



North East Combined Authority

DURHAM • GATESHEAD • SOUTH TYNESIDE • SUNDERLAND

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 15 December 2022 at 2.00pm

Meeting to be held at: Committee Room 1, Sunderland City Hall, SR1 3DP

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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 previous meeting held on 7 July 2022 **1-6**

Minutes for approval as a correct record.

4. North East Local Enterprise Partnership – Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy **7-14**

5. Working Group Update **15-20**

6. Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update **21-30**

7. NECA Budget Proposals 2023/24 **31-42**

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting: 16 March 2023 at 2.00pm.

Contact Officer: Toby Ord
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North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 July 2022
(2.00pm – 3.30pm)

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

Present:

Independent Members: Mr S Hart (Chair)

Councillors: Deinali, Eagle, Flynn, Snowdon, Wallace, Hall (attended as member of public)

Also present:

Officers: James Garland (Principal Funding & Commercial Officer - Sunderland City Council), Stephen Gwilym (Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Durham County Council), 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 Amar, Cllr Beadle, Cllr Doyle, Cllr Elmer, Cllr Kilgour, Cllr Shaw, Paul Darby, and Nicola Robason.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2021

Approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2021

Approved as a correct record.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2022

Approved as a correct record. Councillor Snowdon requested that her commendations for the presentation delivered by the Director of Public Health at Gateshead be put on record.

6. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

Submitted: Report of Corporate Lead for Policy and Insight (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Principal Funding & Commercial Officer delivered the presentation on behalf of the Corporate Lead for Policy and Insight which provided an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Members were informed of the Governments announcement of the EU funding programme replacement, with it having taken 4-5 years for details to relay under the UKSPF banner. It was noted that each Local Authority is drafting their own investment plan to utilise their allocations. It was also noted that £2.6bn has been pledged over a three-year term, with each Authorities allocation doubling in the second year and almost tripling in the third. The primary goal of said funding is to establish pride and a sense of community through the deployment of local projects.

It was stated that there are no requirements for matched funding where the UKSPF is concerned, which often caused projects to stall under EU predecessors, leaving delivery options open to each lead authority. The UK prospectus was said to have a wide range of interventions, with each area being able to select whichever best suits the focusses of their investment plan. The Principal Funding & Commercial Officer went on to deliver a short summary of these interventions covering three main investment priorities:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Businesses
- People and Skills

These priorities were said to be much broader compared to former programmes, allowing communities more flexibility in investing their allocations. The objectives of supporting local businesses include supporting local start-ups in order to create jobs and boost community cohesion, create inward investment, new export opportunities and lay business foundations within respective regions. Under the people and skills umbrella, funding looks to support those who are economically inactive and focus on workforce development to plug gaps in the economy such as low-carbon and green skills.

Members were informed that the UKSPF is a short-term programme with little certainty beyond March 2025, however it is predicted that lots of projects will be operational by 2024/25. It was noted that the Industrial Communities Alliance (ICA) were committed to ensuring the North East receives its fair share of funding - under the European Structural Funds (ESIF), the North and Midlands combined received 64% of total funding, something which is to be replicated under UKSPF.

The ICA have concluded that they can't draw comparisons between new and former programmes until the former European programmes have come to an end by 2024/25. It was also noted that as former programmes begin to wind down, funding received from the UKSPF begins to ramp up. Sunderland's allocation was said to have been slightly reduced due to the prosperity of the localised automotive industry. Durham and Tees Valley both had 'transition status' under the EDRF and therefore received a higher allocation due to higher gross domestic product per capita.

There was said to have been close collaboration between the LA7 area and the LEP, with much discussion over investment priority leads over the three aforementioned areas. Each area was said to have its own accountability and oversight. Investment plans from each Local Authority need to be finalised and submitted to the Government by 1 August 2022. Confirmation of approval is expected back by October 2022. Each Authority is expected to produce a detailed plan to be shared with constituents, publishable following approval.

It was conceded that challenges do exist regarding timeframes, with a tight timeline for spending post-approval in 2022. It was stressed that decent progress in the voluntary sector and that we do not want to see this come to an end.

Members queried whether funding allocations will coincide with future devolution funding, though it was clarified that all further devolution deals would be an addition to money received from the UKSPF and may also add value to supported activities within the region.

