

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

APPROVED MINUTES

15 March 2018

(10.00 am - 12.30 pm)

Meeting held County Hall, Durham, County Durham, DH1 5UL

Present:

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

Councillors: R Crute, J Eagle, N Weatherley, S Graham, R Dodd, B Flux,
J Amar, W Flynn, N Wright, D Snowdon, M Clarke and G Stone

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Patterson (Durham), Glindon (North Tyneside) and Lower (Newcastle).

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Eagle declared an interest as an employee of Nexus and informed Committee that dispensation had been granted for him to take part in discussions of transport related items but he would not be voting in decision making.

34 MINUTES OF 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

35 NOTES OF INQUORATE MEETING 14 DECEMBER 2017

The notes of the inquorate meeting held on 14 December 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

36 NOTES OF INQUORATE MEETING 5 FEBRUARY 2018

The notes of the inquorate meeting held on 5 February 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

Matters arising

Minute 30 – NECA Forward Plan and Work Programme

Peter Judge (Monitoring Officer) and Helen Golightly (Head of Paid Service) provided an update on recent developments with the North of Tyne Devolution proposals.

The Committee were advised that the consultation period had ended and that the majority of respondents had been in favour of the creation of a North of Tyne Mayoral Combined Authority. A first draft of the Order to create the new Combined Authority had been received – slightly later than anticipated – and had been reviewed by officers, with a report going to the Leadership Board on 20 March 2018. A number of amendments to the draft Order had been proposed by officers. An extraordinary meeting of the Leadership Board would be required once the amended Order was received - it was anticipated that this may need to be held during the pre-election period, but legal officers had reviewed the situation and were satisfied that a decision over whether or not to proceed could be taken during that time. If the Leadership Board agreed to proceed it was proposed that the Order would commence at the beginning of a financial quarter, meaning either 1 July 2018 or 1 October 2018.

In discussion the following points were raised.

- Concerns were raised about the questions used in the consultation – both in terms of the wording, which Members felt only allowed for a positive response, and the lack of a question about having a Mayor – and it was queried whether the questions had been written by Government.

Officers advised that they believed the questions to have been written by the North of Tyne authorities, but that Government had been given an opportunity to comment upon them. Members requested that clarity be sought on this point and it was agreed that officers would write to the North of Tyne Authorities to seek confirmation on who had drafted the questions used in the consultation, and what involvement Government had had in the process.

- It was noted that other areas were making progress in establishing Mayoral combined authorities, including one to cover the whole of Yorkshire, and that failure to agree on a way forward within NECA may result in the interests of the region being held back.
- A Member queried whether there may be constitutional issues going forward for non-Mayoral combined authorities. Officers advised that current legislation was neutral in terms of Mayoral and non-Mayoral combined authorities.

RESOLVED: That officers would write to the North of Tyne authorities to seek clarification on who had drafted the questions used in the consultation, and what involvement Government had had in the process.

37 THEMATIC LEAD UPDATE REPORT FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND INCLUSION

Submitted: Report of Thematic Lead for Employability and Skills and Skills Director North East LEP (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Councillor Jackson (Thematic Lead for Employability and Skills) introduced the report which provided an update on progress being made in delivering the Employability and Inclusion and Skills themes of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for the North East. Councillor Jackson advised the Committee that the North East economy continued to be characterised by low pay and low skill employment, and that in order to improve living standards it would be necessary to increase productivity which in turn meant increasing skills levels. Major employers were keen to move into the region, or to expand within the region, but in order to do so they needed to have access to a highly skilled workforce.

Ryan Gibson (Facilitator for the Career Benchmarks Pilot) gave a presentation providing members with an overview and update on the Skills programme and the five areas of focus in addressing Skills Challenges.

In response to comments, questions and points raised by Members the following was noted:

1. There were two benchmarks within the North East Ambition programme that were focussed on meaningful encounters with employers and workplaces, and the Enterprise Advisors programme provided an additional link to employers. Work had been taking place to recruit employers to work with schools, and officers had found that employers were very keen to engage. The involvement of senior staff within schools was considered to be vital to the success of the programme as it had been shown to rapidly increase the rate of progress. It was advised that the 'Careers Leader' within schools should always be a senior staff member.
2. In response to a question from members about provision for young people who were not academically inclined, officers advised that the pilot for the North East Ambition Programme had involved a pupil referral unit and special needs schools. Relationships were established with colleges that allowed these students to see a clear path to progression, and there had been a reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) which could be partially attributed to this. Regular contact with employers and provision of training was also considered to be important.
3. The 'Bring it On' exhibition held at the Stadium of Light in 2017, which had been interactive and had showcased opportunities for young people in engineering, had been a big success. It has been partially funded by the LEP and a second event was to be held at the Beacon of Light in October 2018. Other sectors were interested in replicating the 'Bring it On' approach.
4. Whilst it was not possible to make changes to the national curriculum, it may be possible to influence what was taught in classrooms in terms of skill development and project based learning.

