

**Cabinet
(Extraordinary Meeting)**

19 December 2013

Present: N Redfearn (Elected Mayor) (in the Chair),
Councillors CA Burdis, R Glendon, I Grayson, JLL Harrison,
F Lott, CB Pickard and JJ Stirling

CAB150/12/13 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors E N Darke and L Spillard.

CAB151/12/13 Declarations of Interest

Councillor F Lott declared a registerable personal interest in the item below as he received a special responsibility allowance as Vice Chair of the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority

**CAB152/12/13 Creation of a Combined Authority – Consultation Response
(Previous Minute CAB33/06/13) (All Wards)**

(Note: Councillor F Lott withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of this item.)

Cabinet considered a report on the proposed response to the Secretary of State's statutory consultation currently being undertaken by him in relation to the creation of the Combined Authority for the Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear area. The proposed joint response of the LA7 Authorities was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Further to the agreement by Cabinet on 24 June 2013, and endorsement by Council on 27 June 2013 regarding the creation of a Combined Authority, and also agreement by the other local authorities, the Scheme and Governance Review documents had been submitted to the Secretary of State in August 2013, after a period of consultation had been undertaken with regional and local stakeholders, inviting him to consider making an Order that would establish a Combined Authority across the LA7 area. There was support for the creation of a Combined Authority from all stakeholders.

Before deciding whether or not to place an Order before Parliament the Secretary of State was legally obliged to consult on the establishment of a Combined Authority. Such consultation had commenced on 7 November 2013 and ended on 2 January 2014. He was required to consult with all of the LA7 Authorities as well as the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority. He also had discretion to consult with anyone else that he considered appropriate.

In addition, the Secretary of State had decided it was appropriate to consult with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, the Local Authorities that neighboured the Combined Authority area and the Northumberland National Park Authority.

The consultation document and draft Order published by DCLG were attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The consultation document specifically requested the LA7 Authorities "to actively seek through such means as they consider appropriate the views of their residents, local businesses, and the voluntary sector with a view to providing the necessary evidence for

Government to be satisfied about the degree of local support there is for a combined authority.”

The consultation document made specific reference to the referendum that had taken place in November 2004 in relation to the creation of a North East Regional Assembly. Whereas the Secretary of State in the consultation document accepted that there were substantial differences between a Regional Assembly and a Combined Authority, he wished to ensure that there was clear and compelling evidence that the past opposition of electors within the local area to governance changes in that area did not continue to any new proposal for a combined authority. Accordingly, it would be important that this consultation yielded the evidence necessary for Government to reach a conclusion on this issue.

With the need to obtain the views of local residents as well as local businesses and the voluntary sector before 2 January 2014, each of the LA7 Authorities had undertaken consultation in their areas as considered appropriate by them. All of the LA7 Authorities had established an on-line consultation exercise via their websites. This provided full information on what the Combined Authority would mean for them and for the region as a whole and also sought views on the questions therein. The local consultation in each of the LA7 areas had also included face to face discussions with residents and other key stakeholders within business as well as the public and community/voluntary sectors. Full information had been provided to businesses across North Tyneside via the Business Forum and the group of the largest employers in the Borough and they had been invited to take part in the Government’s consultation exercise.

Cabinet considered a supplementary report on the responses that had been received across the LA7 Authority areas in relation to the consultation exercise undertaken by each LA7 Authority.

Over 500 stakeholders (including almost 400 residents) had participated in the local consultation exercise.

With regard to the overall proposal to establish a more coordinated approach across the area for important issues such as transport, skills and inward investment the vast majority of responses were positive with 76% of respondents to the online survey in favour of achieving this through a combined authority. A review of the detailed comments identified key themes centred on efficiency of service delivery, the value of co-ordination across a larger area, the need for a single, co-ordinated and strong voice for the North East and the benefits that such an approach would bring for the area, its people and businesses.

Overall there was strong support for the proposed scope of the Combined Authority. Transport, skills, inward investment and the coordination of strategic funding were seen independently and, more importantly, collectively as key components for facilitating economic growth.

The majority of respondents felt that the geographical area proposed was appropriate in the context of the proposals however a number of respondents raised the question on why the Tees Valley authorities were not included in the proposals.

The consultation process had demonstrated a significant level of local support for the proposal to establish a combined authority in the North East and the comments and

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concerns raised by stakeholders would be noted as proposals were further developed, and on an ongoing basis as the new body was established.

The following decision options were available for consideration by Cabinet:-

- a) Endorse the formal response attached to the report at Appendix 1 and agree to it being forwarded to the Secretary of State; or
- b) Refuse to endorse the response to the Secretary of State attached to the report at Appendix 1 and to refuse to forward the response to the Secretary of State.
- c) Decline to authorise the Chief Executive to submit the consultation response to the Secretary of State.
- d) Amend the response to be forwarded to the Secretary of State.

It was noted that in accordance with the urgent decisions rules set out in the Council's Constitution, the Chair of Council had agreed to the decisions on this matter not being subject to call-in for the following reason:

The consultation response had to be forwarded to the Secretary of State by 2 January 2014 and any delay in the submission would impact on the completeness and perceived strength of the response to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Resolved that (1) the response to the Secretary of State's statutory consultation regarding the creation of a Combined Authority for the Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear area, attached to the report at Appendix 1, be endorsed; (2) the summary of responses from across the Combined Area to the consultation, set out in the supplementary report, be noted; and (3) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Elected Mayor, Head of Law and Governance and Head of Finance and Commercial Services, be authorised to finalise the response at Appendix 1 as appropriate and submit the final response to the Secretary of State by the consultation response deadline of 2 January 2014.

(Reason for decision: The response has been drafted having regard to the consultation responses received from local businesses, the voluntary sector and residents across the LA7 area. The response is to be endorsed by the Cabinets of all of the LA7 Authorities as it is a joint response from the Authorities, albeit with additional responses from individual LA7 Authorities after engaging in their local consultation exercise).

CAB153/12/13 Date and Time of Next Meetings

6.00pm on Monday 13 January 2014 (Ordinary Meeting)

6.00pm on Wednesday 15 January 2014 (Extraordinary Meeting)

4.00pm on Thursday 30 January 2014 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Minutes published on Friday 20 December 2013.

Decisions contained within these Minutes are not subject to call-in and may be implemented immediately.