MSA applies a proportionate, tiered evaluation framework to ensure accountability, learning, and value for money across our investment portfolios. This will be considerate of the project and programmes value, duration, strategic fit and delivery model, to ensure evaluation approach balances rigour with practicality. Initial considerations of a tiered approach include the following:

6.5.5 Tier 1: Light-Touch Internal Reflections

- Tier 1 evaluations focus on delivery processes and the lessons learned throughout the course of a project. These reviews are typically led internally within the relevant business areas, with support provided by the central Evaluation Team. The primary aim is to generate swift, actionable insights that facilitate continuous improvement, all while minimising additional workload for project teams.
- This approach is particularly suited to small-scale projects, generally with smaller budgets and short durations. Throughout the project, standardised templates and tools such as learning journeys and surveys to capture reflections and feedback will be used to maintain consistency and proportionate learnings.

6.5.6 Tier 2: External Evaluations for Larger or Complex Projects

- These evaluations examine delivery, impact, and value for money in greater detail. They require more resources and coordination to ensure methodological consistency and quality, in majority of cases involving independent evaluators. They are commissioned by the project delivery team or external delivery partners, with coordinated support from the central Evaluation Team. This approach is particularly suited to larger-scale or more complete projects, with medium- to longer-term durations.

6.5.7 Tier 3: Programme or Portfolio Evaluations

- These evaluations provide strategic evidence on outcomes, effectiveness and impact across multiple interventions. They often employ theory-based and counterfactual approaches to assess contribution and impact at scale. In the majority of cases, they are commissioned centrally by the Evaluation Team and delivered with a strong support from policy and delivery teams. This approach is suited to strategically important, catalytic, higher value and longer duration programmes of delivery.

6.5.8 The approach to evaluation will be set out within the initiation documentation and Business Case and agreed through the decision stage.

6.5.9 Where the North East MSA is awarded funding from Government, it will meet the required obligations regarding monitoring and evaluation on the acceptance of grant funding.

6.5.10 The North East MSA's governance arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of the Integrated Settlement are in accordance with the Integrated Settlement Policy. As part of the Government's strategy development for evaluating English devolution, the North East MSA is committed to working in partnership with all Government Departments to support the evaluation activity within the Integrated Settlement and the evaluation of national programmes, with the aim of improving collective understanding of what works.

6.6 The Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation. The North East MSA is committed to effective monitoring and evaluation so that it is able to:

- **Provide local accountability** to the public by demonstrating the impact of locally devolved funding and the associated benefits being achieved.
- **Provide accountability to Government** and comply with external scrutiny requirements i.e. to satisfy the conditions of the Devolution Deal. Specifically, both the Evaluation Strategy and the Performance Management Framework are used to demonstrate local progress and delivery to senior government officials and Ministers who retain ultimately accountability for devolved funding.
- **Understand the effectiveness of policies or investment** and to justify reinvestment or modify or seek alternative policy. Both the Evaluation Strategy and the Performance Management Framework provide a clear feedback loop for the North East MSA and relevant stakeholders.
- **Develop an evidence base to inform future business cases and funding submissions**. The Evaluation Strategy sets out the overarching principles for how evidence will be identified, brought together and analysed to support future work, including the assessment of economic impacts of specific interventions and the development of comparable benchmarks over time.

6.6.1 Lessons learnt from evaluation will be reported to the North East MSA Cabinet and across the governance framework as required.

6.6.2 The Single Assurance Framework itself will undergo review by the Audit and Standards Committee.

6.7 Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework

6.7.1 In line with the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026, the North East MSA is designated an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority as it meets specified eligibility criteria which unlocks further devolution, including an Integrated Settlement from 2026/27. As part of the Integrated Settlement model, the North East MSA has implemented a structured outcomes-based monitoring approach.

6.7.2 This includes six-monthly review cycles coordinated with the Government Programme Board, where progress against the Outcomes Framework will be assessed. Outcome indicators will be tracked across strategic themes. Each investment proposal will include an evaluation plan that aligns with these outcomes and supports transparent reporting.

6.7.3 The Performance Management Framework is used to monitor the MSA's outputs and outcomes, including any outcomes associated with the Integrated Settlement. The Performance Management Framework helps the North East MSA understand the impact of its investments and ensure that insight and evidence actively shape future decisions.

