



North East Combined Authority

DURHAM • GATESHEAD • SOUTH TYNESIDE • SUNDERLAND

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 July 2022 at 2.00pm

Meeting to be held at: Bridges Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, NE8 1HH

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AGENDA

Page No

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Please remember to declare any personal interest where appropriate both verbally and by recording it on the relevant form (to be handed to the Democratic Services Officer). Please also remember to leave the meeting where any personal interest requires this.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 **1-4**

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 **5-12**

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 **13-16**

Items 3-5 for approval as a correct record.

6. UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update **17-20**

7. Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update **21-32**

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

13 October 2022 at 2.00pm.

Contact Officer: Toby Ord
Tel: 0191 424 7541
Email: toby.ord@northeastca.gov.uk

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 14 October 2021
(2.00pm – 3.25pm)

Meeting held at Whickham Room, Gateshead Civic Centre, NE8 1HH

Present:

Independent Members: Mr D Taylor-Gooby (*Chair*), Simon Hart (*Vice-Chair*)

Councillors: C Martin (*Durham*), C Lines (*Durham*), J Eagle (*Gateshead*), M Hall (*Gateshead*), J Wallace (*Gateshead*), D Snowdon (*Sunderland*)

Officers: G Armstrong (*Policy and Scrutiny Officer, NECA*), Nicola Robason (*Monitoring Officer, NECA*), Toby Ord (*Strategy and Democratic Services Assistant, NECA*), Rory Sherwood-Parkin (*Senior Economic Policy Manager, South Tyneside Council*), J Lunness (*Strategy and Democracy Support Officer, South Tyneside*), S Gwilym (*Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Durham County Council*), Angela Frisby (*Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Gateshead Council*)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absences were received from Cllr Coult, Cllr Kilgour and Michelle Rainbow.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M Hall declared an interest as managing director of Prism Care (North East) CIC.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2020

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

5. COVID-19 REGIONAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Submitted: Senior Economic Policy Manager, South Tyneside Council (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

Rory Sherwood-Parkin presented the report and delivered a presentation providing an overview of the NECA area's economic recovery in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was noted that overall, there has been a strong economic bounce-back since the height of the pandemic, with the hospitality sector driving the GDP of the area back up. It was mentioned that the rate of these growths is beginning to slow as a backlog of demand accompanied with EU exit has led to inflationary pressures and worsening of supply chain issues, however overall, the current economic situation is better than forecasted by Bank of England.

It was explained that redundancies have spiked nationwide due in part to the end of the furlough scheme, the universal credit uplift, supply chain issues and Brexit trade barriers. As for unemployment, benefit claimant rates have spiked since the onset of the pandemic, however these rates have declined consistently since the start of the year. It was also noted that data suggests disadvantaged areas are not recovering as quickly as others.

It was noted that furlough and vacancy data suggest a labour market mismatch with record numbers of vacancies nationwide, suggesting a need for up-skilling and re-skilling support.

Business confidence was said to be high, however aforementioned inflationary pressures, supply chain shortages and staff vacancies were said to be impacting all sectors differently.

Attention was drawn to footfall levels in the NECA region, which were noted to be bouncing back despite remaining below pre-pandemic levels. This was attributed to office workforces continuing to work from home and students yet to return to University as of the time of data collection, however, it was noted that there is currently a strong night-time economy, aided by summer staycation boosts as hotels reopen. Members were informed that as footfall levels decline in towns, the focus of high streets must be reconsidered.

The Chair thanked Rory for his presentation, querying whether pre-existing inequalities had worsened during the pandemic. It was clarified that the data shown in the presentation could be used to support this argument.

Members expressed their concerns over staff shortages for public transport as staff cannot be trained quick enough to fill vacancies and many are being enticed by higher paying jobs elsewhere. In response, it was recommended that these issues are investigated to provide both short and long-term resolutions to promote jobs in the area and schemes which provide workers with the necessary skills for said jobs.

A member also raised concerns over the low footfall levels of shopping centres in the region and questioned what can be done to tackle this. The Government's proposed introduction of an online shopping tax was discussed in relation, however it was noted that shopping centres in the region are doing more to attract smaller independent businesses and restaurants as bigger chains close their stores.

Members went on to discuss other contemporary issues such as reassuring businesses suffering supply shortages, health and social care staff shortages and the effects of inflation to both the public and businesses.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report be noted and further data be collected.

