

North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 November 2016

(2.00 - 3.55 pm)

Meeting held Jarrow Town Hall

Present:

Councillors: Crute, Dillon, Eagle, Flux, Graham, A Lower, Meling, Pidcock, Snowdon and Wright

Amended to order of agenda

18 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR/VICE-CHAIR

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer inviting the Committee to appoint its Chair and Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2016/17 (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

Mike Harding (Monitoring Officer) advised Committee that the meeting was quorate.

In accordance with the Constitution of the North East Combined Authority (NECA) the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was delegated to the Committee.

Councillor Wright was duly moved and seconded for the position of Chair.

Councillor Eagle was duly moved and seconded for the position of Vice Chair.

Councillors Wright and Eagle thanked members for their nominations and accepted the positions.

RESOLVED – That Committee agreed that Councillor Wright and Councillor Eagle be appointed as Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the Municipal Year 2016/17.

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Armstrong, Glindon and Pearson.

20 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 involved in any aspects of decision making.

21 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Minute 12 – Policy Review: Transport related barriers to employment; Evidence from Arriva

Members were informed that the policy review evidence would feed into the final report for the review and it was anticipated that a draft would be available shortly.

Officers at Durham County Council had confirmed that the multi-operated ticket issue had been addressed and was now on track.

Minute 13 – NELEP update

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the advisory boards' memberships and terms of reference would be circulated to members shortly.

Regarding the further information requested on the number of jobs created by the NELEP and the grant allocations etc., this information would be provided under agenda item 6.

Minute 15 – Devolution update

The Committee agreed to endorse the decision of the Leadership Board, taken on 6 September, not to begin the next stage in the devolution process at this present time.

22 **MONITORING NEXUS PERFORMANCE**

Submitted: Report of Managing Director (Transport Operations) for NECA to provide an update on Nexus' performance against its Corporate Business Plan (CBP) targets and objectives for 2016/17 for the period from 1 April to 17 September 2016 (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The report also presented findings from the Nexus Service Review which took place between 6 June-1 August 2016.

Tobyn Hughes introduced the report and focussed on Metro performance, the train fleet, the bus strategy and the results of the 'have your say' consultation on local transport services in Tyne and Wear.

In discussion Committee members asked questions and made the following comments:-

- It was good to hear about Metro performance improvements but service cuts in future were bad news for residents.

- What was being done to ensure the transport system was fit for purpose in line with future new build housing?
 - T Hughes stated that the scale of development in the west end of Newcastle would have a significant impact on traffic. Nexus was having ongoing discussions with the Planning Department to ensure future proof solutions in line with planning policy.
 - In July the Leadership Boards approved a new Metro and rail strategy which included expansion. This set out the long term plan by looking at old railway lines and freight routes; there was lots of investigative work about to start looking at feasibility issues going forward. Current Metro trains could not use these old lines; new stock would need to be much more flexible and it was intended that the new procurement would secure a wider array of stock.
- In response to a question about level crossings, T Hughes advised that no Metro only crossings had barriers although there were five open crossings as well as some pedestrian crossings. The Metro traversed the crossings at very low speed to minimise any risk; all crossings closed at least five times per hour in each direction and to erect barriers would have a very disruptive impact on residents.
- With regard to incentivising the public with an offer of free parking on the purchase of a pass, T Hughes commented that he would like to see parking meters synced to Pops cards.
- The Chair noted a comment about “£1 not being a prohibitive amount”. In her ward there was very little car ownership and £1 was a lot of money to some people.
- Nexus had been very dissatisfied with the maintenance of the fleet but higher levels of maintenance would show increased performance. However, more trains available at all times was needed (78 from a total of 90 were required at peak times).
- The procurement of the new fleet would be subject to OJEU procurement procedures and open competition. T Hughes was confident that, whoever won the contract, some jobs would be created in the North East; the fleet builder would also be awarded the maintenance contract which would secure jobs into the future including apprenticeships.
- Northumberland County Council (NCC) had done a good job in raising the profile of the potential of the Ashington – Blyth line. As a railway engineering firm Nexus was working with NCC to assist with the Network Rail relationship. In the future the new fleet trains would have the capacity to run on this line.
- The system had many timing points; lateness was measured via a 3 minute window; if a train was more than 3 minutes late it was counted as a fail.

- The instances of recorded crime on the Metro had been declining over many years although perceptions of crime were often reinforced. All platforms had CCTV linked to Metro and local authority control rooms (the former had the capacity to Tannoy messages to specific platforms).

The introduction of automatic ticket gates had also brought more staff although there was a need to use the roving staff more intelligently to ensure wellbeing.

Security would be factored in to the brief for the new trains.

- Station improvements were continuous and new ideas and suggestions for improvements to the system were welcomed.
- It was confirmed that there had not been an increase in racial crime following Brexit.

23 **NELEP LOCAL GROWTH FUND PROGRAMME**

Submitted: Report of the Chief Operating Officer (NELEP) and Interim Head of Paid Service to appraise the Committee on the role, operations and progress of the NELEP (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

Ray Browning (NELEP Programme Manager) presented the report which provided information on the Local Growth Fund programme mid-way through its second year of operation. The programme comprised of 56 projects which were at different stages of development and sign off, amounting to £220.4m up to 2021.

Comments, question and points raised by members

- Clarification was sought on the number of jobs created – the report stated 6283. R Browning explained that this was job creation in the longer term and that the 6283 was up to 2021. Members commented that the figures presented in the report were misleading and should have been more specific eg. 'possible jobs created'.
- Investing £220m for just over 6000 jobs seemed incongruous. Further explanation was required as was the added value of the NELEP. It was considered that 6000 was not particularly aspirational.
- There was discussion regarding the fact that half of the budget was allocated to transport projects and more explanation around this was needed in the report. Committee was advised that a combined package of projects had been submitted and the government had selected which projects would be supported.
- Projects were supported across the constituent authorities although details were available by local authority area.

- It was too early to make predictions about the ramifications of Brexit although it could present opportunities and possibly challenges.
- A strapline of the LEP was 'more and better jobs'. Data collected would include information on salaries and skills levels and demonstrate added value.
- The 6283 had increased from 4500 as the government had provided more funding following the submission of detailed business cases. Funding was predicated on the legalities of grant support. Case studies were available on the website to provide further information.
- Project bids were accessed through a rigorous process via in-house expertise, an independent private assessor and also the Monitoring Officer.
- LEPs were required to submit bids for future funding in July but the North East bid had not gone forward due to the lack of a devolution deal. NELEP had submitted a ranked list of priorities yesterday and the government would take any decisions required. However, the Local Growth Fund round 3 was considerably less than the programme fund from July.

RESOLVED – That future reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include:

- Actual progress in meeting the delivery and outputs, specifically on job creation;
- A breakdown of job creation in each local authority of the combined authority area;
- Detail of the value and nature of jobs created and the impact on the local economy.

24 **FORWARD PLAN & WORK PROGRAMME**

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes) on the Forward Plan and scrutiny annual work programme for 2016/17.

RESOLVED – That Committee agreed:-

- that the NECA Forward Plan be received and the scrutiny work programme be agreed and
- An endorsement of the approach to the devolution deal be sent to the Leadership Board.

25 **DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

2:00pm on 14 December 2016