

A meeting of the: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
will be held on: **Tuesday 4 March 2025**
at: **10.00am**
in: **Room 0.02, Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business
Park, North Tyneside, NE27 0BY**
to consider the following

AGENDA

	Page No
1. Apologies To record any apologies for absence and the attendance of any substitute members.	
2. Declarations of Interest Members of the committee are required to declare any registerable and/or non-registerable interests in matters appearing on the agenda, and the nature of that interest, in accordance with the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members .	
3. Minutes To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2025.	3 - 7
4. North East Strategic Place Partnership To examine the development of the North East Strategic Place Partnership and consider its future strategic direction.	8 - 12
5. The Mayor's Local Transport Plan Consultation Overview and Findings To consider the Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultation approach and findings and the reshaping of the LTP, delivery plan and Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) to reflect consultation feedback.	13 - 16
6. The Leamside Investment Corridor To examine the proposed development of a strategy for a Leamside Investment Corridor.	17 - 23
7. Equality Objectives To examine progress made towards the North East CA's current equality objectives and to consider plans for setting longer term objectives for 2025-2028.	24 - 30

8. **Work Programme**
To review the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.
9. **Date and Time of Next Meeting**
To note the date and time of the next scheduled meetings.

Contact Officer: Michael Robson, Senior Governance Officer
Tel: 0191 277 7242 E-mail: michael.robson@northeast-ca.gov.uk
www.northeast-ca.gov.uk



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 February 2025

(10.00am)

Meeting held in: Reception Room, Town Hall, South Shields

Minutes

Present:

- Councillor Colin Ferguson (Chair)
- Councillor Les Bowman
- Councillor Rob Crute
- Councillor Richard Dodd
- Councillor John Eagle
- Councillor Steve Fairlie
- Councillor Charlie Gray
- Councillor Chris Lines
- Councillor John McCabe
- Councillor Jim Montague
- Councillor Dawn Welsh

OSC17/02/25 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Rowntree (and her substitute, Councillor Tracy Dodds).

OSC18/02/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

OSC19/02/25 Minutes

Resolved that:

1. the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 November 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
2. the notes of the meeting of members of the Committee held on 10 December 2024 be noted.

OSC20/02/25 2024/25 Budget Monitoring Position Update

The Committee examined a report from the Director of Finance and Investment setting out a revised budget position for 2024/25 and showing the updated forecast spend for the North East Combined Authority's Corporate Budget and delivery programmes. The report had previously been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 28 January 2025.

Members asked questions of Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment, when they examined the degree to which there were likely to be variations in the Corporate Budget and programme delivery. The Corporate Budget was expected to be more predictable and stable and programme delivery was more likely to be subject to variations. A programme performance pack providing an overview of key progress updates, committed funding, forecast expenditure and forecast outputs was due to be presented to the Finance and Investment Board. Officers undertook to provide members of the Committee with a copy of the performance pack. The Committee also noted the different ways in which programmes were delivered which accounted for variations in committed spend across the 5 year programme plan.

It was **agreed** that:

1. the 2024/25 Budget Monitoring Position Update be noted;
2. the programme performance pack due to be presented to the Finance and Investment Board be provided to members of the Committee.

OSC21/02/25 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Committee for review and, if necessary, revision.

The Chair explained that there would be a significant period of time between the next two scheduled meetings in March and July 2025. He suggested that if members of the Committee were supportive of the idea, an additional meeting be arranged during April. This would allow time for members to review the operation of the Committee over its first year, consider its future arrangements and formulate proposals for inclusion in its annual report. In considering its future arrangements it was suggested that the Committee would need to have regard to the Government's proposals for mayoral devolution in England set out in the recently published White Paper.

The Committee highlighted the need to develop mechanisms through which it could effectively monitor the performance and outcomes of those programmes reported to the Committee. In doing so the Committee would have to be mindful that delivery of the Authority's missions was dependent on collaboration with others, for example health bodies, and so it would have to work with others to effectively fulfil its scrutiny role.

Members noted that the programme included a scrutiny exercise to review and assess the benefits of transport investment, by examining the impact of the Northumberland Line to Ashington. It was proposed that this exercise be undertaken in January 2026, after one year of the railways line's operation.

The Chair suggested that issues raised by members relating to metro stations in South Tyneside and access to the metro system for users of mobility scooters could be addressed as part of the Committee's consideration of the Local Transport Plan at its next meeting.

It was **agreed** that;

1. the work programme be updated to reflect the issues set out above; and
2. if necessary, an additional meeting of the Committee be arranged to be held in April 2025.

OSC22/02/25 Highways Infrastructure Funding

The Committee met with Jonathan Bailes, Head of Transport Programmes, who provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of both the combined authority and local authorities with regards to maintaining highways. He also outlined the Authority's proposed approach to the allocation of highways maintenance funding to local authorities as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and based on the production of a Regional Transport

Asset Management Plan (TAMP). The proposed approach was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting in March 2025.

Members asked questions and made comments.

Officers clarified the division of responsibility between local authorities, who would continue to be responsible for the maintenance of critical highways infrastructure, and the role of the North East CA for allocating funding through a fair, consistent and transparent process. This process would be informed by the TAMP and would seek to reduce whole-life costs and mitigate the risk of impacting overall budgets for major interventions. Members welcomed this clarification and emphasised the importance of both the Authority and its constituent councils fulfilling their respective responsibilities. If the North East CA were to determine a region wide approach to the allocation of highways funding, members commented that it ought to ensure that; a) local authorities retain responsibility for their infrastructure; and b) all funding be allocated, in accordance with that process. Members sought assurance that highways funding could not be allocated contrary to the Authority's agreed approach. It was suggested that the Committee could play a role in reviewing the adequacy and delivery of the approach by scrutinising the allocation of funding and assessing performance data collected by the Authority for reporting to the Department of Transport. It was also suggested that the Committee should refer the matter to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each constituent council so that they may consider whether they wish to scrutinise their own authority's approach to the maintenance of highway infrastructure within this context.

The Committee also considered:

- a) the financial pressures associated with highways funding which would be subject to the Government's spending review in Spring 2025;
- b) the role for the Authority in lobbying Government and collaborating with Highways England to secure highways improvements across the region; and
- c) the opportunity for the Authority to facilitate and convene joint working between local authorities to deliver or procure highways services such as street lighting.

It was **agreed** that:

1. the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of both the combined authority and local authorities with regards to maintaining highways be noted and welcomed;
2. the Committee's comments set out above be reported to Cabinet at its meeting in March 2025, to be taken into account when it determines the Authority's approach to the allocation of highways maintenance funding to local authorities as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS);
3. a further scrutiny exercise to review the adequacy and delivery of the Authority's approach to allocating highways maintenance funding be scheduled for February 2026; and
4. the issues considered by the Committee be referred to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each constituent council so that they may consider whether they wish to scrutinise their own authority's approach to the maintenance of highway infrastructure within this context.

OSC23/02/25 Education Improvement Programme

Work was underway with regional stakeholders to identify new regional priorities which would inform the strategic direction of the North East CA's education improvement programme from September 2025. Councillor Tracey Dixon, Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion and Skills, accompanied by Adrian Dougherty, Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform, and Andrew Garrad, Senior Programme manager, attended the meeting to present the emerging vision and priorities and to seek the Committee's views and comments on how the programme might be developed in the future.

The Committee were also provided with an overview of the education improvement work being delivered during the 2024/25 academic year. Work was currently being mobilised through

commissioned services and grant funded support across three interlinked objectives: a) school improvement; b) professional development; and c) responding to local priorities. There were currently 492 schools supported (from a total of 844 across the region) across 748 points of engagement.

The Committee asked a series of questions and made comments when the following issues were considered in more detail:

- a) officers assured the Committee that the Authority had worked in collaboration with the Department for Education, local authorities, academy trusts and charities to identify pressure points and gaps in provision so that the programme would avoid duplication and add value;
- b) the programme had sought to use existing data collection and evaluation mechanisms to reduce the risk of adding bureaucracy in schools;
- c) it was acknowledged that the Authority had no statutory powers in relation to education and so it had to work with others to develop and define its role within the sector;
- d) the programme's future strategic direction would take account of the aims of the new Child Poverty Reduction Unit to build a strategic, long-term and collaborative approach to addressing child poverty in the region;
- e) the Committee expressed an interest in undertaking further work to review and assess the impact of the programme on factors such as attendance, exclusions and child poverty;
- f) the programme included elements to support pastoral care and careers advice in schools;
- g) the Committee expressed its support for the Authority facilitating and encouraging local authorities to collaborate with each other and share best practice;
- h) the Authority had worked with many, but not all, multi academy trusts; and
- i) the emerging priorities for the programme included teacher wellbeing and development. It was suggested that consideration also needed to be given to the retention of teaching staff, to reduce the loss of qualified staff after years of investment and training.

