



# Northumberland County Council

## The Communities and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 3 July 2019

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### Public Protection Service Requests 2018/19

Report of the Executive Director of Place: Paul Johnston

Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Resilience: Councillor John Riddle.

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#### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee, for its consideration and comment, an overview of the numbers and types of service requests received by Public Protection in 2018/19.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

Receive and note the content of the report,

#### Link to Corporate Plan

This report is linked to the How, Living, Thriving and Enjoying parts of the Corporate Plan 2018-21 that have the objectives 'We want to be efficient, open and to work for everyone', 'We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for', 'We want to attract more and better jobs' and 'We want you to love where you live'.

#### Key Issues

On the 6 February 2019, the Committee considered a Performance Report presented by the Executive Director of Place and in respect of Metric 47. "Total number of Public Protection Service Requests", the Committee queried whether this measure should be included as a key indicator. However, they agreed that it would be useful to receive a breakdown of the requests made to the Public Protection Service at a future meeting.

As part of the preparation of the Public Protection Service Statement 2019-21, a review has been undertaken of the key performance indicators, including metric 47 and it is proposed that this will be retained for operational management purposes but discontinued as a key indicator of performance.

## Background

1. Public Protection is part of the Housing & Public Protection Service which forms part of the Place Directorate. It is responsible for the delivery of a broad range of statutory and regulatory services, the application of which is subject to the terms of the relevant legislation, which includes in excess of one hundred Acts of Parliament, Regulations and associated guidance.
2. Services are delivered on a County wide basis and take the form of both planned inspection programmes and responsive services, with key stakeholders including; businesses, residents and visitors. In 2018/19 it responded to 30,937 service requests. On reception many go through a risk based triage process. Many service requests are responded to at this initial stage by technical support staff. This is to ensure efficient use is made of the time of professional officers.
3. The functions are delivered through two operational units: the Public Health Protection Unit and the Business Compliance and Public Safety Unit.

### Summary of service resources at 1 April 2019:

| Function                            | Number of FTE posts | Staffing expenditure | Non-staffing expenditure | Income            | Capital Investment |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Public Health Protection            | 47.17               | 1,949,565            | 237,145                  | -189,520          | 0                  |
| Business Compliance & Public Safety | 57.52               | 2,145,965            | 486,375                  | -2,332,230        | 0                  |
| <b>Total for Service</b>            | <b>104.69</b>       | <b>4,095,530</b>     | <b>723,520</b>           | <b>-2,521,750</b> | <b>0</b>           |

4. To manage demand, a central Technical Support team, based within the Business Compliance and Public Safety unit provides a service wide “triage” function, the aim of which is to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources within the service. This is achieved by the team, upon receipt of a request a service, managing the early stages of the process, ie recording details, providing advice, issuing log/diary sheets etc. Post the initial triage process, those complaints that require further investigation are transferred to the relevant individual team, where the specific skills and competences exist to conclude the matter.

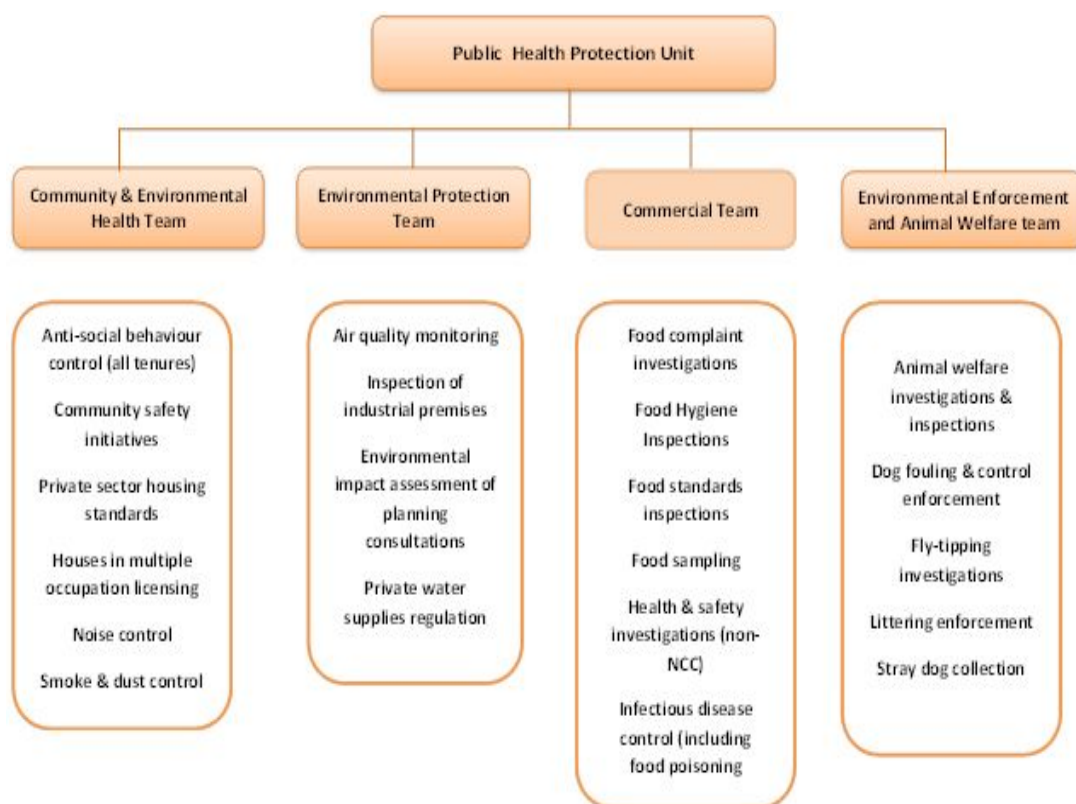
### Public Health Protection Unit - service requests 2018/19.

