

North East Regional Joint Scrutiny Member/Officer Network

Notes of meeting held on Wednesday 10 July 2024

Attendance:

CFGs	Ed Hammond
Darlington Council	Cllr Mary Layton, Cllr Michael Nicholson, Cllr Andrew Anderson, Cllr Bryony Holroyd
Durham CC	Cllr Veronica Andrews, Cllr Rob Crute, Cllr Chris Lines, Stephen Gwilym, Rachel Parker
Gateshead Council	Cllr Brenda Clelland, Cllr Jill Green, Cllr Stuart Green, Emma Fagan
Hartlepool Council	Joan Stevens, Gemma Jones
Middlesbrough Council	Cllr Ian Blades, Cllr John Kabuye
North East CA	Liz Kerr, Michael Robson, Gavin Armstrong
Newcastle City Council	Cllr Colin Ferguson, Cllr Andrew Herridge, Cllr Doreen Huddart, Jessica Hall, Kate McLoughlin
Northumberland CC	Cllr Kath Nisbet, Rebecca Greally, Sean Nicholson
Redcar & Cleveland Council	Cllr Vera Rider, Cllr Ian Hart, Cllr Karen King, Sarah Connolly, Adam Lynch-Brown, Alison Pearson, Caroline Leng
South Tyneside Council	Jonathan Lunness
Stockton Council	Cllr Ann McCoy, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods, Michelle Gunn
Sunderland Council	Nigel Cummings
Tees Valley CA	Connor Malone

1. Welcome

Judy Trainer welcomed everyone to the regional Scrutiny Member/Officer meeting held via Teams.

2. Apologies for Absence

Darlington Council	Cllr James Coe, Paul Dalton
Durham CC	Cllr Bev Coult, Cllr Cathy Hunt, Cllr Philip Heaviside, Cllr Matt Johnson
Gateshead Council	Cllr John Eagle
Middlesbrough Council	Cllr David Branson, Susan Lightwing
Newcastle City Council	Cllr Lara Ellis, Cllr Alistair Chisholm, Cllr Gareth Kane, Cllr Stephen Lambert, Cllr Dan Murray, Cllr Teresa Cairns, Cllr Mark Mitchell
Northumberland Council	Cllr Nick Oliver, Lynsey Denyer, Simon Neilson
Redcar & Cleveland Council	Cllr Steve Kay, Cllr Kendra Evans
Stockton Council	Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Jim Beall
Sunderland City Council	Cllr Claire Rowntree

3. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Expressions of interest had been sought from members for the position of Chair.

Agreed: Cllr Vera Rider from Redcar and Cleveland Council be appointed to the position of Chair from immediate effect.

Expressions of interest was sought from members for the position of Vice-Chair.

Agreed: Appointment of Vice-Chair was deferred to the next meeting to allow members to respond.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 December 2023

Decision – minutes were approved.

5. Terms of Reference – NE Regional Joint Scrutiny/Officer Network

The Terms of Reference were noted.

6. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) Update

An updated was provided in relation to:

- CfGS guidance was being refreshed and would be published in sections in autumn, winter and spring. The guidance would no longer be a document but include a range of material in a range of format.
- A series of learning events were planned, the first focussing on the new government and devolution. Links to the events would be circulated.
- The Annual Survey had been published, which highlighted the continued issue of resourcing scrutiny.
- A local government bill was expected to be included in the King's Speech in July, it was anticipated that there would a focus on collaboration and partnership working at a local level.

A question was raised regarding allocation of funding for local government. It was noted that a budget was expected in the autumn, and it was hoped that the settlement for local authorities would be included in this.

The CfGS was thanked for its update.

7. Combined Authority Scrutiny

Michael Robson presented the governance and scrutiny structures of NECA. This included:

- Chair of Scrutiny must be from a different political party than the Mayor
- The authority could pay Overview & Scrutiny Committee members an allowance
- There would be two members of each local authority appointed to the Committee, along with subs
- Planning to meet four times a year
- Committees work programme would be focused on longer term regional investment and growth and looking at a financial return on investments
- A Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol would be formulated

The membership of the Advisory Boards was raised, and the meeting was informed that lead officers were identifying key stakeholders to be part of the Boards.

The relationship between the Mayor and scrutiny was discussed, and it was noted that the Chair of NECA OSC had already met with the Mayor. It was believed that they were both committed to build an open relationship where scrutiny is valued by the Mayor.

It was believed that requirement for an open relationship between the Mayor and scrutiny did not need to be stated in their protocol.

The mechanism of scrutiny reporting was raised, and it was noted that cabinet would have two months to respond to recommendations, and there would be monitoring after this. Scrutiny would also complete annual reports to self-evaluate.

Connor Malone presented the governance and scrutiny structures of TVCA. This included:

- The Committee met in July where it was agreed to hold a sub committee regarding transport and a sub committee regarding education, employment, and skills. The Committee would meet in October to agree the scope of the reviews for these sub committees
- In addition, scrutiny of the budget took place on an annual basis before this was agreed
- Development work that was taking place for scrutiny included enhanced recommendation tracking, SMART task & finish reviews, and refreshing the scrutiny protocol

It was noted that TVCA and local authorities would benefit from working together.

Ed Hammond commented that, while the ethos for LA and CA scrutiny was the same, the focus was different. It was suggested that more CA's would be created, giving more governance mechanisms and accountability to local areas. If this happened then scrutiny would have a role to play in ensuring accountability.

8. Local Authority Updates/Best Practice

Stockton-on-Tees had set their work programme, carrying out reviews that fed into the corporate transformation programme. As part of this, the reviews would be strengthening engagements through the Council's "Powering Our Future" programme. In addition to this, they were carrying out an appreciative enquiry into Educational Attainment.

Newcastle would share their Supporting Young People into Employment task and finish review report and SMART recommendations once this had been completed.

9. Meeting Schedule/Potential Agenda Items for each Meeting

The schedule of meetings and potential agenda items were noted. The list of scrutiny reviews would be scheduled for the next meeting

Agreed: Educational Attainment Appreciative Enquiry to be added to the schedule.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 25 September, 10am MS Team meeting