

CABINET MEETING – 8 JUNE 2023
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

MINUTES, PART I

Author(s):

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

Purpose of Report:

Presents the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2023, Part I.

Action Required:

To confirm the minutes as a correct record.



At a Meeting of the **CABINET** held in **CITY HALL (COUNCIL CHAMBER)** on **FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2023** at **10.00a.m.**

Present: -

Councillor Rowntree in the Chair

Councillors Chequer, K Johnston, Price, Stewart and Williams

Also present: -

Councillors Scott, A Smith and P Walker – Deputy Cabinet Members

Councillors Edgeworth and Fagan

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 March 2023, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16 March 2023, Part I, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Cabinet members. The Director of Children's Services and the Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs and the Assistant Director of Economic Regeneration left the meeting room for Item 6 as they were members of the Board of Directors of Together for Children.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Miller and F Miller.

North East Devolution

The Chief Executive submitted a report providing an update on the public consultation which Councils had undertaken in relation to the proposals for North East devolution and seeking Cabinet approval to submit the attached consultation

report to the Secretary of State as the next step in the process of establishing the new mayoral combined authority.

Councillor Rowntree reported that at a meeting of the Cabinet on 28 December 2022, the Government had announced a “minded to” devolution deal with the seven councils in the North East – Durham, Northumberland and the five Tyne & Wear councils. To progress and implement the deal, it would be necessary to create a new mayoral combined authority which covered the area of the seven councils and replaced the two existing combined authorities in the region.

As part of the required process, a public consultation had been undertaken on these new, proposed governance arrangements. The consultation period ran from 26 January to 23 March and Councillor Rowntree explained that the report updated Cabinet on the consultation activities and results.

Section 4 of the report outlined that a range of events in different formats and an online survey were conducted to gather the views of residents and stakeholders across the region. Full details of the consultation were set out in Appendix 1 and Section 5 of the report provided a summary of those views and consultation results, based on the five key strands of the deal which were:

- changing how the seven councils work together (i.e. governance arrangements);
- devolution of powers to create an integrated transport system for the area;
- devolution of new housing and planning functions;
- new finance and investment powers; and
- devolution of matters relating to skills, employment and adult education.

Councillor Rowntree highlighted that the majority of responses from residents, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and other key stakeholders had been positive, and in agreement with the proposed governance changes.

Comments had expressed strong support for the overall aims and objectives of the “minded to” deal and there was particularly strong support for devolution around transport, skills, employment and adult education.

Section 5.11 of the report set out some of the concerns which had been raised during the consultation in relation to features of the minded-to deal, although it was not considered that these represented a fundamental concern in terms of moving ahead with the proposals. However, any concerns that had been put forward, would be taken into account when implementing the proposals and establishing the new Combined Authority.

Cabinet Members were asked to consider the contents of the report including the detail provided at Appendix 1.

Councillor Edgeworth referred to the small number of people in Sunderland who had responded to the consultation and asked if any consideration had been given to holding a referendum on the proposals. He also queried how it could be ensured that Sunderland would receive a fair deal as part of the Mayoral Combined Authority.

The Chief Executive advised that a referendum was not required as part of the statutory test and the outcome would not have been binding. He went on to explain that the consultation had been undertaken with the advice of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure that it would meet the statutory requirements.

The leaders and elected mayors of individual authorities would be a very important part of the governance of North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) and would have a say in the distribution of resources. Authorities would receive the appropriate share of funding over the 30-year period to meet their requirements.

The Chief Executive also confirmed that NEMCA would have scrutiny arrangements which operated in the same way as any local authority.

Councillor Williams understood the nervousness which might exist in relation to devolution but felt it was an opportunity for the region and local councils needed to make it work. She hoped that all elected Members would support the proposals.

Councillor Rowntree highlighted that the deal did not go any way to replacing what had been lost over the last twelve years but there was a lot in the deal which would benefit the region and it was an opportunity that should be grasped.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was: -

2. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the content of the report and the attached consultation report be considered and noted;
- (ii) it be agreed that the consultation that has been undertaken was sufficient for the purposes of the legislation and that the findings set out in the consultation report demonstrate that the statutory criteria (referred to in paragraph 3.5 of the report) have been met;
- (iii) it be agreed that the consultation report be submitted to the Secretary of State so that the Secretary of State can:
 - a. consider whether they are satisfied that the consultation has been sufficient and that the statutory criteria have been met; and
 - b. (if so satisfied) request Parliament to make an order to abolish the existing combined authorities and establish NEMCA
- (iv) it be agreed in principle to consent to the making of the necessary statutory order; and
- (v) it be agreed that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, shall be authorised to take all steps necessary to implement the above proposals, including (but not limited to) finalising the terms of the consultation report which is submitted to the Secretary of State.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chair, it was: -

3. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Signed) C ROWNTREE
In the Chair.

Note: -

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.