The likelihood of investment plans being denied approval was also questioned. It was clarified that allocations are conditional to appropriate investment plans; as long as plans shows strong engagement, meet strategic objectives and successful identification of local priorities and challenges, then approval is not expected to be an issue. Should the Government return to request further clarification on some details of presented plans then these will go back individually strengthened.

Lastly, the order of collaboration between Authorities was also queried. It was clarified that regional Chief Executives have been consulted to agree a regional framework. We take this forward to identify subsets of each priority and identify room for collaboration on each matter. Where we share priorities, we can move forward together.

A further update report will be presented at the next meeting.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted.

7. 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.

A short presentation was also delivered providing a brief update on the role of the Committee and the responsibility of it's Members. A succinct recap of the content included:

- OSC exists to hold NECA to account and uphold public confidence in decisions
- Members of OSC are conduits to reaching members of public of each authority
- OSC focusses on wider strategic and discusses whether they are worth investigating

The Chair suggested requesting the regular return of Council Leaders to the Committee in order to gauge their interest on certain topics. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that Leaders have been consulted and are keen to return.

One Member asserted that the 'Devolution – Potential Impacts on NECA' report listed on the work programme should be a top priority for the upcoming meeting.

Members were also made aware that an outstanding action from December's meeting which called for a working group to be set up consisting of four initial members of the Committee be undertaken. It was clarified that the group had to consist of OSC Members, Primary or Substitute, and evidence from Members of other Committees may also be collected.

Councillors Deinali, Flynn, Hall, and Snowden volunteered. It should also be noted that Councillor Kilgour informed the Chair of her intent to partake in the group outside of the meeting.

AGREED – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted.
- ii. the working group be set up with the aforementioned core members and continued outside of meeting.

8. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

13 October 2022 at 2.00pm.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 15 December 2022

Subject: North East Local Enterprise Partnership – Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy

Report of: Eleanor Haisell - Programme Manager, Skills Team North East LEP

Executive Summary

Recent research by [NELEP](#) and [IPPR North](#) has shown that the North East has the highest levels of digital exclusion across the country. This research identified the communities most at risk of digital exclusion, and the types of intervention required to tackle digital exclusion. These categories can be found in Appendix 1.

The strategy is designed to support lead delivery organisations to access funding from the UK from regional and national funding streams such as UKSPF. The strategy will be supported by a database of provision across the North East, and a template business case for local authorities to use.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Background Information

- 1.1 This document sets out a digital inclusion strategy for the North East, commissioned by the North East LEP. This work was contracted to [MH&A](#), who have developed the strategy

2 Overview

- 2.1 Recent research by [NELEP](#) and [IPPR North](#) has shown that the North East has the highest levels of digital exclusion across the country. This research identified the communities most at risk of digital exclusion, and the types of intervention required to tackle digital exclusion. These categories can be found in Appendix 1.

- 2.2 This strategy is designed to support lead delivery organisations to access funding from the UK from regional and national funding streams. This includes future waves of UKSPF, which identified digital inclusion outputs and measurements aligned to mission 1 (pay, employment and productivity) and mission 6 (high quality skills training). The strategy is supported by a database of provision across the North East, and a template business case

2.3 Development of the strategy

To develop the strategy:

- Evidence around digital exclusion in the North East was reviewed.
- Requirements for UKSPF funding were analysed and priorities identified.
- 8 consultation sessions were held with 55 representatives from Combined Authorities, councils, service providers and voluntary sector organisations.
- Provision mapping was conducted via a survey, and supplemented with desk research (ongoing).

2.4 Consultation findings

The consultation with local organisations found that:

- Provision across the North East is primarily focused on skills development and targets economically underactive groups (without a job, lower qualifications, lower income).
- There is little provision specifically designed for other at-risk groups, especially people with disabilities and people in rural locations.
- Covid-19 accelerated provision of devices to communities, but organisations are now struggling to maintain and track the provision of devices that were purchased to meet need during the lockdowns.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Front line services e.g. libraries have an important role to play in ensuring all people in the North East have access to connectivity and devices.
- Providers struggle to market digital services effectively, especially to people who cannot be reached through digital marketing channels.

2.5 Providers also told us that an effective digital inclusion strategy would need to:

- Establish a central definition of digital inclusion, with clear goals and targets.
- Provide a central coordinating function; there is very little awareness of the different types of provision and opportunity for signposting.
- Provide scaffolding for individuals to progress through a digital inclusion journey, ensuring basic needs are met continuously (e.g. access to an appropriate device).

