

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

30 July 2014

Meeting held at County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL

### **Present:**

Councillors: Armstrong, Daley, Dillon, Eagle, Graham, A Lower, Meling, Pearson, Snowdon, Stradling and Wright

#### **6 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15**

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

The Monitoring officer introduced the report which invited members to appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair for the Municipal year 2014/15. Nominations were received for the appointment of Chair in favour of Councillors Wright and Lower. Councillor Wright's nomination was duly seconded. Upon a vote Councillor Wright was appointed unanimously.

**RESOLVED** – That Councillor Wright be appointed Chair for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

(Councillor Wright in the Chair)

#### **7 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

The Chair then sought nominations for the role of Vice Chair. Nominations were received in favour of Councillors Eagle and Doyle. Councillor Eagle's nomination was duly seconded. Upon a vote Councillor Eagle's appointment was agreed by a majority of those present with no votes against.

**RESOLVED** – That Councillor Eagle be appointed Vice-Chair for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

#### **8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Glindon, Maxwell and Tyler.

#### **9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

## 10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2014 be approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 11 WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated copy attached to official minutes) which summarised the responses received from members of the committee for inclusion in the work programme.

In introducing the report the Monitoring officer indicated that 5 responses had been received. In relation to the suggestion 'Understanding the role of NECA and the Committee', reports which had been submitted to the Leadership Board (NELB) from each of the three thematic Leads (Transport, Economic Development and Regeneration and Employability, Inclusion and Skills Update) had also been circulated as part of the agenda for this meeting. The aim had been to provide Members with an insight into the type of information which was available and could be provided to members on a regular basis and would support them in taking an informed approach to consideration of their work programme. It was recommended that officers should develop a series of workshops to facilitate this suggestion.

Members were supportive of the suggestion to hold a series of workshops and a number of additional and related suggestions to develop the work programme were made as follows:-

- To look at best practice of scrutiny arrangements at other combined authorities (in particular Manchester) and explore the possibilities for member visits to other authorities or invite representatives of other combined authorities to visit and share their experiences, as part of the workshops.
- That Lead Members be invited to address members at the start of the workshops (10minutes), enabling members of the committee to meet them in person and to receive an overview of the subject from them.
- Utilising existing knowledge and member experience of scrutiny, to begin work now to consider a selection of transport related topics. Assessing what already exists from work undertaken by individual Councils.
- Looking at the work being done by the Leadership Board, receiving presentations and gaining an understanding of the work being done across each of the thematic groups; adding value to, understanding and influencing their decisions.
- With specific reference to item 21 of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of Procedure, the need to set out a process map to ensure an understanding of the functions and clarity for authorities as to their role would be welcomed. It was recognised that each authority would not be working independently but within the collective working of the Combined Authority.

Following a review of the discussion it was:-

**RESOLVED** – That:-

- i. Workshops are arranged as proposed.

- ii. Work be undertaken to gain an understanding of the work of scrutiny (best practice) in other Combined Authorities which would be fed in to the workshops.
- iii. Arrangements to include inviting the thematic leads to address the workshops, but that the workshops proceed should this not be possible.
- iv. Presentations on the work of the Combined Authority be made at the workshops and that topics for scrutinising be taken forward arising from discussions.
- v. Details of the Leadership Board's work programme be considered to gain an understanding of their intentions, including the financial implications of their decisions.
- vi. An exercise be undertaken to provide a process map of the scrutiny arrangements of the Combined Authority to ensure an understanding of its role and functions, in particular by councils individually.

## 12 SUPPORT FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated copy attached to official minutes) which set out the proposals for support arrangements for the Scrutiny function of the North East Combined Authority (NECA) on an interim basis.

The Monitoring officer gave a brief introduction and Jane Robinson (Chief Executive Gateshead) as Interim Head of Paid Service for NECA gave a more detailed introduction to the report. The report had been prepared following the discussion at the last meeting when the Chief Executive of North Tyneside Council had undertaken to raise members' comments with the Chief Executives' group. The report set out the role of scrutiny, the scope of which, in relation to the Combined Authorities responsibilities, was extensive and it was recognised that the arrangements would need to reflect that. The interim Democratic Support role would continue to be provided by Newcastle, with Policy support provided by Sunderland (that being the Authority which had provided the Chair of the Committee). The policy role would include commissioning and programme development and would involve bringing others into the process as necessary, including thematic leads and officer leads from individual authorities. A programme of rotation of meetings at each authority's venues would be implemented. Close monitoring of the development of the role of scrutiny and the resources required would be necessary as the role and understanding of the NECA developed.

Karen Brown from Sunderland was in attendance at the meeting and in response to Member comments, undertook to ensure that all relevant scrutiny officers from the NECA area were kept informed and were involved in the process as required. This would meet with the principle of the Chair's Authority leading the scrutiny process whilst being supported by the resources available in other constituent authorities (paragraph 3.1 refers).

In relation to the appointment of independent advisers requiring approval of the Leadership Board (paragraph 2.9), it was confirmed that this related to the Board's financial control and would not relate to approval of the individual experts.

**RESOLVED** – That the proposals for supporting the Committee as set out in Part 3 of the report, and clarified at the meeting, be noted.

### 13 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP - APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES**

A Member highlighted that the issue of appointment of substitute members had been raised at the last meeting and the expectation had been that the issue would be discussed again at this meeting.

The Monitoring Officer indicated that the appointment of substitutes to this Committee would involve a change to the NELB Constitution and any such change would require the approval of the Leadership Board. The intention was that the Constitution would be reviewed following the first six months of operation of the Combined Authority. That review would be undertaken at the Leadership Board meeting in October therefore any views expressed or recommendations made by this Committee could be fed into the review process. It was suggested that the issue be discussed in full at the next meeting.

After further discussion of the merits or otherwise of the committee having substitutes appointed it was:-

**RESOLVED** – That an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to enable the issue of appointment of substitute members for this Committee to be considered.

### 14 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held at 2pm on Tuesday 9 September 2014 in Gateshead.