

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9 February 2016

(2.00 - 3.45 pm)

Meeting held Jarrow Town Hall, South Tyneside Council, Town Hall, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear, NE32 3LE

Present:

Councillor: Wright (Chair)

Councillors: Armstrong, Dillon, Eagle, Flux, Graham, Maxwell, Meling, Pidcock, Snowdon and Wright

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Lower, Pearson, Crute, Glindon and Councillor Watson (Leader of Sunderland City Council).

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Vice Chair (Cllr Eagle) advised that the NECA Monitoring Officer had granted dispensation to enable him to be a representative and to participate in discussions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

36 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2015

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising:

- i. Devolution Update (Minute 28)** – Members agreed that an update be included on all future agendas.

37 POLICY REVIEW : TRANSPORT BARRIERS - EVIDENCE FROM T&W PTUG

Submitted: Report of the NECA Monitoring Officer (previously circulated and a copy attached to the official minutes).

The purpose of the report was to consider evidence from the Tyne and Wear Public Transport Users Group for the policy review of transport related barriers to

education, employment and training. The evidence was submitted following a Call for Evidence issued during the summer of 2015.

General comments were invited and additionally, specific questions were posed as follows:

- (a) The accessibility of public transport (i.e. whether people can travel at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and within reasonable ease)?
- (b) The availability of public transport and the extent to which it is adequate to access employment sites?
- (c) What alternative transport approaches could be considered to support people being actively engaged in work?

A representative from the Tyne & Wear Public Transport Users Group (TWPTG) had been invited to address committee on the group findings (set out in Appendix A).

Mr D Shaw addressed the meeting explaining that the report was the work of the transport users Management Committee and crossed all local authority boundaries. In presenting the findings Mr Shaw highlighted the following:

- A reflection on past transport modes, the change in working patterns and demographic changes.
 - Pit buses for the mining communities.
 - The use of public transport (mainly buses) to reach work was not too difficult.
- Funding for bus services and the metro were becoming increasingly difficult. Fares had increased above inflation for a number of years and it was now cheaper to use a car for work purposes.
- The only way to increase bus users was to make buses more attractive.
- Regarding travel to work people need to be able to travel speedily and economically between home and as many potential workplaces as possible. An audit should be undertaken of all major areas of employment to ascertain both problems faced by existing public transport users and the barriers that car drivers experience that stop them from using public transport.
- Look at transport modes for a complete journey i.e. cycling-Metro-buses. It was suggested that NECA ensure that a mapping exercise is carried out of public transport serving out of town business parks. Ascertain what current transport connections currently exist to enable access to employment.
- Cross boundary ticketing was a huge problem; it is impossible to purchase one ticket for multiple services.
- Display boards for time tables and information were not effective.

- Cuts in funding continued to be an issue leading to problems travelling to and from work.
- Bus routes with competition from the various operators.

Member's questions/comments

Confusing information about available options.

Responding to a question regarding fares Mr Shaw explained that consultants KPMG had produced a report which stated that bus provision had improved, contradicting public views that transport is problematic with the numerous offers available and too much information. He referred to Oyster cards, a good option but reliant on control of the whole network. A complex system was in operation in the NECA area; people needed a consistent bus network with a simple ticketing structure.

It was acknowledged that community buses would benefit from additional passengers. Mr Shaw added that the TWPTUG had links with Northumberland and possible joint working was under discussion. He explained that a franchise scheme could create a cross ticketing route using more marginal services running more frequently. He referred to rural Northumberland where numerous bus services had been removed. However, community buses could provide a reliable service if businesses were prepared to promote their use to employees.

A member stated that the report was based on privatisation instead of nationalisation. Reference was made to efficient, successful bus companies across the UK that were owned by local authorities.

It was pointed out that Germany and Austria had an effective transport system where public and private operators had joined together.

The Chair thanked Mr Shaw for attending the meeting and presenting the findings of the user group.

RESOLVED - that the evidence be received and used to contribute towards the policy review.

38 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Submitted: Report of the Economic Development and Regeneration Thematic Lead (previously circulated and a copy attached to the official minutes).

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on activity and progress under the Economic Development Regeneration theme of the Combined Authority.

