

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2 July 2019

(10.00 - 11.15 am)

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

Minutes

Present:

Chair: Cllr G A Roughead

Vice Chair: Cllr L Wright

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

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020

Cllr G Roughead and Cllr A Lower were both nominated and seconded for the position of Chair.

RESOLVED that -

Cllr G Roughead was duly appointed Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

Cllr L Wright was duly appointed Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr A Lower; Cllr G Stone attended as substitute.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Earley declared an interest in agenda items 6 (Budget Monitoring Year End 2018/19) and 7 (Local Full Fibre Networks). Cllr Earley was a member of the NTCA Cabinet and in attendance when these were discussed. Cllr Earley did not participate in the discussions.

4 **AGREEMENT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2019**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 **ADDRESS FROM JAMIE DRISCOLL, THE MAYOR OF THE NORTH OF TYNE COMBINED AUTHORITY**

Mayor Driscoll attended the meeting and addressed those present. His comments included:

- His commitment to democracy, openness and collaboration, climate change; he also welcomed the work of the committee, the value of Scrutiny and future input to the decision making process.
- Agreement to working with representatives of the CBI to discuss investment projects, commitment to promote local businesses.
- Community engagement linked to a Mayor's Question Time; this would move across the boundaries of the 3 constituent authorities.
- Members were given a brief outline of progress with the Adult Education Budget and Local Full Fibre Networks. Funding for Adult Education should be in place for the start of the next academic year.
- The real living wage.
- Collaboration with the authorities South of the Tyne and the Scottish Borders.
- The Mayor confirmed his commitment to Devolution and cross-party work.
- Appointment of Ambassadors for Business, CVS and Youth.

Mayor Driscoll responded to questions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Guidance and the development of an Executive and Scrutiny Protocol. Mayor Driscoll gave assurances that he will be guided by Scrutiny.

A member questioned whether there had been any meetings between the Mayor and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny. The Chair, Cllr. Roughead confirmed that as the incumbent Chair of Overview and Scrutiny he had met with the Mayor informally along with the Policy and Scrutiny Officer in the period following the 2019 North of Tyne Combined Authority Mayoral Election before being re-appointed as Chair of Overview Scrutiny for 2019/2020 Municipal Year.

The Mayor addressed a question in relation to Community Wealthy Building explaining that it is a series of interventions where wealth is recirculated locally for the benefit of local communities. In the case of a combined authority/local authority, this would be through the procurement process.

Responding to a question as to whether he had made any political appointments or if anyone appointed had previously held or aspired to hold political office or a position within a political party the Mayor confirmed that he will be appointing a political advisor. He also pointed out that there will be a rigorous interview process conducted by NTCA staff; the post will also be politically restricted (as detailed in section 5 of the Constitution). Mayor Driscoll explained that some staff were already

in place when he was elected and that appointments to senior positions recently advertised would involve Cabinet members.

The Mayor confirmed that he would work closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The possibility of reports incorporating a reference to the potential impact proposals might have on health and well-being; it is an issue that could be considered for each proposal. Although the Mayor pointed out that health is not within the remit of the Combined Authority a Member of the Committee reiterated the adverse effects that can arise as a result of new development.

The Mayor agreed that scrutiny can work well where Cabinet suggests items for deeper consideration and looking forward.

Mayor Driscoll was asked about his expectations for the Combined Authority. In response the Mayor stated that he would like to see changes to primary legislation for instance the full implementation of the minimum wage by all employers. He also drew attention to the Mayor's power to levy an additional precept on local council tax bills, adding that this would lever in monies from various European funds if and when there is a shared prosperity fund. Committee were however advised that at the present time the power will not be implemented.

Specific engagement with the diverse population living and working in the Combined Authority. The Mayor advised Committee that he has already started communications with the various cultures and church groups.

The Chair thanked Mayor Driscoll for attending and addressing the meeting.