6. DIGITAL EXCLUSION IN THE NORTH EAST

Submitted: Report of the Skills Director, North East LEP (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

In absence of Michelle Rainbow, the Chair led members through the report.

Attention was drawn to the executive summary of the report, which expressed concerns over digital exclusion in the North East and provided an overview on those most likely to be affected, accompanied with recommendations on how to overcome digital exclusion.

Ultimately it was resolved that Michelle Rainbow should be present in order for the report to be delivered effectively and the proposed recommendations properly discussed.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report be noted, and that Michelle Rainbow is to be requested to attend the next meeting to deliver the report.

7. FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

Gavin Armstrong presented the report which provided Members with the opportunity to consider items on the Forward Plan and the Work Programme of the Committee for 2020/21.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report be noted.

8. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

16 December 2021 at 2.00pm

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 16 December 2021
(2.00pm – 4.00pm)

Meeting held virtually on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Independent Members: Mr D Taylor-Gooby (Chair), Mr S Hart (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Eagle, Hall, Flynn, Lines, Snowdon

Also present: Michelle Rainbow (Skills Director, North East LEP)

Officers: Tom Hall, (Director of Public Health, South Tyneside), Stephen Gwilym (Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Durham County Council), Caroline O'Neill (Strategic Director of Children, Adults and Families, Gateshead Council), Angela Frisby (Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Gateshead Council), Eleanor Goodman (Finance Manager, NECA), Gavin Armstrong (Policy and Scrutiny Officer, NECA), Toby Ord (Strategy and Democratic Services Assistant, NECA)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Martin, Paul Darby, and Nicola Robason

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hall declared an interest in Item 7 as the Director of Prism Care (North East) CIC, a non-profit care provider. There was no subsequent inhibition to speak on the matter.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2021

This meeting was held informally via Microsoft Teams and therefore the previous minutes could not be ratified.

4. NECA BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23

Submitted: Report of the Chief Finance Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

NECA's Finance Manager delivered the report on the budget proposals for the fiscal year of 2022-2023.

It was noted that the forecasted deficit for the current year was around £9.6k, lower than currently expected. As for next years proposals, it was noted that the budget can be worked around staffing costs, and that contributions to the NECA Corporate Budget and the budget for fulfilment of the North East Joint Transport Committee can be maintained at the current level. Members were informed that no additional contributions will be requested from NECA constituencies, however these proposals will be subject to review from 2023-2024 onwards.

It was also noted that NECA should expect to receive more investment income, supported by the Bank of England's announcement of rising their interest rates from 0.1% to 0.25%. It was asserted that this will knock onto products available on the market. Members were made aware that there are prudent levels of reserves to hold against any unforeseen costs.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report be noted.

5. DIGITAL INCLUSION

Submitted: Report of the Skills Director, North East LEP (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Skills Director for the NELEP delivered the report which explored the issue of digital exclusion in the North East and provided an insight onto the significance of digital inclusion.

Digital exclusion was defined as having a lack of accessibility or the skills to utilise computer technology, technology said to be critical for accessing vital skills services and social contact. Members were made aware of research conducted by NELEP which found that exclusion is often caused by a lack of devices, connectivity, skills, confidence, or individual resistance, and it was noted that certain groups or communities are more likely to suffer from digital exclusion than others, most notably the elderly and the economically disadvantaged.

Attention was drawn to importance of digital inclusion in an education setting, with assertions that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to suffer academically when it comes to IT skills. It was noted that the onset of COVID-19 had exacerbated these issues with the closure of IT suites and public libraries, this was said to have caused further disparity in the learning gap causing many young people to fall behind. Despite this, it was stated that the requirement to have learning resources published online meant that missed content was easier to re-access resources at a later date.

It was noted that many private sector organisations have attempted to coordinate a response to the lack of connectivity or access to devices as both issues inhibit the ability to successfully apply for certain jobs. Continuing the subject of employment and digital capability, Members were made aware of research data from businesses and employers which indicated roughly a fifth of applicants lack basic IT skills, and following this it was noted that there exists a general lack of awareness regarding sourcing digital skills training. Furthermore, training that is available is not necessarily fit for purpose or specific to each applicable role; there appears to be a lack of coordinated activity in supplying such training, both at a regional and national level.