Councillor Speding (Sunderland City Council) attended the meeting on behalf of Cllr Watson who had submitted his apologies.

Committee was informed of the recent meeting of the Economic Development and Regeneration Advisory Board (EDRAB) where members considered items on the regional Inward Investment function and activity, and the development of a regional investment plan/pipeline for the NECA area.

Councillor Speding referred to the 34 foreign investments reported over the first two quarters of 2015/16. Details of the investors were set out in section 3 of the report.

In considering the report Members noted the progress made to develop a series of sector-based propositions to be used to attract inward investment into the NECA area.

During the ensuing discussion Members noted the proposed expansion in foreign investment. Reference was made to the recently appointed consortium, established to promote the North East to investors and to increase the amount of inward investment. A question was asked as to whether the final propositions had been received at the end of January as set out in the report. Cllr Speding offered to provide this information outside of the meeting.

Members welcomed future investment and acknowledged the complex confidential processes involved.

A member raised the issue of the national policy change in relation to National Non-Domestic Rates and questioned the potential impact on NECA.

RESOLVED – that the update be received.

39 **TRANSPORT MANIFESTO**

Submitted: Report by the Chief Executive Officer for Transport (previously circulated and a copy attached to the official Minutes).

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) has a duty to produce a Transport Plan covering the whole of its area. Among other functions, the plan will replace the existing Local Transport Plan (LTPs) for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

In advance of the Transport Plan, a shorter Transport Manifesto has been produced which will enable the public to give their views on the overall strategic direction for Transport in the NECA area. Views will then be included in the Transport Plan to give it greater customer focus.

The Principal Transport Planner, NECA delivered a presentation to the Committee describing the content of the Manifesto. During the presentation the following points were highlighted:

This was a 2 stage approach – the Transport Plan and the Transport Manifesto. The Manifesto was now published on the NECA website and websites of the local authorities within NECA.

Copies of the questionnaire and Manifesto were available for Members.

The four key themes for transport were –

- Easy
- Reliable
- Affordable
- Accessible

The Principal Transport Planner explained that under the NECA Constitution the Manifesto was not a 'Part 4' Document but that the Transport Plan was. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will therefore have opportunities to make recommendations to the Leadership Board regarding the Plan.

The consultation, scheduled to close on 8 April 2016, had been lengthened to allow sufficient time for Town and Parish Councils to consult their members and feedback any views.

In welcoming the report members raised the following issues/questions

The economy and role of business should be added as a -key theme.

Another member suggested that responsiveness was an important key theme.

Members asked if there was a plan for the north. In response the Principal Transport Planner explained that the purpose of the Plan was to promote the region and attract funding.

Regarding the publication of the Plan on the NECA website a member voiced concerns that the site was not user friendly and trying to respond to the consultation was too time consuming.

A member referred to the traffic congestion caused by the implementation of bus lanes, particularly in the city centre, the replacement of roundabouts with traffic lights again leading to congestion and the fact that it was cheaper to travel by car.

The development of new business sites should only take place once appropriate transport links were embedded.

There were still concerns from people in isolated communities who seeing many services withdrawn were disillusioned with bus operators.

The Chair questioned what was known about future transport funding compared to the aspirations of local politicians.

RESOLVED – that the Committee noted the current status of the Transport Manifesto

40 FORWARD PLAN & WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated and a copy attached to the official minutes) which incorporated a copy of the NECA Forward Plan and the updated Scrutiny Annual Work Programme for 2015/16.

Members were advised that the report provided an opportunity to consider items for the current period and to review the work programme.

Attention was drawn to section 3.4 of the report; a request from North Tyneside's Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee that a committee of the Combined Authority consider undertaking an investigation into the '**role of public transport employees in assisting other agencies to protect young people from child sexual exploitation**'. Following discussion it was agreed that enquiries would be made to investigate what is currently being explored at a regional level on behalf of all local authorities across NECA to ascertain what practices/developments were in place or scheduled to take place.

Members also agreed that an update on Devolution be included on future agendas.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be received.

41 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

2.00pm on Tuesday 22 March 2016 at North Tyneside Council (TBC)