North of Tyne Combined Authority
Assurance Framework

FINAL

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

This Assurance Framework explains the arrangements for the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) to:

- Demonstrate that arrangements are in place to ensure accountable and transparent decision making;
- Appraise projects and allocate funding; and
- Monitor and evaluate projects to ensure that they achieve value for money and projected outcomes in accordance with the Mayor and Cabinet's priorities.

It has been updated to meet the National Local Growth Assurance Framework, (updated in September 2021) issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for Mayoral Combined Authorities with a Single Pot funding arrangement as part of their Devolution Deals.

This Assurance Framework has also been updated following the publication of the revised Her Majesty's Treasury Green Book in November 2020.

The Single Pot approach to funding is a significant fiscal agreement in devolution deals which reduces ring fences and consolidates funding lines for which the NTCA is the accountable body.

The North of Tyne Devolution Deal was approved by Government when the NTCA was established on 2 November 2018. The Devolution Deal, which focusses on inclusive economic growth, sets out details of the powers and functions devolved from central government to the NTCA and the directly elected North of Tyne Mayor. The powers and functions of NTCA and North of Tyne Mayor are set out in the North of Tyne Order.

The Devolution Deal agreed between NTCA [1] and HM Government provides the area with greater local control, flexibility and responsibility over funding streams and their outcomes, particularly over the management of the Single Pot and the Adult Education Budget (AEB). In performing its role, the NTCA ensures that it acts in a manner that is lawful, transparent, evidence-based, consistent and proportionate. This Assurance Framework provides a robust framework to enable NTCA to maximise the impact of the Devolution Deal and is applicable to any funds devolved to the NTCA, including, for example, the Brownfield Housing Fund.

1.2 Scope of the Assurance Framework

NTCA has established an Investment Fund through which it administers the North of Tyne Single Pot allocation of funding from HM Government, alongside any other local and national funding sources which may subsequently be included. In July 2020 NTCA was also awarded a £23,853,618 share of the £400m Brownfield Housing Fund and this is administered through the Assurance Framework.

[1] North of Tyne includes the areas of the local authorities of Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council.

NTCA also has control of a £23 million per annum Adult Education Budget which is administered in accordance with the published AEB Guidelines in Annex C of the National Local Growth Assurance Framework, and its own assurance framework (see Appendix 1)

This Assurance Framework is predominantly for the Single Pot Investment Fund which comprises the £20 million per year allocation of revenue funding, over 30 years (sometimes called 'Gain Share'), which will be subject to a five-yearly Gateway Review by Government. In line with the Devolution Deal this is in the control of NTCA, working with the North of Tyne Mayor[2]. Any additional funding that is included in the Investment Fund will be subject to this Assurance Framework.

The Investment Fund provides the opportunity to combine funding to maximise economic impacts. All projects funded through the Investment Fund are subject to the agreed prioritisation, appraisal, and monitoring and evaluation framework, including value for money assessments tailored to the nature and scale of the proposed investment.

This Assurance Framework will be refreshed annually and in line with Government updates to Assurance Framework guidance to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Furthermore, where interests are aligned, should other funding sources be subsequently aligned with the Investment Fund to ensure that an integrated, comprehensive and strategic approach to promoting growth and an inclusive economy within the North of Tyne is adopted; this framework will be updated accordingly. Where there are significant changes to the framework from the approved document, or when wholly new funding streams are added to the North of Tyne Single Pot, revisions will be agreed with the Ministry of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (MLUHC).

The NTCA has worked closely with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP) to develop this Assurance Framework. The NTCA is also now the accountable body for the North East LEP.

The North East LEP Assurance Framework was updated in October 2020 to reflect the change of accountable body status.

This Assurance Framework also sets out how the NTCA works with the North East LEP to ensure duplication of activity is avoided and to ensure that the Investment Fund is additional to and does not replace North East LEP funding.

The establishment of the NTCA means that the area of the former transport authority, the North East Combined Authority (NECA) is reduced, and both NECA (as amended) and the NTCA have transport powers over their respective geographies. However, the order which creates NTCA requires both NTCA and NECA to exercise their transport functions through a statutory joint committee (with three members from NTCA and four members from NECA) which maintains previously existing transport arrangements. The statutory Joint Transport Committee (JTC) is responsible for preparing a single Transport Plan for the area of the two combined authorities. It continues with the work to maintain and improve strategic transport connectivity across the region and to international markets.

[2] No spending commitments beyond the initial five-year allocation has been made prior to the North of Tyne Mayor entering office and agreeing the NTCA investment strategy.

This Assurance Framework, the Adult Education Budget and the Investment Fund are managed in accordance with the usual local authority checks and balances, including the financial duties and rules which require local authorities to act prudently in spending. This provides assurance to MLUHC's Accounting Officer and to Parliament as to how wider funding routed through local government is allocated and that there are robust local systems in place to ensure resources are spent with regularity, propriety and value for money.

The NTCA Assurance Framework should be viewed alongside the following documents:

- The Devolution Deal agreement, which sets out the terms and commitments between HM Government and NTCA (North Of Tyne Devolution Document.pdf (northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)
- Single Pot Settlement Letter, which outlines the principles and content of the Single Pot Investment Fund.
- Baseline Implementation Plan
- NTCA Adult Education Budget (AEB) Assurance Process March 2021
- NTCA Corporate Plan which builds on the NTCA Economic Vision and Devolution Deal and sets out the priorities for the NTCA.

The Corporate Plan will be produced on an annual basis and outlines the priorities for the Authority for the year ahead using the powers and resources from our devolution deal to drive jobs, inclusion, new homes and positive economic change in our region. The full document can be viewed here.

2. NTCA Decision Making

This section describes how the NTCA ensures accountable and transparent decision making in relation to the use of the Single Pot funding and Adult Education Budget.

2.1 Investment Fund Decision-Making Process and Delegations

The NTCA Constitution sets out how the authority operates and makes decisions, as well as its responsibilities, procedures, codes of conduct and protocols.

The North of Tyne Combined Authority Cabinet, chaired by the North of Tyne Elected Mayor, is the decision-making body of the authority with the NTCA Investment Panel making recommendations on funding to either Cabinet or to a designated officer. The Investment Panel is supported by the NTCA Technical Officers Group.

The NTCA Cabinet comprises the Elected Mayor, two elected members from each constituent council and a non-voting representative of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, with the elected members being responsible for a specific portfolio. The Mayoral Ambassador for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) also sits on Cabinet as a non-voting observer.

The NTCA Cabinet is responsible for all funding decisions, unless Cabinet have specifically delegated the decision or unless it is a decision delegated to officers under the Scheme of Delegations ("the Scheme") which was most recently approved by Cabinet in September 2020 forms Part 2.9 of the NTCA Constitution,

The Scheme provides a number of general delegations to certain "designated officers", namely the Head of Paid Service (i.e. the Managing Director), the Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Director of Economic Growth and the Director of Policy and Performance, and - for North East LEP matters only - the Chief Executive of the North East LEP).

