

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

Second Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE,
NORTH TYNESIDE AND NORTHUMBERLAND
COMBINED AUTHORITY (ADULT EDUCATION
FUNCTIONS) ORDER 2019

Thursday 31 October 2019

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: DAME CHERYL GILLAN

† Donelan, Michelle (<i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education</i>)	† Penrose, John (<i>Weston-super-Mare</i>) (Con)
† Fletcher, Colleen (<i>Coventry North East</i>) (Lab)	Reeves, Ellie (<i>Lewisham West and Penge</i>) (Lab)
† Green, Chris (<i>Bolton West</i>) (Con)	† Robinson, Mary (<i>Cheadle</i>) (Con)
† Harper, Mr Mark (<i>Forest of Dean</i>) (Con)	Streeting, Wes (<i>Ilford North</i>) (Lab)
† Kane, Mike (<i>Wythenshawe and Sale East</i>) (Lab)	† Throup, Maggie (<i>Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury</i>)
Kyle, Peter (<i>Hove</i>) (Lab)	† Timms, Stephen (<i>East Ham</i>) (Lab)
Lammy, Mr David (<i>Tottenham</i>) (Lab)	West, Catherine (<i>Hornsey and Wood Green</i>) (Lab)
† Morris, David (<i>Morecambe and Lunesdale</i>) (Con)	Yohanna Sallberg, <i>Committee Clerk</i>
† Newton, Sarah (<i>Truro and Falmouth</i>) (Con)	
Pawsey, Mark (<i>Rugby</i>) (Con)	† attended the Committee

The following also attended (Standing Order No. 118(2)):

Cartlidge, James (*South Suffolk*) (Con)

Second Delegated Legislation Committee

Thursday 31 October 2019

[DAME CHERYL GILLAN *in the Chair*]

Draft Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2019

11.30 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Michelle Donelan): I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside and Northumberland Combined Authority (Adult Education Functions) Order 2019.

In 2018, a devolution deal was agreed between the Government and this combined authority. We made a commitment fully to devolve the adult education budget, and this order will deliver on that commitment. Six orders are already in force in relation to the combined authorities of Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West of England, West Midlands, Tees Valley and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from the academic year 2019-20.

Across England, the AEB, as part of the adult skills system, is designed to improve productivity, employment and social inclusion. It provides vital support to help adults, including those furthest from learning and the labour market, to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. Since August, approximately 50% of the AEB has been devolved to six combined authorities and delegated to the Mayor of London under separate powers.

Made under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the order enables the transfer to this combined authority of certain adult education functions of the Secretary of State in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, and of the relevant part of the AEB. In particular, the following functions will be exercisable by the combined authority instead of the Secretary of State: section 86, on education and training for persons aged 19 or over; section 87, on learning aims for such persons and provision of facilities; and section 88, on payment of tuition fees for such persons. The transfer does not include the functions in so far as they relate to apprenticeships or those subject to adult detention.

The Department for Education will transfer the relevant part of the AEB to the combined authority to undertake the functions. It will be its responsibility to manage the overall AEB allocation efficiently and effectively, - to ensure that it delivers for its local residents.

From the 2020-21 academic year, the combined authority will be responsible for providing funding for statutory entitlements for eligible learners in maths and English up to and including level 2; first full level 2, for learners aged 19 to 23; first full level 3 qualifications, for learners aged 19 to 23; and the forthcoming digital skills entitlement. The combined authority will be able to shape the adult education provision that is available to its residents and ensure that provision best meets local needs.

I think we all agree that skills are an essential driver of economic growth in a region. Devolution gives the combined authority the opportunity to address the skills challenges it faces and to enhance economic growth in the area. The economy of the combined authority is founded on a strong tradition of manufacturing and engineering excellence. Although there has been a transition to a predominantly service-based economy, manufacturing continues to play an important role both in employment and in defining the ongoing characteristics of communities.

Through the order, the combined authority can deliver a step change as part of its strategic skills plan by offering a second chance to learners aged 19 to 23 to achieve, through high-quality first full level 2 and/or level 3 academic or vocational programmes; offering learners aged 19-plus the chance to achieve English and maths qualifications up to and including level 2; and commissioning providers to deliver a curriculum mix that reflects the changing nature of the local economy and the skills needs in the area, including job vacancy-led programmes.

Without the order, the combined authority would be much more limited in how it could address the challenges for its residents and bring about greater prosperity for the region. With that in mind, I urge all hon. Members present to support this change.

The Chair: It gives me great pleasure to call Mike Kane.

11.35 am

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Thank you, Dame Cheryl. I thank the Minister for setting out the order. I listened carefully to what she said. As the Opposition have said on previous occasions, and as my colleague Lord Watson said in the other place when they debated this order earlier this month, we welcome the order's devolution of powers and funding for adult education. I see three Greater Manchester MPs present, and it was Greater Manchester that blazed a trail in seeking from the Department for Education subsidiarity for these skills, which are at present being put into action across our conurbation at the moment.

Our concerns relate to the cuts to the adult education and wider skills budget, which have placed a limit on how successful we could be. I hope those cuts will be reversed. The Labour party will certainly make that pledge in our manifesto in the next week or so. I very much hope that the order will enhance the provision of adult education in the north-east, and we will not oppose it.

Hon. Members are always brave to put their names on ballot papers, so I wish everybody the best of luck and thank them for their service to this House and country. If they do not come back, I wish them good luck for the future. I take this opportunity to thank House staff and civil servants, who serve us so adequately in this place.

11.36 am

Michelle Donelan: Without wanting to delay the Committee any longer, I echo the support expressed by the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East. I reiterate the Government's commitment to the adult education budget and to ensuring that it can deliver for

people who need to access it. The change we are making today will offer residents of the combined authority a real opportunity to reach their potential, improve their earnings and progress in their jobs. It will allow the skills system to be delivered in a flexible, responsive way, and enable it to sustain a fully flexible economy. With that in mind, I commend the order to the Committee.

The Chair: As this is probably the last Delegated Legislation Committee that I shall chair in this Parliament—I hope I will have the privilege of chairing many more in the forthcoming Parliament, as I, too, offer myself to the electors—I echo the words of the Opposition spokesman in thanking all the Clerks of Committees, who serve us so well on secondary legislation

and in the Public Bill Office. I thank the Doorkeepers, who keep us safe, and the *Hansard* Reporters, who scribble down our words, however incoherent they may be. I also thank the many officials from all the Departments that have supported us and Ministers throughout proceedings. Secondary legislation is not always understood by the great public out there, but it is an important part of our legislature. I wish everybody the best of luck for the election. With great sadness, I wish hon. Members who will not be returning and are standing down at the election all the best for their future careers.

Question put and agreed to.

11.39 am

Committee rose.

