

Approved Minutes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10 March 2020

(10.00 - 11.00 am)

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

Present:

Chair: Cllr Gregah Alan Roughead

Vice Chair: Cllr L Wright

Councillors: S Dungworth, P Earley, S Graham, M Hall, P Holland, G Stewart, and G Stone

46 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

47 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Lower
Cllr Stone attended as a substitute for Cllr Lower

48 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

49 **AGREEMENT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

50 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND LAND**

Mayor Redfearn, as Cabinet Member for Housing and Land, had previously provided a briefing note, a copy of which was circulated and attached to the Official Minutes.

Mayor Redfearn provided an update on her portfolio highlighting the following points:

The focus on the housing and land portfolio was to increase the net new additions to local housing need figures from a baseline of 1,800 per year to 3,000 per year by 2032. The Housing and Land Board, which is advisory, will oversee an integrated programme of housing delivery across the North of Tyne area and is very much focused on collaboration. It is made up of Members, housing providers and experts and has input from public, private and non-profit sectors. It does not replicate what is already there.

The powers of the Combined Authority in respect of housing and land are limited. The Combined Authority does have powers around compulsory purchase orders and powers in respect of Mayoral Development Corporations, however, there are no plans to use these at present.

A programme of work has begun and very shortly the Combined Authority will bring forward a vision for housing and a set of early investments and next steps. The new homes target for this year is already being met and needs to be sustained.

Homes must be accessible to all which means providing homes of all types and tenures from affordable housing to executive style homes; developing housing options that meet the range of needs present across the North of Tyne area.

Investment will be needed in social housing, improving standards in the private rented sector and encouraging the development of more supported housing and other types of housing suitable for an aging population.

The Combined Authority is in the final stages of agreeing a partnership with Homes England which will allow the Authority to set out its priorities, building on work already undertaken by the three local authorities. There will be a variety of strategic objectives which will include:

- Low Carbon – the creation of sustainable, low carbon communities that are fit for the future.
- Ageing ready - Mayor Redfearn stressed the importance of being ageing ready, adapting to an ageing society.
- Digitally connected - In relation to digital connectivity the Authority is investing in rural broadband in Northumberland and expanding fibre connections in Newcastle and North Tyneside.
- Aligned to infrastructure – Improvements to transport infrastructure providing an opportunity to open up new sites for housing and employment; for example, the Northumberland – North Tyneside – Newcastle rail line.

- City, Coast and Country – a variety of approaches towards building construction, recognising the needs of rural communities and urban centres and a mix of tenure suitable for all.

Preliminary proposals will be presented to the Housing and Land Board meeting in April and to the North of Tyne Cabinet meeting in April. There will be extra capacity to support existing officers to develop a 'pipeline' of sites but will also help with strategic planning, design and the capacity to do proper market testing to understand the viability of the proposed developments. To achieve extra capacity a capacity fund could be developed in collaboration with Homes England.

In relation to infrastructure Mayor Redfearn advised that the Combined Authority, through the Devolution Deal, is committed to an infrastructure statement which would involve the bringing together of the infrastructure plans for each local authority as well as plans for transport related infrastructure being developed for the region.

It is the aim of the Combined Authority to create a prospectus that helps to bring housing ambitions closer to being realised and provide residents with access to good housing.

Mayor Redfearn responded to questions/comments from members which included:

- A member referred to the ageing population and the types of housing that will be required to meet a variety of needs such as wider doors to accommodate wheelchairs and sensors that will activate alarms. In response Mayor Redfearn explained that the Board will promote why a variety of housing types are important in new developments and also there will be specialists to work with the Housing and Land Board to design and provide the styles of accommodation required by an ageing population.
- Responding to a query as to how the Combined Authority can add value to the work already being undertaken on housing types and retrofitting for older properties. Mayor Redfearn explained that an audit of where each local authority was at and what needed to be done would be undertaken and also the area as a whole to identify areas where we can build. She also added that Central Government are looking for authorities that can demonstrate that they have the ability and the capacity to move forward for pilot schemes relating to housing, for example. In respect of infrastructure the Authority has to be proactive; some funding is already in place to move forward in reopening the Northumberland – North Tyneside – Newcastle line. Once opened it was anticipated that it would help to reduce the congestion in urban centres.
- A member referred to ageing ready and digitally connected homes, those living in isolated communities many of whom work from home and the fibre connection required to enable this. In responding, Mayor Redfearn spoke about the ambitions of the Combined Authority to enable modern methods of construction and the provision of a digital infrastructure programme, Central Government have already provided funding towards costs of fibre connectivity.