6.7.4 The Programme Assurance Team will coordinate data collection and reporting of investment programmes, financial/outputs/outcomes performance against contracted profiles, ensuring consistency and accountability. The reporting schedule is set out in the performance management framework

6.8 The North East MSA Local Evaluation Framework (LEF) is one of the reporting arrangements replacing the North East MSA's Gateway Review in 2025 – 2026 with a lighter touch regime.

6.8.1 These changes will reduce bureaucracy, improve efficiency and accountability. The North East MSA LEF is a framework outlining the North East MSA's agreed approach to evidencing the impact of devolved interventions – such as skills, place and economic development – against both local priorities and national objectives. It will support transparent decision-making, strengthens accountability to government and stakeholders, and generates insight to inform future policy and investment choices.

6.8.2 The North East MSA will partake in an annual conversation with MHCLG, replacing the previous Gateway Review process.

7. Communications

7.1 Engagement of Local Partners and the Public.

A suite of communications guidance for funding streams has been developed, owned by the Communications, Engagement and Marketing Team.

7.1.1 Communications objectives are to:

- Keep the public and stakeholders informed about the progress and milestones of devolution.
- Encourage the public and stakeholders to get involved in engagement or consultation activities.
- Build support for the North East devolution by sharing the vision, ambitions and the benefits it will have for local people.
- Ensure the North East MSA's position is presented fairly and accurately in any related media coverage.

7.1.2 All communications activity complies with the code of recommended practice issued under the Local Government Act 1986. The code requires that any publicity describing the North East MSA's activities and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation or both. Any comment should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. All publicity and comments are free from political bias.

7.2 Communications tools.

7.2.1 Primary communications tools are:

- Website: All information about the North East MSA, including background information, timelines, news and events (including 'Mayor Meets' opportunities) are published on the North East MSA website.
- Social media: All news, updates and events are shared via social media.
- A suite of funding publicity guidance for beneficiaries/ delivery partners will also be available on the website.

7.3 Working with the media.

The North East MSA actively engages with the media to amplify messages to the broadest possible audiences.

7.4 Accessibility.

All communications relating to the North East MSA are accessible and transparent. Stakeholders and the public will be kept updated with progress, delivery and decision making. It also supports effective and meaningful engagement activity to encourage participation in the relevant activities and enable local partners and the public the opportunity to inform key decisions and future strategy development.

7.4.1 The communications approach takes into account the requirements of the following:

- Project applicants

- Governance requirements
- Wider partnership requirements; and
- Communities’ requirements.

7.4.2 Information relating to the North East MSA’s Publication Scheme, Social Media House Rules and Brand guidelines including the various ways in which the CA and the Mayor can be contacted are found on the North East MSA website.

8.0 Transport Projects

8.1. Transport Assurance Overview - For the purposes of the Single Assurance Framework (SAF) a transport scheme is defined as any scheme that significantly changes the transport network infrastructure or its operation, whatever the objective of the scheme. All transport schemes will be delivered in line with the requirements of the English Devolution Accountability Framework and any additional fund specific requirements set out by Government as necessary.

8.1.2 The SAF ensures a flexible and proportionate approach, enabling transport business cases to retain the benefits of local assurance in terms of speed of decision making.

8.1.3 For transport infrastructure schemes, the North East MSA will ensure that modelling and appraisal is sufficiently robust and fit for purpose for the scheme under consideration, and that modelling and appraisal meet the guidance set out in the Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG). This is undertaken by an independent appraiser with the appropriate technical expertise to ensure that the scheme aligns with relevant guidance and best practice, and that it represents a robust, proportionate and deliverable investment. The outcome of this assessment is documented within the Appraisal Summary Report.

8.1.4 The appraisal is then subject to an internal review process, the findings of which are reflected within the relevant decision-making documentation. These recommendations are incorporated into reports presented through the appropriate governance route, including Cabinet and/or the relevant Single Assurance Framework (SAF) pathway, such as the Technical Officers Group, Finance and Investment Board, or Delegated Decision process.