5. The aim of the Public Health Protection Unit is to provide; environmental health, community safety, environmental enforcement, food safety, health and safety and animal welfare services to protect and improve the environment, public health, safety and well-being of residents, and support business growth.

The Unit's activities are strongly linked to all the corporate priorities but particularly:

- We want to be efficient. open and to work for everyone (How)
- We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for (Living),
- We want you to love where you live (Enjoying).
- We want to attract more and better jobs (Thriving).

6. The Unit comprises four teams that deliver a series of protective and preventive statutory functions for the Council. The Unit seeks to protect and improve public health, safety, and well being through an approach that uses the three 'E's': education, engagement and, where necessary, enforcement.



| Team                                       | FTE  |
|--|--|
| Unit Manager                               | 1  |
| Community Safety & Environmental Health    | 15.5   |
| Environmental Protection                   | 6.5  |
| Commercial Team                            | 10.17  |
| Environmental enforcement & animal welfare | 14 (+ 3 FTE fixed term funded by Town/Parish SLAs) |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>47.17</b>                                       |

The Unit works in partnership with a variety of other services including; Northumbria Police, Public Health England, Environment Agency, Food Standards Agency, Health & Safety Executive, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Fire Safety, Adult & Children Safeguarding, Town and Parish Councils, Development Management, and plays an active role in the Safer Northumberland Partnership.

The team comprises officers with a wide range of competencies including; environmental health officers, community safety officers, environmental enforcement officers, animal welfare officers, and technical officers with a wide range of specialisms.

- The Unit responded to 13,877 service requests in 2018/19 from residents and businesses. It also carried out over a thousand proactive visits and inspections to protect and improve food hygiene, food standards, environmental quality and standards, and water quality in private water supplies.

The Unit investigates many different types of public health & safety issues including anti-social behaviour, noise, air & land pollution, fly tipping, littering, poor housing standards, dog fouling and we take hundreds of stray dogs a year to a place of safety.

- The table below shows a breakdown of the service requests received by the Unit in 2018/19 and illustrates the number and variety that officers within the Unit had respond to during the year.

| Category   | Sub-category  | Number of service requests |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Environmental Health - Environmental Protection</b> | Noise Control   | 1522                       |
|  | Dust, smoke & odour                                       | 333                        |
|  | Water supplies (private & public)                         | 106                        |
|  | Planning consultations - environmental impact assessments | 1276                       |
|  | Other environmental requests                              | 53                         |
|  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>3290</b>                |
| <b>Environmental Health - Housing</b>                  | Housing standards   | 436                        |
|  | Houses in Multiple Occupation                             | 12                         |
|  | Filthy & verminous premises.                              | 26                         |
|  | Defective drainage  | 77                         |