It was **agreed** that:

1. the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Inclusion and the Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform, in developing the future strategic direction of the education improvement programme, be asked to:
 - a) ensure that the programme does not duplicate or replicate existing provision in an already congested education sector;
 - b) place emphasis on how the programme can help improve attendance at school, reduce exclusions and reduce child poverty; and
 - c) give consideration to the retention of teachers as well as their wellbeing and development,
2. the Committee undertake a further scrutiny exercise to review and assess the impact of the programme in September 2025 on factors such as attendance, exclusions and child poverty.

OSC24/02/25 Supporting People with Disabilities, Health Conditions and Additional Barriers to Seek Sustained Employment

The Committee met with Councillor Tracey Dixon, Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion and Skills, Adrian Dougherty, Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform and Ruth Gaul, Principal Programme Manager, to examine and comment on how the Authority could support people with disabilities, health conditions and additional barriers to seek sustained employment.

The Committee were presented with a report setting out the national and regional policy context, the challenges in the North East labour market, the current support available to residents and details of new integrated, innovative regional employment support including:

- a) Connect to Work, the first major element of the Get Britain Working Strategy, to help connect local work, health and skills support and provide a coherent, systematic, and joined up approach to maximise the benefits available for individuals and local communities; and

- b) Economic Inactivity Trailblazer. In December 2024 the North East CA had been identified as a Trailblazer to bring together health, employment, and skills services to improve the support available to those who are inactive due to ill health and help them return to work.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and to comment on these initiatives to help shape and influence the Authority's approach. In doing so the Committee:

- a) highlighted the importance of working with employers and organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry, Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to address the stigma associated with long term absences from work;
- b) referred to the current challenges in the education sector caused by a loss of learning and social skills during the Covid pandemic and suggested that the Authority's strategies and programmes to support people into work would need to begin to prepare for the needs and demands of young people currently in education;
- c) explored in more detail how neuro-diverse people could be supported into employment;
- d) highlighted the importance of childcare in supporting people to return to work;
- d) acknowledged the role of the public sector in taking a lead as major employers through their equality, diversity and inclusion policies; and
- e) reiterated the need for the Committee to monitor the performance and outcomes of the Authority's programmes.

It was **agreed** that:

1. the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Inclusion and the Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform, in developing the Authority's programmes to support people into employment, be asked to give particular consideration to:
 - a) working with employers and employer organisations to address the stigma associated with long term absences from work; and
 - b) the needs of young people currently in education who may in the future experience different challenges in securing employment due to a loss of learning and social skills during the Covid pandemic;
2. the Committee undertake a further scrutiny exercise in February 2026 to review and assess the development of Connect to Work and the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 March 2025

Title: North East Strategic Place Partnership
Report of: Heather Orton, Principal Manager – Housing and Infrastructure

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the development of the North East Strategic Place Partnership (NE SPP) and to invite discussion on its future strategic direction and place based operating model.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to:
- a) Note the contents of the report;
 - b) Note the progress to date and work in development to develop a regional place-based pipeline that support housing growth and regeneration in priority housing areas; and
 - c) Provide comments on the partnership's strategic objectives and its future strategic direction.

3. Background

- 3.1 Members of the Committee have previously suggested that it ought to consider housing issues as part of its work programme. Following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, Dame Norma Redfearn DBE, Cabinet Member for Housing and Land, relevant officers and representatives from Homes England have accepted an invitation to attend today's meeting to provide an overview of the development of the North East Strategic Place Partnership (NE SPP) and seek members' comments on its future strategic direction.

4. North East Strategic Place Partnership

Context

- 4.1 In March 2024, the Government announced a "trailblazer" deeper devolution deal with the North East CA as part of the Spring Budget, to empower local leaders with new funding and tools to deliver local regeneration priorities. The devolution deal sought to build on the ambition to level up across the North East, ensuring the region has the powers needed to deliver long-term change and a brighter future for everyone. Strategic Place Partnerships with Homes England were part of the proposed mechanisms to harness the skills, capabilities, pace and resources at a sub-regional level to unlock housing delivery and place-based growth.
- 4.2 The region has a well-established, successful track record of working with partners to deliver significant investment in new homes, including on previously developed land. With increased pressures and need to deliver more and better housing, the NE SPP provides a framework for greater collaboration.
- 4.3 The Partnership demonstrates the benefits of devolution by adding value through (a) strategic coordination and collaboration across our constituent authorities; (b) amplifying our investment case through a single 'plan' which in turn drives a more strategic dialogue with Government and Homes England; (c) delivering value in terms of unlocking investment and strategic support from Homes

England across some of our major sites; and (d) will strengthen the region's position given the new Government's house building targets, and a commitment from our social housing providers to strong collaboration.

- 4.4 During 2024 and 2025, the North East CA have been working in partnership with Homes England, Local Authorities and the North East Housing Partnership to set the ambition, focus areas and develop a pipeline of potential housing sites. The NE SPP is enabling further added value:
- Place-based working, identifying and developing key opportunities for housing regeneration and delivery through building a pipeline of sites and unlocking projects within focus areas that overcome market failure.
 - Aligning our collective internal resources, drawing on the capacity, strengths, capability and expertise of each partner at an early stage in project development, and reducing duplication across workstreams and focus areas.
 - Identifying early, mid and longer term opportunities to invest, and to provide a platform to take forward with private sector partners and Registered Providers (RPs), underpinned by a shared ambition for our places and communities.
 - Allocating financial resource – jointly – to develop investment ready, strategic propositions including transformational projects, to access capital funds and achieve delivery.

Objectives

- 4.5 A NE SPP Partnership Business Plan has been developed and seeks to overcome challenges and maximise opportunities across the region to support the delivery of housing as an integral part of a strategic approach to economic regeneration, infrastructure planning and inclusive place making. Three strategic objectives have been identified to add value to the work already being delivered by the North East CA and Homes England. These are:
1. Accelerate the delivery of high-quality homes which offer affordability, choice and that are accessible to all and offer real choice to people at all income levels;
 2. Unlock housing led regeneration and inclusive economic growth through innovative funding and investment strategies; and
 3. Create fairer, healthy, well-connected and resilient places where communities can thrive and contribute to the region's net zero ambitions.
- 4.6 The NE SPP seeks to enable the delivery of the right homes in the right places to support economic growth. This is underpinned by an annual Delivery and Resource Plan and a pipeline of strategic sites that is in development to drive forward delivery and to identify and unlock specific constraints.
- 4.7 The housing priority focus area map included in appendix A reflects economic growth corridors and emerging clusters of activity within the current Strategic Place Partnership Business Plan:
- Along major economic corridors formed by the strategic and key road and rail
 - Tyne Renaissance
 - Town and City Centre Growth
 - Neighbourhood Growth and Regeneration
 - Coastal and Rural

Governance

- 4.7 Aligned to the governance for the North East CA Housing and Land Portfolio, a Strategic Place Partnership Board is to be established. This has currently been meeting in shadow form. Once established, the SPP Board will comprise senior representatives from the Combined Authority, the Housing and Land Portfolio Holder, Homes England, and a representative from the North East Housing Partnership. The Board will be chaired by the Mayor and will set and oversee the strategic direction for SPP intervention. It will act in an advisory capacity with investment decisions being taken within the existing governance structures of the relevant partners of the SPP. Its responsibilities will be as follows:

- Overseeing the development of a joint North East housing pipeline, business cases and investible propositions for priority projects.
- Receiving regular reports on progress from operational groups towards achieving the strategic objectives and hold the operational groups to account on this.
- Make recommendations as it sees fit, on any matter within its remit, to the Homes England Place Project Executive and Investment Committee and/or North East CA Cabinet and Investment Panel.
- Engaging key partners both locally and nationally in the effective delivery of the SPP Strategic Objectives.
- Ensure and commit resource and capacity to deliver the SPP PBP, including the Delivery and Resource Plan.

4.8 The Board will be supported by an Officer Steering Group that will drive activity and seek to develop an inclusive approach to pipeline building including assets/sites held by Registered Providers (RPs, specifically the North East Housing Partnership as well as Strategic Partners and other RPs operating in the North East) and others as appropriate. The SPP can only be effective through collaborative working with partners, both in the public and private sector. The partnership will also work local authority inhouse/arms-length organisations, private developers (including through representative bodies such as Home Builders Federation, British Property Federation), investors, government departments and other public sector bodies (such as One Public Estate, Active Travel England, Highways England and Historic England).

5. National Policy Ambitions

5.1 Government have committed to delivering 1.5m homes in this current Parliament which has seen changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and housing delivery targets. The English Devolution White paper published 16 December 2024 also sets the direction of travel to support growth and the government's plans to strengthen place based regional working. Strategic Place Partnerships are recognised as an integral partnership model to strengthen the accountability of Homes England to Mayors and for taking forward, over time, the move towards a more regionalised model that is responsive to the economic plan of an area.

5.2 The North East Combined Authority is developing its Local Growth Plan and housing is recognised as integral infrastructure that underpins and supports growth across the region.