In conclusion, the Skills Director stated that the LEP's role is to continue to collect and provide intelligence, commissioning further research and setting clear, measurable objectives. Members were informed that the LEP aims to bring together stakeholders to secure funding and achieve said objectives. A business case will be prepared to put forward to the Government when possible, and recommendations will also be put forward to the House of Lords Youth Committee.

Following these discussions, the Skills Director requested that the Committee raise this issue where possible in order to raise awareness and attract stakeholders / funding. It was suggested that some evidence may be submitted to the Levelling Up White Paper in the possibility of sourcing funding.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted.

6. FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer presented the report which provided Members with the opportunity to consider items on the Forward Plan and the Work Programme of the Committee for 2021/22.

Members were informed that all current items have been considered. Should there be any further items for consideration then the Policy and Scrutiny Officer should be contacted.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report be noted.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE – WINTER PRESSURES

Submitted: Report of the Strategic Director of Children, Adults and Families, Gateshead Council (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Director of Public Health at South Tyneside Council opened the report which gave an insight into the current situation regarding COVID-19, specifically the new Omicron variant, in the North East.

It was stated that at this time there is great uncertainty regarding the new Omicron variant, as case numbers in the UK are rapidly rising. The chief concern was said to be the way the new variant's spread is translating through communities as opposed to foreign transport. Conceding that the variant is said to be milder than others, it was noted that a small proportion of cases could cause a large jolt given the way this variant is spreading.

Members were informed that there are currently many unknowns regarding the new variant, including the way vaccinations combat it; there are worries that the new variant may subvert the vaccine. The importance of regular lateral flow testing was emphasised as a precautionary approach. Visual data was presented to the board, showing that currently the rate of transmission is increasingly higher in the South as opposed to the North East, however as previously seen with other variants, this may quickly change.

At this time, it is suspected that around 6% of all COVID cases in the North East are Omicron, however case numbers are expected to rapidly deteriorate. As of 15 December, there are 99 confirmed cases of Omicron in the North East, nine of these are linked directly with foreign travel. Members were informed of the way in which Omicron cases are identified in patients using the 'S gene Target Failure' method. This method allows for predictions to be made on the number of prevalent Omicron cases and is used as a proxy marker to flag them.

The new variant is beginning to outcompete its Delta predecessor and was noted as being able to evade natural immunity. Two vaccine doses were previously stated to have 90% effectiveness at combatting COVID, however Omicron is said to reduce that effectiveness by 20-40x. A further booster jab is thought to elevate said effectiveness back up to 70-75%.

Further graphics were presented to the board to demonstrate the levels of administered vaccinations within the LA7 area and emphasis was placed on the importance of effective booster rollouts. Attention was drawn to recent 'Plan B' measures enacted by the Government which aim to minimise transmission while limiting restrictions on economic activity through enforcement of face masks on public transport and in supermarkets.

The Director of Public Health continued covering recent measures enacted by the Government, including the encouragement of working from home and raising the COVID Alert Level to 4, with a review point for further measures in early January. Members were also informed that it is now a legal requirement for all venues to receive COVID certification; all attendees of events over a certain threshold must provide either their COVID pass or proof of a negative lateral flow taken in the last 48 hours.

The Government and Local Authorities were said to have been in close contact with health bodies in England, and it was noted that the Government is keen to uphold face-to-face teaching in schools. Members were informed that it's vital the Local Authorities support the vaccine rollout wherever possible, suggesting that vaccine workforces will likely need to be redeployed. Council meetings currently must legally remain in person, however guidance is awaited from the Local Government Association, indicating there may be a legislative waive. It was also noted that there will be a push for clarification over the Contain Outbreak Management Fund before March 2022.

Issues were raised regarding low levels of public trust, as well as support for the vulnerable. There is also a lack of clarity on the extent or management of Plan B. Primary care colleagues are being freed up to administer boosters, however other areas of routine care management are being deprioritised. Members were advised that Local Authorities should work to support younger people receiving their vaccines and promote social measures. It was noted that there is ongoing work around the North East to encourage everyone to receive their jabs.

