At a meeting of the ECONOMIC PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL on TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026 at 4.30pm

Present: -

Councillor Price in the Chair

Councillors Dixon, Donkin, Fagan and G. Smith.

Also in attendance: -

Councillor Lindsey Leonard, Portfolio Holder Environment, Transport and Net Zero
Martin Bewick, Senior Manager Homeless & Vulnerable People
Paul Muir, Transport Development Group Engineer
Chris Ferry, Highways Design and Infrastructure Manager
James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer
Paul Wood, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Members of the Press

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Foster, Guy, Newey, Reed, Scanlan and Watson

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 February 2026

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 were submitted.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest

Review of Housing Allocations Policy

The Executive Director of Public Health & Wellbeing submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek the views if the Committee on the draft review of the Council's Housing allocations policy

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Martin Bewick, Senior Manager Homeless & Vulnerable People, was in attendance to present the report along with PowerPoint presentation and to answer any Member queries.

In response to Councillor Dixons queries, Mr Bewick advised that instances of Domestic Abuse were in Category 1 and if the case was severe it could be an exceptional circumstance. There were other agencies which looked after such people also, with Wearside Women in Need being one of the biggest organisations in the region.

Councillor Dixon commented that he had previously visited the Oasis facility and enquired as to what Category those people would be. Mr Bewick advised that these were typically single persons but of the most complex cases usually.

In response to Councillor Fagan's queries, Mr Bewick advised that they do require proof/evidence for cases of Domestic Abuse and this would include things such as Police statements or documents showing Organisational support.

In relation to the public consultation carried out on the changes to the Policy, Mr Bewick advised that every person on the list was contacted and provided with an email link to the survey in which they could also supply comments.

Councillor Donkin wished for his thanks to be passed onto the Team for their help in dealing with recent constituent issues and enquired as to what requirements there were of landlords of properties in relation to the rules such as fly tipping and maintenance of waste bins etc. Mr Bewick commented that it was difficult and you had good and bad landlords so they were learning which ones worked and which did not but the landlord should take action when there are instances of ASB etc and for the maintenance of the property.

In terms of absentee landlords it was very tricky in managing these and they tried not to use these if possible or only when needed.

Councillor Donkin enquired if the tenant would be monitored when in the property. Mr Bewick confirmed that officers monitored the tenant and would be in contact with them every day.

Councillor Smith referred to a recent constituents son who had been moved into a property within Whitley Bay. Mr Bewick advised that they did use hotels and B&B's outside of Sunderland and there were around 13-14 people out of the area. This was not ideal but they did not have an endless supply of available hotel rooms within the City.

The Chairperson wished to congratulate the team on their work, stating that they were doing a sterling job and queried as to how big the team was now. Mr Bewick advise that they had 36 staff, with 4-5 current vacancies at present.

Councillor Dixon suggested there may be some merit in the Team having a meeting with all Councillors to discuss the options available. Mr Bewick agreed that it may be

worth getting back in a room with Members and having a conversation to advise of the current circumstances.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chairperson thanked Mr Bewick for his attendance and it was then: -

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Northumbria Road Safety Partnership Update

The Assistant Director Transport and Infrastructure submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the Committee on the work of the Northumbria Road Safety Partnership.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Paul Muir, Transport Development Group Engineer and Councillor Lindsey Leonard, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Net Zero were in attendance to present the report along with a PowerPoint presentation and to answer any Member queries.

In response to Councillor Dixons query over the decision to only meet twice a year, Councillor Leonard advised that they had originally pushed back on this to increase the meeting to biannual rather than just annually but they did meet as and when needed.

Councillor Dixon commented that it did suggest a lack of urgency by the lead authority and queried Gateshead's work in this regard. Councillor Leonard advised that given some Authorities had stressed urgency this had moved the process on and now that the money was coming in it had started to speed up progression and partners were now refocussed. Mr Muir also advised that Officers had a steering group which met on a monthly basis.

Councillor Dixon enquired as to how involved the Police were as partners. Councillor Leonard informed that the Police were keen on the campaign side of the work and that they would be needed for the enforcement.

