

**Notes of NEREO Regional Scrutiny Officers/ Health Officer Network meeting  
28 February 2017 at County Hall, Durham**

**Attendance**

Tom Gorman, Chair (Durham)

Stephen Gwilym (Durham), Karen Brown, Nigel Cummings (Sunderland), Angela Frisby (Gateshead), Judy Trainer, Peter Mennear (Stockton), Caroline Breheny (Middlesbrough), Kath Christon (Newcastle), Mike Bird (Northumberland), Sharon Jones (Tees Valley Combined Authority), and Joan Stevens (Hartlepool).

**Apologies**

Shirley Burton, Karen Graves, Linda Todd (Darlington), Ali Pearson (Redcar and Cleveland), Sharon Ranade (North Tyneside) and Paul Baldesera (South Tyneside).

**1. Notes of Previous Scrutiny Officers/Health Officers Network**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 March 2016 were agreed.

**2. Chair and Vice-Chair for NEREO Officer Network and Support Arrangements**

Discussion took place on the current arrangements for the NEREO Officer network and the invitations for nominations to the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Network.

**Agreed** - that Tom Gorman, Durham County Council be appointed Chair of the Network and Joan Stevens, Hartlepool Borough Council be appointed Vice-Chair.

Regarding support arrangements for the Network it was suggested that, in view of the number of regional and sub regional meetings that were being called on issues such as Health and the Combined Authorities the Terms of Reference for the Network be amended to require that it meets on two occasions per year rather than the four originally proposed.

**Agreed** – that the NEREO Scrutiny Officer Network terms of reference be amended to require two meetings per year.

**3. NEREO Member/Officer Scrutiny Network**

The NEREO Member/Officer Network was currently chaired by Cllr Denise Jones, Newcastle City Council, and that Tom Gorman indicated that he would contact Cllr Jones to discuss her future support requirements and the potential dates for future meetings. It was suggested that for the reasons stated above, it would seem appropriate to move the NEREO Member/Officer Network meetings to two per year also.

Tom suggested that the first meeting be held late June/early July 2017 with a second meeting in Late February/early March 2018. He would discuss this with Cllr Jones and feedback to all officers.

**Agreed** – that the Chair be approached to agree to the NEREO Scrutiny Member/Officer network meeting twice a year.

#### **4. Health Scrutiny Issues**

##### **(i) Position of Chair and Vice-Chair for the Regional Health Joint Scrutiny Committee**

Stephen Gwilym referred to the current terms of reference for the North East Regional Joint Health OSC which currently requires a Chair and up to two Vice-Chairs to be appointed on an annual basis. The Terms of Reference also state that the Chair cannot serve for two consecutive 12 month periods. The current Chair, Cllr Ray Martin-Wells has held that position for 2 years because of the absence of nomination for the position from another member authority. The current Vice-Chair, Cllr John Robinson has held the position of Vice Chair for the past year.

Both Councillors were willing to continue in their respective roles should no other expressions of interest/nominations be received. There were no subsequent indications from officers in attendance that their authority would wish to take up either role.

##### **(ii) Scrutiny Arrangements for Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs)**

Stephen Gwilym raised the issue of the potential scrutiny arrangements for the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans published in November 2016. He indicated that there were two STPs which covered County Durham:

- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Durham STP (the Northern STP);
- Durham, Darlington and Teesside, Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby STP (the Southern STP).

Reference was made to the numerous Health Scrutiny Committees currently operating within the North East Region, namely the North East Regional Joint Health OSC (All 12 NE Regional Councils are members); the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (comprising Darlington BC, Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, Redcar and Cleveland BC and Stockton-on-Tees BC) and the Better Health Programme Joint Health OSC (comprising Darlington BC, Durham County Council, Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough BC, North Yorkshire County Council, Redcar and Cleveland BC and Stockton-on-Tees BC).

The Better Health Programme Joint OSC had been set up specifically to look at proposals for that project but, during the course, of its meetings had also received information about the Southern STP and had been advised that the Better Health Programme was an integral element of that Southern STP.

In view of the consideration given to the Southern STP within the Better Health Programme OSC, Councillors in North Durham were becoming increasingly frustrated by the absence of a similar joint scrutiny arrangement for the Northern STP and had been lobbied by residents for this to be pursued. Stephen also referenced an e-mail sent from Caroline Latte from North East Commissioning Support which had asked about this same issue of joint scrutiny for the Northern STP.

Angela Frisby suggested that there was no requirement, under the legislation, for local authorities in the Northern STP area to establish a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, as the STP in its current format does not represent a major service change.

Karen Brown suggested that the scrutiny of the Northern STP could be considered by either the North East Combined Authority OSC or the North East Regional Joint Health OSC. She also referenced the establishment of a statutory Joint Health OSC by South Tyneside Council and Sunderland City Council to examine potential services changes being proposed across South Tyneside NHS FT and Sunderland City Hospitals NHS FT. Stephen Gwilym asked if these changes might impact on County Durham residents as if this was the case, Durham County Council might need to be involved in this arrangement also.