6 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019/20**

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

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer briefly outlined the report the purpose of which was to agree the work programme for the municipal year 2019/20 The following aspects were highlighted:

- The proposed agenda for each meeting up to March 2020, detailed in appendix 1. This is not 'set in stone' and does not prevent items being moved or added.
- The meeting on 14 January 2020 will be a work shop to consider the draft budget proposals.
- The development of an Executive/Scrutiny Protocol.
- A proposal to extend the time frame currently used for the forward plan from 28 days to 3 months. This would enable better forward planning for the Committee and increase transparency and public awareness of the decisions of the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

Comments and queries from members:

Reference was made to the planned informal meetings between the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Mayor of the Combined Authority. It was confirmed that the Committee will receive feedback when appropriate, an officer will be present, and notes will be taken.

RESOLVED that –

- i) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the work programme for the year ahead and,
- ii) Agreed with the proposal to request that Cabinet consider extending the time frame currently used for the forward plan from 28 days to 3 months.

At this point Cllr Earley left the meeting and did not take part in discussions or decisions

7 BUDGET MONITORING YEAR END 2018/19

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

Janice Gillespie briefly outlined the report the purpose of which was to inform the Committee of the Draft Outturn Statement and Draft Accounts 2018/19 as reported to Cabinet on 4 June 2019.

Key Points were highlighted including the Corporate Budget Outturn 2018/19 (table 2, page 17); the Investment Fund Outturn and reserves as at 31 March 2019 (£19,932,370); an explanation regarding the assets and liabilities of the Joint Transport Committee.

The Chair commended the work undertaken to produce the Draft Outturn Statement and the Draft Statement of Accounts and the approach used, demonstrating best practice.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

At this point Cllr Holland left the meeting and Cllr Shatwell attended as substitute

8 LOCAL FULL FIBRE NETWORKS

Submitted: Report by the Digital Design and Delivery Manager, Northumberland County Council (previously circulated and a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

Steve Smith outlined the report the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update on the progress made on the application by the North of Tyne Combined Authority to DCMS's Local Full Fibre Programme (Wave 3).

The Committee noted several points including;

- The local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) requires Authorities to work in dialogue with DCMS to extend the reach of high-speed fibre communications to **Public Sector** sites.
- In December 2018 Cabinet agreed its support for negotiations with DCMS to secure LFFN funding.
- In March 2019 the NTCA Cabinet approved an allocation of up to £75,000 investment from the business Case Development Fund.
- The aim is to draw down up to £12m funding into the North of Tyne area to significantly improve digital infrastructure in the area.
- The project team now have approval to progress to the DCMS Investment Panel on 9 July 2019. If successful, the build out for the DCMS funded work to approximately 313 rural sites within Northumberland would take approximately 12 months.
- As part of the programme the project team are also working on a pilot model connecting local rural hubs in rural areas starting with schools. For Northumberland this will involve 13 schools.

Comments/questions from members

- Were there advantages in submitting a bid as a Combined Authority especially as there may be benefits for other providers. In response S Smith explained that whilst the funding is for public sector sites only' it will be a leveller and will make the deployment of full fibre services to businesses and residents more commercially viable to private investors.
- In relation to a query regarding a fall-back position if the bid is not successful S Smith explained that various programmes were already underway which include numerous elements to enable connectivity.
- A question was asked about current work underway in South East Northumberland and whether it is linked to this programme. S Smith explained that it is a commercial venture and provided details of the work. However, he emphasised that it is not linked to this programme.
- In response to a query regarding the benefits to schools Smith informed Committee that schools in the rural areas currently experience connectivity challenges. Full fibre network will enable faster speeds and different approaches to teaching e.g. a teacher working in France could teach French to children via Skype. It would also have advantages for back office staff.
- S Smith confirmed that a future evaluation will seek to capture all benefits of the programme.

Members wished the team good luck for the forthcoming DCMS Investment Panel meeting and hoped for a successful outcome.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

9 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

8 October 2019, 10.00am at North Tyneside Council