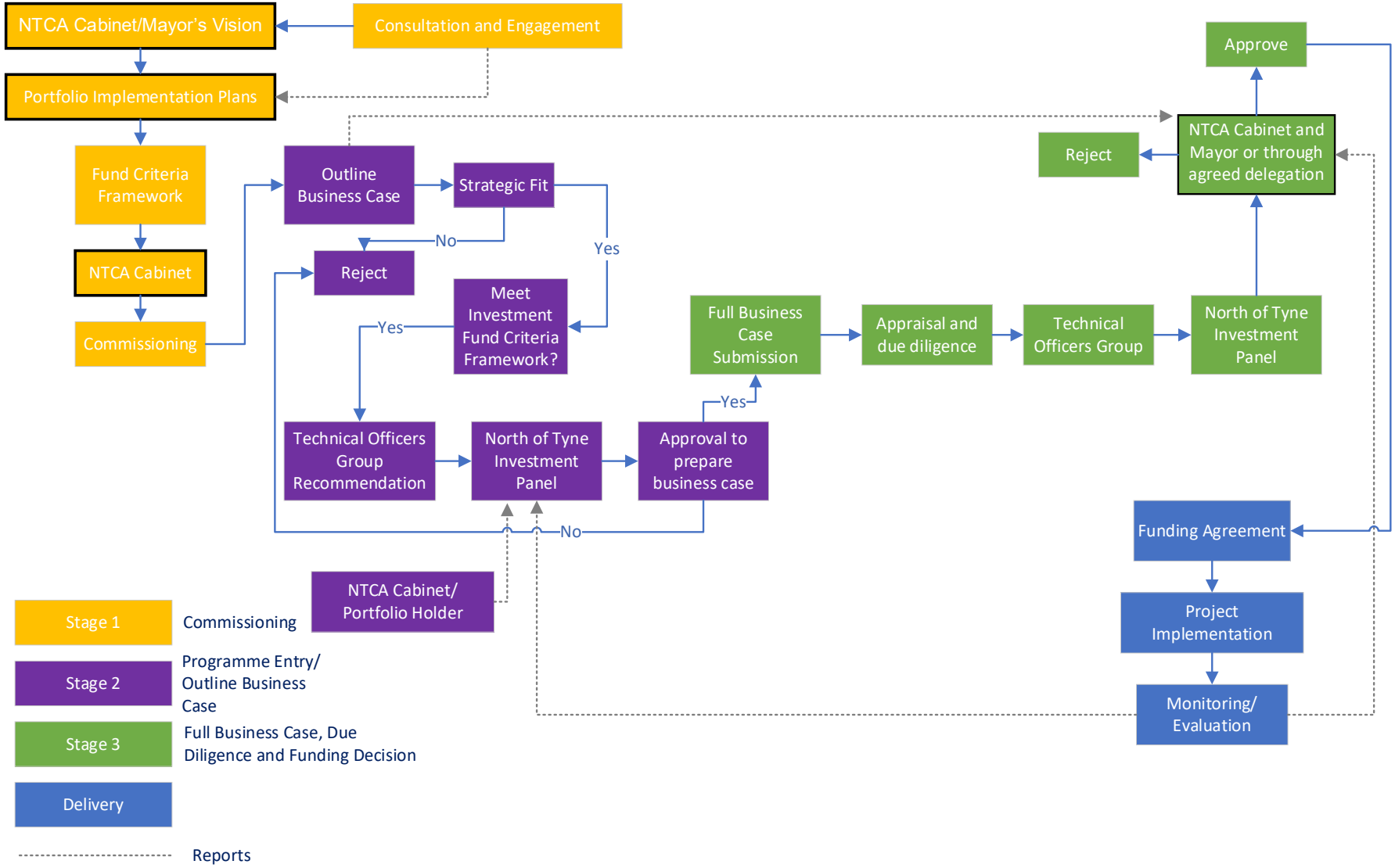
Nevertheless, all decisions on the use of Investment Fund monies [and other relevant sources of funding] must be made in accordance with the processes in this Assurance Framework.

All decisions made by officers under delegated authority will be fully recorded and published (unless there are specific reasons why non-publication is permissible)

2.2 Accountable Decision Making

The following diagram forms the basis for the Investment Fund decision-making process and displays the process that is followed for commissioning, appraising and making funding decisions on new bids to the Investment Fund. It also displays the overarching role of the NTCA's Cabinet and the Mayor and other key groups in the process.

Diagram 1 – North of Tyne Investment Fund Decision Making Flow Diagram



2.2.1 Stage 1 – Funding Criteria Frameworks.

Purpose: to use intelligence, evidence and research to create Funding Criteria Frameworks which describe the services or interventions that are needed to support delivery of NTCA's strategic objectives. The Funding Criteria Frameworks are used to communicate NTCA's expectations to potential delivery bodies.

The Funding Criteria Frameworks are developed to reflect the agreed strategic priorities of the Combined Authority. These are used to specify the requirements of a specific commissioning exercise that could lead to decisions on the method that is used to deliver services and / or interventions. Options include: services or interventions being procured from a third party; services or interventions being delivered by the Combined Authority or one of the constituent Local Authorities and; other suitable partner, services or interventions being delivered via a bespoke joint venture, or specially developed delivery body. The content of the commissioning exercise and subsequent decision on delivery mechanisms are overseen and agreed by NTCA Cabinet unless Cabinet have specifically delegated the decision.

Funding Criteria Frameworks are initially considered by the Technical Officers Group prior to their recommendation for consideration by the Investment Panel. Investment Panel then either recommends the Funding Criteria Frameworks for approval by Cabinet; unless Cabinet have specifically delegated the decision, or unless it is a decision delegated to officers under section 2.9 of the NTCA Constitution; the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers.

2.2.2 Stage 2 – Outline Business Cases

Purpose: to assess the Outline Business Cases received and decide whether applicants should be invited to develop a Full Business case application for funding.

The Technical Officers Group will consider the Outline Business Cases received in response to commissioning against the relevant appraisal criteria and make a recommendation to the NTCA Investment Panel. The decision of the Panel on whether an Outline Business Case should progress to Full Business Case will be reported to the NTCA Cabinet/Portfolio Member and communicated to sponsors. The NTCA Cabinet will be informed about progress of business cases throughout this process.

2.2.3 Stage 3 – Full Business Cases

Purpose: to undertake a technical appraisal of Full Business Cases received against the agreed criteria and report the outcome to NTCA Cabinet for a decision on whether the funding application should be agreed, unless Cabinet have specifically delegated the decision or unless it is a decision delegated to officers under section 2.9 of the NTCA Constitution, the Scheme of Delegation of Functions to Officers.

Full Business Cases are submitted to be appraised by independently verified technical agents appointed for the purpose, as appropriate. The outcome of the appraisal is considered by TOG and the NTCA Investment Panel who then either make recommendations to NTCA Cabinet or to the authorised designated officer under a delegated decision.

2.2.4 Stage 4 – Funding Awards, Monitoring and Evaluation

Purpose: to progress funding awards and apply the subsequent monitoring / evaluation arrangements. Decisions are processed by the NTCA Programme Management Office and communicated to sponsors. The NTCA Programme Management Office is also responsible for management of the contracts, payment of claims, monitoring and evaluation activities, reporting and performance management.

2.3 Reporting and Approving Changes to Grant Funding Agreements - Delegations.

This section sets out the process to deal with changes to a Grant Funding Agreement that may be required following monitoring activity and highlights key Officers and Groups with delegated responsibility for this process. Designated Officers means the Head of Paid Service (Managing Director), the Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Director of Economic Growth, and the Director of Policy and Performance.

2.3.1 Reductions in NTCA expenditure and a reduction in outputs

Criteria	Decision Point
All reductions in NTCA expenditure and outputs will be assessed by the Programme Management Office.	If there is significant difference from contracted figures and a potential detrimental impact on programme delivery, this will be raised with Designated Officers and actions agreed. Change reported to Investment Panel through monthly performance updates.

2.3.2 Increase in NTCA expenditure – delegated decisions

Any request for additional NTCA investment will be subject to an appraisal re-assessment to review impact on value for money, economic case, and subsidy control. As agreed by NTCA Cabinet in June 2020, increases of expenditure are delegated for decision to the following level. Please see page 81 of the June 2020 Cabinet Report:

Criteria	Decision Point
Under £200K	Managing Director (ie Head of Paid Service) in consultation with Investment Panel.
Above £200K	Cabinet

2.3.3 Reductions to Outputs

Achievement and the subsequent reporting of outputs increases towards the end of a project's lifetime. NTCA has developed an escalation process to deal with poor project performance. Where grant beneficiaries identify issues that may prevent them from full output achievement, they will be required to work with their named NTCA Officer to develop an action plan which aims to rectify areas of underperformance. This will

be reviewed regularly until performance improves and the project is delivering in line with contractual expectations.

If the grant beneficiary is unsuccessful in delivering against the objectives of the action plan, a decision will be taken by the designated officer in consultation with Investment Panel on agreed next steps. In cases of severe underperformance this could include applying a financial penalty.

2.4 Adult Education Budget Decision Making Process

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) falls outside of the general principles of this Assurance Framework, with transparency, accountability, formal decision making by the NTCA, general references to project identification, appraisal, monitoring and value for money subject to different arrangements.

Recommendations are discussed at AEB Steering Group meetings attended by relevant officers, and decisions are taken to NTCA Cabinet for decision or through the agreed officer delegation scheme as set out in NTCA's Constitution or delegations directly agreed by Cabinet.