6. Progress to date and future direction

6.1 The SPP pipeline development, future housing growth and integrated place-based development are priorities for the SPP that are continuing to evolve. Collaboration with Homes England throughout 2024 has seen strategic investment asks developed for our largest brownfield sites, including Forth Yards (a funding request of over £100m for remediation and infrastructure costs to enable development is currently under consideration by Government) and Sunderland Riverside, which secured £30m from Homes England to fund the new Wear Footbridge and public realm improvement as a part of wider regeneration of the area. This has also been supplemented with additional capacity to develop place-based approaches and schemes that have wider regeneration benefits.

6.2 The North East CA Cabinet on 28 January 2025 approved additional technical assistance funding to strengthen investment readiness of schemes on the SPP pipeline. This will add much needed resources and capacity to help bring forward place-based priorities.

6.3 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note the progress to date and range of priorities, focus and needs being considered through the SPP.

7. Potential Impact on Objectives

7.1 The North East SPP is a Deeper Devolution Deal commitment and a core short term priority for the North East CA as set out in its Corporate Plan and the Housing and Land Strategic Portfolio Plan.

8. Equalities Implications

8.1 The North East CA is committed to driving equality and diversity. The measures contained within this paper will help meet duties under the Equality Act 2010, particularly around advancing equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics, notably with regard to socio-economic background and supporting the delivery of affordable housing. Strategic objectives and housing focus areas strive to create inclusive, well connected and accessible places that provide good quality and affordable homes for people across the region. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken at a project level. There are no direct equalities implications arising out of the recommendations within this report.

9. Consultation and Engagement

9.1 The SPP Partnership Business Plan has been developed in collaboration with the seven constituent Local Authorities. Strategic pipeline development will be undertaken in partnership with local authorities and the North East Housing Partnership. Site specific consultation and engagement will be undertaken at a project level.

10. Appendices

Appendix A - North East SPP Housing Focus Areas

11. Background Papers

- Strategic Portfolio Plan and establishing a North East Strategic Place Partnership decision – [Cabinet Decision Notice - 30 July 2024 \(1\).pdf](#)
- English Devolution White Paper published 16 December 2024 - [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

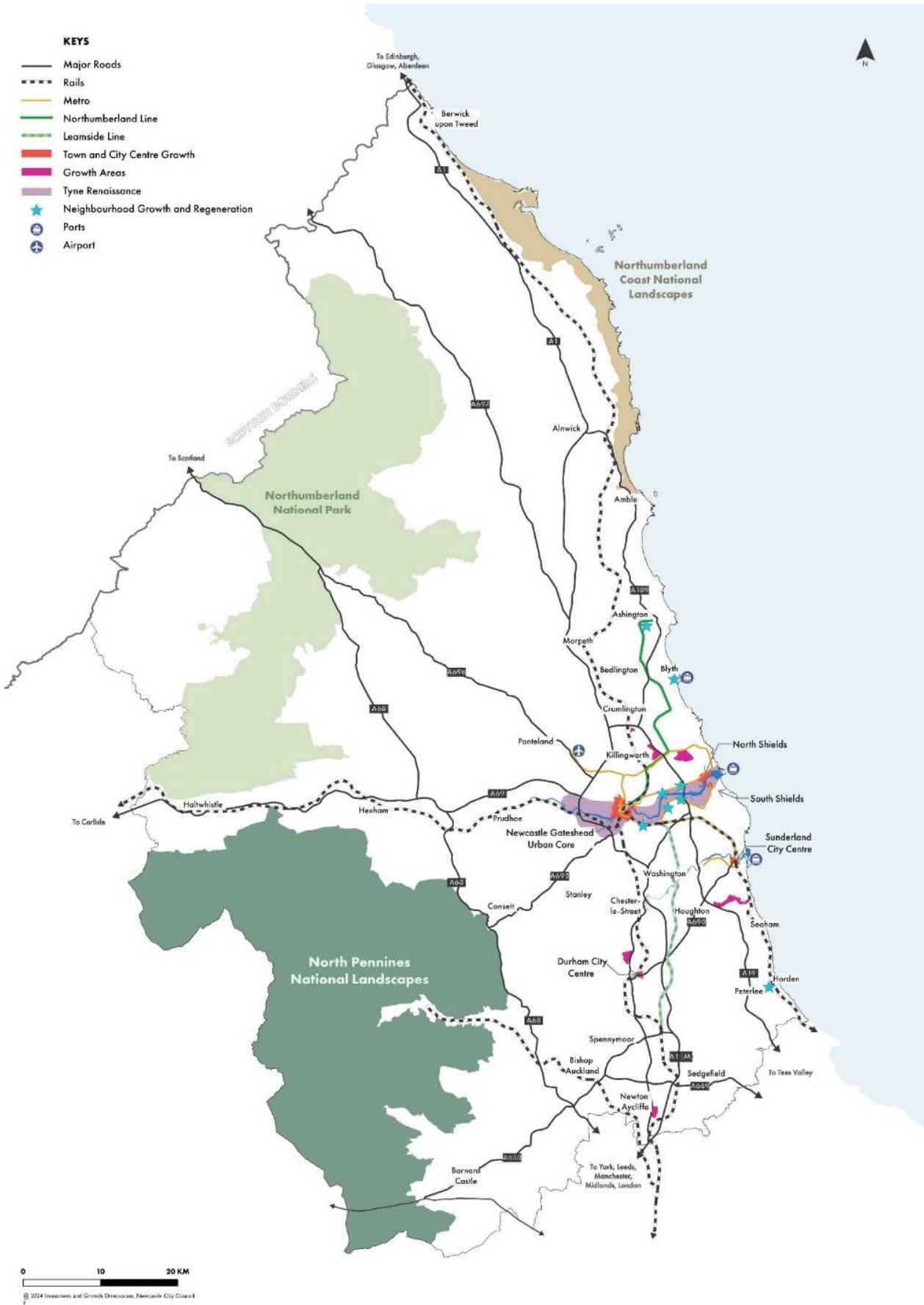
12. Contact Officers

Heather Orton, Principal Manager – Housing and Infrastructure, North East Combined Authority, heather.orton@northeast-ca.gov.uk
Peter Mennell, Director of Housing, North Tyneside Council, peter.mennell@northtyneside
Matthew Bell, Head of North East, Market Partners and Place, Homes England, matthew.bell2@homesengland.co.uk

13. Glossary

NE SPP North East Strategic Place Partnership

North East SPP Housing Focus Areas



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 March 2025

Title: The Mayor's Local Transport Plan Consultation Overview and Findings
Report of: Philip Meikle, Assistant Director of Transport Strategy

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultation approach and findings. Consultation took place between 4 November 2024 and 26 January 2025, and 16,294 responses were received from a broad cross section of sources.
- 1.2. The report also updates on the reshaping of the LTP, delivery plan and Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) to reflect consultation feedback.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1. Note and consider the approach taken to the LTP consultation, and the feedback received from that process.
 - 2.1.2. Note that changes are being made to the LTP, LTP Delivery Plan and summary document to reflect consultation feedback.

3. Background Information

3.1. Local Transport Plan

- 3.1.1. The 2022 North East devolution deal requires the North East Combined Authority to produce a new LTP for the region. The LTP is a statutory plan and sets the North East CA's transport priorities up to 2040, including plans to deliver the Mayor's manifesto commitments for transport. It sets out plans for a green, integrated transport network that works for all.
- 3.1.2. To accompany the full length LTP, a document has been prepared entitled "Delivering Green Transport". This document is designed to summarise the longer LTP document.

3.2. LTP Delivery Plan

- 3.2.1. The LTP delivery plan supports the LTP by setting out what it is proposed will be built, introduced, or changed, to deliver the LTP. Partners such as Local Authorities, Nexus and transport operators will deliver many of the schemes outlined in the delivery plan and, like the LTP itself, the delivery plan covers the period of time up to 2040.
- 3.2.2. The LTP delivery plan:
 - Highlights powers and other delivery mechanisms (such as bus reform) that support the delivery of the LTP;
 - Sets out a range of interventions and schemes that are costed and set against potential funding options, including specific mayoral manifesto commitments, and;

- Aligns interventions to schemes that can be delivered (subject to funding and powers) in the following time periods:
 - Up to 2027
 - 2028-2032
 - 2033-2040

3.2.3. The delivery plan is a live programme which will evolve as interventions develop, new funding priorities are identified, and as we progress through delivery, which means some schemes may drop out and be replaced by alternatives over time. Both the LTP and delivery plan have been developed in collaboration with the seven local authorities and Nexus.

3.3. Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA)

3.3.1. The ISA evaluates the impact of the LTP on factors such as environment, health, inclusion, and accessibility and is a statutory requirement. There is also a post adoption statement as part of the ISA which outlines the nature of the assessment undertaken and necessary future actions. This statement will be published when Cabinet adopts the LTP.