Stephen Gwilym suggested that it might be preferable to establish a joint Health OSC for the Northern STP which could consider any and all potential proposals for a significant variation or substantial change arising from the STP as well as having oversight of the draft STP and subsequent consultation, engagement and communications plans.

Angela Frisby suggested that it would be good to have a further meeting with scrutiny officers from across Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Durham to discuss the potential for establishing a joint Health Scrutiny Committee covering Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Durham for the purpose of scrutinising the STP for that area and any subsequent major service changes arising from the Plan.

For the Southern STP, there was general agreement that the terms of reference for the Better Health Programme Joint OSC could be broadened to incorporate scrutiny of the Southern STP. However, in view of the request made at a recent Tees Valley Joint OSC for the STP to be considered at a future meeting of that Committee, the BHP OSC proposals would have to be discussed with those authorities.

**Agreed that:**

- (i) a further meeting be arranged with scrutiny officers from across Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Durham to discuss the potential for establishing a joint Health Scrutiny Committee covering Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Durham for the purpose of scrutinising the STP for that area and any subsequent major service changes arising from the Plan;
- (ii) officers from local authorities from across the Southern STP footprint agree in principle to the amendment of the Terms of Reference for the Better Health Programme Joint OSC to include scrutiny of the Southern STP subject to the views and feedback from the Tees Valley Joint Health OSC membership.

## **5. Combined Authorities – Scrutiny Updates**

### **North East Combined Authority**

Karen Brown reported upon the North East Combined Authority OSC. She reminded that, whilst NECA had not secured its devolution deal, the Combined Authority OSC continued to hold the CA Executive to account. It has met with a wide range of service providers across the NECA area.

It has undertaken a major piece of review activity looking at transport barriers to employment.

Reference was also made to the Commission for Health and Social Care Integration established by the Combined Authority and its published report which sets out ten recommendations for health and care leaders across the CA area to tackle poor health and poverty.

The NECA OSC was due to meet on 10 March 2017 and will discuss the Combined Authorities governance arrangements. The Committee sought information on the future potential arrangements for NECA and how a more robust scrutiny function would align to future decision-making arrangements. On the basis that new governance arrangements are required for the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members have requested some clarification from the Leadership Board, represented by the Chair of the Board on the potential future arrangements for NECA.

### **Tees Valley Combined Authority**

Sharon Jones, Scrutiny Officer Tees Valley CA, reported that the Tees Valley CA OSC had formally commenced operations in October 2016 and had scheduled meetings on a six-weekly basis. The OSC had agreed to key principles, terms of reference and a proposed work programme.

It was currently expanding its knowledge base across the Tees Valley CA footprint and had held meetings in a number of strategic locations including South Tees Development Corporation.

It would also be examining the implications for the Combined Authority of the recently published Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order, to come into force on 8th May 2017. This would provide members with the opportunity to agree the final Call in procedure for the TVCA OSC.

**Agreed** that the information be noted.

## **6. CLG Commons Select Committee Inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government**

Tom Gorman referred to the recently announced select committee inquiry into local authority scrutiny and the invitations to submit representations against the key questions identified by the select Committee as part of its lines of enquiry. Tom advised that the deadline for submissions was 10 March 2017 and, whilst appreciating that most local authorities in the region would be submitting evidence to the inquiry, suggested that the NEREO Regional Scrutiny Officers group may wish to produce a combined submission.

It was also suggested that once the results of the inquiry are published, this would be a good opportunity to invite representatives from CLG to attend the Regional Member/Officer Scrutiny Network.

Some preliminary areas put forward for consideration in a joint submission included:

- The effectiveness of Scrutiny to call witnesses to give evidence – positive experiences where this was related to the statutory scrutiny functions of health, crime and disorder/community safety and flooding and coastal risk management. Less so for areas such as Schools outside of LA Control, Public Utilities, Housing Providers;
- Resourcing of local government and the increasing pressure and effects of austerity are severely undermining the ability to resource scrutiny;
- How topics for detailed scrutiny review are selected;
- Safeguarding;
- Accountability of Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Tom Gorman suggested that each local authority submit three key issues that they would wish to be included in a joint submission and one area where scrutiny has worked well by 9 March 2017 to enable the submission to be forwarded by the deadline.

**Agreed** that each local authority submit three proposed issues for consideration by the committee and one area where scrutiny has worked well to Tom Gorman for inclusion in a joint NEREO Regional Scrutiny submission to the CLG Inquiry in to local authority scrutiny.

#### **7. AOB – North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee – 2 March 2017**

Joan Stevens reported that the North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee would receive an update on the national congenital heart services for children and adults review. The report recommended the retention of children's and adult's heart services within Newcastle City Hospitals NHS Trust, albeit with some conditions attached. This was excellent news for the region.

The meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.