8.2 City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) - City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding has been allocated by government to eligible Mayoral Combined Authorities inclusive of funding for Highways Maintenance, with the North East's eligibility outlined within the North East Devolution Deal. As of 1 April 2026 CRSTS and its successor fund, Transport for City Regions form part of the North East MSA's Integrated Settlement.

8.2.1 Delivery of CRSTS will align with the business case submitted to government and will include an agreed delivery programme and list of identified schemes for investment through the North East's CRSTS. The business case also confirms the governance and assurance requirements, proportionate to the scale of the investment.

8.2.2 CRSTS investment activity will be appraised, delivered, monitored, and evaluated in line with the principles set out within the SAF with additional information included to ensure the conditions of the funding are met in full. Ongoing quarterly monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by DfT, the North East MSA will also adhere to the government's CRSTS change control process. For any CRSTS scheme retained by DfT the North East MSA will adhere to departmental assurance requirements.

8.2.3 CRSTS funding awarded to Local Highways Authorities for highways maintenance will be outlined within the North East Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). The monitoring of spend and delivery will be in accordance with government guidance and the conditions of CRSTS funding. To enable delivery of the CRSTS programme in the available timescales, the application of the SAF will be proportionate with funding decisions expedited and delegated as described in Section 5.6.5 of the SAF and where it is appropriate to do so.

8.3 Transport Project Prioritisation - A pipeline of transport investment proposals is outlined in the North East Local Transport Plan adopted by the North East MSA Cabinet in March 2025. In order to be considered for investment through the North East MSA's devolved funds, and for transport funding opportunities provided for by non-devolved funds, projects must be included with the Local Transport Plan and this forms part of the project initiation process for transport schemes.

8.3.1 For transport investments, scheme promoters are required to complete a bespoke project initiation paper (PIP) form - 'the scheme identification and prioritisation pro-forma'; this document includes more detailed transport specific criteria. The information provided in these pro-formas is used to both prioritise candidate schemes and to sift out schemes that do not meet the eligibility requirements of funding opportunities.

8.3.2 The criteria upon which transport proposals will be assessed are:

- A qualitative assessment of how the project achieves regional and/or programme objectives
- Value for money, measured either through an economic appraisal that provides a benefit cost ratio (BCR), or a qualitative statement of value for money when an economic appraisal has yet to be conducted
- Deliverability to timescales/funding window
- Risk profile

8.3.3 The prioritisation of transport projects and schemes adopts a model similar to the Department for Transport Early Assessment Sifting Tool (EAST), with clear priorities, driven by the North East's economic, decarbonisation and health objectives.

8.3.4 The process also involves a rigorous review and challenge of any: planning powers and/or consents that may be required for the project to progress, construction issues involved, the certainty of third-party funding and consultation evidence on the public acceptability of the proposal.

8.3.5 A scoring mechanism is used, whereby options are appraised and assigned a score. This will facilitate onwards ranking and prioritisation of options with unfeasible options removed.

8.3.6 The prioritisation process, identifies preferred local transport investments for funding opportunities and is central to local decision making. The process is designed to be robust, evidence based, and transparent in line with best practice.

8.3.7 This process ensures all transport investment will deliver the strategic objectives of the North East MSA, described in the Corporate Plan, and the North East Local Transport Plan (LTP). Statutory requirements, conditions of funding and other local transport objectives also form a key component of investment decisions, with the particular objectives and priorities of each funding stream made available by Government taken into account.

8.4 Appraisal. The appraisal process for the SAF is consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book and Business Case Appraisal process. For transport schemes this includes supplementary and departmental guidance, such as the Department for Transport's (DfT) TAG appraisal guidance.

8.4.1 The North East MSA will ensure Value for Money (VfM) and transparency of transport schemes through the following Transport Project Business case assessments: Appraisal Summary Reports (ASR), Outline Business Cases (OBC) and Full Business Cases (FBC).

8.4.2 The assessment requirement will be proportionate to the scale of the investment as set out in the table below.

Table 3: Business Case Assessment Requirements

Scale of Scheme	**Business Case Assessment requirement***
<£250,000	Business Justification Case
£250,000 - £1m	Full Business Case (no Outline Business Case required)
£1m - £5m**	Outline Business Case, Full Business Case
>£5m	Outline Business Case, Full Business Case and Appraisal Summary Report

*in line with DfT guidance

** For novel or contentious investments an addition business case stage comprising of an appraisal summary report may be included.