A member queried whether those being hospitalised are vaccinated, and it was stated that there are both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals being hospitalised in high dependency units, more data may become available in the future. Further questions were raised over vaccine efficacy against Omicron, however Members were informed that real world data will have to become more readily available in order to provide an accurate response. Members also queried the case for lateral flow testing when in close contact with someone who tests positive, to which was clarified by stating that a lateral flow can be taken each time leaving the house for seven days, so long as these return negative isolation is not necessary. It was also queried whether there was still a shortage of lateral flow tests, however it was made clear that there was not a shortage, but rather an error on the supplier's website. The Chair questioned whether it was possible to catch both strains of the virus, and where to access the COVID pass. In response, it was stated that repeat infection is a possibility, and the COVID passes may be accessed via the NHS app or online.

The Strategic Director of Children, Adults and Families at Gateshead Council delivered the latter part of the report which provided insight into the current situation regarding social care within the NECA region.

It was noted that there's currently a large demand for workers in the care sector, with 4.5k current vacancies which have remained a problem throughout 2021. 25% of the workforce is said to be on zero-hour contracts, with that number rising to 46% for domiciliary care. Private providers pay on average 39% less than the same roles in the public sector and NHS. The current turnover rates for care workers are 33%.

Due to the North East's level of health and financial inequality, many require health and social care at a younger age, and due to the increased modern lifespan, are receiving care for much longer. Subsequently, the requirement for such services is ever increasing. Further strains are being placed on the workforce due to the nature of the current labour market. While companies such as Amazon offer attractive welcome bonuses, it was stated that the care sector cannot match this but retained that care staff are invaluable.

The demand for care was said to be exacerbated by the pandemic as this causes further health inequalities, only being furthered by great urgency for patients to be discharged from hospital to free up beds. Brexit has also affected staffing levels as foreign care workers have had to leave their roles in order to return to their country of origin. Members were informed of the struggle to provide people with the care package they request, most wish to be cared for in their homes, however with the current strains put on the care sector, many are having to be admitted to care homes.

In order to attempt to use resources efficiently, it was noted that workforces are being realigned and redeployed to prioritise the neediest. Care firms are also asking family members to do what they can where possible, however safeguarding issues are starting to arise in light of this. Hardship payments are being made by the Local Authorities to sustain providers. The importance of vaccinating carers was stressed so that they are not forced to leave their roles in the name of protecting those they work with and ensuring quality remains high in care homes.

Members were informed that support is being gained from the voluntary sector and constant searches for funding are ongoing. Liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions has also been conducted in an attempt to fast track the recruitment process to get vacancies filled as quickly as possible.

It was noted that winter is always a hard time for the care sector; health conditions deteriorate, vulnerable people require more care, more staff are forced to isolate and adverse weather causes domiciliary care workers to leave their roles. Atop of this, it was asserted that care work often doesn't pay enough to support childcare causing workers to look elsewhere. These factors combined with inflation at a ten-year high were said to be pushing the care sector to its limit. The Government has approved a one-off payment to help with funding, yet this is said to be insufficient, working out at £190pp.

The Chair queried whether the Integrated Care System will ease integration with NHS services, however it was stated that it is still too early to comment on, although the onset of the pandemic has caused the NHS and social care sector to work more closely together. The Vice-Chair added that he believed there needs to be regional collaboration on the matter, promoting and raising the profile of campaigns to support and recruit to these sectors in need. Strategic Director of Children, Adults and Families built upon this, stating her wish to have a clear career path present in the care sector in order to attract young aspirers into roles.

Subsequent to the meeting, the Vice-Chair stated his wishes for a 'task and finish group' to be organised outside of the meeting regarding both Item 4 and 7 to allow us to garner a greater understanding on the matter at hand and subsequently take effective action. Members agreed to write around and ask for supporters, and for the Policy and Scrutiny Officer to write a short summary.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report and presentations be noted.

8. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

3 March 2022 at 2.00pm

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 3 March 2022
(2.05pm – 3.05pm)

Meeting held at: Mayor's Parlour, Sunderland City Hall, SR1 3AD

Present:

Independent Members: Mr S Hart (Chair)

Councillors: Snowdon

Also present:

Officers: Alice Wiseman (Director of Public Health, Gateshead Council), Stephen Gwilym (Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Durham County Council), Patsy O'Reagan (Principal Accountant, NECA), Gavin Armstrong (Policy and Scrutiny Officer, NECA), Toby Ord (Strategy and Democratic Services Assistant, NECA)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Taylor-Gooby, Cllr Coult, Cllr Eagle, Cllr Hall, Cllr Hood, Cllr Lines, Cllr MacKnight, Cllr Martin, Paul Darby and Nicola Robason

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2021

This meeting was inquorate and therefore minutes of the previous meeting could not be ratified.

4. FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer, NECA (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer delivered his regular work programme update, informing Members that the current format provided structure for the workings of the Committee. It was also clarified that this is a live document; should any items from Durham or other relevant authorities which require incorporation then the Policy and Scrutiny Officer should be contacted.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report be noted.

5. TACKLING INEQUALITIES IN THE NORTH EAST – A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Submitted: Report of the Director of Public Health, Gateshead Council (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Director of Public Health delivered a presentation which provided an overview of the impacts COVID-19 has had on inequality within the region. It was noted that many have been hit hard by the on-set of the pandemic, highlighting and exacerbating inequalities within our communities

It was noted that many approaches to improving public health often fail to acknowledge contributing circumstances, often associated with wellbeing as opposed to healthy living. Social inequalities were said to contribute to health and wellbeing; those more likely to have been required to go to work during lockdown are likely to have been the worst affected, and subsequently more susceptible to infection.

Reference was made to the Marmot Review multiple times, providing commentary on public health inequalities and their detriment to society as a whole; ill health drives poor productivity creating a cycle of poor health. It was stated that a national strategy should be built upon actions of citizens as opposed to Senior Officers imposing policy. The necessity of full public engagement was stressed throughout the meeting.

The collaboration of the LA7 was said to have put us in good stead for tackling further public health challenges, with authorities providing services such as the delivery of emergency food parcels and responding to thousands of special requests throughout the pandemic. During which, demand for child services had seen an increase in Gateshead, it was estimated that this demand was replicated throughout

the LA7. Members were also provided with anecdotal evidence of increasing levels of mental illness and chronic disease later in life, only exacerbated by cheap alcohol; deaths from alcoholic liver disease reached their highest yearly increase with the North East being the worst affected. Other impacts of the pandemic were said to include young people missing out on vital development and education, and it was noted unemployment is still yet to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels.

Members were told of some lessons that could be derived from the pandemic:

- i. Commit to the 6 policy objectives laid out by Marmot;
- ii. Tackle poverty and resource support for those experiencing financial struggles;
- iii. Ensure recovery focuses on prevention / early intervention;
- iv. Exercise prevention at all levels;
- v. Work with communities to understand their issues;
- vi. Harness power of community action without stifling;
- vii. Identify and evaluate mainstream service innovations developed during the pandemic

It was stated that our focus should be on living safely and fairly with covid to build a shared understanding of its impacts.

Members thanked the Director for her informative and comprehensive presentation, stating that issues covered resonate with the Committee. The aforementioned lessons were said to have fitted in well with the scrutiny processes. Members also offered appraisal for the empirical approach to these issues, as opposed to detached policy implementations.

Making reference to the proposed working group, the Chair requested that this be progressed outside the meeting to thoroughly examine the way in which opportunities are influenced. It was requested that invitations be sent out and sent back to our Durham representatives making sure that we have decent representation from all Members.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted.

6. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 July 2022

Subject: UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update

Report of: Corporate Lead for Policy and Insight

Executive Summary

UK Shared Prosperity Funds are the successor to European Regional Development and Social Funds. The NECA area has been provisionally allocated £66m across its four member authorities over 3 years (2022/23-2024/25).

The main focus of UKSPF is upon three themes: Communities & Place, Supporting Local Business and People & Skills, although the latter theme is not applicable until the final of the three years.

To unlock the allocation, each Local Authority is working on a Local Investment Plan to submit to Government by its 1st August deadline.

The presentation (which will be available on the day of the meeting) sets out the background to UKSPF, details the allocations (and how this compares to previous EU funding), describes the collaboration taking place between local authorities and updates on the approaches being taken by each council, the challenges therein and the next steps.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and presentation and recommended that a further update be provided later in the year.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Background Information

- 1.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Funds (UKSPF) are the successor to ERDF and ESF: £2.6bn fund over 3 years across UK, mostly revenue based (90% in 22/23, 80% in 24/25)

The primary goal of UKSPF is “to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK” aligning to Levelling Up White Paper missions.

UKSPF is devolved to Combined and Local Authorities; create local plans, manage and monitor spending.