4. LTP Consultation

The LTP, the delivery plan and the ISA have all been subject to extensive public consultation using consultation versions of the documents approved by Cabinet on 17 September 2024. Consultation ran for a 12-week period between 4 November 2024 and 26 January 2025. Members of the Committee commented on the draft LTP and the proposed approach to the consultation exercise at its meeting on 8 October 2024. Further details regarding specific engagement and activity planned across the region were provided to members. We are grateful for member's support in disseminating this information in communities and for any feedback received.

4.1. Consultation Approach

4.1.1 The consultation approach was designed to achieve maximum engagement with, and representation from, all sections of society in the region. The approach was agile in nature and a variety of materials and methodologies were used, each designed to maximise engagement and accessibility. The approach consisted of:

- An online survey;
- Four online events;
- 36 in-person drop-in events held across the region;
- Meetings with stakeholders
- Meetings with community groups;
- Nine bespoke events, including one specifically for women and girls;
- Focus groups;
- Written submissions;
- Toolkits for schools;
- Survey specifically designed for young people;
- Bespoke communications;
- A dedicated telephone number; and
- A dedicated email address.

4.2. Responses

4.2.1. 16,294 responses were received of which:

- 15,565 were from individuals;
- 19 were from statutory consultees;
- 41% were from males;
- 54% were from females;
- 80% were from respondents in urban areas and 20% in rural areas;

- 37% of respondents had a disability, impairment or health condition;
- 133 were from young people, and;
- The greatest number of responses (28%) came from the 50-64 age bracket.

4.2.2. Responses were continually measured and compared against ONS population data to ensure fair representation from across the seven local authorities was received. Where numbers were shown to be low, activity was pivoted using tools such as social media campaigns to target areas where more engagement was required.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1. Responses indicate support for the LTP with:

- 81% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the ambition;
- 85% strongly agreeing or agreeing that the LTP identifies the right challenges;
- 81% of respondents believing that we are focusing on the right improvements; and
- 64% of responses indicating that proposed improvements would improve their use of sustainable travel.

4.3.2. The final version of LTP, delivery plan and ISA have been reshaped following consultation to reflect feedback including:

- A need for greater reference to how transport can support economic and housing growth sites;
- Requests to include taxis as part of the integrated transport network;
- A need to better align the LTP with the North East CA missions and the North East Local Growth Plan;
- Calls for stronger references to freight; and,
- The need to prioritise maintenance and resilience of existing transport assets.

4.3.3. A LTP consultation overview and findings report, which summarises the consultation approach and findings, is being produced. The report will also outline the North East CA's response to the feedback and the changes made to the LTP and interrelated documents as a result of the consultation. If feedback hasn't been actioned, the report will explain why.

5. Next Steps

5.1. At their meeting on 18 March 2025 Cabinet will be asked to endorse the publication of the:

- Finalised local transport plan;
- The LTP Delivery Plan;
- The LTP Consultation Overview and Findings Report; and
- The Integrated Sustainability Appraisal.

6. Potential Impact on Objectives

6.1. The LTP demonstrates the part transport has to play in the delivery of all five of the North East CA missions.

6.2. In turn, the delivery plan supports delivery of the LTP, offering clear line of sight between the North East CA missions and the deployment of funding.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1. The North East CA equalities team have fed into the development of the consultation approach which was designed to achieve maximum engagement with, and representation from, all sections of society in the region. Work was carried out to ensure responses came from a wide variety of places. Efforts were focused on different routes to market and our engagement with key stakeholders was positioned to be as flexible as possible.

- 7.2. In order to achieve this people were able to submit feedback in a number of different ways including via:
- Email
 - Online survey
 - Paper survey
 - Telephone
 - Events
 - Letter

7.3. Documents were also made available in a range of formats, including plain text and hard copies, which were available on request.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1. An extensive 12 week public consultation took place from 4 November 2024 until 26 January 2025.
- 8.2. The local authorities were engaged as part of the development of the consultation approach.
- 8.3. In addition, there has been significant collaboration with all seven local authorities and key stakeholders during the development of the LTP and accompanying documents.

9. Appendices

None

10. Background Papers

North East Local Transport Plan (LTP) Report [Agenda Pack - North East CA Cabinet 17.09.24 \(10\).pdf](#)

11. Contact Officers

Philip Meikle, Assistant Director of Transport Strategy, Philip.meikle@northeast-ca.gov.uk

12. Glossary

ISA – Integrated Sustainability Appraisal
LTP – Local Transport Plan

Title: The Leamside Investment Corridor
Report of: Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment;
Ian Freshwater, Senior Economic Development and Regeneration Officer

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the background and purpose of a scrutiny exercise to examine the proposed development of a strategy for a Leamside Investment Corridor.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to:
- a) examine the proposals to develop a strategy for a Leamside Investment Corridor; and
 - b) provide officers with any comments and observations which may help inform and shape the development of the strategy.

3. Background

- 3.1 In determining its work programme, members of the Committee expressed an interest in scrutinising the Authority's ambition to re-open the Leamside railway line, which runs from Gateshead to Ferryhill in south County Durham. The option of appointing a task and finish group to examine the business case for the re-opening of the line has been discussed with relevant officers. They have advised that the outline business case for the re-opening of the line to extend the metro to Washington will not be complete until 2026 and so it may be more appropriate for the Committee to receive a series of reports at key points in the project.
- 3.2 One such key moment occurred on 28 January 2025 when Cabinet agreed to allocate £500k from the Authority's Investment Fund to develop a Leamside Investment Corridor strategy. The strategy will set out plans for a broad, ambitious, vision and strategy for the area around the line; one that is about place-based growth, regeneration, better access to skills and employment, the potential for a new town and/or other significant new housing, and the opportunity to realise significant government and private sector investment.
- 3.3 The report setting out the Authority's approach to developing a strategy is attached as Appendix A. The lead officers, Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment, and Ian Freshwater, Senior Economic Development and Regeneration Officer, have agreed to attend today's meeting to present details, answer members questions and receive feedback.
- 3.4 Further scrutiny exercises in relation to the Leamside line, to consider the outline business case for the re-opening of the line Washington and to examine lessons learnt from the re-opening of the Northumberland Line have been included in the committee's work programme.

4. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 4.1 The Leamside Investment Corridor aligns with and advances the priorities set out in the North East CA's Corporate Plan and Local Growth Plan. The potential for economic growth, regeneration and new housing along the corridor is significant and is mapped in this report to the Mayor's and Cabinet's five missions for the Combined Authority, whilst reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Leamside Line is a key economic priority for the region, identified in the North East CA Devolution Deal and the Mayor's manifesto.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 The strategy development will include full consideration of equalities implications. None are noted at this stage.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 Widespread consultation on the Combined Authority's new Transport Plan (incorporating bringing the Metro to Washington and the Leamside Line reopening) is complete and is subject to separate report on this agenda. The type, timing and duration of consultation on the Leamside Investment Corridor itself will be defined as part of the strategy development.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Report to Cabinet 28 January 2025

8. Background Papers

The following background documents have been used in the compilation of this report and are available for inspection either by clicking on the links below or by contacting the report author:

- Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme
- Report to Cabinet – 28 January 2025 (Annexed)

9. Contact Officers

Ian Freshwater – Senior Economic Development and Regeneration Officer
ian.freshwater@northeast-ca.gov.uk 07894 253 049

Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment Mags.Scott@northeast-ca.gov.uk 07876 393 780

Michael Robson, Senior Governance Officer and Scrutiny Officer
michael.robson@northeast-ca.gov.uk

10. Glossary

Not applicable.

Title: The Leamside Investment Corridor
Report of: Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment
Portfolio: All

Report Summary:

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the proposed development of a strategy for a Leamside Investment Corridor.

Cabinet is already well-briefed on the proposed re-opening of the Leamside railway line, which runs from Gateshead to Ferryhill in south County Durham, where it connects with the East Coast Main Line. This paper sets out plans for a much broader, ambitious, vision and strategy; one that is about place-based growth, regeneration, better access to skills and employment, the potential for a new town and/or other significant new housing, and the opportunity to realise significant government and private sector investment. This is our chance to transform a hitherto transport-centric opportunity into a hugely ambitious one that delivers across all five of the Mayor and Cabinet's missions and can enable transformative change for the whole region. This is a programme that will deliver in and for the long-term – the benefits of the transformation that this programme envisages will be felt by future generations.

Harnessing public and private sector knowledge, capabilities and financing, we will develop a broad, wide-reaching case for investment; a long term inclusive proposition whose benefits will be felt by future generations :

- Leveraging the impact of infrastructure investment by bringing forward new development sites, particularly focused on **housing** delivery, and examining the potential for a new town through our Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England.
- Capitalising on the **green economy** shift by accelerating growth in clean energy.
- Improving **employment, skills and training opportunities** in the North East's priority industries, and in the railway sector itself, maximising the local benefits of line engineering works and wider growth to residents and communities.
- Designing locally focused interventions that tackle **economic inactivity and child poverty**, including through better housing, connectivity, and targeted adult skills development.
- Enhancing the **profile and perception of the local area**, stimulating the visitor economy and engagement with heritage, culture, and leisure assets.
- Delivering **impact at a national level** by increasing the capacity of the East Coast Main Line for both passenger and freight services.

