

## **North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

20 October 2015

(2.00 - 3.45 pm)

Meeting held Committee Room, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QH

### **Present:**

Councillor: Wright (Chair)

Councillors: Armstrong, Crute, Dillon, Eagle, Flux, Glindon, Graham,  
A Lower, Meling, S Pearson, Pidcock and Snowdon

### **17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Maxwell.

### **18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Eagle declared an interest as an employee of Nexus.

### **19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2015**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 September 2015 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### **20 POLICY REVIEW: TRANSPORT RELATED BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT - EVIDENCE FROM STAGECOACH**

Submitted: Report of Robin Knight (Stagecoach North East Commercial Director) to provide evidence from Stagecoach for the policy review on transport related barriers to education, employment and training (previously submitted and copy attached to the official minutes).

Robin Knight stated that Stagecoach had welcomed the call for evidence from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and introduced the report. He also advised that the report was in draft form at this stage and that further details would be added to the document before the close of the evidence call.

The report included information on Stagecoach activities to overcome barriers in the categories of ongoing activities to support passenger journeys, schools and colleges and employment. The Stagecoach comments focussed on Tyne and Wear as the company had very limited or no involvement in County Durham and Northumberland.

## Members' comments, questions and responses

- Smart Travel – Stagecoach, with Go North East and Arriva, was planning to roll out SmartZone Bus to Bus products. It was anticipated that only one card would be required for bus services.
- Smartzone was being piloted in South Tyneside although the trial was governed by the local authority boundary. A PAYG pilot had also been established by Stagecoach on bus services in Middlesbrough.
- The Smartzone ticket would be available for durations of one day, one week or a month.
- Bus operators had had a multi-modal all zone ticket ready for Tyne and Wear since March.
- A number of technical meetings had been held but Nexus could not join the bus operator scheme until a decision on the regulatory environment was taken.
- Members emphasized that the Metro only serviced a very small part of the NECA area and that multi-modal ticketing had to be an objective for the entire region.
- Go North East would also be submitting evidence to the policy review.
- It was understood that Arriva and Go North East had been in talks about rolling out Smartzone ticketing in County Durham.
- Members questioned the complexity in the North East (as compared to London). It was pointed out that the Competition and Markets Authority had acted as a break on multi operator ticketing. It was also noted that it was in fact the deregulated elements of transport services in the region currently delivering smart ticketing.
- In response to a request to say more on the problems of shift workers, Robin Knight said that historically services used to focus on scholars and workers at peak times. Now land use planning was key to providing services and Stagecoach was constantly looking at innovative initiatives.
- Stagecoach already worked with several educational establishments but was looking for any opportunity to work with others and to serve them.
- The Chair referred to research which had indicated that free and cheap ticket offers were not targeted at the people who needed the services the most. Robin Knight advised that this was a danger of long term/broad brush schemes but that any initiatives were targeted as well as they could be; commercial initiatives were focussed carefully on the people they were aimed at.

The Chair reminded members that Overview and Scrutiny Committee was evidence gathering only at this time. All evidence would be taken into consideration, and brought back to committee in February/March, before recommendations were put

forward to the North East Leadership Board (NELB). The recommendations of the review would contribute to the Transport Plan for the North East, which was due to be completed in 2016.

Evidence submitted from the City of Durham Trust would be published on the website. Other witnesses would be scheduled into the programme of the policy review.

## 21 THEMATIC LEAD TRANSPORT UPDATE

Submitted: Report of Thematic Lead for Transport to outline details of major transport developments and announcements since the last update report was provided to the Leadership Board on 14 July (previously submitted and copy attached to the official minutes).

Ian Coe (NECA Principal Transport Planner) introduced the report and advised that since the last meeting of the Leadership Board there had been a number of significant transport developments affecting the North East. This included the work of the Transport for the North (TfN) partnership, the Transport Vision for the North East, Local Growth Fund Transport Schemes, rail, public transport, sustainable transport and aviation.

### Members' comments, questions and responses

- In relation to indicative timescale for the Transport Plan, the Chair asked when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be consulted. Ian Coe said he would come back with this information as a matter of urgency.
- The Chair requested that appropriate officers be advised that Overview and Scrutiny must be entitled to carry out committee level public consultation if it considered it necessary.
- The Scrutiny Officer requested that the Transport Plan be dealt with as an Article 4 plan and dealt with in accordance with the NRCA Constitution.
- A strong voice was needed to emphasize that disused rail lines in the region should be reopened to support the objectives of NECA.
- A member commented that it was disappointing that the political lead was not in attendance at the meeting. Committee was advised that the lead member would attend the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in March.
- Concern was expressed with regard to the scale of Transport for the North (TfN) and whether or not it had smaller plans which sat under the blueprint.

Ian Coe advised that TfN was a partnership and that NECA did have a voice. The NECA Transport Plan would dovetail into the work of TfN and take account of the North East's objectives.

- There was also the question about whether the current infrastructure could cope with the future growth.

Officers were looking at a study into local rail capacity to see if it could cope with the expected growth, the possibility of reopening lines, lack of capacity and pinch points.

- Members discussed the problems with the closed level crossing at East Boldon.
- It was pointed out that at some point prioritisation of issues in the report would be needed and that Overview and Scrutiny should be involved.
- As Arriva operated most of the bus services from Newcastle to Northumberland it had previously been agreed that they would be invited to a future meeting.
- An exercise was looking at the case for dualling either the A69, A66 or both.
- The current plan for the A1 was to dual it to Ellingham, Northumberland.

Ian Coe said he would check the criteria for dualing and also the position with regard to the rest of the A1.

- Overview and Scrutiny asked to be reminded of the Local Growth Fund Transport Schemes, if they were on schedule and how the plans were shared with residents.
- Regarding the consultation exploring options to support regional airports from the impacts of the devolution of Air Passenger Duty, Ian Coe agreed to share any progress with members in writing.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be included in the Transport Plan preparations and the additional information from the Principal Transport Planner would be circulated.

## 22 **DEVOLUTION UPDATE**

Submitted: Report of Head of Paid Service to provide the committee with an update on progress, the content of the NECA submission to Government and to consider governance systems and the role of overview and scrutiny under devolved arrangements (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

The Scrutiny Officer informed committee that, unfortunately, late apologies had been received from Adam Wilkinson, the NECA interim head of paid service.

The Chair and committee members expressed concerns about the unfortunate situation. There was a host of issues in the report that Overview and Scrutiny members wanted to comment on before decisions were taken. Following the

meeting the Scrutiny Committee agreed to meet with members of the Leadership Board to discuss progress on the proposals.

The next Scrutiny Committee meeting would be held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 2.00 pm in North Tyneside. The Head of Paid Service would be in attendance to provide the Scrutiny Committee with a progress report and the Chair of the Leadership Board would also be in attendance, on behalf of the Leadership Board.

## 23 **FORWARD PLAN & WORK PROGRAMME**

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

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the report provided Members with an opportunity to consider the items for the current 28 day period and to review the work programme.

Members were advised that the Nexus Performance update had been referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Transport North East Committee (TNEC) via the North East Combined Authority, Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This was because of concerns about disruptions to the Metro Service on the weekend of the Great North Run.

## 24 **DATES AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

2:00pm, Tuesday 1 December 2015 at Cobalt, North Tyneside.

Councillor Armstrong submitted his apologies for the meeting. It was unlikely that Councillors Pidcock and Flux (Northumberland) would be in attendance due to a planning committee commitment.