The AEB Steering Group comprises the following:

- NTCA Head of Inclusive Growth
- NTCA AEB Policy and Data Officers
- NTCA AEB Relationship and Contract Manager
- North Tyneside Council Category Manager – Strategic Procurement
- NTCA Lead Accountant
- Northumberland County Council Senior Auditor
- Newcastle City Council Solicitor.

Further detail on the specific arrangements for AEB are provided in Appendix 1 attached to this report. The NTCA Strategic Skills Plan (available on the NTCA website) and the NTCA AEB Invitation to Tender and NTCA AEB Funding & Performance Management Rules (available on request) also provide more detail on arrangements.

2.5 Accountable Body Arrangements – Statutory Officers

The NTCA is a local authority for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972 (and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009) and is the Accountable Body for public expenditure that supports the Devolution Deal, facilitating collective decision making between constituent partners in economic development and regeneration.

The NTCA has appointed a statutory Chief Finance Officer under section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985 and a statutory Monitoring Officer under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Chief Finance Officer role (Section 73 Officer) ensures that resources are used legally and appropriately and that they will be subject to the usual checks and balances by making sure there is a sound system in place for financial management. The Monitoring Officer role ensures that all legal responsibilities are adhered to. The NTCA will comply with the audit and scrutiny requirements set out in the 2009 Act and the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 and the NTCA will ensure that it acts in

a manner that is lawful, transparent, evidence based, consistent and proportionate. Please refer to the NTCA Constitution for further detail.

The NTCA is the accountable body for North East LEP resources.

2.6 Audit

The NTCA has established an Audit and Standards Committee, whose remit and operations are set out in the NTCA constitution. This committee is a key component of the NTCA's corporate governance arrangements and an important source of assurance about the organisation's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, reporting on financial and annual governance processes and for the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by its Members.

The audit functions of the Audit and Standards Committee are:

- Reviewing and scrutinising the authority's financial affairs;
- Reviewing and assessing the authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements;
- Reviewing and assessing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources have been used in discharging the authority's functions; and,
- Making reports and recommendations to the NTCA in relation to the above points.

NTCA will obtain internal audit services to provide a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The internal audit provision will conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards which are intended to promote further improvement in the professionalism, quality, consistency and effectiveness of internal audit across the public sector.

The annual external audit of the NTCA's statement of accounts is undertaken by a registered external local auditor under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. (https://www.icaew.com/technical/audit-and-assurance/local-public-audit-in-england). The external auditor appointed is Mazars. The external auditors will undertake the audit of the NTCA's statement of accounts and value for money arrangements in line with the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/) in line with the requirements set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015.

2.7 Scrutiny

The NTCA has established an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, whose remit and operations are set out in the NTCA Constitution, and which has the power to:

- Review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the NTCA or the Mayor of its functions; and
- Make reports or recommendations, with respect to the discharge of its functions.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consists of 3 members from each Constituent Authority and such independent persons as may be appointed by the NTCA. The appointment of members to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Constituent Authorities reflects political balance across the whole of the NTCA's area at the time of their appointment.

2.8 Transparent Decision Making

It is important that all decisions taken regarding the Single Pot and Adult Education Budget are accountable, open and transparent. This will include clear separations of duties; for example, the person responsible for scrutinising applications and business cases will not be the same as the person who either applies for the funding or is responsible for its delivery.

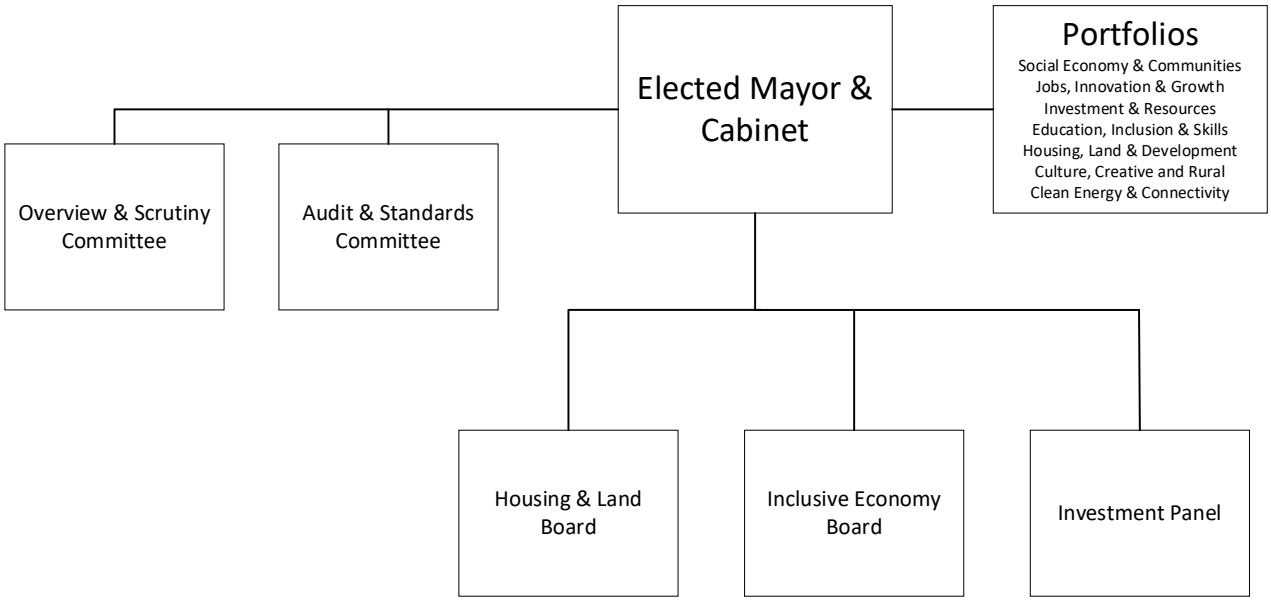
Transparency will be maintained through the existing NTCA arrangements and by adhering to the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), building on existing good practice across the three local authorities.

2.9 NTCA Governance Structure

A diary of proposed NTCA Cabinet meetings is agreed at the Annual Meeting of the North of Tyne Combined Authority. The NTCA Cabinet meetings take place in public (although the public may be excluded for confidential matters), with agendas published on the NTCA website 5 clear working days before the meeting. Minutes of the meeting are signed off at the same or next meeting of the NTCA Cabinet or the committee (as applicable).

As detailed in Diagram 2 below, the NTCA has several Advisory Boards (Inclusive Economy Board; Housing and Land Board) and an Investment Panel. The meetings of these Boards and Panel are scheduled to ensure they fit with the overall NTCA Cabinet meeting timetable, as appropriate.

Diagram 2: NTCA Governance Structure



The Housing and Land Board, Inclusive Economy Board and Investment Panel shown in Diagram 2 above are all advisory bodies that advise and provide recommendations to the Cabinet. All budgets and funding decisions - including funding allocations and decisions around the Adult Education Budget, are made by the Cabinet, unless Cabinet have

specifically delegated the decision or unless it is a decision delegated to officers under the Scheme of Delegations.

Please see the following links for further information:

Committees - NTCA (northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

The Cabinet - NTCA (northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

Advisory Bodies - NTCA (northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

2.10 Publication of Decisions

As detailed above, the NTCA publishes a record of the decisions made at NTCA Cabinet meetings via the website. Investment Fund Performance Reports are provided at meetings of the NTCA Cabinet and these will be recorded through the NTCA Cabinet minutes. The NTCA also ensures compliance with Government guidelines on publication, where appropriate.

2.11 Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 2018

As a public body, the NTCA is responsible for holding the official record of Single Pot proceedings, Single Pot documents and Adult Education Body funding decisions and will ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018, which includes the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Full details of the NTCA's Freedom of Information requests procedures can be found on the NTCA Website. Freedom of Information - NTCA (northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

2.12 Publication of Annual Accounts

The North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Annual Statement of Accounts and spend over £500 is required to be published on the NTCA website in line with ancy regulations. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 required the Draft Statement of Accounts to be published annually by 31st May with final Audited Statement of Accounts to be published by 31st July.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2020/21, which took effect from the 31 March 2021, extended this statutory requirement for the completion and publication for the draft Statement of Accounts from the 31 May to 31 July. With the audited accounts to be published from 31 July to 30 September.

