
Tees Valley Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Cavendish House, Teesdale Business Park, Stockton-On-Tees, TS17 6QY
Thursday 13th January 2022 at 10:00am**

Present:

Cllr Hobson (Chair) (Middlesbrough Council)
Cllr Smith (Vice Chair) (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)
Cllr Harker (Darlington Borough Council)
Cllr Hobson (Middlesbrough Council)
Cllr Renton (Darlington Borough Council)
Cllr Riordan (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)
Cllr Wells (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)
Cllr Branson (Middlesbrough Council)
Cllr Nelson (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)
Cllr Beall (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)
Cllr Head (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)

Officers:

Julie Gilhespie - Group Chief Executive TVCA
Gary Macdonald – Group Director of Finances and Resources
Peter Judge - Chief Legal Officer, Monitoring Officer TVCA
Ruth Callaghan – Acting Business Support and Governance Manager

Also in attendance:

N/A

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Barlow (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)
Cllr Dulston (Darlington Borough Council)
Cllr Jones (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)
Cllr Brenda Harrison (Hartlepool Borough Council)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were recorded as above.

2 Declarations of interest

No declarations were made.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2021 were agreed as a true record.

4 Chief Executive's Update

A paper was circulated giving Members an update on activity of the Combined Authority since the last meeting.

The Group Chief Executive offered the opportunity for Committee members to raise questions. No questions were raised.

5 Finance and Resources Sub committee Budget Consultation Report

Cllr Smith had chaired two meetings of the subcommittee on 13th and 20th December 2021. With the Group Director of Finance and Resources they had reviewed the draft budget report in detail. The circulated report sets out the full set of questions and answers and offers a summary of the themes arising from the points raised. With the wider Overview and Scrutiny Committee's approval the paper would be sent to the Cabinet meeting on 28th January 2022 to inform their decision making around the draft budget.

Cllr Branson raised that he had sent a letter to Tom Bryant Head of Transport about some specific transport issues. The Group Chief Executive agreed to review the progress with a response to this letter.

Action: Group Chief Executive to speak to the Head of Transport about a reply to Cllr Branson's letter to the Head of Transport.

The Group Chief Executive set out that the Transport Strategy was still undergoing a process of being approved at Central Government. Once approved the Transport Plan would be developed further and could be brought to the Committee by the Head of Transport at the March meeting.

Action: Head of Transport be invited to attend meeting on 17th March to present on the Transport Plan.

The sub committee chair reported that the sub committee had raised a large number of question which had been answered by the Group Director of Finance and Resources. The subcommittee had noted that there were areas of unallocated funding not yet allocated where projects were still being explored.

The Chair recommended that all noted the report and agree that the Committee send their report to Cabinet on 28th January. The Committee voted in favour. The Chair thanked Cllr Smith and the sub committee for their input and a job well done.

Resolved that the detail of the report is noted and that the report be sent to Cabinet for their meeting on 28th January 2022.

6 Investment Plan Delivery Update

The Group Director of Finance and Resources introduced the paper which set out the delivery of investment funding for this quarter. He noted that the allocations of funding were progressing well. There were a couple of areas where the profile of spend was below planned expectations. This was a result of the way that government allocations work and are scheduled.

A committee member raised a question about the impact of the proposed spend on electric vehicle charging points given recent Central Government proposals to limit their plans in this area. The Group Chief Executive was able to confirm that the proposals were based on TVCA funding two thirds of for this project and that if central government funding was reduced, TVCA would proceed with their funding allocation.

The committee member also raised questions about the impact on the Darlington Railway Station project resulting from changes to the roll-out of HS2. This might also be exacerbated by the post-covid impact on rail passenger numbers. The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that the Full Business Case for this project still required approval from Central Government.

Committee member asked what jobs would be created through the proposed Tees Valley Large Capital Grant Scheme. It was explained that the number of jobs depends on the type and nature of each individual scheme. The Combined Authority have reference information from previous experience to assist in establishing the appropriate job numbers that might be expected from the type/nature of scheme proposed.

Committee member raised the issue of the Guisborough to Nunthorpe cycle way and potential risks associated with cycling down the main road. Cllr Smith noted that she had investigated this point and could confirm that the plan was to create a cycle path alongside, but separate to the main road.

Resolved that the detail of the report is noted.

7 Delegated decisions

A report was circulated detailing the Delegated Decisions taken by the Combined Authority since the last meeting.

Resolved that the detail of the report was noted.

8 Constitution Review

The Chair set out that this review had been asked for by the previous Chair. The purpose was to review the constitutions of other Combined Authorities to examine how they handle the issue of quoracy for Scrutiny Committees. The chair confirmed that he had looked at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority constitution and had found it very similar to the TVCA constitution. Another member confirmed that he had looked the Manchester Combined Authority constitution and concurred that this was also similar.

The Chair noted the previous advice provided by the Monitoring Officer that the TVCA constitution in relation to the scrutiny committee was set out in legislation and therefore little could be done to change the approach to quoracy. The Monitoring Officer noted that the previous chair had written to Minister Robert Jenrick previously and gained permission to have more named substitutes.

Committee members noted that even with this additional dispensation the committee had experienced issues with being quorate.

Committee members discussed the merits of continuing with this review, but noted that it might be more worthwhile focusing efforts into lobbying government regarding the issues the committee has faced. It was noted that the government was currently consulting on this issue and that the Monitoring Officer would write a letter which could be sent from the Committee chair to input into the consultation. In addition, the Monitoring Officer would consult with his network of other Combined Authority Monitoring Officers to ask about their experience and issues relating to ensuring their scrutiny committees are quorate.

Action: Monitoring Officer to draft letter on quoracy issues on behalf of the Chair to set out issues and concerns regarding the legislative constraints relating to scrutiny committee quoracy.

Action: Monitoring Officer to draft letter to other Combined Authority Monitoring Officers to gain their views on scrutiny committee quoracy issues.

The committee discussed the approach within Local Authorities regarding meeting in person or virtually. The Monitoring Officer set out his view and interpretation of the legislation that a meeting needed to take place in person if decisions were being made.

There was some discussion around whether O&S members were 'members' of TVCA. It was confirmed that they were not 'members' of TVCA as this relates to the Cabinet members. Instead they are 'members of the TVCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the Declarations of Interest form was confusing.

Action: Governance team to ensure that the declaration of interest form is inclusive of all types of Board and committee members.

The Chair requested a meeting with the Monitoring Officer to discuss the issues raised under this item. It was agreed that this would supersede the original scope of the constitution review.

Resolved that the existing scope of the constitution review not be pursued and rather a new set of actions be undertaken to lobby government over the issues relating to overview and scrutiny quoracy.

9 Date and time of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 17th March 2022.