5. In response to concerns about European Social Fund (ESF) funding coming to an end and queries as to what risk mitigation was to be put in place, officers advised that ESF was not the only source of funding and that resources and expertise could be pooled. Government had promised that EU funding would be replaced but details around this had not yet been announced. It was proposed that a case should be made for the North East to have control over its share of funding.
6. There was no commitment made by employers to providing for employment for young people through the North East Ambition programme, only to provision of support and guidance. It was suggested that a guaranteed interview would be a fantastic outcome and a great next step to aim for.
7. One of the benchmarks within the North East Ambition programme related to tackling gender stereotyping and activities took place within schools to challenge stereotypes. An event was to take place for young women to meet females already working in engineering and science.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

38 **DURHAM YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE**

Submitted: Report of Strategic Lead: Progression and Learning Durham County Council (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Linda Bailey (Strategic Lead Progression and Learning, Durham County Council) presented the report which provided members with information about the DurhamWorks Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) Programme.

In response to comments, questions and points raised by Members the following was noted:

1. Members expressed concern about the lack of desire from some young people to engage in further activities to develop employability skills and asked what could be done to address this.

Officers advised that the most disadvantaged young people had been targeted for this programme, and that many of them had previously been mandated by the Job Centre which had resulted in them developing a negative view of 'employability skills', and that it could be challenging to persuade them of the potential benefits. It helped if young people were able to clearly see the end results and were offered activities which were less formal in nature and/or helped them to develop work-related skills.

2. Information was collected about the number of young people who had gained employment, but progression would not be reported until the end of the programme as officers did not want to give up on anyone in the meantime. The service was individualised and based on need.

3. If and when funding for the programme ended the branding would remain, and the collaborative working relationships and networks established through the programme would continue.
4. National evaluation would take place six months after completion of the programme, and this could be used to compare results with other YEI areas. However it would take at least a year after the end of the initiative to understand the full outcome. The programme is being evaluated at a local level on a quarterly basis and this evaluation is looking at all aspects of the model and its' delivery. Once the programme ends, it is intended that a review of the younger cohort would take place within 6-12 months.

RESOLVED – That:

- i. The report be received and comments noted.
- ii. Further progress reports on the delivery of the DurhamWorks Programme to be brought to future meetings of the Committee, as appropriate.

39 **NECA DECISION MAKING PROTOCOL**

Submitted: Report of Monitoring Officer and Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Nicola Laverick (Policy and Scrutiny Officer) and Peter Judge (Monitoring Officer) presented the report which outlined the Decision Making Protocol for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Nicola reminded members that this item had previously been discussed by the Committee and had been shared with members and Scrutiny Officers from the constituent authorities for comment, and drew attention to the summary of feedback received in paragraph 1.6.

RESOLVED – That:

- i. The comments received from Scrutiny Officers regarding the protocol be noted.
- ii. The draft Decision Making Protocol be agreed and Leadership Board invited to consent to the Protocol.
- iii. The Monitoring Officer and Policy and Scrutiny Officer be instructed to implement the Protocol and to provide advice and guidance to officers regarding the Protocol and the required standards.

40 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of agenda item 8 (Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels) because exempt information was likely to be disclosed and the public interest test against the disclosure was satisfied.

42 NECA FORWARD PLAN AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted: Report of Monitoring Officer and Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Nicola Laverick (Policy and Scrutiny Officer) presented the report which provided Members 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 2018/19.

In response to comments, questions and points raised by members the following was noted:

1. Members asked to have a report brought back to Committee on all major projects being carried out by or on behalf of the NECA so that members could identify any they may wish to add to their work programme for more detailed consideration.
2. Members requested that they receive details about the joint arrangements for governance and delivery of transport functions between the NECA and the NTCA going forward.

RESOLVED – That:

- i. A report be brought back to the next meeting detailing all of the major projects being carried out by or on behalf of the NECA.
- ii. The Committee to receive details about the joint arrangements for governance and delivery of transport functions between the NECA and the NTCA going forward as they become available.

43 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Provisional date (subject to confirmation at the Annual Meeting):

Monday 16 July 2018 at 10.00am.