Councillor Dixon raised a question on behalf of Councillor Reed who had unfortunately had to submit apologies to the meeting, this related to the last meeting in which the subject had been considered and that there would be a replacement of the old cameras before new locations were sought. Mr Muir advised that this was for new sites and the existing cameras were to be looked at for how to be maintained and possibly refreshed.

Councillor Donkin requested clarification that there were currently 8 cameras, some working and some not and that there would be an additional 2 cameras. Mr Muir advised that there were currently 15 cameras in total but they were looking at new locations where there were the greatest amount of incidents.

Councillor Donkin queried in relation to the spot cameras and if these would be moved around and how many more they were getting. Mr Muir informed that the two cameras they were getting would be fixed and the Police would continue with the mobile van enforcement.

In response to Councillor Donkin's request for consideration of the A19, particularly around Hylton Castle, Mr Muir commented that he hadn't heard of anything being considered but he could raise this as an issue with National Highways as he had regular meetings with them.

With regards to an issue raised by Councillor Smith over the ASB of scooter users in Pallion Park and the removal of the camera there, Councillor Leaonard suggested that if residents reported the incidents to the Police, they could build intelligence as to where they were going after the park.

The Chairperson queried if Gateshead were in sole charge of the media campaign as the lead authority. Mr Muir informed that the steering group had agreed that the Police would lead on all messaging in this regard. Moving forward on next steps It was expected that the Police Communications would share a statement between all Local Authorities for agreement before going out to the press to announce the appointment of the camera operator.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chairperson thanked Mr Muir for his report and it was then: -

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Active Travel Development Update

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the Committee on the progress being made regarding the development of the City's Active Travel schemes.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Chris Ferry, Highways Design and Infrastructure Manager was in attendance to present the report along with a PowerPoint presentation and to answer any Member queries.

Councillor Dixon referred to a previous meeting on Ryhope Road in which timescales had been advised of September 2027 and now the presentation was stating an earlier start time of May/June. Mr Ferry informed that grant funding had been received earlier than expected so they were now looking at design tweaks so that they could start planning earlier. In relation to if resident objections were made, these would go to the Planning and Highways Committee as part of the TRO process but hopefully the tweaks made would address those residents concerns.

With regards to the parking bays further down on Ryhope Road, Mr Ferry advised that he would speak with the Team and get back to the Member on this.

Councillor Fagan referred to the implementation of floating bus stops and advised that concerns had been raised by the society of the blind. Mr Ferry advised that there was to be hazard paving installed and cyclists were to give way, so bus users would have priority across that space but he noted that he would consult with the society for the blind to hear their concerns.

Councillor Donkin queried if the new JustEat robots were allowed to use the cycle lanes. Mr Ferry advised that this was a good question which he would need to seek guidance on but he presumed as the robots maintained the same speed as walking that they would use the footpaths.

In regards to a query from Councillor Smith in relation to the white line markings/widened pavement at Pennywell Road, Mr Ferry advised that he would take this away to speak with the team to find out their purpose.

The Chairperson commented that with regards to the cycle lanes, the challenge was getting the public and local residents on board and there was a need for better engagement/consultation, particularly in the Houghton area where there had been a lot of concerns with issues over emergency services etc and queried if there were any way of reviewing how things were working.

Mr Ferry informed that he needed to reach out to the Emergency Services and in relation to consultation, the Team had changed how they operated and now held public events for residents to talk to officers as well as giving the opportunity to explain in more detail what was proposed.

Councillor Leonard commented that they had learned a lot of lessons from the Ryhope Road proposal consultations and it was an evolving process.

Councillor Dixon wished to thank Councillor Leonard for attending the meeting commenting that it seemed to benefit the Committee for the Portfolio Holder to attend.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chairperson thanked Mr Ferry for his report and Councillor Leonard for attending the meeting, it was then: -

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Annual Work Programme 2025/2026

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), for the Committee to consider and agree the work programme for the municipal year 2025/26.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report for Members' information and possible suggestions/comments.

Councillor Dixon wished to thank Mr Diamond for the prompt response in providing the information he had previously requested.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee received and noted the report

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from 25 February 2026 (copies circulated).

(For copy report and notice – see original minutes).

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members to get in touch if they required further information on any of the items included in the notice.

6. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) J. PRICE
Chair