
Tees Valley Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Microsoft Teams Live Event
Thursday, 18th June, 2020 at 2.00 pm.**

Present:

Cllr Stephenson (Chair) (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)
Cllr Rooney (Vice Chair) (Middlesbrough Council)
Cllr Barlow (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)
Cllr Brown (Hartlepool Borough Council)
Cllr Harker (Darlington Borough Council)
Cllr Hobson (Middlesbrough Council)
Cllr Jeffrey (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)
Cllr Jones (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council)
Cllr Jones (Darlington Borough Council)
Cllr Renton (Darlington Borough Council)
Cllr Riordan (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

Officers:

Julie Gilhespie - CEO - TVCA/STDC
Sharon Jones - Governance & Scrutiny Officer - TVCA
Nicola Dean - Governance Support Officer - TVCA

Also in attendance:

Apologies for absence:

Cllr Loynes (Hartlepool Borough Council)

1 Declarations of interest

There were no interests declared.

2 Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 17th October were agreed as a true record

The last meeting on 16th January was inquorate so there are no minutes of that meeting.

The Chair reminded Members that if they wish to raise any questions outside of the scheduled meetings that these should be raised via the Chair, copying in Sharon Jones, rather than being asked direct to officers.

3 Chief Executives Update

A report was circulated from the Chief Executive giving an update on the work of the Combined Authority since the last meeting.

The Committee were advised that the main focus of the CA over the last few months has been the impact of Covid 19. We have largely focused on recovery planning and looking at the short, medium and long term impact on the economy. A comprehensive piece of work has been carried out and a report on this will be ready soon. This can be shared with the Committee once available.

The Business support helpline that was established at the beginning of the outbreak has seen lots of calls received in the early days of the pandemic but this has reduced significantly over the last few weeks.

Teesside Airport has been closed but is due to reopen next week. New flights will begin in July and the main traffic, which is the KLM flight to Schipol, is due to restart on 1st August.

TVCA have responded to the Governments Freeport consultation. Once this moves to the next stage there is an opportunity for Tees Valley to bid to be one of first Freeports.

There was a pot of money announced within the budget for the Transport Investment Prospectus. This will allow for long term planning from 2024 onwards.

Questions were asked around the following areas:

Purchase of hand sanitizer by TVCA - what was the cost of this and what was the process for procurement. It was reported via A&G committee in January that there is no procurement strategy in place for TVCA. Has this now been rectified? The Committee were advised that the total cost for the sanitizer could not be quoted at this point but can be provided. The procurement was carried out via emergency procurement rules at a time when no sanitizer was available anywhere and TVCA were able to source a provider. A Procurement Strategy has now been drafted and is awaiting sign off. It should be noted that all procurement has been done in accordance with the procurement rules, there just hasn't been a strategy sat alongside this.

Can evidence can be seen to show how successful we have been in responding to the Covid outbreak. 1000 businesses were surveyed and the results from these can be shared. There are plans in place to carry out a follow up survey, this will be a piece of evidenced work that we can suggest interventions on the back of. We know that recovery won't be quick but we will look to work flexibly to help where we can.

There has been a dramatic change in how people travel due to Covid. Has there been provision made for this in the Transport Prospectus, given that it wasn't on the horizon when it was produced. It was advised that amendments were made in the prospectus to increase money for electric vehicles and for cycling and walking suggestions. The Prospectus and funding allows us to flex plans to ensure they meet the needs of the public.

Resolved that the details of the report are noted

4 STDC Update

A report was circulated informing the Committee of key activity within South Tees Development Corporation.

It was questioned why no jobs have yet been created to replace those lost with the closure of SSI. It was explained that the nature of site means that opportunities are long term. There was never an expectation for job creation in the first few years, the land is still not officially owned by us yet. We will see construction jobs starting in the next few months and this will continue to upscale as time goes on. It is a long term solution.

A discussion took place regarding the significant changes to STDC Board and Management structure, specifically, the decision not to replace the CEO and also the reduced Board membership. Cllr Jeffrey commented that she is disappointed with the changes to the Board, in particular that there are no women on the Board, other than the RCBC Leader. She also questioned how the current MP for Redcar was given a place on the board when the previous MP for the same area had requested a seat and was denied. It was explained that there is a process set out in the Constitution for how the Board is established and that this process was followed. It is ultimately a Cabinet decision and it was agreed at their last meeting. The management changes are to realign STDC so that it is working more closely with TVCA and operates as a group. The CEO is now across the Group and the Financial Director and Commercial Director will also work across the group. The structure therefore is quite different and this is to meet the needs moving forward and towards transition in the Autumn.

It was questioned if there is a way for the Committee to see what success looks like over the forthcoming months and years to allow them to measure progress. It was agreed to look at a way to allow the Committee to understand the long term project and that this is something that can be measured against moving forward.

Resolved that the details of the report are noted

5 Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual report

The Committee received the draft annual report to be presented to Cabinet in July.

The Chair brought the Committees attention to Section 13 of the report, which refers to substitute members. She asked Members to each find a substitute to attend meetings on their behalf should they be unable to. The substitute must be from the same political group.

Resolved that the committee agreed the report for submission to Cabinet.

6 Delegated Decisions March-June 2020

The Committee received a report detailing the Delegated decisions taken by the Combined Authority since the last meeting.

Questions were raised regarding the DD for bus travel. JG advised the Committee that she would need to gather further detail on the specifics of this decision and would provide a response in writing to members. This would include information as to whether the bus companies have also accessed Government grants.

The Darlington link road funding was questioned, specifically whether any progress has been made with regard to timescales for this being built. It was advised that a submission has been made to DfT any they will decide if this will progress. Once we know if the project is to proceed then we will lobby for a timescale for this.

Cllr Chris Jones raised a specific query with regard to rail projects consultancy. Campaigning has been ongoing for a feasibility report to be carried out for Redcar East and an additional holt to be built. It was advised that this is on the list of schemes to consider and it will continue to be looked into further.

Resolved that the report is noted

7 Meetings & Forward Plan

A further Committee meeting is to be added in September to look at the Business Case submitted to BEIS. The date of this is TBC

August's meeting will contain an update from the LEP Chair and the EES Portfolio holder as these were missed out due to the cancellation of meetings previously. There will also be an airport update.

Members questioned what the process for call in would look like within the current lockdown situation. It will be clarified to Members how this would be carried out should it be required.

8 Date & Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 13th August 2020