8.4.3 Decisions will be taken appropriate to the phase of a scheme and greater scrutiny and emphasis on VfM will be undertaken as schemes progress through the ASR, OBC and FBC process, with greater scrutiny of final stage VfM.

8.4.4 The transport team within the North East MSA will be responsible for ensuring that modelling and appraisal is sufficiently robust and fit for purpose for the scheme under consideration, and that it meets the guidance set out in TAG. In addition to TAG, other robust or evidence-based assessments or methodologies may be employed to assess the overall business case of a scheme.

8.4.5 TAG will be used for all schemes but for schemes with low value (below £5m) a proportionate approach will be taken.

8.4.6 There is a general expectation that all schemes must endeavour to achieve "high" VfM, where benefits are at least double costs as set out within DfT's guidance, at all stages of the decision process.

8.4.7 VfM for transport schemes will be independently scrutinised on behalf of the North East MSA as part of the appraisal process. This will be undertaken either by expertise in house with responsibility sitting outside of the business area developing or promoting the business case or via a commission to a specialist transport consultant, fully independent from the scheme promoter and with no involvement in the development of the scheme being appraised.

8.4.8. Analysis of schemes contained in business cases is undertaken following the guidance that has been published at the time of the analysis. Additional sensitivity testing may then be required to gain an understanding of the impact of recent changes when the business case is submitted, and possibly afterwards if there is a significant period of time between submission and approval Central case assessments will be based on forecasts which are consistent with the definitive version of NTEM (DfT's planning dataset).

8.4.9 Alternative planning assumptions may be considered as sensitivity tests, the results from this may be considered as part of the decision-making process to approve a scheme. Appraisal and modelling will be scrutinised to ensure it has been developed in accordance with TAG principles. This will be undertaken through the independent appraisal process and overseen by the North East MSA's transport function.

8.4.10 A value for money statement for each scheme in line with published DfT TAG guidance and DfT advice on assessing VfM will be presented for consideration at the approval/decision stages noted in the graphic below:

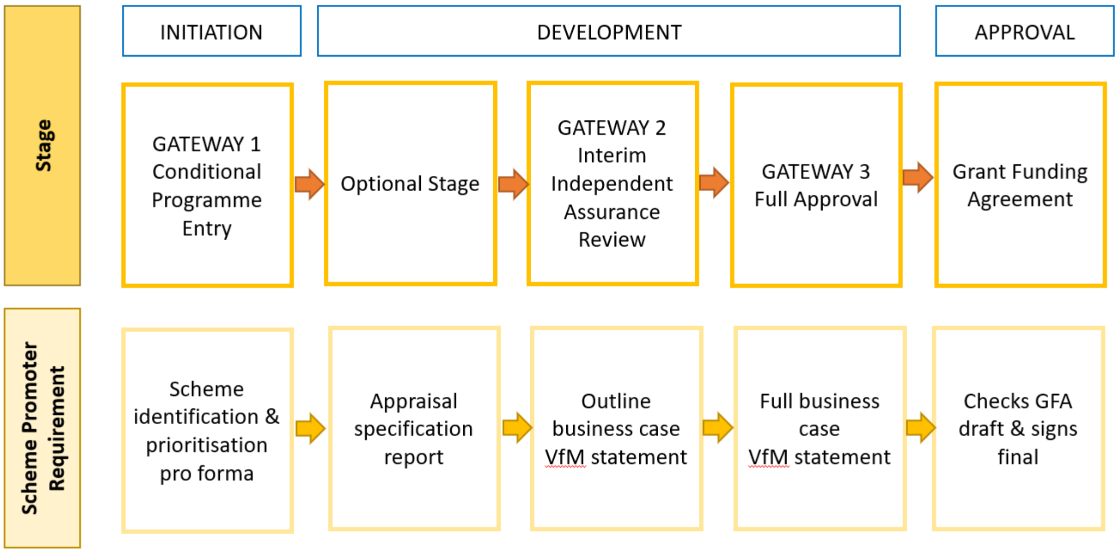

Figure 9: Value for Money Requirements for Transport Schemes

8.5 Approval/Decision - The CRSTS Business Case was approved by Cabinet in March 2025. Subsequent investment decisions for CRSTS investments will be taken in line with the SAF, including agreed delegations dependent on scale.