Support the lifecycle of support and maintenance for devices

2.6 Digital inclusion strategy

The digital inclusion strategy has been designed as a six-stage scaffolded journey, which sets out clear minimum standards and aligns with the missions of the UKSPF missions and outcomes.

Stage	Priority area	Actions
1	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined and deliver a minimum standard of internet connectivity • Advocate for improved infrastructure and work with central government, telecommunications providers to seek opportunities for innovative provision e.g. 5G test beds
2	Devices and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure residents are digitally excluded due to lack of appropriate devices for needs • Ensure a thorough understanding of needs and requirements, through wraparound assessment and set up support • Maintain a physical and digital infrastructure across the region

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3	Appropriate intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of the trigger points that will bring a user in front of a service, and use this to develop effective triage and signposting • Work with other providers and partners across the public sector to ensure digital exclusion does not affect access to key services e.g. support in GP surgeries to ensure residents can use digital services
4	Basic skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all residents have access to and can be assessed for basic digital skills, as outlined in the National Standard for Digital Skills • Use this set of skills as a baseline for building advanced skills to support economic growth priorities across the North East
5	Skills for digital inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners and providers to ensure a clear and shared understanding of a minimum skill level • Ensure all residents can access the digital skills required for employment and can access support and training to become economically active
6	Skills for growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents should understand the opportunities to develop advanced skills and how digital skills intersect • Economic growth plans and skills plans for the North East should have a dedicated focus on what digital skills are required and what pathways for skills development will be available

2. Proposals

2.1 There are no proposals being put forward as the presentation is for information and discussion.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

3.1 Not applicable.

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4. Alternative Options Available

4.1 Not applicable

5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Potential Impact on Objectives

6.1 Will provide a proposed approach and framework that NECA constituent authorities can use for economic development and inclusion in their areas.

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

12.1 Significant engagement with relevant officers across local authorities in the NECA area and across the region.

13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 None

14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – Target groups and interventions is included at the end of this report.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15. Background Papers

15.1 None

16. Contact Officers

16.1 Eleanor Haisell, Programme Manager, Skills Team North East LEP
eleanor.haisell@nelep.co.uk

16.2 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Email: gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk

17. Sign off

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

18. Glossary

18.1 None

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 1

Target groups and interventions

Table 1: communities most at risk of digital exclusion

Communities most at risk
People with disabilities
Homeless people
Older people
People in a rural location
People in social housing
People without a job
People on lower incomes
People with lower qualifications
People who do not have English as a first language

Table 2: Types of intervention required

Types of intervention required
Connectivity
Devices
Developing skills
Improving confidence
Overcoming resistance

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 15 December 2022
Subject: Working Group Update
Report of: Policy and Scrutiny Officer

Executive Summary

This report provides members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update from the working group on to understand the 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.

Senior health and social care and economic officers from across the NECA area and wider region have meet to establish common areas of priority that will help address health inequalities in the region.

The results of this work will form part of the evidence base for the ongoing project throughout the year. The key dates and phases of work are outlined in the paper.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Background Information

- 1.1 At the 7 July 2022 the Committee discussed growing pressures within the recruitment and retention areas that support our essential services especially, but not limited to, the health and social care sector.
- 1.2 The Committee agreed that the Vice-Chair and officers establish 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.

Working group activity

- 1.3 The Committee working group met on 21 July 2022 to confirm the process and requirements of the work to understand the 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.
- 1.4 The working group noted that 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. And that the focus would be on creating a Partnership understanding of current threats and pressures with a view to encouraging greater collaboration and reduce potential for unintended consequences.
- 1.5 The working group confirmed the key lines of enquiry and types of evidence that will be used as well as key officer support. It was confirmed that the group would draw on as much information as possible from existing pieces of work to avoid 'reinventing the wheel' while acknowledging the need to examine evidence with the appropriate lens for this piece of work.
- 1.6 The working group discussed key risks to the project and the proposed governance of the group. The working group agreed that it should be chaired by the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that there should be regular updates to the full committee.
- 1.7 Since this discussion senior officers from across the region have met to determine common areas of priority that will help address health inequalities in the region and agree key areas of joint action collectively which could focus on community wealth building, mental health.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 1.8 Key contact officers have been agreed from health and social care (Amanda Healy DPH Durham, Alice Wiseman DPH Gateshead) and economic development (George Mansbridge – ED South Tyneside, Sarah McMillian Northumberland) in the local authorities and work is ongoing to determine key actions in the context of an increasingly challenging economic environment.
- 1.9 There is ongoing work looking at the added value public health and economic development can add to each other and how current economic development workstreams can support work to address health inequalities. This will relate to both work local Councils can do directly in their authority, NHS Trusts and in the wider business sector through activities such as the Better Health at Work Award.
- 1.10 Local authorities are sharing good practice from local inclusive economic strategies and how we focus on the inclusive element and increase skills and use intelligence to focus work appropriately
- 1.11 Work will continue and a further update will be brought to the Committee in December 2022.
- 1.12 Table 2 below outlines the timing to the phases of work for the project.
 It is expected that phases will need to run concurrently with feedback loops informing further questions and evidence as the project progresses