Spend over £500 will be published on a monthly basis (this includes all items purchased, payments made to suppliers and other costs incurred in carrying out operational activity).

Links to the annual accounts can be found here North of Tyne Combined Authority Statement of Accounts

2.13 Conflicts of Interest

The NTCA has a code of conduct for members and a code of conduct for officers which set out clear procedures for dealing with any conflicts of interest which may arise when carrying out the business of the NTCA. The code of conduct can be found in the NTCA Constitution .

2.14 Complaints and Whistle Blowing Procedures

The NTCA has a dedicated complaints procedure against Members of the NTCA which is followed upon receipt of a complaint. Complaints against Members of the NTCA - NTCA (northoftyne-ca.gov.uk)

All staff employed by the NTCA are made aware of the whistle blowing policy which is set out in the NTCA Constitution.

2.15 Equality and Diversity

An Equalities and Diversity Policy has been established that covers the work and outputs of the NTCA Cabinet, Boards, and groups, which is updated on an annual basis. NTCA undertakes and implements the actions from Equality Impact Assessments on all its significant decisions, polices, plans, practices and procedures. NTCA is fully committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and to fulfilling its statutory duties towards its employees and residents with regards to equality and inclusion.

2.16 Corporate Policies.

Other corporate policies relating to Modern Slavery, Environmental, Social Value and Data Protection and Confidentiality can be found here.

2.17 Gifts / Hospitality

The NTCA gifts and hospitality procedures apply where any gift or hospitality over the value of £50 will be declared and documented, internally, by NTCA and is available on the NTCA Website.

2.18 UK Subsidy Control

This Assurance Framework has been designed to support the NTCA to make an assessment about whether its investments are UK Subsidy Control compliant.

The business case templates that form the core of the application and appraisal process, require Project Sponsors to confirm that their project complies with UK Subsidy Control requirements and set out how this will be adhered to throughout project delivery. The templates also require Project Sponsors to outline what advice (e.g. legal advice) they have had in relation to UK Subsidy Control. Where appropriate, NTCA will build in specific subsidy control conditions into the Grant Funding Agreement.

Where required, the NTCA will also conduct legal due diligence to obtain further confidence that UK Subsidy Control requirements have been met.

2.19 Inclusive Economy

Delivering an inclusive economy is at the heart of our Assurance framework. We have developed our Inclusive Economy Policy Statement, targets, outcomes and indicators which inform our monitoring and evaluation process.

3. Programme Management Framework, Project Appraisal and Ensuring Value for Money

3.1 Programme Management Framework

This section describes the NTCA's Programme Management Framework approach, which is applied to all Single Pot investments. The Framework is based on best practice and what works from other frameworks in operation in both Mayoral Combined Authorities and LEPs and has been designed to provide the basis on which the NTCA requires applicants for funding to provide the evidence that is needed for the NTCA to make transparent and equitable decisions about the allocation of resources.

The Framework sets out in further detail how the NTCA uses the appraisal process to ensure that applicants for funding provide the evidence that proves that investments provide good value for money and deliver outcomes that are consistent with NTCA's economic and inclusive economy objectives.

Criteria used in the appraisal process are based on the Treasury's Green Book and so provides stakeholders – including Government, local partners and local communities – with the assurance that there is evidence in place to support the need for a project and a robust framework to manage projects in an appropriate way, from project planning and development, through to selection, delivery and closure, ensuring maximum impact and value for money is being delivered for the local area.

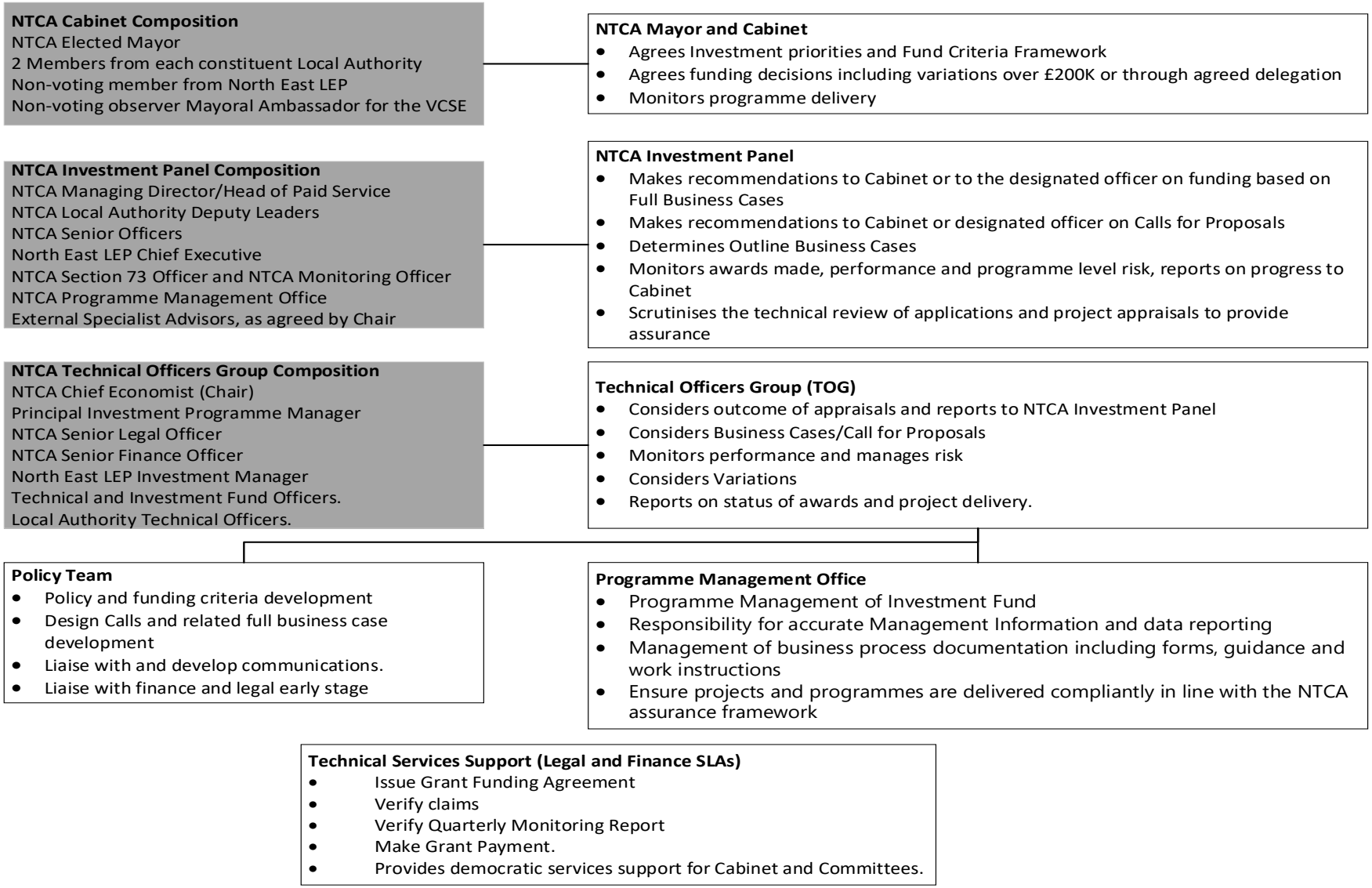
It also outlines in further detail how the NTCA manages the effective delivery of investments made through the Single Pot and how risk is managed. It also describes how the NTCA's Assurance Framework works practically with the North East LEP's Assurance Framework in instances where one project is funded by both organisations.

The Framework is made up of processes and procedures for:

- Commissioning;
- Options Appraisal and Prioritisation;
- Business Case Development and Value for Money Assessment;
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

The process is illustrated in Diagram 1 and Diagram 4 below sets out the Organisational Management Structure that sits behind the process.

