

# **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 20 February 2018 at 12.30 pm.

## **PRESENT**

Councillor P.A. Jackson  
(Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

## **CABINET MEMBERS**

Daley, W.  
Homer, C..  
Jones, V.  
Oliver, N.

Riddle, J.R.  
Sanderson, H.G.H.  
Wearmouth, R.

## **OTHER MEMBERS**

Armstrong, E.  
Cessford, T.  
Dodd, R.  
Flux, B.  
Hill, G.

Hutchinson, I.  
Pidcock, B.  
Reid, J.  
Roughead, G.  
Seymour, C.

## **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Elsdon, A.  
Hadfield, K.

Henry, L.  
Lally, D.

Director of Finance  
Committee Services and Scrutiny  
Manager  
Legal Services Manager  
Chief Executive

## **70. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **Devolution to North of Tyne**

The Authority, together with Newcastle City Council and North Tyneside Councils ("the NT Authorities"), had agreed a "minded to" Devolution Deal with

the Government. To implement the Deal, and establish a new North of Tyne mayoral combined authority, the Councils needed to withdraw from the existing North East Combined Authority (“NECA”).

The report updated Cabinet on the public consultation which the NT Authorities had undertaken in relation to these proposals and sought Cabinet approval to submit the consultation report appended to the report to the Secretary of State (copy attached to the signed minutes). An additional recommendation had been circulated (copy also attached to the signed minutes).

The Leader detailed some points of information and benefits for Northumberland which would come from the deal including:-

- A package of funding and responsibilities currently undertaken in Whitehall would be devolved to the three Councils.
- The consultation results had been very supportive.
- Local decision making would be more relevant and bring more prosperity.
- The investment fund of £20m pa for the next 30 years was calculated to bring 10,000 jobs and £1-2 bn of investment over the next 30 years.
- The initiative was also about education and skills as well as investment and business, and would bring about a major change in how education was delivered to develop better careers and prospects, and therefore better paid jobs.
- This was a chance for people to forge a better future for themselves and he commended the report to Cabinet.

The Chief Executive endorsed the Leader’s comments adding that this initiative was a catalyst for change in areas where improvement was needed and the funding provided would open up real opportunities.

Member comments included:-

- Councillor Oliver was very supportive of the consultation results and the whole process and commented on the extra opportunities available for additional funding beyond the £20 pa, eg for broadband which was very important in those areas where service was poor. The deal gave the Authority a seat at the table to draw in funding it could not otherwise access.
- Councillor Sanderson welcomed the report and was pleased to see so many stakeholders support the initiative, which he felt would give rural business a chance to shine. He paid credit to the Leaders and senior officers in getting the deal to where it was today.
- Councillor Wearmouth welcomed the report and the findings of the consultation and felt this would democratise the Authority as the head would be elected by voters. Borders were often inhibitors to communities and this would blur them by improving access to jobs and the wider resource of the metropolitan area. On the skills issue, the

clear message from business was that it was tough to find people with the necessary skills in the area for the jobs which were being created, and the developments for further education would help change that situation.

- Councillor Riddle also welcomed the report and that politics were being put to one side. In the consultation, he felt that more explanation of the elected mayor position and its powers would have clarified things more.
- Councillor Daley commented that this was real power, unlike the Regional Assembly of the past. Whitehall was devolving real powers to the areas which was to be welcomed, and he was delighted to support the report.

Mr Henry explained the reason for the additional recommendation circulated, which had the effect of treating the issue as an urgent one for the purposes of call in. A call in and associated delay could potentially prejudice the whole process and timeframe set by the Government.

Councillor Reid reiterated his concerns about the initiative, commenting that the consultation results had been far from unanimous and that this would work against Northumberland's interests on transport as it would not have a place on the transport committee. Also, the £20m pa was not all it seemed because there would be five year breaks built in.

The Leader responded that the Authority had fully devolved arrangements for the transport committee and would get a stronger voice in Transport for the North. The five year test was no different to almost any other form of funding arrangement as this was just good governance. The cross party working group had gone into the detail in some depth and he had given a commitment to a full Council meeting on the matter.

Councillor Reid expressed concern regarding the timing of the mayoral election and that it might work against Northumberland in terms of turnout. The Leader advised that the election was timed to coincide with all other mayoral elections in the country, making it more like a national election.

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that:-

- (a) the content of this report and the consultation report attached as an Appendix be noted;
- (b) it be agreed that the NT authorities should submit to the Secretary of State the consultation report and the observations on the consultation report which were set out in paragraphs 9 to 17 of the report;
- (c) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of Council, 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; and

- (d) it be agreed that, for the purposes of call in, any decision taken by Cabinet in respect of this matter is to be treated as urgent on the basis that any delay likely to be caused by any call in process would seriously prejudice the Council and the public's interests in that to comply with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government requirements as to the timetable for the statutory process which may be involved ultimately in this matter, they have requested that the consultation report be submitted by 23rd February 2018.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....