There are no requirement for match funding, but encouraged and can mix delivery models (ie in house activity, procure or commission projects/programmes)

The Levelling Up White Paper set out that: “Lead authorities will be strongly encouraged to work with other districts, county or unitary authorities to agree and commission skills and employment activity.”

Each of the 4 NECA authorities working on their own Local Investment Plans, while also discussing regional collaboration.

These need to be submitted to Government by 1st August 2022. Government aims to approve Plans by October 2022 (and funding to then start).

2. Proposals

- 2.1 This report is a progress update and it is proposed a further update is provided later in the year.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

- 3.1 To keep NECA OSC updated on progress.

4. Alternative Options Available

- 4.1 None

5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Local Authorities to continue to work on Local Investment Plans and submit to Government by 1st August 2022.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6. Potential Impact on Objectives.

6.1 No implications arising from this report.

7. Financial and Other Resources Implications

7.1 No implications arising from this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9. Key Risks

9.1 Any key risks will be set out in the presentation.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

11. Crime and Disorder

11.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

12. Consultation/Engagement

12.1 This is not applicable.

13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 This is not applicable.

14. Appendices

14.1 There are no appendices.

15. Background Papers

15.1 There are no background papers.

16. Contact Officers

16.1 Rory Sherwood-Parkin, Corporate Lead – Policy & Insight, South Tyneside Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17. Sign off

- 17.1
 - Head of Paid Service: ✓
 - Monitoring Officer: ✓
 - Chief Finance Officer: ✓

18. Glossary

- 18.1 Not applicable.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 July 2022

Subject: Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update

Report of: Policy and Scrutiny officer

Executive Summary

This report provides members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to consider the items on the Forward Plan for the current 28-day period and discuss items for the Work Programme for 2022/23.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- i. Review the current Forward Plan and consider which items they may wish to examine in more detail;
- ii. Suggest any items for the Work Programme for 2022/23 that Members would wish to explore in more detail, either at the Committee or via a 'deep dive' or working group.
- iii. Note the contents of the Annual Work Programme update contained within the paper and consider how this work can build on that the NECA Local Authorities are undertaking.
- iv. To agree to the establishment of a working group to look into the following issue. Understanding current threats and pressures, and mitigations, to the delivery of strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosper and to deliver on economic development and regeneration ambitions.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Background Information

- 1.1 The Forward Plan is a document which NECA is required to maintain under the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017. The Forward Plan is published on NECA's website and lists the decisions that the North East Combined Authority intends to take in the coming months and must include all decisions to be made in the next 28 days.
- 1.2 The Forward Plan template contains specific information relating to each decision, including the date the decision will be made, a brief explanation of the topic, the consultation to be undertaken, and contact details of the author. The Forward Plan template has recently been updated and includes further information including if the decision is a 'Key Decision' and if an item will be discussed in private.
- 1.3 Details of each decision are included on the Forward Plan 28 days before the report is considered and any decision is taken. This supports the transparency of decision making within the Combined Authority and allows members of the public to see the items that will be discussed. There are special procedures for circumstances where publication for the full 28 clear day period is impractical or where there is special urgency. Both of these procedures involve the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

Role of Overview and Scrutiny

- 1.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee examine any decisions of the North East Combined Authority – be that by the principal decision-making body or a committee or officer holding delegated authority. This Scrutiny occurs in public and ensures democratic and public accountability.
- 1.5 One of the main functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the review and scrutiny of 'Key Decisions' made by the NECA Leadership Board and Officers of the Combined Authority. The relevant regulations set out a test for what should be considered a Key Decision – being those which are most significant in financial or other terms. This is explained in the Decision-Making Protocol adopted by the Committee on the 15 March 2018. At the inaugural meeting of the NECA Leadership Board on the 13 November, following the governance changes, it was agreed that the Decision Making Protocol would remain in place:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<https://northeastca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/NECA-Decision-Making-Protocol.pdf>

1.6 It is NECA’s practice to include formal decisions on the Forward Plan to maximise the opportunity for review and scrutiny. In considering items in the Forward Plan, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should determine which areas scrutiny can add most value to in relation to the decisions being made.

1.7 The Forward Plan at the date this paper was issued is published at:

<https://www.northeastca.gov.uk/committee-meetings/forward-plan>.