Diagram 3: Assurance Process Management Structure



3.1.1 NTCA Cabinet and Mayor

- Set the policy direction for the NTCA's Investment Fund.
- Agree the NTCA Investment priorities.
- Set Call parameters and approving the content of commissioned exercises unless decision is delegated.
- Use the appraisal reports provided by the Investment Panel, make all final investment decisions in relation to the Investment Fund unless Cabinet and Mayor have specifically delegated the decision or unless it is a decision delegated to officers under the Scheme of Delegations at Part 2.9 of the NTCA Constitution.
- Consider monitoring reports and amend investment priorities accordingly.
- Delegate Decisions.

3.1.2 NTCA Investment Panel

- Scrutinises the technical review of applications and project appraisals to provide assurance around value for money, due diligence, transparency and equity;
- Considers Outline Business Cases and approve them to move to Full Business Case stage.
- Makes recommendations to the NTCA Cabinet and Mayor on individual full business case applications.
- Where a decision is delegated, Investment Panel recommends projects for approval with the Authorised Officer (e.g. Managing Director or Director) taking the final decision on the funding requested subject to any relevant conditions.
- Using programme and project level monitoring reports, makes recommendations relating to variations and future investment priorities.

3.1.3 NTCA Technical Officer Group

- Manages the commissioning and application process;
- Carries out appraisal work on Outline and Full Businesses cases and reports outcome to Investment Panel;
- External advisors are commissioned in cases where this is considered appropriate and may attend Technical Officers Group, Investment Panel and Cabinet and Mayor to advise upon any complex content;
- Issues and oversees the application of funding agreements:
- Manages the monitoring and evaluation activities and risk management;
- Reports the outcome of project monitoring and evaluation activities;
- Provides administrative function for the Investment Fund and Investment Panel.

Further detail of how the decision-making process operates is set out below.

3.2 Decision-Making Process - Commissioning (project identification) and Application Process

3.2.1 HM Treasury Green Book

All projects follow the same overarching business case and governance process. The assessment for all project types will include specific methodologies that reflect relevant departmental requirements. Specific methodologies may be necessary to properly consider the impact of individual elements of the programme.

The Investment Fund is being used to fund:

- projects where the funding is being used to part fund a complete scheme;
- the development of a full business case for project proposals that meet an initial assessment.

All projects are required to have a business case based on the requirements on the HM Treasury Green Book. Projects are assessed against their contribution towards NTCA's strategic priorities and according to the five cases model set out in the Treasury Green Book:

- **The strategic case** – a compelling case for change that explains how the project provides fit with NTCA's strategic objectives, as well as any relevant local and/or national strategic priorities;
- **The economic case** – which describes how the project represents the best public value in meeting our economic and inclusive economy objectives;
- **The commercial case** – demonstration that the deal is attractive to the market, can be compliantly procured and is commercially viable;
- **The financial case** – confirms that the project is affordable;
- **The management case** – confirms that the capacity is available and proportionate to the delivery requirements.

The NTCA has identified inclusive economy as a key priority. In addition to broader value for money assessment, we will consider the contribution of proposed projects to the 'inclusive economy' objectives of the NTCA. Different areas of the NTCA investment programme will make different levels of contribution towards our inclusive economy objectives and the Inclusive Economy measurements are central to the wider NTCA evaluation framework. The NTCA Inclusive Economy Policy Statement can be viewed online. In addition, where relevant, the appraisal process takes into account the contribution of projects towards NTCA's commitment to economic growth in rural areas. The process as a whole provides the NTCA with the assurance that approved projects are delivering public value.

The Investment Fund decision-making process consists of the distinct stages referenced under the Decision-Making process section and further detail is provided below:

3.2.2 Commissioning

Bespoke commissioning exercises are informed by NTCA's strategic priorities and input from the NTCA Mayor and Cabinet. Based on instructions from the Mayor and Cabinet and using evidence relating to each of the key challenges facing the NTCA area, officers draft funding criteria frameworks (often referred to as call documents) that set out the specifications for eligible interventions. Unless delegated, call documents and associated guidance notes are approved by the Mayor and Cabinet and made available to the relevant organisation or published on the NTCA website and open for a specified time. Applicants are required to respond to the specific requirements set out in the call for proposal documents by submitting a Full Business Case.

NTCA has a Business Case Development Fund for the development of early stage projects which have the potential to contribute to the NTCA's stated objectives. Proposals for the Business Case Development Fund are invited to complete a bespoke application form, with Cabinet making decisions on the allocation of funding, unless the decision is delegated.

3.2.3 Expression of Interest

In certain circumstances, the NTCA may ask applicants to complete an Expression of Interest, prior to completion of an Outline Business case. The purpose of the Expression of Interest would be to confirm that the proposal is consistent with NTCA's strategic priorities, outline the rationale for intervention, set out the primary benefits associated with the intervention and identify a proposed preferred option with costs based on an appraisal of the available options.

3.2.4 Outline Business Case

The purpose of the Outline Business Case is to generate sufficient detail on the preferred option to enable a decision about whether to ask the applicant to submit a Full Business Case. As a minimum, the Outline Business Case application form will require the following:

- Consideration of strategic fit including evidence that the intervention will contribute to NTCA's strategic priorities
- Clear evidence of the need for the intervention and that the associated impacts would not otherwise be realised;
- Forecast of the additional impacts that the intervention will deliver. Expected impacts (outcomes and outputs) and associated benchmarks will be specified for each commissioning exercise..
- Demonstration that the intervention represents value for money;
- Evidence that the intervention is deliverable within the defined timescales and that the requisite levels of management capacity is in place to ensure regulatory compliance;
- Detail of the financial costs of the proposed intervention,
- High level assessment of any other options for delivering the proposed intervention
- Evidence that the Investment Fund resource is required and details of public and private sector leverage;
- Potential risks and mitigating actions of the project;
- An estimate of return on investment (if appropriate).

3.2.5 Full Business Case

Applications that are considered to meet the requirements set out in the Fund Criteria Framework and have been prioritised by the Investment Panel will be invited to develop and submit a Full Business Case.

The Fund Criteria Frameworks will include further detail on any issues identified during the consideration of the Outline Business Case and input relating to the requirements listed in the table below:

Full Business Case Requirements	
Applications	**Supporting Evidence (**if applicable)
Outcome of an Options Analysis Details of the procurement plan and associated processes Detailed financial case for the project NPV and BCR calculations Details of the management team and capacity Detailed financial plan Detailed delivery plan with schedule of outputs Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements Risk Register	Market analysis Proof of match funding Development appraisal State Aid/UK Subsidy Control position Planning permission Site investigation reports Cash flows Evidence of land ownership

Full Business Cases will be aligned with MLUHC's Appraisal Summary Tables to present the outcome of the appraisal process.

The requirements of the Full Business Case will be specified in each case to avoid duplication and reflect what is proportionate in each case.

A Business Case Application Form and Funding Guidance is attached as Appendix 2 and 3.

Depending on the development stage of individual projects, submission and consideration of the Outline Business Case and Full Business Case may be undertaken jointly as a single stage.

For transport projects, this will include support (primarily consultancy support) which will scrutinise and provide assurance over technical modelling and appraisal work undertaken by promoters. Modelling and appraisal work for transport schemes will be expected to be carried out by the scheme promoter.

3.2.6 Appraisal and Prioritisation

Using the information provided in the Outline Business Case and Full Business Case submissions projects will be appraised in line with the Treasury Green Book guidelines and their contribution towards NTCA's strategic priorities.

Specifically, appraisal of Full Business Cases will involve assessing the evidence provided to determine the:

Strategic Fit – An intervention's contribution to the priorities and headline measures set out in the NTCA Corporate Plan or call for proposals will be a key consideration. NTCA is aiming to support interventions that contribute to a range of distinct but related objectives and individual applications will be appraised and prioritised in the context of a programme of activities so that a balanced approach and cumulative impact is achieved.

Rationale for intervention – an explanation of why the existing prevailing market mechanism alone is failing to achieve economic efficiency or specified unmet need or demand that the intervention is designed to address and the demonstrable beneficial change that will occur as a direct consequence of the intervention.

Benefits – the direct, measurable outputs or outcomes associated with the investment or intervention including additional jobs, private investment, productivity, learner outcomes, business turnover, increased activity rates, housing units, increased land values, etc that can be attributed to the intervention with associated monetary values and timings.