The Leamside Investment Corridor is expected to unlock significant levels of new private sector investment and financial innovation, delivering outcomes and contributing to the business case for the rail line itself reopening. It is our opportunity to manage the growth opportunities that the rail line unlocks – to ensure they align with what's important for the region. So in addition to enabling new housing development, the corridor will provide better access to existing employment sites like Nissan and IAMP; and support regeneration through connectivity in a number of more deprived communities, particularly around Washington North, Penshaw, West Rainton, Ferryhill and Fencehouses.

The approach proposed in this paper provides an outline framework, a proposed future governance model and early actions to accelerate the Leamside Investment Corridor.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of this report;
2. Endorse the Leamside Investment Corridor approach;
3. Agree an allocation of up to **£500k** from the North East Combined Authority Investment Fund to fund the development of the strategy and associated artefacts, including research; initial masterplan (including preliminary growth and housing strategies); cultural and creative strategy; and new area and spatial maps to illustrate the vision; and
4. Authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with Director of Finance and Investment, to procure and enter into contracts with third party support for the above, within the stated allocated funds and in accordance with North East CA Financial Regulations, the Single Assurance Framework and policies and procedures.

A Context

1. The scale of the Leamside Investment Corridor opportunity

- 1.1 The business base local to the corridor is already home to a range of specialisms across energy, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and knowledge-based services. The Leamside Investment Corridor provides scope to expand supply chains, build agglomeration and enable industrial growth that is future-proofed and aligned to the region's emerging Local Growth Plan. Communities in deprived areas will be better connected to good jobs and services. New stations along the rail line that sits at the corridor's core will provide a stimulus for inward investment.
- 1.2 The Leamside Investment Corridor will also catalyse the housing market, provide viable sites for new housing, potentially including new town development, and drive renewal of poorer and/or older housing stock. New stations at Washington, Ferryhill, and elsewhere would provide loci for new developments. We will develop this aspect of the case by leveraging our Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England and the work of the Housing and Land Advisory Board. In the first instance, this will be addressed via a match funded commission under the Investment Corridor Strategy focused on capturing the evidence for significant housing growth along the corridor.
- 1.3 Central to the strategy will be the quality of places, neighbourhoods, quality of life, heritage and cultural assets. This will underpin the region's offer to investors and visitors, with access to the rich blend of arts, culture, natural assets and attractions of the area. A dedicated culture, leisure and visitor study will be commissioned under the Investment Corridor Strategy.
- 1.4 The potential is significant, and will help achieve a number of mutually reinforcing objectives that underpin the North East Combined Authority's Five Core Missions:
 - **The home of real opportunity** – addressing long term poverty and deprivation issues by improving employment and training opportunities in all growth sectors for local residents; delivering specific skills training interventions to maximise uptake in rail construction, delivery, running and maintenance; links housing conurbations to places of employment; brings forward new affordable and accessible housing in sites aligned with the line; and helps tackle deprivation, child poverty and raise the quality of life.
 - **A North East we are proud to call home** – delivering on pledges around transforming experience and reach of Metro services; reduces dependency on the car as a mode of transport, maximises and leverages the impact of infrastructure investment, such as helping bring forth housing sites; enables a dedicated workstream using the line as a new means of access to heritage, cultural, leisure and visitor economy assets;

- **Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all** – linking employment sites such as Port of Sunderland and Sunderland Investment Zone, NETPark Investment Zone and Newcastle Airport; providing opportunities for the green economy and other priority sectors.
- **Home of the Green Energy Revolution** – delivering on pledges around transforming experience and reach of Metro services; reducing dependency on the car as a mode of transport; linking together sites such as Port of Sunderland and Sunderland Investment Zone; Nissan; IAMP and Durham Investment Zone;
- **A welcoming home to global trade** – enhancing the profile and perception of the local area; helping employers access a skilled workforce; employment and growth sites will be linked by the line, better connection between Durham and Newcastle Airport; improving passenger and freight capacity of the East Coast Main Line – hence providing significant benefit at a national level.

1.5 Early finding from studies indicate that the Leamside Metro extension to Washington alone will:

- Generate over £90 million per year in economic benefits to the region
- Create nearly 8 million additional passenger journeys a year
- Reducing reliance on the most polluting forms of transport, elimination 87,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year

This Economic Corridor work will enable the identification of further significant outputs and outcomes by investment into the whole area around, and connected by, the line.

2. Background to the Leamside rail line

- 2.1 The reintroduction of passenger services between Pelaw and Ferryhill on the Leamside Line has gathered pace following the allocation by Cabinet of £8m for Nexus to fully develop the Business Case for bringing the Metro to Washington.
- 2.2 The proposed new passenger services will provide a direct connection between Pelaw and Ferryhill (via Washington) and create a new rail link to communities in Gateshead, Sunderland and County Durham, as previously supported by the North East CA Cabinet.
- 2.3 Whilst there is evidence that the rail infrastructure alone can be a catalyst for long-term resilient growth, new rail connectivity does not generate inclusive economic growth on its own. Infrastructure is necessary, but not sufficient, with wraparound funding a proven model to maximise and accelerate the impacts of infrastructure investment and provide greater certainty for private sector investment.
- 2.4 Previously, Nexus have commissioned ERail to investigate the route of the line, associated adjoining land and to ascertain land values. Commissioned in 2021, it is currently being updated, and contributes to scoping of the financial innovation in the public and private sector required to realise the Leamside Investment Corridor opportunity. £8m has been committed by North East CA Cabinet for the full Business Case for Phase1 of the line, the Metro extension to Washington. The delivery of the line was a key pledge within the Mayor's Manifesto and is outlined with the North East CA Corporate Plan – it will be catalytic to the wider re-opening of the full extent of the line. All work to date has identified and underlined the economic potential of the corridor and now we seek to fully define how the potential of the opportunities can be maximised.

3. Mobilising Strategy

- 3.1 There will be a need to bring forward the capacity across the area, working in partnership with LAs, stakeholders and wider partners, to develop the overarching strategy and narrative and the investable propositions underpinning it.
- 3.2 To drive forward strategy development and engagement at pace it is proposed that funding be allocated to support the development of the strategy and associated artefacts, including research, initial masterplan (including preliminary growth and housing strategies, to be aligned to the wider

emerging role for the CA in developing Spatial Development Strategies), a cultural and creative strategy, and new area and spatial maps to illustrate the vision.

- 3.3 Cabinet is therefore asked to allocate £500k of the North East CA investment fund to deliver the above and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Mayor and the Director of Finance and Investment, to procure and enter into contracts with third party support where appropriate within that funding, in accordance with North East CA Financial Regulations, the Single Assurance Framework, policies and procedures.

4. Partnership and Governance

- 4.1 The work undertaken to date on the rail element of this programme has involved the seven constituent Councils and Central Government Departments, working closely together at a number of different levels. (When in existence, predecessor combined authorities, and Transport North East, were also involved.)
- 4.2 Building on the excellent transport-focused partnership work undertaken so far it is proposed to extend the remit of the Investment Corridor work to include collaboration with Local Authorities, relevant Government departments, and agencies such as the Office for Investment and Homes England. The Investment Corridor strategy will be led by the North East CA Director of Finance and Investment, and all financial decisions will be subject to usual assurance framework considerations and delegations.

B. Potential Impact on North East Combined Authority Objectives

1. The Leamside Investment Corridor aligns with and advances the priorities set out in the North East CA's Corporate Plan and Local Growth Plan. The potential for economic growth, regeneration and new housing along the corridor is significant and is mapped in this report to the Mayor's and Cabinet's five missions for the Combined Authority, whilst reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Leamside Line is a key economic priority for the region, identified in the North East CA Devolution Deal and the Mayor's manifesto

C. Key Risks

1. There are no significant risks associated with the investment in developing a strategy for the Leamside Investment Corridor. The strategy work will develop a clear picture of the risks associated with the strategy itself and with further investment in the programme.

D. Financial and Other Resources Implications

1. A total allocation of £500,000 is requested from the Investment Fund. A delivery plan for this will be realised through a business case application from the NECA team. A financial profile will be agreed as part of the delivery arrangements which will subsequently be considered by Finance and Investment Board and final decision delegated to the Chief Executive / Director of Finance and Investment. Like other funding which has been approved by the Combined Authority, project spend will be validated and reported to Cabinet as part of the regular quarterly monitoring report.

E. Legal Implications

- 1 The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

F. Equalities Implications

- 1 The strategy development will include full consideration of equalities implications. None are noted at this stage.

G. Consultation and Engagement

- 1 Widespread consultation on the Combined Authority’s new Transport Plan (incorporating bringing the Metro to Washington and the Leamside Line reopening) is underway. The type, timing and duration of consultation on the Leamside Investment Corridor itself will be defined as part of the strategy development.