Update on Requests for Special Urgency / General Exception

1.8 In accordance with the Decision Making Protocol, it was agreed by Members that the request of any Short Notice Procedure that involved the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be reported at the next Committee. The table below shows the number of requests made since the last meeting was held:

Type of Short Notice Procedure	Number of Requests since previous Committee
Requests for Special Urgency	0
Request for General Exception	0

1.9 The table above reflects that there have been no requests for general exception and no requests for special urgency since the last Committee.

Annual Work Programme – Update

1.10 The most recent version of the work programme has been compiled to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to consider items that they have requested.

1.11 The work programme is also designed to give an overview of all performance, decision-taking and developments within the NECA, as well as being focused and flexible to allow for new issues and recognising the capacity of the scrutiny committee to respond in a timely way to emerging developments throughout the year. The Plan allows the Committee to take a longer-term view than the Forward Plan, adding a longer-term perspective to the Committee’s work. Advantages of a longer-term perspective is the opportunity to gain a deeper

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understanding of matters and to allow for more constructive engagement and scrutiny.

1.12 Members are also invited to comment and give consideration to any additional items they would wish to consider on their Work Programme or those decisions where they can add value.

1.13 The NECA thematic leads have been invited to present to the committee on activity and progress in these areas. The timings of these discussions are to be confirmed and will be in an updated work programme.

1.14 The proposed work programme included in appendix 1. It should be noted that the work programme covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude 'deeper dives' providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates. These topics can be raised with the Chair and Scrutiny Officer at any time.

1.15

The Committee requested that the Vice-Chair and officers consider the establishment of a Committee working group to look into the broader issue of understanding current threats and pressures, and mitigations, to the delivery of strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosper and to deliver on economic development and regeneration ambitions. A proposed approach to investigating this issue is included as Appendix 2 for the Committee's consideration.

2. Proposals

2.1 Committee Members are invited to review the Forward Plan for the current 28-day period – giving consideration to any items they may wish to examine in more detail – and to suggest any items for addition to the Annual Work Programme for 2022/23.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

3.1 To provide an opportunity for Committee members to input on any additional items as part of continued planning for the Work Programme for 2021/22.

4. Alternative Options Available

4.1 Option 1 – The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may review Forward Plan and suggest additional items for the Work Programme.

Option 2 – The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may choose not to review the Forward Plan or consider any additional items for the Work Programme.

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Option 1 is the recommended option.

5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

5.1 In considering the Forward Plan, Members are asked to consider those issues where the Scrutiny Committee could make a contribution and add value.

5.2 If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee determines to review or scrutinise a decision notified in the Forward Plan, a meeting of the Committee will be arranged to allow scrutiny members to carry out their role in a timely manner.

5.3 The work programme will be refreshed and updated at each meeting of the Committee throughout the year.

6. Potential Impact on Objectives

6.1 Development of a work programme and review and scrutiny of decisions in the Forward Plan will contribute towards the development and implementation of the policy framework of the NECA, the Joint Transport Committee and the North East LEP as well as providing appropriate challenge to decisions making.

7. Financial and Other Resources Implications

7.1 No financial or other resource implications are identified at this stage.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from these recommendations.

9. Key Risks

9.1 There are no key risks associated with the recommendations made in this report.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

11. Crime and Disorder

11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

12. Consultation/Engagement

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12.1 On-going consultation takes place with Officers and Scrutiny Members across the NECA in regard to the items for the Annual Work Programme as Appendix One.

13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 The proposals consider the wider impact and take into account the Principles of Decision Making as set out in the NECA Constitution. They allow Members consideration of the items on the Forward Plan and allow them the opportunity to have an overview of all performance, decision making and developments across NECA.