Additionality – all gross benefits will be adjusted to take into account displacement, deadweight and leakages, to provide a true measure of the output and outcomes that have occurred because of an intervention and would not have happened in the absence of the intervention.

Time Period – consideration of the life span of the cost and benefits to be delivered and measured.

Value for Money – the cost evidence provided by applicants will be scrutinised to ensure that the costs provided in the application are robust. Verified cost figures will used to provide a valuation of benefits to be delivered using Net Present Value (NPV) and Net Present Social Value (NPSV) and a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR). The resultant BCR will be compared to relevant benchmarks to provide an objective basis on which projects can be compared and prioritised.

Deliverability and risk – appropriate consideration of deliverability, compliance and risk, as well as appropriate mitigating action, and its associated costs.

The NTCA ensures that an appropriate assessment of investments made through the Single Pot is undertaken to ensure value for money. This assessment is proportionate to the funding allocated and in line with the established guidance, where appropriate, as set out by HM Government:

- HM Treasury Green Book;
- MLUHC Appraisal Guide;
- Infrastructure UK Route map;
- DfT Value for Money Framework at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-value-for-money-framework including Section 6 'Reporting Value for Money' at each stage of the scheme development process. The VfM assessment will be signed off as true and accurate by the NTCA Section 73 Officer as part of their role within the Technical Officers Group.

Where appropriate for the scale of funding and type of activity, NTCA assesses the Benefit to Cost ratio (BCR) and Net Present Social Value (NPSV) presented in the business case and the outcome will be reported to the relevant decision maker. In principle, the NTCA will consider funding projects that have a positive NPSV and BCR. When assessing the BCR the Investment Panel will use the following scale:

- BCR < 1: Poor VfM
- 1 < BCR < 1.5: Low VfM
- 1.5 < BCR < 2: Medium VfM
- BCR > 2: High VfM

An assessment of the non-monetised benefits, also including the impact on inclusive economy is made and included in the report to Cabinet and is also considered as part of the final funding decision. Having considered the full range of additional beneficial factors associated with a funding application the relevant decision maker may decide to invest in a project that is lower than high VfM (Benefit Cost Ratio above 2 and accounting for significant non-monetised impacts and key uncertainties).

The updated HMT Green Book places greater emphasis on the Strategic Case, requiring business cases to develop a strong strategic case narrative, and provides a broader definition of value for money, so, alongside considering Benefit Cost Ratios, there is a need for proposals to have strategic fit in order to be considered good VfM. Other key drivers for investment decisions include but are not limited to:

- Where a project has very high level of strategic fit for the objectives of the North of Tyne Combined Authority

- Where a project has significant positive Wider Economic Impacts to the North of Tyne

- Other significant positive wider impacts which can be quantified and attributed to the North of Tyne Combined Authority are and which are in particular accordance with the objectives of the authority. These will include health impacts, air quality, social & distributional impacts where applicable.

- Where the investment will unlock significant development sites in the North of Tyne

- Where the promoter is providing a very high proportion of scheme funding as match funding.

For Transport schemes, a Value for Money statement will also be written in line with published DfT guidance. This will be expected to have been updated and presented throughout the approval process and will be signed off as true and accurate by the Section 73 Officer with responsibility for Value for Money assessments within NTCA.

In line with good governance procedures and the National Local Growth Assurance Framework, the NTCA will publish transport business cases before decisions are made and ensure that external opinions expressed by the public and stakeholders are made available to NTCA decision makers.

As well as considering the potential for projects to contribute to NTCA's strategic priorities and value for money, the appraisal process will be designed to consider and militate risk: the process will provide the basis on which the NTCA can be confident that project investments represent additionality, satisfy all appropriate legal and regulatory requirements and will be delivered in a timely and effective manner.

3.2.7 Role of the Investment Panel – Due Diligence and External Advisors

The assessment is completed by the Investment Panel which will include technical experts who appraise specific aspects of applications. Additionally, external advice is commissioned in cases where this is considered appropriate. For example, all applications relating to residential / commercial acquisitions and developments are subject to due diligence carried out by independently verified agents. The due diligence carried out covers aspects of the proposed acquisition or development including site and property conditions, and an assessment of the relevant market conditions.

The NTCA has appointed an independent organisation, through appropriate procurement, to undertake financial due diligence on behalf of the NTCA in relation to the financial information provided in high value or high risk applications and with internal financial checks undertaken for all applicants at the Full Business Case stage.

3.2.8 Meeting the requirements of external bodies.

As required in the National Guidance, in addition to following the Green Book Guidance the methodology used to assess value for money will need to be in line with the established guidance set by the relevant government department and these are summarised below:

> **Transport** – transport projects in receipt of Investment Fund monies will be subject to this Assurance Framework and will be appraised according to the appropriate standards. In line with the Single Pot Assurance Framework Transport all projects will be subject to the minimum requirements on value for money assessment and must be

appraised in line with DfT's appraisal guidance (WebTAG), although for smaller schemes (for examples less than £5 million) it may be appropriate to take a more proportionate approach, to be decided by the NTCA. For these purposes a 'transport scheme' is defined as any scheme that significantly changes the transport network infrastructure, whatever its objectives.

Transport Business Cases will be expected to follow published DfT guidance on the five case model at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-business-case

Transport business cases will be expected to follow Value for money published guidance here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/768356/National_Local_Growth_Assurance_Framework.pdf

WebTAG, the DfT's appraisal guidance is available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transport-analysis-guidance-webtag and provides a comprehensive guide to transport modelling and appraisal to ensure value for money. Scheme promoters will be expected to demonstrate how they have followed published guidance, including WebTAG, and where there have been any deviations.

Central case assessments must be based on forecasts which are consistent with the current definitive version of the National Trip End Model (NTEM). Alternative planning assumptions may be used as sensitivity tests and these results may be considered when coming to a decision regarding the scheme.

Scheme promoters will need to consider how to deal with any updates to WebTAG that might occur during the progression of the scheme through assurance process. Where this occurs, the scheme promoter should refer to the proportionate update process (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/427079/webtag-tag-proportionate-appraisal.pdf) and discuss the approach to the scheme with NTCA and their specialist technical advisers.

Scheme promoters will also be expected to apply the Value for Money Framework, this can be found online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630704/value-for-money-framework.pdf

and

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/267296/vfm-advice-local-decision-makers.pdf

Housing – Homes England good practice, advice and guidance will be adhered to alongside MLUHC's appraisal guide for residential and no-residential development.

Skills Capital – Education and Skills Funding Agency good practice, advice and guidance will be included in the consideration of skills capital projects.

Enterprise, Innovation and Business Support – as well as being considered against the VFM tests set out in the Treasury Green Book, enterprise, innovation and business support projects will be considered in light of past appraisal outcomes and the contribution to local policy drivers, particularly the NTCA Corporate Plan, NTCA's Vision (which is supportive of the NELEP's Strategic Economic Plan), the European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy and national policy goals articulated by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Regeneration – projects will need to be in line with the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance. In addition, the MLUHC appraisal guide will be used to consider the costs and benefits of proposals.

Tourism and Cultural – Where relevant, NTCA will consider Visit England, Heritage Lottery and/or Natural England guidance and standards.

3.2.9 Devolving the decision-making process.

NTCA will consider the merits of establishing separate funding mechanisms for specific purposes and these may include providing financial assistance using loan or equity funding. Proposals to establish separate funds would be taken through the Assurance Framework decision-making process to ensure that they meet the required standards.

The NTCA may also consider appointing external fund managers and the decision to do so would also be subject to the requirements of the Assurance Framework. Any decision to devolve the decision-making process to an external body would be dependent on the third-party decision-making body meeting the standards for decision making set out in the NTCA Assurance Framework. In addition, the agreement with external fund managers would ensure that representatives of the NTCA would be embedded in the external decision-making process and that regular reports on progress would be provided to the NTCA Cabinet.

3.2.10 The Adult Education Budget decision-making process.

The diagram below sets out the specific roles and responsibilities relating to the management and administration of the AEB. These roles are as follows:

NTCA Cabinet and Mayor

- Setting the policy direction for the AEB and assuring alignment with the NTCA Vision;
- Agreeing the AEB priorities in line with the Vision and Devolution Deal;
- Using the reports provided by the AEB team, make all final decisions in relation to the AEB
- Consider monitoring reports and amend AEB priorities accordingly.