Table 2 – Timing to phases of work

Phase	Status	Completed by	Deliverable
1. Project initiation	Completed	July 2022	Working group established and project endorsed
2. Evidence Gathering	Ongoing	Sept 2022 to Feb 2023	Update to formal OSC in March 2023
3. Evidence Analysis	Starting	Jan to April 2023	Update to formal OSC in March

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4. Conclusions and draft reporting	Yet to start	May to July 2023	Presentation, discussion and endorsement at informal working group/ full OSC June 23
5. Presentation to Leadership Group	Yet to start	July 2023	

2. Proposals

2.1 There are no proposals

3. Reasons for the Proposals

3.1 Not applicable

4. Alternative Options Available

4.1 Not applicable

5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

5.1 The Committee working group will continue to meet as the project progresses and will provide updates to each formal Committee meeting.

6. Potential Impact on Objectives

6.1 No direct impact on objectives

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

12.1 On-going consultation takes place with Officers and Scrutiny Members.

13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 Not applicable

14. Appendices

14.1 Not applicable

15. Background Papers

15.1 NECA OSC 7 July 2022 - Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme Update

16. Contact Officers

16.1 Gavin Armstrong, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

16.2 Email: gavin.armstrong@northeastca.gov.uk

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 15 December 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. 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.

Working group update

1.10 At the 7 July 2022 the Committee discussed growing pressures within the recruitment and retention areas that support our essential services especially, but not limited to, the health and social care sector and requested that a working group was established to look into it.

1.11 The OSC working group met on 21 July to confirm the process and requirements of the work to understand the 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

- 1.12 Since this discussion senior officers from across the region have met to determine common areas of priority for action that will help address health inequalities in the region. These include key areas of joint action collectively which could focus on community wealth building, mental health. Key contact officers have been agreed from health and social care and economic development in the local authorities and work is ongoing to determine key actions in the context of an increasingly challenging economic environment.
- 1.13 This has included sharing of good practice from local inclusive economic strategies and how we focus on the inclusive element and increase skills and use intelligence to focus work appropriately.
- 1.14 Clarity on how some of the region's health challenges impact on the economy will be a key outcome of this work, recognising the 'different languages' across the disciplines and to support a joint understanding of the inter-dependencies between the two agendas.
- 1.15 Work will continue and a further update will be brought to the working group in the coming months and the Committee at its March 2023 meeting.
- 1.16 **Annual Work Programme**
- 1.17 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.
- 1.18 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 understanding of matters and to allow for more constructive engagement and scrutiny.
- 1.19 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.
- 1.20 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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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.

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 2022/23.

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.

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 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**
- 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**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 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
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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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Items for future consideration (2022-2023)

Meeting Date	Subject
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution – Potential Impacts on NECA (this item may require a special OSC meeting earlier than March 2023) • Thematic Update from a Portfolio Leader • Report back from Working Group – Evidence gathering and Analysis
June/July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic Updates from Portfolio Leaders • Report back from Working Group – Conclusions and draft reporting

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.

1. Background Information

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposals for the 2023/24 NECA budget, as part of the consultation process. The report on the draft budget was presented to the Leadership Board on 29 November and is attached to this report.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 The draft budget proposals for 2023/24 are set out in the report attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Key proposals presented to the NECA Leadership Board on 29 November include:
- a) The contribution from the NECA constituent authorities to NECA corporate costs to be maintained at £25,000 per authority next year. This will need to be reviewed for future years.
 - b) The £70,000 contribution towards the costs of the JTC Accountable Body role is continued in 2023/24 through an equal contribution of £10,000 from the seven local authority members of the JTC. This will need to be reviewed for future years.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

- 3.1 As part of the process for setting its budget, NECA must ensure appropriate and effective consultation takes place with all Members and other stakeholders on the content of the Budget. This includes consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and this report provides an opportunity for such consultation to take place.