14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – Annual Work Programme Update

15. Background Papers

15.1 None.

16. Contact Officers

16.1 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

Email: gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk

Telephone Number: Tel No: (0191) 4247537

16.2 Nicola Robason, Deputy Monitoring Officer

Email: nicola.robason@southtyneside.gov.uk

Telephone Number: 0191 424 7186

17. Sign off

- 17.1
- ✓ Head of Paid Service
 - ✓ Monitoring Officer
 - ✓ Chief Finance Officer

18. Glossary

18.1 NECA - North East Combined Authority

North East LEP - North East Local Enterprise Partnership

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Appendix One

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

Standing Items for each Committee Meeting:

- Declaration of Interest
- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- NECA Forward Plan and Work Programme Report

Source of work programme and items of importance:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee obtains work programme items from the following sources:

- a) Items submitted by Members of the Committee (and including items referred by other members of the Combined Authority);
- b) Suggestions from NECA Chief Officers; Patrick Melia – Head of Paid Service, Nicola Robason – Deputy Monitoring Officer and Paul Darby – Chief Finance Officer
- c) The Budget and Policy Framework; Transport Plan and Strategic Economic Plan
- d) The Forward Plan;
- e) The Thematic Leads;
- f) Evidence for any policy review work of relevance to NECA

Items for future consideration (2022-2023)

Meeting Date	Subject
13 Oct 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back from Working Group - <i>To Examine the Potential for Increased Partnership Collaboration in the Delivery of NECA's Strategic Priorities</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Inequalities Update • Devolution – Potential Impacts on NECA (TBC) • Thematic update from portfolio lead (topic TBC – potentially comment from the Chair)
15 Dec 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic Updates from Portfolio Lead (topic TBC) • Update on UKSPF/ government funding and Skills agenda in NECA area • Update on Digital Exclusion
16 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic Updates from Portfolio Lead (topic TBC)

It should be noted that the work programme above covers items that will be discussed at the meetings. It does not preclude 'deeper dives' providing more focused scrutiny of particular topics by a sub-group of the committee outside of these meeting dates.

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Appendix Two – Proposed Establishment of Committee Working Group

Purpose and Intention

The NECA O&S Committee has an agreed focus on mitigating threats to the delivery of our strategic objectives primarily concerned with health and wellbeing, ability to work and prosperity (poverty) and to deliver its ambitions to targets for economic development and regeneration

The Committee is aware of the pressures within the recruitment and retention areas that support our essential services especially, but not limited to, the health and social care sector.

Background

From the NECA website:

Our ambition is to create the best possible conditions for growth in jobs, investment and living standards, making the North East an excellent place to live and work.

The North East Combined Authority has three portfolios to deliver this:

- [Transport](#)
- [Employability and Inclusion](#)
- [Economic Development, Digital Advisory Board](#)

The broader connections between health and well-being and economic prosperity was considered in the Selbie Report.

The joint NECA/NHS Commission for Health and Social Care Integration was established as part of the proposed devolution deal agreed between NECA and central government in September 2015. This recognised that despite having strong health and care services across the region and life expectancy increasing faster than other parts of the country, there are still too many residents suffering from poor health and wellbeing, with many unable to work and trapped in a cycle of poverty.

With the region considering how best to recover from the multiple impacts of the COVID pandemic on the region it is important to take a system based approach and look at the interdependencies that can be best used for improvements.

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Our focus therefore could be on creating a Partnership understanding of current threats and pressures with a view to encouraging greater collaboration and reduce potential for unintended consequences.

A potential working title for the work could be *To Examine the Potential for Increased Partnership Collaboration in the Delivery of NECA's Strategic Priorities.*

Proposed stages of work

Stage 1

Governance

- to assemble a work group of NECA officers and Members
- establish agreed terms of reference for the project
- agree time commitment and timescales for reporting
- determine external contributors invited to take part and give evidence

Key Lines of Enquiry

- Understanding the current pressures associated with recruitment and retention within essential services such as vacancies, absence levels
- The impact on accessibility and important considerations such as timeliness (such as, waiting times, assessment and treatment)
- Particular focus on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health
- Being safe
- The COVID-19 Factor especially in relation to retention
- The extent this is limiting ability to work and learn
- The interdependencies across essential services eg health and social care, education and learning, transport
- The impact on development and economic regeneration
- Proactivity and steps to mitigation

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Stage 2

Gathering Evidence likely contributors

- NHS England (Regional organisations)
- Public Health Directors and other relevant LA directors (eg Directors of Adult and Child Social Care)
- Primary Care
- Social Care (Children and Adults)
- Independent Care Sector
- HE/FE & Schools
- Transport North East
- Local Employers Assns
- Trade Unions

Stage 3

- Analysis of the evidence

Stage 4

- The work group reach conclusions
- Drafting the report
- Consultation and sign off

Stage 5

- Presentation to Leadership Group



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- Consideration to publish