- Mayor Redfearn was asked to elaborate on the mix of tenure and how she could guarantee that landlords will deliver a range of housing. She explained that houses and homes are about people and affect the way people feel about their environment. The membership of the Housing and Land Board includes a representative from the private landlords association and there was good communication with the sector, it was important that we take them with us.
- Reference was made to the possibility of an accreditation scheme for private landlords and asked how the Housing and Land Board could work with those private homeowners who have derelict properties. Mayor Redfearn explained that the Board can work with private homeowners and partners and gave examples of how this has worked in North Tyneside. Local Authorities are proactive and innovative in tackling derelict properties.
- The Chair referred to the membership of the Housing and Land Board which he felt were all appropriate but flagged up the vacancy for a representative for rural interests suggesting that this be progressed.

The Chair thanked Mayor Redfearn for attending and addressing committee.

51 **UPDATE ON LOCAL FULL FIBRE NETWORKS**

Submitted: Report of the Digital Infrastructure Programme Manager (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

P Armstrong introduced the report the purpose of which was to update Committee on the progress of the NTCA Digital Infrastructure Programme. This follows an initial paper which was presented on 2 July 2019.

In considering the report Members noted that on 26 September 2018 the NTCA Digital Infrastructure Programme was awarded up to £12m grant funding from the DCMS Local Full Fibre Networks fund for the delivery of gigabit capable connectivity to public sector sites in Northumberland.

The grant funding will be used in conjunction with existing Council Wide Area Network (WAN) budgets to ensure commercial viability and to provide a connected region. Cabinet have agreed that £550,000 from the Investment Fund be used to fund resources and external specialist support to deliver the programme of works.

Progress and an update were detailed in section 2.1 of the report. The number of public sites previously anticipated had reduced from 313 to 280. This was due to:

- 23 schools being selected to be part of a Department for Education (DfE) Rural Gigabit Connectivity Scheme therefore their funding provided by DfE.
- 4 sites being delivered by the existing iNorthumberland programme.
- 15 sites being removed from the programme for State Aid compliance.

Reference was also made to the NTCA's membership of the regional Digital Infrastructure Working Group which included local authorities and associated planning and highway departments, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, the North East Combined Authority and the Tess Valley Combined Authority. Work was being undertaken on aligning planning conditions, engaging with house builders and providers to create the right conditions for their investment

Questions/Comments from Members

- A request for a list of the 271 sites in Northumberland which will get the gigabit capable connectivity
- A request for a list of the 23 schools in the DfE Rural Gigabit Connectivity and the 4 sites in the iNorthumberland programme.
- A request for a list of the sites removed because of State Aid compliance.
- Any information that demonstrates that it is not just rural areas receiving assistance.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the information contained in the report and requested additional information as set out in the points above.

52 **UPDATE TO THE 2020-21 BUDGET REFLECTING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NORTH EAST LEP TRANSFER**

Submitted: Report of the Interim Section 73 Officer (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

J Gillespie introduced the report the purpose of which was to provide an update to the 2020/21 Budget to reflect the implications of the North East LEP transfer.

She advised Members that Committee have previously received information in respect of the LEP budget and the associated risk areas as part of the budget consultation and this was the latest position. Members also noted that the NTCA would take responsibility for the LEP budget on 1 April.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the update to the 2020/21 Budget reflecting the implications of the North East LEP transfer (Appendix 1).

53 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Submitted: Report of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes)

J Softly presented the report the purpose of which was to advise the Committee of proposed changes to NTCA's Constitution and updated Committee on the use of decision-making powers.

The Monitoring Officer referred to the papers circulated at the meeting. The papers provided an update on the appointment of the Mayoral Ambassador for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector and the Inclusive Economy Board.

The proposed changes to the Constitution were set out in section 2.1 of the report; Mayoral Ambassador, Inclusive Economy Board, Financial Regulations and delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer. Regarding urgent decisions and call-in and waiving of the 28 days' notice of forthcoming decisions it was reported that there has been no occasion to date when it has been necessary to use those provisions. Also, there has been no request for a decision to be called in. A list of delegated decisions reported to Cabinet were detailed in Appendix 1.

The Chair requested that the proposed draft changes to the Constitution be circulated to all Committee Members.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report and requested that the proposed draft changes to the Constitution be circulated to all Committee Members

54 **ADOPTION OF CABINET-SCRUTINY PROTOCOL**

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously submitted and a copy attached to the Official Minutes)

E Kerr introduced the report the purpose of which was to present the Committee with the first North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol and seek Committee's endorsement.

The Overview and Scrutiny statutory guidance highlights the importance of raising awareness in the wider authority of scrutiny's role and function and encourages the production of an Executive-Scrutiny protocol.

Members heard that the protocol was a starting point and reflected comments made by the Committee and included input from the Chair and Vice Chair.

The Chair commended E Kerr for the work involved to produce the protocol and suggested that it be reviewed annually. It was also suggested that a future workshop be scheduled in about 6 months' time where member could discuss and further develop the protocol.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol.

55 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

Submitted: Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Officer (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes)

E Kerr briefly introduced the report and thanked members for their work and attendance throughout the year, especially for ensuring that each meeting was quorate.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the submission of the Annual Report to the Cabinet meeting in June 2020.

56 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

To be confirmed