4. Alternative Options Available

- 4.1 This report is presented for information.

5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Comments made as part of the consultation process will be considered in the development of the final, detailed budget proposals for 2023/24 which will be presented to the NECA Leadership Board for approval in January 2023.

6. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 6.1 There are no impacts on objectives arising from this report.

7. Financial and Other Resources Implications

- 7.1 The financial and other resource implications are set out in detail in the individual reports contained as appendices.

8. Legal Implications

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 15 December 2022
Subject: NECA Budget Proposals 2023/24
Report of: Chief Finance Officer

Executive Summary

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the NECA Budget Proposals for 2023/24 and future years as part of the budget consultation process.

A report on the draft 2023/24 Budget was presented to the Leadership Board on 29 November 2022. That report is attached as an appendix to this report for consideration and comment. Included in the report is an updated forecast of outturn for the current year against the budget agreed in February 2022.

The report sets out that the forecast for the 2022/23 financial year is a small deficit of approximately £2,600, in line with earlier estimates presented to the Leadership Board which will be funded by Tyne Tunnels reserves. The report highlights that budget proposals for 2023/24 are in line with the forecasts set out as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by the Leadership Board in February 2022.

Contributions to the NECA Corporate Budget and the NECA budget for fulfilment of the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) Accountable Body role will be maintained at the current levels of £25,000 and £10,000 respectively per authority for 2023/24, although these will be subject to review for 2024/25 onwards.

The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be considered in the development of the final budget report and reported to the NECA Leadership Board when it sets the budgets for 2023/24 at its meeting in January 2023.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to receive the report for information and provide comment for consideration as part of the consultation process.

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9. Key Risks

9.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 There are no 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. Addressing Geographic Diversity

12.1 Proposals relate to the costs of operating NECA as a Corporate entity and carrying out its accountable body role. There are no geographic diversity implications arising from this report.

13. Climate Change/Environmental Sustainability

13.1 There are no climate change or environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

14. Consultation/Engagement

14.1 The budget is subject to a period of consultation which includes this committee as well as other committees of NECA, constituent local authorities and officer groups.

15. Other Impact of the Proposals

15.1 There are no other impacts arising from this report which is for information.

16. Appendices

16.1 Appendix 1: NECA Leadership Board 29 November 2022 – 2023/24 NECA Corporate Proposals

17. Background Papers

17.1 None

18. Contact Officers

18.1 Eleanor Goodman, NECA Finance Manager;
Eleanor.goodman@northeastca.gov.uk; 0191 433 3860

19. Sign off

- Head of Paid Service: ✓

- Monitoring Officer: ✓
- Chief Finance Officer: ✓

Leadership Board

Date: 29 November 2022
Subject: NECA Budget 2023/24
Report of: Chief Finance Officer

Executive Summary

This report sets out budget proposals for 2023/24 for consultation, and indicative estimates of the period 2024/25-2025/26, along with an updated forecast of outturn for 2022/23. The budget proposals will be subject to further consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and presented to the Leadership Board at its meeting in January 2023 for approval.

In line with the estimates presented to the Leadership Board at its last meeting, the forecast for the 2022/23 financial year is for a small deficit of approximately £2,600, largely in line with the original budget for the year. Interest income on short term investments is forecast to be higher than the original budget for the year which offsets additional costs on Service Level Agreements for the provision of support to NECA which are forecast to be higher than the original budget.

The report highlights that budget proposals for 2023/24 are in line with the forecasts set out as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) presented to the Leadership Board in February 2022.

Contributions to the NECA Corporate Budget and the NECA Budget for fulfilment of the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) Accountable Body role will be maintained at the current levels of £25,000 and £10,000 respectively for 2023/24, although these will be subject to review for 2024/25 onwards.

Recommendations

The Leadership Board is recommended to:

- i. Receive this report for consideration;
- ii. Note the updated forecast of outturn for 2022/23;
- iii. Agree the following proposals that are set out for the basis of consultation on the 2023/24 NECA Revenue budget:
 - a. That contributions to the NECA Corporate budget from NECA constituent authorities be maintained at the current level of £25,000 per council (total £100,000);

Leadership Board

- b. That contributions to the JTC Accountable Body role from JTC Constituent authorities be maintained at the current level of £10,000 per council (total £70,000).