AEB Steering Group

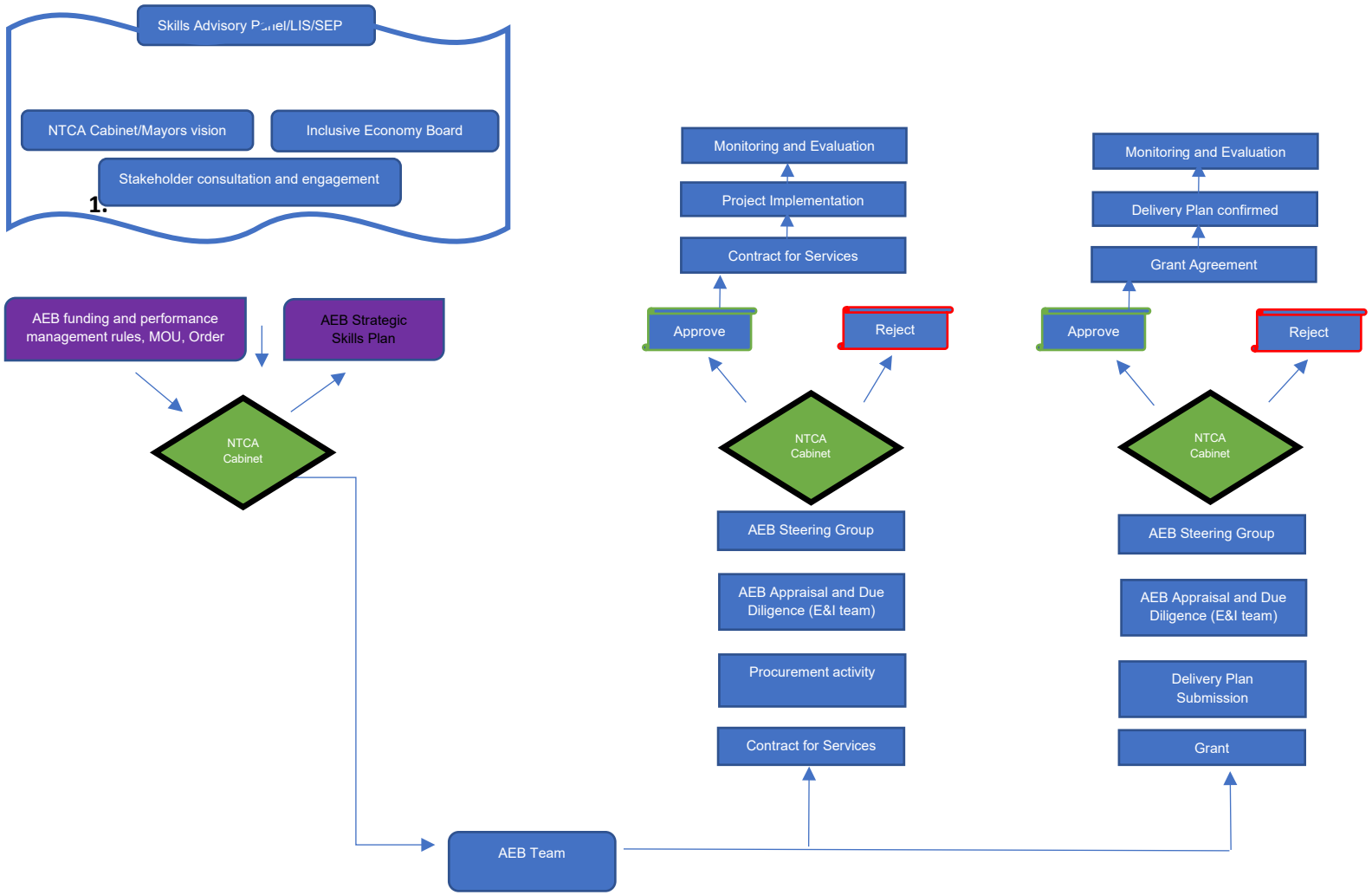
- Scrutinise tenders and the allocations process to provide assurance around value for money, due diligence, transparency and equity;
- Using monitoring reports, make recommendations relating to variations and future investment priorities.

AEB Team

- Manages the commissioning, grant allocation and procurement process;
- Carries out appraisal work above and reports outcome to AEB Steering group;
- External advisors will be commissioned in cases where this is considered appropriate and may attend wherever relevant to advise upon any complex content;

- Issues and oversees the application of funding contracts:
- Manages the monitoring and evaluation activities and risk management;
- Reports the outcome of AEB project monitoring and evaluation activities;
- Provides administrative function for the AEB Steering Group and Cabinet.

Diagram 4 Adult Education Budget Governance diagram



3.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the North East LEP and NTCA

The North East LEP and NTCA are committed to work collaboratively and share economic intelligence and to co-ordinate and monitor investment programmes to help ensure the effective use of public resources. The North of Tyne Combined Authority's Vision (NTCA Vision) document provides the basis for investment decisions. The NTCA Vision is supportive of the North East LEP's Strategic Economic Plan.

The North East LEP Chair attends the Cabinet of the NTCA as a non-voting member and officers from the North East LEP are represented on both the Technical Officer Group and the Investment Panel. The Principal Investment Programme Manager also attends the North East LEP Technical Officers Group meeting as an observer.

The NTCA is the accountable body of the North East LEP.

3.3.1 Co-ordinating with the North East LEP

The NTCA Investment Fund is additional to and does not replace funding from the North East LEP. Cp-ordination in terms of strategic programming, commissioning and handling of project funding proposals is assisted through regular meetings between key members of their respective Technical Officer Groups. This helps with the strategic alignment of respective project calls, the efficient handling of project investment enquiries and sharing of market intelligence.

Any project may be funded by two or more organisations: it may be the case that the NTCA provides funding to a project which also requires funding from the North East LEP, which has a separate Assurance Framework. Where this is the case, the NTCA's portion of the investment is treated in the same way as a stand-alone project and tested using the NTCA Project Assessment Framework. This is because the NTCA's objective is to provide assurance to itself that its portion of investment in the project is appropriate and will provide and deliver Value for Money.

3.4 Handling pre-existing projects

Pre-existing projects and programmes can apply for NTCA's funding subject to the full NTCA decision-making processes.

Where pre-existing projects and programmes are important in the context of the North of Tyne, but do not require specific funding from the NTCA, there is no requirement for them to be tested against the NTCA Assurance Framework.

3.5 Financial Accountability and Management Controls

NTCA has arrangements in place to:

- Ensure that all financial arrangements are adhered to including those relating to procurement, tendering, arrangements for contracting and processes;
- Assess lawfulness prior to endorsing all decisions for project funding contracts to be issued and any payments made;
- Ensure that decisions are consistent with any national or European Environmental, Equalities or State Aid/UK Subsidy Control regulations and are otherwise lawful;
- Maintain separate accounts for different funding programmes;

- Provide quarterly expenditure monitoring reports as part of programme performance reports to NTCA Committees;
- Make arrangements for the annual Audit of expenditure on all NTCA programmes, including where appropriate requiring external organisations in receipt of NTCA grant funding to submit annual external audit certificates to verify expenditure defrayed;
- Maintain a register of NTCA Cabinet member personal interests;
- Manages funds in line with Treasury Management and Investment Policy.

3.6 Programme Management Capacity

An experienced Programme Management Office has been assembled for NTCA and this oversees the development, delivery and day-to-day management of the Investment Fund and associated resources. The team utilises existing capacity across the authorities (including on secondment) where appropriate and procure specialist appraisal support where considered necessary. The NTCA structure includes posts for the Programme Management Office and these have been filled following recruitment processes. Access to specialist consultants if required will be through frameworks available through the North East Procurement Organisation, Crown Commercial Services or similar frameworks. However, the NTCA will also provide advice to scheme promoters.

3.7 Programme Management

The NTCA Investment Panel takes an overarching view of the NTCA programme and project portfolio and regularly reports to the NTCA Cabinet and Mayor on progress. The Director of Policy and Performance oversees the Programme Management Office which utilises recognised programme and project management techniques to manage the investment fund programme.