H. Appendices

N/A

I. Background Papers

None

J. Contact Officers

Ian Freshwater – Senior Economic Development and Regeneration Officer
ian.Freshwater@northeast-ca.gov.uk 07894 253 049

Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment Mags.Scott@northeast-ca.gov.uk 07876 393 780

K. Glossary

None

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 March 2025

Title: Equality Objectives
Report of: Leigh Mills – Head of Skills and Inclusion

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is firstly to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress made towards this year's Equality Objectives and secondly, to share the plans for setting longer term objectives for the North East CA for 2025-2028. The equalities and inclusion team are seeking feedback on the suggested new objectives and the approach taken.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to note the progress made so far against this year's equality objectives.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to review the approach taken to set longer term organisational equality objectives and provide feedback on this approach.

3. Progress against the '24-25 Equalities Objectives

- 3.1 In June 2024 Cabinet approved 12 equality objectives for the first year of the new North East CA. These objectives were designed to be transitional and to help internal teams create new processes, deliver training and gather insights which would pave the way for a longer term set of organisational equalities objectives to be prepared. The 2024-25 objectives are included in Appendix A.
- 3.2 Since last summer, the Equalities and Inclusion Team, in partnership with other key teams (such as People and Culture) have led on an internal plan of action driving forward progress towards these objectives. An annual report demonstrating the progress made is now underway. It will be shared with Cabinet in June 2025.
- 3.3 Progress is largely positive, with highlights including the creation and roll out of a new equality impact assessment process, which takes a tiered approach and has gleaned interest from other local and combined authorities in the country. The equalities and inclusion team have supported with the creation of 12 equality impact assessments since launching this process in September 2024, including for large scale pieces of work such as the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. In September 2024 we ran our first 'Fairer North East' week. This was a week of activities and engagement for staff, dedicated to celebrating inclusion and taking action to embed equalities in our day-to-day work. As part of the week's activities, we created a training video for staff on the Public Sector Equality Duty, re-launched our Equality Impact Assessment process and ran training sessions on this, delivered by a local training provider. We also delivered a staff 'learning hour' session about gender-responsive policy making, which was attended by 57 staff. This has been followed by other learning hours about violence against women and girls, International Women's Day, challenges for young disabled people in our region, and doubly disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- 3.4 Other notable areas of progress include examples of targeted and meaningful engagement (such as the consultation on the North East's draft Local Transport Plan and an online consultation seeking

resident feedback on the accessibility of adult skills courses in their area), new staff guidance about inclusive communications and events and the newly launched Mayor's Opportunity Fund which will focus on cohesion, inclusion and civic participation, working with some of our most under-represented residents.

4. Creating longer term Equalities Objectives

4.1 As the first set of equality objectives were designed to support and underpin the activities during the first year of the new combined authority, we have proposed a new, longer term set of equality objectives going forward. The new equality objectives will be operational from summer 2025-2028, subject to approval by Cabinet at their meeting in June 2025.

4.2 The proposal for the new equality objectives has been drafted by the Equality and Inclusion Team and is based on the missions and commitments which have been outlined in the North East CA Corporate Plan and the North East Mayor's manifesto. They are aligned with other North East local authority equality ambitions and directions of travel. They are also rooted in regional evidence and learning and insights from this year's objectives. The draft objectives have been created in consultation with multiple teams across the combined authority, including people and culture, transport, economic growth, child poverty, employment and skills.

4.3 The proposal is that the objectives are split into three themes reflecting the different roles we hold as a combined authority:

- Employer
- Commissioner
- Convener

This is in keeping with how we framed this year's equality objectives, and it is also aligned with the approach that other combined authorities such as Liverpool and Greater Manchester take.

4.4 Cabinet will be asked to approve the new objectives in June 2025. An internal working group will then be established and led by the equalities and inclusion team who will be responsible for the creation of an action plan, assigning owners and meeting regularly to review progress. Annual reports will continue to be sent to Cabinet each summer.

4.5 We have reflected upon how the EDI landscape may develop and change in the UK over the lifetime of the equality objectives, as well as recent changes internationally. To ensure this work is future-proofed, we have kept the North East CA's emerging Local Growth Plan and the strong economic case for equality at the forefront of our thinking. We have also considered upcoming legislative changes such as the proposed introduction of the Socio-Economic Duty and the Race Equality Act.

4.6 The draft objectives are shared in Appendix B. Overview and Scrutiny is invited to review and provide feedback on this approach.

5. Potential Impact on Objectives

5.1 The proposed equality objectives are intentionally and strongly aligned with the North East CA's missions, strategic and mayoral priorities and with commitments outlined in other key strategic documents.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 It is a statutory requirement for Public Sector Organisations to publish one or more equality objectives at least every 4 years and to publish information on general duty compliance with regard to people affected by our policies and practices every year. The creation and publication of an annual equality report for the first year of operating for the North East CA and the proposal for a new set of equality objectives are a key part of compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1 The draft objectives have been created in consultation with multiple teams across the combined authority, including people and culture, transport, economic growth, child poverty, employment and skills. Following feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, there will be further consultation, including with the VCSE sector.

8. Appendices

Appendix A - 2024-25 Equality Objectives
Appendix B – Draft Equality Objectives 2025-28

9. Background Papers

The following background documents have been used in the compilation of this report and are available for inspection either by clicking on the links below or by contacting the report author:

None

10. Contact Officers

Leigh Mills leigh.mills@northeast-ca.gov.uk
Robin Fry robin.fry@northeast-ca.gov.uk
Emma Patterson emma.patterson@northeast-ca.gov.uk

11. Glossary

EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

North East CA Equality Objectives 2024-25**Employer****1. Diversity**

As an employer, we will take steps to ensure the diversity of our workforce reflects the population we serve.

We will develop the systems required to collect and analyse employee data so that we can identify diversity gaps and develop an action plan to begin addressing them, including proactive actions within recruitment processes.

2. Equity

As an employer, we will ensure that our policies are applied fairly, enabling all staff to thrive and contribute to the success of the organisation.

We will develop the systems required to assess whether policies and procedures are being applied equitably, so that we can identify any disparities and develop an action plan to begin addressing them.

3. Inclusion

As an employer, we will create the conditions for staff to feel valued, respected and heard.

We will develop a better understanding of staff experiences of inclusion through a programme of engagement, developing an action plan to begin addressing any challenges and opportunities uncovered.

4. Training

As an employer we will ensure that all staff and Cabinet are confident in adhering to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We will ensure all employees and Cabinet members complete equality, diversity and inclusion training on a regular basis.

Commissioner**5. Evidence**

As a commissioner of services, we will develop a deep understanding of the inequalities faced by residents in our region.

We will proactively embed equalities in the existing economic analysis of the organisation, targeting gaps in evidence, and using our evidence work to champion action to address issues of inequality. We will work with partners and communities to understand the impact of inequalities on people's lives.

6. Portfolio plans

As a commissioner of services, we will embed actions to reduce inequalities and promote inclusion across all Combined Authority investments and policies.

We will identify and embed opportunities to address inequalities across all portfolios and strategic plans.

7. Guidance

As a commissioner of services, we will embed actions to reduce inequalities and promote inclusion across all Combined Authority investments and policies.

We will develop guidance for colleagues and partners to embed reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion into the design, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation of all Combined Authority policy and investments.

8. Funding

As a commissioner of services, we will consistently apply the principles of equity and inclusion to the way we make funding accessible.

We will work with partners and other funders to ensure our funding opportunities are accessible to organisations working with some of our most under-represented residents.

9. Data

As a commissioner of services, we will use data and evidence to drive action to address inequalities and promote inclusion.

We will develop systems to consistently collect, monitor and evaluate disaggregated data about the people benefitting from our funded activity, taking action to identify and address gaps in participation.

Convener

10. Engagement

As a civic leader, we will build strong relationships with those around us to help us achieve our goals for the region.

We will develop an approach to inclusive engagement that helps to build positive relationships with diverse audiences so that our policies reflect the needs and ambitions of our people and communities.

11. Collaboration

As a civic leader, we will build strong relationships with those around us to help us achieve our goals for the region.

We will establish an Equalities and Inclusion working group with membership comprising of colleagues from all seven local authorities plus other key stakeholders.

12. Membership

As a civic leader, we will take steps to appoint a diverse membership to our boards which reflects the communities we serve.

We will regularly review membership of advisory groups and governance forums, ensuring that membership is diverse and inclusive.

DRAFT North East CA Equality Objectives 2025-28

We are proud to propose 6 equality objectives over a three-year period (2025-2028) which we've divided into three themes, reflecting the different roles we hold as a combined authority:

- employer
- commissioner
- convener.

The objectives, which are laid out in this document will be developed with more detail alongside key measurables and indicators of progress, demonstrating our commitment to supporting strong and connected communities that help to reduce inequalities and improve wellbeing for all.

They have been informed by regional data, our portfolio plans, our corporate plan, consultation with the VCSE sector, and the North East Mayor's manifesto.

The objectives look inward at our own workforce and staffing policies as well as looking outwards, considering our roles as commissioner of services and convener.