Leadership Board

1. Background Information

- 1.1 A report was presented to the Leadership Board in October setting out the draft proposals for 2023/24 and future years and the updated forecast of outturn for the current financial year, 2022/23.
- 1.2 In line with the budget-setting timetable agreed by the Leadership Board in July 2022, this report sets out budget proposals for the NECA Corporate budget and the Accountable Body budget for the provision of this role for the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC). The draft proposals have been revised for new information since the last report and this report now presents the proposals which will be subject to consultation in line with the NECA constitution.

2. Proposals

2022/23 Forecast of Outturn

- 2.1 The NECA budget for corporate costs is required to support operational costs including staff employed by NECA, Service Level Agreements (SLAs), independent members allowances and expenses, and supplies and services costs. The report to the Leadership Board on 1 February 2022 set a net NECA Corporate budget for 2022/23 of £212,390 which provided for NECA corporate capacity and to fulfil the JTC Accountable Body role. This is funded from contributions from NECA constituent authorities totalling £100,000 (£25,000 per authority), contributions from JTC constituent authorities totalling £70,000 (£10,000 per authority) and interest income on short term investments. The budget was revised in July to account for expenditure in relation to the North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP) region-wide development programme. Income for this expenditure is recovered from the four constituent local authorities so the impact on NECA's net budget is nil.
- 2.2 Interest rates have increased significantly during the year from historically low levels of 0.1% to the current Bank of England base rate of 3%. This has had a positive impact on the level of interest the authority has been able to achieve on its investments, part of which contributes to the budgets in this report.
- 2.3 Accordingly, the forecast for investment income receivable in 2022/23 is forecast to be in excess of the budget set for the year in February 2022. This offsets increased costs in relation to Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and supplies and services.
- 2.4 Staffing costs have been updated to reflect changes to the rates of National Insurance from November 2022 following the mini-budget in September 2022.
- 2.5 The forecast has been updated on the most recent information and is set out in the table below.

Leadership Board

	NECA Corporate		JTC Accountable Body	
	2022/23 Original Budget	2022/23 Forecast	2022/23 Original Budget	2022/23 Forecast
Employees	54,510	51,030	13,340	13,589
Service Level Agreements	54,060	69,770	76,330	77,670
Independent Members Allowances and expenses	6,500	6,100	0	0
Supplies and Services	7,560	10,674	0	0
NESIP	0	633,924	0	0
Total Expenditure	122,630	771,498	89,670	91,259
NECA Corporate Contributions	(100,000)	(100,000)	0	0
JTC Accountable Body Contributions	0	0	(70,000)	(70,000)
Interest Income	(20,000)	(35,000)	(19,000)	(21,000)
NESIP	0	(633,924)	0	0
Total Income	(120,000)	(768,924)	(89,000)	(91,000)
Net deficit to fund from reserves	2,630	2,574	670	259

Budget Proposals 2023/24 and Estimates for 2024/25 and 2025/26

- 2.6 Appendix 1 sets out the proposed budget for 2023/24, along with Medium Term Financial Strategy estimates for 2024/25 and 2025/26. The constituent authorities contributions to the NECA Corporate Budget and to the NECA budget for fulfilment of the JTC Accountable Body role are included at the current levels of £25,000 and £10,000 respectively for 2023/24, however these will need to be subject to review for 2024/25 onwards and is dependent upon investment income being maintained at the rates achieved in 2022/23 and balances held being at a sufficient level.
- 2.7 The proposals set out for consultation are largely in line with draft proposals reported to the Leadership Board in October but have been updated for the latest available information. Since the last report, the mini budget confirmed that the 1.25% increase in National Insurance payable by employees and employers would be reversed with effect from November 2022.
- 2.8 In October, a press release from Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) announced the outcome of its procurement of audit services for the next appointing period spanning the audits from 2023/24 to 2027/28. Contracts have now been awarded for 99.5% of the audit work which was bid for. However, the bid prices

Leadership Board

received by PSAA reflected a significant increase compared to the previous procurement in 2017, as a result of major challenges in the local audit sector in the intervening period. Therefore PSAA have advised bodies to anticipate a major re-set of total fees for 2023/24, involving and increase in the order of 150% on the total fees for 2022/23. The actual total fees will depend on the amount of work required. NECA and JTC budgets have been updated to anticipate an increase in audit fees of approximately £30k from 2023/24 onwards. PSAA have raised with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) their concern that this likely increase in audit fees will pose a significant challenge to local bodies already facing a range of financial pressures.