8.5.1 Where several individual projects contribute to shared overarching aims and objectives a partial Programme Full Business Case will be developed with some matters reserved. The Management dimension of the business case will identify the delegated arrangements for the approval of expenditure on each of the individual elements or projects. This approval process will be agreed as part of the business case approval and typically involves the production of an assurance statement.

8.6 Value for Money Transport Schemes - The Value for Money assessment ensures that there is a robust economic case for the scheme to be supported by North East MSA funding. This follows DfT Transport Appraisal Guidance to generate a consistent presentation of the value for money based on a benefit cost ratio and an assessment of the non-monetised impacts for each scheme. The strategic fit test is driven by the potential contribution of each scheme to the achievement of local objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan and The Local Transport Plan.

8.6.1 Independent assessment of VfM will be based upon the BCR of the scheme and also consider both qualitative and quantitative evidence of both monetised and non-monetised costs and benefits. It is expected that scheme promoters will reference appropriate and proportionate use of the DfT's guidelines in presenting value for money evidence. Supplementary local guidance is also provided to scheme promoters.

8.6.2 The North East MSA will endeavour to maximise VfM in the use of public funds, however, this will not always translate to prioritising the investment option with the highest BCR, as there may be non-monetised benefits, or substantial project risks that outweigh the lower ratio of monetised benefits. The North East MSA will ensure that value for money is taken in the context of whether a proposal achieves its strategic objectives, rather than whether BCR which is 'strong', as there might be alternatives where the BCR does not align as clearly with the Authority's strategic objectives set out in key policies including the Local Transport Plan. This will be considered as part of any local decision making.

8.6.3 The North East MSA's S73 Officer will sign off all Value for Money statements undertaken whether in the form of a business case or in signing off the independent assessment.

8.7 Cycling and Walking Schemes - All cycling and walking schemes must meet the latest standards set out in Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 1/20). To ensure consistency in the quality and safety of schemes, Active Travel England (ATE) will provide support to ensure cycling and walking schemes are designed and delivered to high standards. The North East MSA will work with ATE and all its constituent authorities to ensure the design quality of all active travel schemes funded through the North East MSA is in line with relevant design guidance, with design reviews undertaken prior to any scheme approval.

8.8 Delivery - The North East MSA's transport function, as the accountable business area will carry out the programme management of agreed transport schemes, to ensure their delivery by scheme promoters. The identification of schemes, development of scheme proposals and completion of business cases is the responsibility of scheme promoters, supported by the Transport team and subject matter experts within the North East MSA.

8.8.1 This working arrangement will be underpinned by the establishment of formal grant funding agreements, signed off by the Monitoring Officer as described in section 6 of the SAF, that protect the financial interests of the North East MSA and enable the North East MSA to fulfil its responsibility to deliver VfM whilst setting out respective responsibilities including reporting and audit requirements.

8.8.2 Business cases will be published on the North East MSA website in line with DfT guidance and published where it is appropriate to do so as part of submission for the decision to approve funding. For any scheme with a capital value of more than £50m over its lifetime, and in line with the Integrated Settlement Policy Document, para 40 b and c, the North East MSA will publish the business case which underpinned the decision to invest to support local transparency and accountability.

8.9 Monitoring and Evaluation - All transport schemes exceeding £5m in monetary value will follow the Local authority major schemes: benefits management, evaluation strategy.

9.Decisions Taxonomy

9.1 The Cabinet is the principal decision-making body of the North East MSA and may delegate certain decisions. The list below summarises the main types of decisions taken across the North East MSA.

Table 4: Decisions Taxonomy

Cabinet	Delegated Decisions
• Programme & Major Investment Decisions • Financial Planning & Budget Setting • Mayoral Strategic Decisions • Corporate Strategy & Long-Term Plans • Constitutional & Governance Decisions.	• Statutory Officer Decisions (Delegated) • Operational Officer Decisions • Contracting & Procurement Decisions • Investment Decisions • Project Variations • Acceptance of Funding