

MEMBERS BULLETIN

AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORT

Date: 28 November 2019

Report Title: CITY REGION DEAL MONITORING GROUP

Report By: P.D Siggers

1. Background

1.1 This report for the Members Bulletin provides an update for Audit & Scrutiny Committee and other interested Members with an update of the recent meeting of the City Region Deal Monitoring Group. The presence of Audit & Scrutiny Committee members on the City Region Deal follows a limited assurance report considered by Committee on 27 March 2019. The subsequent decision by Committee to monitor the work of the Board through the delivery of the agreed improvement plan which focuses on the improvement of administration arrangements for the management of the deal and its allocated resources.

2. Meeting held on 7 November 2019

2.1 Only three of the ten members of the Group attended, partly due to the EDI committee continuing at the same time.

2.2 Michelle Colqhoun (Scottish Government – Digital Directorate) and Stuart Robertson (HIE) gave a presentation on the Scottish Government's roll out of the superfast broadband programme. In particular, the Group was advised that the preferred partner for the R100 programme had not yet been selected for the Highland Area. BT Openreach has been selected for the other two areas of Scotland. No progress could be made until this was done with a decision expected by the end of 2019.

The following points were raised:

- There was an urgent need to address issues in the peripheral and de-populated areas of the Highlands;
- Small business would benefit significantly from increased connectivity
- The Scottish Government's ambition for full-fibre roll-out across the country by 2021 was welcomed;
- It was essential that THC to bring forward a business case to identify how and where the £20m of UK funding could be utilised;

- It was agreed that such an outline business case should be brought to the next meeting of the Group;
- It was noted that trials of 5G had been started in some areas and that this was something that THC should consider;
- A presentation on the roll-out of City Fibre was to be made to the Inverness Area Committee on 21 November. It was noted that excellent progress had been made with this project;
- It was anticipated that considerable work was required in North West Sutherland, having regard to the requirements of the projected Space Port;
- It was agreed that an updated map of coverage and initiatives across the Highlands for consideration at the next meeting;
- It was agreed that future discussion within the Highland Partnership on the best use of digital services should involve Elected Members.

3. Schedule of UK and Scottish Government Reports

- 3.1 It was noted that all reports to the two bodies had been made within the time limits stipulated.

4. Quarterly Performance Report for 2019/20 (Q2)

- 4.1 Detailed information was provided for the following projects:

- Science Skills Academy STEM D
- Inverness Castle
- Affordable Housing
- Innovative Assisted Living (Fit Houses)
- Longman Junction
- East Link
- West Link
- UHI Life Sciences Innovation Centre
- Land Reclamation
- Northern Innovation Hub
- Joint Digital Action Plan
- Air Access
- Employability and Skills
- WiFi

It was noted that the Digital programme was running behind schedule, partly for the reasons noted in the presentation. This project had been given a “Red” status under the “RAG” scheme.

The UHI Life Sciences Innovation Centre was also given a “Red” status as the build cost had come in significantly higher than anticipated.

Amber status had been applied to the following:

- Land reclamation (delays due to the Longman Junction);
- Employability & Skills (delays partly caused by need to obtain Scottish Government agreement to funding);
- Innovated Assisted Living (Nairn site failed to gain planning permission, sites in

Inverness and Tongue still being explored).

5. Future Programme of Invited Guests

- 5.1 It was agreed that a Representative of Transport Scotland be invited to the next meeting.

Designation: Chair of Audit & Scrutiny

Date: 17.11.19

Author: P.D. Saggars