Reserves

- 2.9 The NECA Corporate Reserve was £0.419m at 1 April 2022. After funding the small deficit forecast for 2022/23, this reserve is forecast to be £0.416m at 31 March 2023. Based on current budgets, this is considered a prudent level of reserves to hold to mitigate against unforeseen costs which may arise specifically in relation to this area of the budget.
- 2.10 Separate reserves are held for Transport activity (including Nexus and the Tyne Tunnels), and decisions on these reserves will be taken by the JTC as part of its own budget considerations.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

- 3.1 This report sets out budget proposals for 2023/24 for the NECA Corporate budget, including fulfilment of its Accountable Body role for the JTC.
- 3.2 The report identifies that NECA Corporate contributions will be maintained at £25,000 per authority and contributions to the JTC Accountable Body role will be maintained at £10,000 per authority in 2023/24 and will be reviewed for 2024/25.

4. Alternative Options Available

- 4.1 The Leadership Board is recommended to agree to the proposals set out being taken forward for consultation and, taking into account comments raised as part of the consultation, presented to the Leadership Board for agreement in January 2023.
Alternatively, the Leadership Board may put forward alternative proposals to be consulted upon.

5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 The NECA Constitution requires that consultation on budget proposals be undertaken at least two months prior to the budget being agreed. The proposals will be subject to consultation with the Leadership Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and officer groups. The results of the consultation will be taken into account in the preparation of

Leadership Board

the final budget proposals presented to the Leadership Board for agreement at its meeting in January 2023.

6. Potential Impact on Objectives

6.1 The budget and medium-term financial strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 has been and will continue to be prepared to reflect the objectives of the Authority and feedback from constituent authorities. Future reports will set out the revenue and capital budget proposals in detail for agreement that will help deliver the objectives of the Authority.

7. Financial and Other Resources Implications

7.1 The financial and other resources implications are set out in the main body of the report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 The budget must be approved unanimously in accordance with the requirements of the NECA Order and the NECA Constitution.

9. Key Risks

9.1 Appropriate risk management arrangements are put in place in each budget area by the delivery agencies responsible. Reserves are maintained to help manage financial risk to the authority.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 There are no 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

12.1 There are no consultation requirements arising from this report.

13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 There are no other impacts arising from these proposals.

14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 – NECA Corporate and JTC Accountable Body Budget estimates 2023/24-2025/26

Leadership Board

15. Background Papers

15.1 NECA Constitution

16. Contact Officers

16.1 Eleanor Goodman, NECA Finance Manager,
Eleanor.goodman@northeastca.gov.uk, 0191 433 3860

17. Sign Off

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

Leadership Board

Appendix 1 – NECA Corporate and JTC Accountable Body Budget Proposals 2023/24-2025/26

	2023/24 Proposed Budget			2024/25 Draft Budget			2025/26 Draft Budget		
	NECA Corporate	JTC Accountable Body	Total	NECA Corporate	JTC Accountable Body	Total	NECA Corporate	JTC Accountable Body	Total
Expenditure									
Employees	54,550	15,220	69,770	56,730	15,830	72,560	59,000	16,460	75,460
Service Level Agreements	55,400	77,670	133,070	57,060	80,000	137,060	58,770	82,400	141,170
Independent Members Allowances	6,500	0	6,500	6,500	0	6,500	6,500	0	6,500
Supplies and Services									
NESIP	642,610	0	642,610	821,430	0	821,430	820,390	0	820,390
Total Expenditure	781,020	92,890	873,910	964,120	95,830	1,059,950	967,510	98,860	1,066,370
Income									
NECA Corporate Contributions	(100,000)	0	(100,000)	(100,000)	0	(100,000)	(100,000)	0	(100,000)
JTC Accountable Body Contributions	0	(70,000)	(70,000)	0	(70,000)	(70,000)	0	(70,000)	(70,000)
NESIP	(642,610)	0	(642,610)	(821,430)	0	(821,430)	(820,390)	0	(820,390)
Interest Income	(38,410)	(22,890)	(61,300)	(42,690)	(25,830)	(68,520)	(47,120)	(28,860)	(75,980)
Total Income	(777,610)	(90,000)	(867,610)	(961,430)	(95,000)	(1,056,430)	(960,390)	(98,000)	(1,058,390)
Net (to)/from Corporate Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0