Employer

1.1 As an employer we will continue to create opportunities for good work within our own organisation, including building a staff community that fosters inclusivity, where every voice is heard and everyone feels a sense of belonging.

People and Culture colleagues are currently drafting examples of what this would include and key measurables based on their new (draft) EDI framework– early indications are that this will include workforce diversity and inclusion initiatives, pay gap reporting.

Commissioner

2.1 As a commissioner of services, we commit to investing in equitable and inclusive projects and programmes so that we can support people to overcome barriers to opportunity, allowing our region to be home to a vibrant and growing economy where no one's potential is wasted.

We are working with numerous teams on the detail underpinning this objective but it is likely to include equitable participation in adult skills and employability programmes, health inequality and collecting and using disaggregated data about live programmes.

2.2 As a commissioner of services, we commit to undertaking activities which will reduce child poverty and support families in our region.

The child poverty reduction team are drafting the detail underpinning this objective – it will likely include our ambitions to measure every investment decision against its impact on child poverty and using an intersectional lens when making decisions about child poverty interventions.

2.3 As a commissioner of services we commit to reducing transport related social exclusion which will improve transport for all users.

The transport team are drafting the detail underpinning this objective – it will likely include the introduction of safety initiatives for women and girls and ensuring a transport infrastructure that enables disabled people to travel safely.

2.4 As a commissioner of services, we commit to creating a North East we're proud to call home, building stronger neighbourhoods and developing community cohesion.

We are working with various teams on the detail underpinning this objective, but early indications are that it will include equality impact assessments, left behind areas, developing a strategic relationship with our VCSE sector, ensuring funding opportunities are accessible to all organisations and anti-racism activities.

Convener

3.1 As a civic leader, we will build strong relationships with those around us, working closely with partners and North East citizens to help us set and achieve our goals for the region.

We are working with various teams on the detail underpinning this objective, but early indications are that it will include the publication of a citizen engagement strategy, centralised guidance for staff on inclusive comms and engagement, and access to good work.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 March 2025

Title: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme
Report of: Michael Robson, Senior Governance Officer & Scrutiny Officer

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the latest version of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for review and, if necessary, revision.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to:
- a) review the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme as set out in Appendix A; and
 - b) if necessary, propose any additions or changes to the work programme.

3. Context

- 3.1 The Committee has previously agreed that its work programme be reported to each Committee meeting to enable all members of the Committee to review the work programme, suggest items for inclusion and, if necessary, agree any changes. This will provide flexibility to react to changes within the Authority and so scrutiny can be undertaken on policy development as it evolves. The Chair and Vice Chair will also continually review and revise the work programme as necessary.

4. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee enables local councillors, on behalf of their communities, to scrutinise and challenge the Cabinet and the Mayor on delivery of the Authority's ambitions and objectives and to consider matters of strategic importance to residents within the Authority's area with a view to influencing their decisions.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny should be mindful of its Public Sector Equality Duty and to consider whether its activities and the work it is scrutinising eliminates discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advances equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and fosters good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 Discussions with the Chair, Vice Chair and senior officers within the authority have culminated in the production of the work programme. The work programme is regularly reported to the Committee and the Authority's Senior Leadership Team.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

8. Background Papers

[Minutes of previous meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)
[Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
[Scrutiny Protocol for English institutions with devolved powers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
[Centre for Governance and Scrutiny - Overview and scrutiny in combined authorities: a plain English guide 2nd Edition](#)

9. Contact Officers

Michael Robson, Senior Governance Officer and Scrutiny Officer
Michael.robson@northeast-ca.gov.uk 0191 277 7242

The North East CA has appointed an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable local councillors, on behalf of their communities, to scrutinise and challenge the Cabinet and the Mayor and to consider matters of importance to residents within the Authority's area with a view to influencing their decisions. Effective scrutiny arrangements are an essential component of local democracy, enhancing accountability and transparency of decision making.

This work programme sets out how the Committee intends to fulfil this role. The programme will be regularly reviewed and refreshed by the Committee so that it can react to changes within the Authority and so scrutiny can be undertaken on policy development as it evolves.

When deciding whether an item should be included in the work programme, the Committee should consider the following evaluative questions:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?"

Anyone who has any suggestions for inclusion in the work programme can contact:

Michael Robson

Senior Governance Officer

Email: michael.robson@northeast-ca.gov.uk

Tel: 0191 277 7242

Part A – Work Programme

The Committee intends to undertake the following scrutiny exercises.

4 March 2025 – Committee Meeting (Quadrant, North Tyneside)		
Housing and Land To examine the development of the Strategic Place Partnership, its objectives and workstreams and discuss its future strategic direction.	Dame Norma Redfearn Cabinet Member for Housing and Land Heather Orton Principal Housing Infrastructure Manager Peter Mennell Director of Housing, North Tyneside	Homes England to attend.
North East Local Transport Plan To receive and consider the feedback received during the public consultation exercise on the draft Local Transport Plan.	Tobyn Hughes Director of Transport Philip Meikle Rachelle Forsyth-Ward Jen Robson Emma Bennett	Cabinet due to approve final LTP on 18 March 2025.
Leamside Investment Corridor To consider the proposed development of a strategy for a Leamside Investment Corridor.	Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment Ian Freshwater	

	Senior Economic Development and Regeneration Officer	
Equality Objectives To review delivery of the Authority's initial equalities objectives set for 2024/25 and to contribute to the formulation of a set of longer term equality objectives to be agreed by Cabinet in May 2025.	Robin Fry, Inclusive Economy Advisor	
Work Programme To review, and if necessary, revise the overview and scrutiny work programme.	Michael Robson, Scrutiny Officer	

April 2025 (if required)		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report To approve the annual report for submission to Cabinet.	Michael Robson, Scrutiny Officer	
English Devolution White Paper To consider the implications for the Authority and the Committee of the proposals contained in the white paper.		

July 2025		
North East Mayor To receive an annual report from the North East Mayor on the delivery of the Strategic Portfolio Delivery Plans.	Kim McGuinness	
Budget Outturn Report To monitor the Authority's financial position for the corporate budget and all funding streams as at the end of the financial year 2024/25.	Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment	

September 2025		
Education Improvement Programme the Committee undertake a further scrutiny exercise to review and assess the impact of the programme in September 2025 on factors such as attendance, exclusions and child poverty.	Adrian Dougherty, Interim Strategic Leader for Skills, Inclusion and Public Service Reform Andrew Garrad, Senior Programme Manager	Minute OSC23/02/25 refers

November 2025		
<p>Unlocking Finance for North East Businesses to start, and to grow To receive a progress report in relation to the management of the funds in 12 months time.</p>	<p>Rob Hamilton, Interim Strategic Leader for Economic Growth and Regeneration</p> <p>Mags Scott Director of Finance and Investment</p>	<p>Previously reported to the Committee on 5 November 2024.</p>

December 2025		
<p>Initial Budget and Corporate Plan Proposals a) To consider the Cabinet and Mayor's initial budget and Corporate Plan proposals (including performance management framework) and accompanying information; and b) make recommendations on these, where it is considered appropriate, to the Cabinet and Mayor.</p>	<p>Mags Scott Director of Finance and Investment</p> <p>Alan Reiss Director of Operations</p>	
<p>Budget Monitoring Report To monitor the Authority's financial position for the Corporate Budget and all funding streams as at 30 September 2025.</p>	<p>Mags Scott Director of Finance and Investment</p>	<p>The Committee may prefer to receive a broader combined financial and non-financial CA performance report once the performance framework is finalised.</p>

January 2026		
<p>Revised Budget and Corporate Plan Proposals a) To consider the revised Budget & Corporate Plan proposals; b) To make any any recommendations and/or observations to the Mayor/Cabinet; c) To examine the proposed performance management framework and to consider its relationship with it; and d) Review and reflect on the role and operation so far of OSC within the CA.</p>	<p>Mags Scott, Director of Finance and Investment</p> <p>Alan Reiss Director of Operations</p>	
<p>Northumberland Line To review and assess the benefits of transport investment, members have suggested they undertake a visit to the Northumberland Line to Ashington to learn more about the development and construction of rail schemes, with members of the Northumberland County Council's</p>	<p>Northumberland CC</p>	

project team talking through the key features of the scheme and lessons learnt. It has also been reported that an external review of the Northumberland Line project was being undertaken and its findings could be reported to the Committee.		
--	--	--

February 2026		
Highways Maintenance Funding A further scrutiny exercise to review the adequacy and delivery of the Authority's approach to allocating highways maintenance funding be scheduled for February 2026; and	Jonathan Bailes Head of Transport Programmes	Minute OSC22/02/25 refers
Supporting People into Employment the Committee undertake a further scrutiny exercise in February 2026 to review and assess the development of Connect to Work and the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer.	Leigh Mills Head of Skills and Inclusion Ruth Gaul Principal Programme Manager	Minute OSC22/02/25 refers

March 2026		

2026-27		
Bus Reform To consider the outcome of the Bus Franchising Assessment.	Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport Lucy Keating, Head of Bus Reform	Bus Reform Options were previously considered in Oct 2024.
Metro Expansion and Leamside Line To consider the Outline Business Case for the Washington Metro Loop and the Strategic Outline Case for the re-opening of the southern section of the Leamside Line.	Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport	

Part B – Potential Exercises

The following topics have been suggested as areas for examination but the timing and method of scrutiny have yet to be determined. There are a range of methods which may be used including formal committee meetings, the appointment of task and finish groups, meetings with the Mayor and Cabinet members, informal briefings, workshops, all day inquiries, fact finding visits or community engagement.

