

Economic Prosperity Sub Committee

Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Present: Councillor M Wilson (Chair)
Councillors L Bones, T Brady, M Hall, Janet Hunter,
B Pickard, W Samuel and J Walker

Apologies: Councillors H Johnson and G Westwater

14/21 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

15/21 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Trish Brady declared a Non-Registerable Personal Interest in relation to the Regional Recovery Plans because her business had received business support grants during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

16/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 September 2021 be confirmed subject to the inclusion of Councillor Janet Hunter's apologies and signed by the Chair.

17/21 Regional Recovery Plans

The Sub-Committee received a joint presentation from Henry Kippin, Managing Director of the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA), and John Sparkes, the Council's Director of Regeneration and Economic Development, on the region's recovery plans for employment and transport and their impact in North Tyneside.

Henry Kippin described the economic and social circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic which had led to the need for the formulation of regional recovery plans to provide collaborative, proactive support for business, communities and places. He commented on how the situation had now changed and explained how the NTCA had supported recovery in the region.

John Sparkes presented a range of examples of how the NTCA had supported recovery in North Tyneside, including the production of the North Shields Masterplan, attracting inward investment from companies such as Verisure Alarms, investment in quayside infrastructure at the Swan Hunter site and the provision of IT equipment for vulnerable children. Reference was also made to how North Tyneside would benefit from a variety of cross regional programmes to be delivered through collaborative working with the NTCA and neighbouring authorities.

Following the presentation members discussed with John and Henry various aspects of the region's economic recovery plans including:

- a) the likely impact of the investment by the Reuben Brothers in Newcastle city centre on the region's recovery plans for an inclusive economy;
- b) the importance of transport networks to provide access to employment opportunities across the area;
- c) the need for the NTCA to demonstrate that the devolved and collaborative model of delivery could work and the potential for this model to be extended across a wider regional area;
- d) the work of the NTCA to secure unspent apprenticeship levy funding for the training of apprentices in the area and to fund a two-year Apprenticeship Hub pilot to help young people get jobs; and
- e) how the NTCA was focussed on financially supporting rather than directly developing and delivering innovative low carbon, sustainable industries.

The Chair thanked officers for an informative presentation and Henry Kippin undertook to provide the sub-committee with further information and advice if required.

18/21 Good Work Pledge

Leigh Mills, the Head of Inclusive Growth at the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA), presented details of the Good Work Pledge, launched by the Authority in November 2020.

The NTCA had consulted with employers and key stakeholders to identify the key elements of what 'good work' looked like and the Good Work Pledge had evolved, based on five pillars. Each pillar contained criteria used to identify, promote and grow good work practices in businesses and organisations of all sizes and sectors across the region. The pillars were related to:

- a) promoting health and wellbeing;
- b) developing a balanced workforce;
- c) valuing and rewarding your workforce;
- d) effective communications and representation; and
- e) demonstrate a social responsibility.

Organisations had been invited and supported to demonstrate their commitment to good work at either a standard or advanced level by showing that they met, or were actively progressing towards, all of the key criteria in 2 or all 5 pillars respectively. To date 39 organisations had joined the Pledge, representing over 20,000 employees, and a further 22 applications were under consideration. In 2022 the NTCA would seek to accelerate take up of the Pledge, align it with the Better Health at Work Award and target the start-up business community with the aim of helping to shape the development of newly established businesses.

Members asked for further written information in relation to the Pledge and officers undertook to share copies of reports submitted to the NTCA's Cabinet with members of the sub-committee following the meeting.

The sub-committee examined the benefits of the Pledge in comparison with similar national awards such as Investors in People. It was noted that the Pledge created local standards and it would help inform NTCA's investment decisions.

19/21 The State of the Local Economy

The sub-committee was presented with data which provided an indication of the state of the economy in North Tyneside. The data included the numbers of people claiming Universal Credit, the number of employments furloughed, the town centre vacancy rate, numbers of job advertisements and new business start-ups. Some of data was also compared with other regions across England.

The sub-committee considered the apparent anomaly in the numbers of vacancies and people claiming benefits increasing at the same time. Members indicated that they would be interested to explore in more detail an analysis of job vacancies and the action being taken by training agencies and the adult education sector to quickly retrain those out of work with the skills in demand.

With reference to the data on town centre vacancy rates, it was noted that the sub-committee was scheduled to examine in more detail work to preserve and develop town centres. Members asked that as part of that exercise they be presented with:

- a) town centre maps showing the location and nature of vacant properties;
- b) data relating to the numbers of licensing applications and planning applications for change of use; and
- c) a comparison of vacancy rates in high streets and shopping centres such as the Killingworth Centre;
- d) any information or research into the performance of town centres in North Tyneside.

It was **agreed** that (1) the presentation be circulated to members of the sub-committee and members be invited to submit any questions arising from the data to relevant officers; (2) the information set out above be submitted to the sub-committee as part of its exercise to examine the future development of town centres.

20/21 Appointment of the Green Skills Sub Group

The sub-committee considered proposals for the appointment of a task and finish sub-group to consider the Council's approach to adapting to a green industrial revolution and ensuring people have the right skills for the future green jobs.

Following consultation with the Chair of the Sub-Committee and relevant officers it was proposed that the remit of the sub group would be to:

- a) consider the steps required to ensure residential, public, commercial and industrial buildings in the borough have the lowest possible carbon emissions to support the Council's 2030 net zero ambition;
- b) analyse the skills, qualifications and accreditations that will need to be gained by the local workforce so that:
 - i. they are equipped to deliver energy efficient buildings;
 - ii. the need for imported skills is avoided; and
 - iii. the borough benefits from the low carbon economic growth;
- c) identify sources of funding that could be accessed for skills and training from a variety of sources to support the local economy;
- d) make recommendations to the Elected Mayor and Cabinet on how the Council and its partners might stimulate the local training market so that the required skills, qualifications and accreditations can be taught to our residents by North Tyneside based providers.

Members of the sub-committee discussed the merits of including section a) of the remit as set out above. It was suggested that the sub group should take a broader view of green skills and not be limited to the built environment.

All members of the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committees had been invited to express an interest in serving on the sub group as the topic cut the across the remit of each sub-committee. The following members had responded and it was proposed that they be appointed to the sub group:

Councillor Matt Wilson
Councillor Margaret Hall
Councillor Trish Brady
Councillor Bruce Pickard
Councillor Brian Burdis
Councillor Liam Bones
Councillor Maureen Madden

It was **agreed** that (1) the Green Skills Sub Group be appointed comprising the members named above; and
(2) the remit be determined by the sub group at its first meeting to be held on 7 December 2021.