

Economic Development and Regeneration Advisory Board

24 July 2018

Meeting held Committee Room, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

APPROVED MINUTES

Present:

Councillor : I Malcolm (Chair)

Councillors: J Adams, G Bell, C Marshall, M Mordey, B Pickard and
R Wearmouth

Co-opted Members: B Farhat, G Hall, T Salmon and J Walker

1 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD,
RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNCTIONS (FOR INFORMATION AND REFERENCE)**

Noted.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Miller and R Wearmouth and Ms S Glendinning.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Subject to a minor amendment to add Ms G Hall to the list of apologies for absence, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 March 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Economic Development and Regeneration Progress Update

Update on the North of Tyne Devolution

(Minute 29 refers)

The Chair provided a brief update on the progress of the North of Tyne Devolution. He also explained that the Leaders and Elected Mayor of the seven local authorities agreed on the importance of continuing with the regional Economic Development

and Regeneration function and a single Invest North East England team for the region.

5 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRS**

RESOLVED – That Councillor C Marshall and Ms G Hall be re-appointed as Vice-Chairs of the Economic Development and Regeneration Advisory Board for the municipal year 2018/19.

6 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION PROGRESS UPDATE**

Submitted: An update report of the Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Regeneration (previously circulated and attached to Official Minutes).

Members considered the report which provided an update on activity and progress under the Economic Development and Regeneration theme of the Combined Authority. The report was introduced by G Currey and S McMillan.

Amongst the matters discussed by the Advisory Board were the following:

- the activity of Invest North East England (INEE) and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, including bidding for funding;
- the importance of continuing to work to ensure effective web search results for prospective investors, including offering links between the websites of the seven councils and the INEE website, achieving web-search optimisation for INEE and considering language options;
- the choice of events and exhibitions for the INEE attendance based on appropriateness, effectiveness and cost;
- the effectiveness of the work of OCO Global in delivering on the INEE requirements;
- the many advantages of promoting the North East jointly by the seven local authorities through a single presence at conferences and events, including for specific sectors; the successful examples of such approaches in other areas, for example The Midlands Engine; the need to explore this approach further; and the complexities involved in adopting this approach, including costs, local competition and variances in the strength of banding;
- the need for a discussion at a future meeting of the Advisory Board on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to inform a response to the government consultation;
- the need for a narrative to accompany information on export wins and other statistics, whilst respecting commercial sensitivity.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7 **NORTH EAST FUND**

Submitted: An update report of the Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Regeneration (previously circulated and attached to Official Minutes).

Members considered the report which provided an overview of the North East Fund, an investment programme for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the NECA area.

A Mitchell, the Chief Executive of the North East Fund Company delivered a presentation (attached to Official Minutes) which provided information on the following:

- the background to the creation of the North East Fund;
- the Fund's components, ambitions, objectives and targets;
- the range of support provided by the Fund Managers;
- the commercial nature of the Fund;
- progress to date; and
- challenges in achieving objectives.

In discussion, it was noted that:

- Members noted the advantages of the fund over other lending options, including banks and private investment.
- As with any funding programme, there was a level of bureaucracy involved in accessing and administering the Fund, but this was less burdensome when compared to some of the private investment options.
- Fund Managers were the first point of contact for the SMEs who were seeking funding. As an advantage, Fund Managers were likely to make a decision on the funding offer for a SME at earlier stages and provide advice and guidance even where funding was declined, thereby providing a more comprehensive offer, improving the overall experience and enabling success.
- Social media was used to publicise the fund and showcase successful examples.
- Members would speak to their Economic Development Teams to suggest they should help to promote the Fund and offer links to the Fund website on the websites of the local authorities.

The Chair, on behalf of the Advisory Board, thanked A Mitchell for the presentation.

RESOLVED – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted;
- ii. the Economic Development Teams in the seven local authorities be advised to assist in promoting the North East Fund; and
- iii. an update be brought to the Advisory Board to a future meeting in approximately twelve months.

8 LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION: NORTH EAST BREXIT REPORT

Submitted: An update report of the Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Regeneration (previously circulated and attached to Official Minutes).

Members considered the report which provided an overview of the Leaving the European Union report that had been produced by the North East Brexit Group (NE Brexit Group). R Baker, Head of Strategy and Policy of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership delivered an associated presentation (attached to Official Minutes).

Amongst the matters discussed by the Advisory Board were the following:

- The importance of work to assess and mitigate the impact of Brexit on workforce.
- The Trade Union Congress (TUC) input on workforce protection, including workers' rights, including companies' transfers due to Brexit.
- The uncertainties associated with the government position on Brexit, including leadership and the fact that, at present time, there were more questions than answers on the impact of Brexit, and the difficulties and worries this represented for local elected representatives.
- In the light of the existing and emerging evidence, the importance of working to prepare for mitigation of emerging risks and identifying opportunities however limited these might be.
- Regarding the much harder impact of Brexit on the North East when compared to other regions, the importance that the government understood the North East perspective and the important role of elected representatives and parliamentarians in progressing this matter.
- The advantages of establishing the NE Brexit Group and the value of its work to date in bringing partners together, gathering evidence, sharing knowledge and developing an understanding of impact. And further work of NE Brexit Group, including deep diving, expanding the work programme and moving towards intervention and mitigation.

The Chair, on behalf of the Advisory Board, thanked R Baker and the North East Brexit Group for their work.

RESOLVED – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted; and
- ii. an update be brought to a future meeting.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 23 October 2018 at 2pm.

On invitation from S McMillan, Members considered and suggested items for the Advisory Board work programme. The following items would be added to the work programme:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Deep Dive (Sectors)
- Business Growth and Innovation
- Skills
- North East Fund Update
- Brexit Update
- Northern Powerhouse
- Tourism Economy of the North East, including programmes such as Tall Ships and Great North Exhibition
- Economic Development and Regeneration Progress Updates

The Chair suggested that, if Members identified a suitable venue to host a meeting outside of a venue of a local authority, they could submit suggestions to S McMillan, the Lead Officer, or V Miller, the Democratic Services Officer.