Scrutiny Exercise	Lead Cabinet Member /Officer(s)	Notes
<p>Local Growth Plan To contribute to the development of a local plan to grow the economy in the North East area.</p>	<p>Kim McGuinness, North East Mayor</p> <p>Rob Hamilton, Interim Strategic Leader for Economic Growth and Regeneration.</p>	<p>Likely to be ready around April time.</p>
<p>Community Infrastructure Fund Councillor Dixon offered to provide the Committee with more details of a proposed Community Infrastructure Fund when more details were available. The aim of the fund will be to help communities to secure community buildings and assets within their local area.</p>	<p>Councillor Tracey Dixon</p> <p>Mandi Cresswell Policy & Economy Adviser (Social Economy)</p>	
<p>Single Assurance Framework Councillor Michael Mordey indicated he would welcome the Committee’s input into the management of the assurance framework.</p>	<p>Councillor Mordey Director of Finance and Investment</p>	<p>The ASC and OSC to co-ordinate an approach to the SAF as the Audit and Standards Committee also intends to review the framework.</p> <p>OSC Members were invited to ASC workshop on 19 Nov 2024.</p>
<p>Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Development Partnership Councillor Hopgood has invited the Committee to consider and make recommendations on options for delivery of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy and whether there should be one organisation for the whole of the area or if they should remain separate.</p>	<p>Councillor Hopgood Mark Adamson Principal Sector Growth & Delivery Manager</p>	
<p>Employer Accreditation Scheme To consider proposals to establish a framework to help employers identify what ‘good work’ looks like, get recognised or make improvements.</p>	<p>Caroline Preston, Policy & Economy Adviser</p>	<p>The scheme is due to be launched at the end of January 2025.</p>
<p>Brownfield Housing Fund To examine the impact of the Brownfield Housing Fund Programme to remediate and revitalise brownfield sites across the area for the provision of new homes.</p>	<p>Mark Stamper, Head of Economic Delivery</p> <p>Heather Orton, Principal Housing Infrastructure Manager</p>	<p>Previously reported to the NTCA OSC in March 2024.</p>

<p>Adult Well-Being and Health and Ability to Work To examine adult well-being and health and its relationship to individuals' ability to work in the North East.</p>		The NECA OSC held a one day conference in February 2024 with a view to informing the North East CAs work programme.
<p>Inward Investment To examine the region's approach to attracting inward investment into the North East England.</p>	Guy Currey, Head of Inward Investment	
<p>Investment Zones To consider the impact of Investment Zones introduced by Government to catalyse the development of high-potential industry clusters. In November 2023, it was confirmed the North East would benefit from IZ status supported by £160 million investment over 10 years.</p>	Rob Hamilton, Interim Strategic Leader for Economic Growth and Regeneration	
<p>Devolution To consider the implications of emerging national policy on the CA and the region, particularly the White Paper on English Devolution.</p>	Henry Kippin, Chief Executive	
<p>North East Railways In querying the need for increasing freight capacity on the rail network it was suggested that members may wish to consider in more detail the Authority's ambitions for rail services and how these can be delivered in collaboration with Great British Railways.</p>	Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport	
<p>Nexus To review the performance of Nexus against its Corporate Business Plan for 2023/24</p>	Catherine Massarella, John Fenwick and Stuart Clarke, Nexus	Previously reported to the JTC OSC in Oct 2023. In Sept 2024 Chair & Vice Chair agreed that performance info needed to be scrutinised but by another body not OSC.
<p>North East Bus Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) To examine progress in delivering the programme of interventions to reverse the decline in bus patronage and increase bus modal share.</p>	Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport Heather Jones, Head of Enhanced Partnerships	Previously reported to JTC OSC Discussed at meeting held on 8 Oct 2024.
<p>North East Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Strategy To examine delivery of the Strategy which seeks to expand the public charging network in the North East, support an increase in the uptake of zero emission vehicles and look at alternative fuels.</p>	Rachelle Forsyth-Ward, Head of Transport Policy and Strategy Development	Previously reported to JTC OSC

<p>North East Active Travel Strategy To examine delivery of the North East Active Travel Strategy which set a target for over half of all shorter journeys in the North East (under 5 miles) to be made by active travel by 2035, up from 37% in 2018/19.</p>	<p>Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport</p>	
<p>Key Route Network To consider proposals for a Key Route Network (KRN) Strategy, the development and delivery of a single asset management plan for the North East road network and its relationship with National Highways.</p>	<p>Tobyn Hughes, Director of Transport</p>	

Part C – Member Development

In addition to conducting scrutiny exercises set out above, the Committee will also undertake other activities to enhance members’ knowledge and skills to effectively fulfil their role as scrutineers.

Activity	Detail	Timescale
Induction	<p>A presentation from the Chief Executive on the North East CAs vision, powers, priorities and structures.</p> <p>Introduction to the role of O&S, the difference between local and combined authority scrutiny, work programming and the role and expectations of a scrutiny members.</p> <p>Review of work programme and methods of working.</p>	July 2025
Pre-Meetings	The Committee will meet remotely and informally ahead of each Committee meeting and following publication of the agenda to prepare and co-ordinate key lines of enquiry.	To be held at 12noon on the Friday before each committee meeting via Microsoft Teams.
Informal Workshops	The Committee may wish to meet informally to review and determine its work programme, methods of working or undertake preparatory research ahead of formal meetings.	
Members’ Briefing	Members of the Committee will be sent regular written briefings containing details of news and developments relating to the North East CA.	Monthly
Specific Briefings	Members may request on line or in person briefings to gain a better understanding on specific areas of the Authority’s work and provide members with an opportunity to select topics for further more detail scrutiny.	
Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Training	It is proposed that the CfGS be commissioned to deliver a bespoke training session for OSC members.	To be arranged.
Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Training	Members will be encouraged to join the annual training programme delivered by the CfGS in the region.	
North East Scrutiny Network	Members will be encouraged to participate in the Network to liaise with other authorities and share good practice.	Quarterly Meetings

Part D – Action List

The action list below records and tracks the Committee’s requests for information.

Meeting Item	Requested Action	Outcome/Status	Owner
16 July 2024 Minute OSC5/7/24	Members asked that they be provided with supplementary information regarding expenditure on consultancy support for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme.	Information circulated with written monthly briefing on 19 August 2024.	Jonathan Bailes Head of Transport Programmes Eleanor Goodman Finance Manager
8 Oct 2024 Note 2 of Appendix to Minutes	It was reported that multi-operator, multi-modal capped tickets targeted at those aged 21 and under had increased usage in the age group by 25%. Officers undertook to provide members of the Committee with further details.	Information circulated with written monthly briefing on 4 November 2024.	Heather Jones Head of Enhanced Partnerships
8 Oct 2024 Note 3 of Appendix to Minutes	Members asked that they be notified of the commencement of the public consultation exercise.	Information circulated with written monthly briefing on 4 November 2024.	Jen Robson Head of Business Transformation, Performance and Insights
5 Nov 2024 OSC13/11/24	A briefing note setting out initial progress on Unlocking Finance for North East Businesses to start, and to grow be provided to members of the Committee after 6 months.	Due May 2025	Mark Stamper Head of Economic Delivery
5 Nov 2024 OSC15/11/24	It was agreed that the OSCs comments regarding the Mayor’s Opportunity Fund be referred to relevant officers to be considered as part of the mobilisation of the Fund.	Comments referred to the Chief Exec, Director of Operations and Director of Finance on 11 Nov 2024.	Michael Robson Scrutiny Officer
10 Dec 2024 Note 2	Members asked that they be provided with training to help them to read and interpret the Authority’s budget monitoring reports.	Delivered during the budget workshop held on 14 January 2025.	Mags Scott Director of Finance & Investment
10 Dec 2024 Note 2	Officers undertook to provide members of the Committee with supplementary information in relation to: i) the operating profit of TT2 Ltd, the operator of the Tyne Tunnels; and ii) details of the Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO) maturity loans held by the Authority.	Information circulated to members on 28 January 2025	Mags Scott Director of Finance & Investment

4 Feb 2025 OSC20/02/25	A programme performance pack setting out key progress updates, committed funding, forecast expenditure and forecast outputs, due to be presented to the Finance and Investment Board be provided to members of the Committee.		Mags Scott Director of Finance & Investment
---------------------------	---	--	--