

**Approved Minutes  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

21 March 2019

(2.00 - 3.10 pm)

Meeting held: Mansion House, Fernwood Road, Jesmond, Newcastle, NE2 1TJ

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Chair: Councillor Cllr G A Roughead

Councillors A Lower, M Hall, S Graham, G Stewart, G Davey, M Williams and Steve Cox

14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Wright, Fairlie and Bell.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

16 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2019 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 11 (page 4 refers). Amend the final sentence to read "The Chair commented that the presence of a Cabinet Member would have been welcomed and commended officers present for work completed so far".

17 **NORTH OF TYNE HOUSING AND LAND BOARD - PROGRESS UPDATE**

Submitted: Report of the Interim Director of Inclusive Growth (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Cllr Joyce McCarty attended the meeting on behalf of the Cabinet.

The Committee discussed the report the purpose of which was to provide an update on progress with the North of Tyne (NTCA) Housing and Land Board. It provided

background to the establishment of the Board, its terms of reference and membership as well as an overview of latest progress. The report also provided information on another advisory Board that is due to be established for the NTCA – the Inclusive Economy Board.

Members heard about the Housing and Land Board and were informed that the Cabinet would receive a report in April in respect of the Inclusive Economy Board.

In response to queries raised by the committee the following information was noted.

**Comments and queries from members included:**

In response to a query in respect of the quality of the public sector land which could be brought forward for housing use and the amount of land available for house building A Senior gave an explanation of each local authority allocation plan and what is in the public domain; council asset-based plans and stock ownership. The three local authorities are now in the process of considering obvious sites on a ward by ward basis.

It was noted that Newcastle and North Tyneside have already published their local plans (housing needs survey); Northumberland will publish their next plan in 2021.

A member asked if the Combined Authority could make use of compulsory purchase powers and convert empty buildings in shopping centres to affordable housing. Reference was made to dwellings above town centre shops.

A Senior provided advice in respect of decent housing standards and amenities required to address the needs of future residents. It was also explained that shops were difficult to change from retail purposes to dwellings only, particularly as in most cases there are still shops on either side of the properties.

Confirmation was given that small rural areas in Northumberland have been identified to receive funding through the Transforming Cities Initiative.

Brief discussions took place in relation to the Terms of Reference for both the Housing and Land Board and the Inclusive Economy Board.

Housing and Land Board

Committee were of the view that the Board was dominated by housing providers and lacked the community balance that would ensure provision for amenities such as schools and roads; the board is lacking in representation of rural areas.

Inclusive Economy Board

Committee had noted the reference to ‘the Board will be directly accountable to the Combined Authority’s Cabinet and will operate in an advisory capacity, monitoring and reporting progress and making recommendations as appropriate’; set out in the Terms of Reference. Committee felt that the phrase suggested more than an advisory capacity and implied that some decisions will be made in private.

In response committee were advised that the membership of the Housing and Land Board and the Terms of Reference were set out in the Combined Authority's Constitution. Assurance was given that the Board is advisory and specialist advice will be sought to assist with issues such as supporting development of services, for example the needs of residents in social care and supportive housing. The Interim Monitoring Officer clarified the position confirming that the wording in the report is not meant to be detrimental to the role of overview and scrutiny and, decision making powers rest with Cabinet.

The Chair commended everyone for the amount of work completed.

A Member of the Committee reminded everyone that the Housing and Land Board does not have a budget allocation and that their role is an advisory one; the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to scrutinise the proposed policies.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be noted.

## 18 **REPORT TO CABINET ON INVESTMENT FUND UPDATE AND FUNDING APPROVALS**

Submitted: Copy of the Cabinet report of 12 March 2019 (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

R Hamilton presented the report, previously considered by Cabinet which outlined applications for funding, details of proposed call for bids for a programme of interventions designed to inspire more children and young people to engage with the STEM subjects and digital skills and outlined the next stage of the work programme around the investment fund.

### **Comments and queries from members included:**

1. A member commented that the report was very detailed and added that it would be useful to have sight of the work undertaken by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Interim Monitoring Officer explained that the LEP was under the umbrella of the North East Combined Authority (NECA).
2. A question was asked in respect of the North of Tyne Rural Business Growth Investment Fund and whether Northumberland County Council will continue as the lead organisation. R Hamilton gave assurances that this had not changed.
3. The name of the rail link between Ashington and Newcastle, now to be known as the Northumberland to Newcastle line will not be recognised by residents.
4. The Chair expressed his appreciation for the work undertaken and acknowledged the STEM and Digital Skills Programme. Referring to the Tour of Britain Cycling Event officers were asked if consideration could be given to including the northern border of Northumberland in the event.

**RESOLVED** - that the report be received.

19 **REPORT TO CABINET ON NORTH OF TYNE COMBINED AUTHORITY  
MAYORAL ELECTION**

Submitted: Copy of the Cabinet report of 12 March 2019  
(previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Members considered the report, previously considered by Cabinet which outlined preparations for the North of Tyne Combined Authority Mayoral Election and requested confirmation that the Interim Head of Paid Service should be appointed as the Combined Authority Returning Officer.

The report gave Committee the opportunity to look at the campaign and publicity to be used during the election period.

Points to note included:

1. Work with central government to develop an awareness campaign to be funded by government.
2. Ensuring a clear message to the public in respect of the role of the Elected Mayor.
3. Promote voter registration. Each registered voter will receive a booklet containing a short address from each candidate.
4. Advertising methods.

**Comments and queries from members included:**

- a) In response to a query regarding the cost of the campaign and a breakdown of the costs Committee were informed that it is to be funded by central government who do not communicate actual spend to NTCA officers.
- b) A Member referred to officers seconded to the NTCA whilst also undertaking roles in their respective authorities. Officers were requested to present a report to a future meeting; the report to provide information in relation to costs and officer time whilst seconded.
- c) A Member asked if each candidate will pay a fee to meet the costs of an election address. In response Committee were informed that the cost of an address was not excessive. Officers will clarify and email response back to Members.
- d) The Interim Monitoring Officer Informed Committee that there will be 2 elements for the Count; 2 May – verification and 3 May – actual Count.

**RESOLVED** that further information be provided on:

- i) Breakdown of costs relating to the election campaign

ii) Officer secondment

iii) Candidate costs incurred for election address.

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

To be confirmed