Overseen by the respective NTCA Portfolio Holder, the Programme Management Office effectively monitors, evaluates and reviews the performance of projects in respect of delivery, expenditure and outputs/outcomes. A performance management system is used to collate, record and report on the progress of individual projects and the programme overall. Quarterly (or more regularly if appropriate) financial reports are submitted to the NTCA alongside the achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs) – that captures outputs and outcomes achieved. This ensures that there is ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of each type of investment in line with NTCA and funding providers' expectations.

Where projects do not achieve their milestones for delivery, projects need to provide evidence to demonstrate that they are able to get back on track or seek approval for change. These requests are considered by the Investment Panel and a decision is made by the NTCA Cabinet unless the decision has been delegated to an authorised officer. Projects that consistently fail to meet projected performance (financial and outputs) may have funding withdrawn. Projects which are not performing in line with the grant agreement are reviewed and the outcomes of this process are referred back to the NTCA Investment Panel and in turn, the NTCA Cabinet, unless the decision has been delegated to an authorised officer.

All projects are required to produce a project closure report at the end of the project (within 3 months of completion), which demonstrates that all activities have been delivered in

accordance with the offer letter, that all funding has been spent appropriately in line with the projected financial profile for the project and that all relevant outputs and key milestones have been achieved. The project closure report captures the immediate success of the project and also agrees next steps related to the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the funding.

3.8 Risk Management

The NTCA recognises that effective risk management is an integral part of good corporate governance and as such should be a part of everyday management processes.

Risk Management processes have been adopted and are reviewed to ensure they still meet the Authority's needs as it grows and develops; encouraging dialogue with a range of our partners and stakeholders, as they play a big part in NTCA's delivery plans. Cabinet and Mayor agree the approach to risk with Audit and Standards Committee monitoring the risks on a quarterly basis.

The Principal Investment Programme Manager champions risk management at the programme and project level, providing a management lead in these areas and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are maintained. The Principal Investment Programme Manager will have overall responsibility for the identification and management of programme and project risks, but the day-to-day coordination of corporate risk management activities is undertaken by the Statutory Officers (Managing Director, Monitoring Officer and Section 73 Officer) of the NTCA.

3.9 Identification and Assessment of Risk

A high-level risk register has been adopted and is maintained by the Programme Management Office. Investment Panel receive monthly performance reports (which includes Adult Education Budget), and updates on risk.

At the project level, all projects are expected to outline in detail any identified risks during the full business case development and due diligence processes. Grant funding agreements require funding recipients to maintain an ongoing risk register and submit updated risk assessments including mitigations on a quarterly basis as part of the monitoring and reporting process. Each funding programme will produce a risk register, which will include escalated project risks. These are reviewed by the Technical Officers Group and risks form part of the regular Performance Update at Investment Panel.

4. Evaluation and Monitoring

4.1 Overview

The NTCA has developed a comprehensive performance management system and an NTCA Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (available on request) that will operate at both the corporate level and at the individual programme/project level. This will enable NTCA to:

- Monitor impacts and progress towards organisational goals, respond to escalated risks and monitor the progress of projects supported by NTCA funding to understand whether projects are on track to deliver projected outputs and outcomes.
- Assess the additionality of activities (and impacts) and to assess whether a project or programme has achieved Value for Money.
- Identify the sustainability of impacts, and the equity implications of activities.
- Monitor contribution towards inclusive economy and rural economy outputs
- Maintain scrutiny and accountability.
- Inform future investment prioritisation and resource allocation.
- Identify what works (and what does not), and in what circumstances, to inform future activities and delivery and the sharing of best practice.

4.2 Performance Monitoring

All projects funded by the NTCA, regardless of size, will have an effective monitoring and evaluation plan in place which will form a key part of the business case. This will enable assessment of the effectiveness and impact of investing public funds. The monitoring and evaluation plan will guide the collection of data from individual projects and will be designed to ensure that it captures information required by NTCA and government.

During the delivery phase, monitoring will be undertaken on a quarterly (or more regularly if appropriate) basis and will cover project expenditure, leverage, milestones, outputs and outcomes. Following practical completion individual projects will continue to be monitored on a frequency to be agreed at practical completion. Post completion monitoring will identify any remaining leverage, outputs, outcomes, impacts and milestones and lessons learned.

Individual monitoring and evaluation plans will be proportionate, correspond with procedures for appraisal, and be in line with the latest government department guidance where relevant. These plans will identify the resources required to deliver the proposed monitoring and evaluation activities.

4.3 Evaluation and Benefits Realisation

The evaluation component of individual projects' monitoring and evaluation plans will need to complement the five-year Single Pot investment fund Gateway Review. Transport projects will also need to comply with the latest DfT guidance on scheme evaluation.

All projects will be required to produce a benefits realisation plan as part of their business case, which identifies the outcomes (benefits) they are planning to deliver, how outcomes will be measured (in accordance with a standardised NTCA monitoring framework), a baseline assessment, and how they intend to implement, monitor and assess the project

to identify whether the benefits have been realized in line with the approach and timescales set out in the monitoring and evaluation plan.

In line with DfT guidance, Transport projects over £5m will also need to comply with the latest DfT guidance on local major scheme evaluation, published at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9154/la-major-schemes-monitoring-evaluation.pdf which sets out the DfT's expectations on the monitoring and evaluation of major schemes. Fuller evaluations will be selected based upon the scale of investment, the nature of the scheme and the benefits to be gained from the evaluation evidence gathered. Decisions regarding which schemes to select for fuller evaluation will be made by the Senior NTCA officers and/or the Technical Officer Group.

All projects will receive a desk-based or physical closure visit by NTCA, depending on project complexity. This will review project performance against the terms of the grant funding agreement and business case, as well as clarify any ongoing monitoring requirements. This will be supported by a project closure report (within 3 months of project completion) and within this re-confirm the monitoring activities set out in the Benefits Realisation Plan. The report will also identify and capture lessons learned which alongside our evaluation work will inform the future delivery of NTCA projects. This information will assist the NTCA in both policy making and future scheme development and ensure that future rounds of investment incorporate best practice in delivery.

In addition to monitoring of individual projects, the NTCA will monitor performance of the overall programme. NTCA is working with MLUHC to meet the national evaluation requirements. NTCA will work in parallel to deliver as required to evaluate any elements not covered in the national indicators and themes and consider if a local evaluation will be undertaken. If so, this will be complementary to any Government requirements and will be procured on the open market to ensure its objectivity.

4.4 Five-Year Gateway Review

NTCA will be subject to five-yearly Gateway Reviews to assess investment impact of the Investment Fund. NTCA will be subject to an independent Evaluation to assess the impact of its Investment Fund expenditure.

5. Communications

5.1 Engagement of Local Partners and the Public

A suite of communications guidance for funding streams has been developed and a Communications, Engagement and Organisational Development Team is in place.

Communications objectives are to:

- Keep the public and stakeholders informed about the progress and milestones of devolution.
- Encourage the public and stakeholders to get involved in engagement or consultation activities.
- Build support for the North of Tyne devolution by sharing the vision, ambitions and the benefits it will have for local people.
- Ensure the NTCA's position is presented fairly and accurately in any related media coverage.

All communications activity complies with the code of recommended practice issued under the Local Government Act 1986. The code requires that any publicity describing the NTCA's activities and aims should be as objective as possible, concentrating on facts or explanation or both. Any comment should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. All publicity and comment is free from political bias.

5.2 Communications tools

Primary communications tools are:

- Website: All information about the NTCA, including background information, timelines, news and events, will be published at https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/
- Social media: All news, updates and events will be shared via Twitter and Facebook.
- A suite of funding publicity guidance is available at https://www.northoftyne-ca.gov.uk/support/business-guidance/

5.3 Working with the media

NTCA will actively engage with the media to amplify messages to the broadest possible audiences.

5.4 Accessibility

All communications relating to NTCA's work are accessible and transparent and stakeholders and the public are kept updated with progress, delivery and decision making. It also supports effective and meaningful engagement activity to encourage participation in the relevant activities and enable local partners and the public the opportunity to inform key decisions and future strategy development.

The communications approach takes into account the requirements of the following:

- Project applicants
- Governance requirements
- Wider partnership requirements; and

- Communities’ requirements.