|  |   |             |
|--|---|-------------|
|  | Nuisance from adjacent premises   | 214         |
|  | Other housing issues  | 134         |
|  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>899</b>  |
|  |   |             |
| <b>Environmental Health - Food Hygiene, Safety &amp; Standards</b> | Food hygiene & safety complaints  | 377         |
|  | Food Hygiene Rating System enquiries  | 88          |
|  | Infectious disease outbreaks  | 69          |
|  | Food business registration enquiries (new businesses)                           | 724         |
|  | Business / general public food safety/standards advice                          | 284         |
|  | Produced in Northumberland  | 20          |
|  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>1562</b> |
|  |   |             |
| <b>Environmental health - health &amp; safety at work</b>          | Premises complaints   | 117         |
|  | Other enquiries   | 13          |
|  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>130</b>  |
|  |   |             |
| <b>Community Safety</b>  | ASB Cat 1 (hate crime, domestic abuse, drugs related, assault)                  | 343         |
|  | ASB Cat 2 (vehicle nuisance, alcohol related, rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour) | 494         |
|  | Other community safety  | 41          |
|  | <b>Total</b>  | <b>878</b>  |
|  |   |             |
| <b>Environmental Enforcement</b>                                   | Fly tipping   | 1471        |
|  | Waste accumulations on  | 659         |

|   |  |               |
|---|--|---------------|
|   | private property   |               |
|   | Other complaints (includes buildings open to access, overgrown or derelict land) | 540           |
|   | Graffiti & flyposting  | 46            |
|   | Abandoned vehicles   | 562           |
|   | <b>Total</b>   | <b>3236</b>   |
|   |  |               |
| <b>Animal welfare &amp; dog control</b> | Stray dogs   | 758           |
|   | Dog fouling  | 1488          |
|   | Animal welfare & cruelty   | 390           |
|   | Micro-chipping   | 144           |
|   | Green Dog Walkers Scheme   | 1102          |
|   | <b>Total</b>   | <b>3882</b>   |
|   | <b>Public Health Protection Unit Total</b>                                       | <b>13,877</b> |

### **Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit**

9. The aim of the Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit is to provide Building Control, Licensing, Pest Control and Trading Standards Services by responding to requests for advice, guidance and services from businesses and residents, taking proportionate action when breaches of legislation are uncovered.

The Unit's activities are strongly linked to all the corporate priorities but particularly:

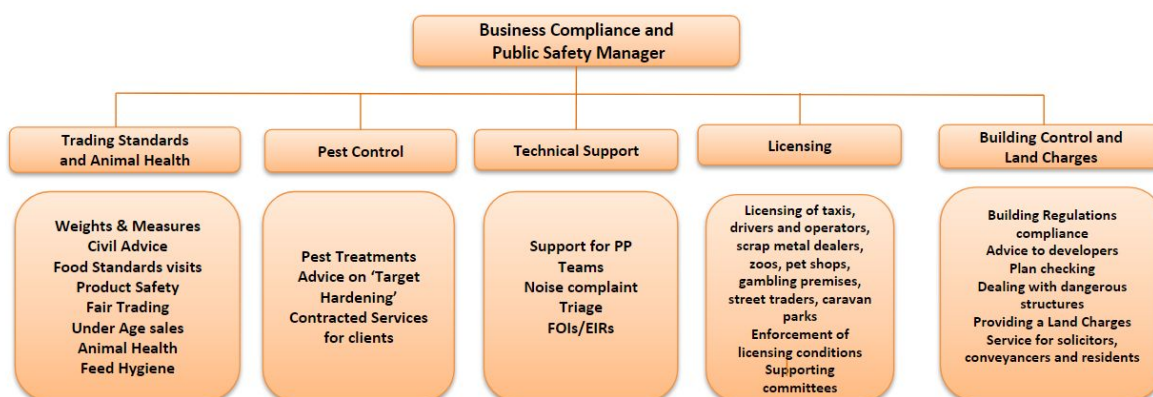
- We want to be efficient. open and to work for everyone (How)
- We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for (Living),
- We want you to love where you live (Enjoying).
- We want to attract more and better jobs (Thriving).

10. The Unit comprises five teams that deliver a series of protective and preventive statutory functions for the Council. The Unit seeks to protect and improve the safety and well being of residents; to support reputable businesses and take proportionate action against those who breach legislation; to support developers in complying with safety and environmental standards for new buildings and to maintain standards in the care of farm animals and the feed that is provided for them.

The Unit works in partnership with a variety of other services including; Northumbria Police, NCC Public Health, HMRC, Food Standards Agency, Fire Safety, Adult &

Children Safeguarding, Local Authority Building Control, other regional local authorities, National Trading Standards, Development Management, and plays an active role in the Safer Northumberland Partnership.

The team comprises officers with a wide range of competencies including building control surveyors, licensing officers, pest control officers, trading standards officers, animal health inspectors, and technical support officers who support colleagues across Public Protection.



| Team                              | FTE          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Unit Manager                      | 1            |
| Trading Standards & Animal Health | 14.73        |
| Pest Control                      | 4            |
| Technical Support                 | 8.47         |
| Licensing                         | 11.81        |
| Building control & land charges   | 17.51        |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>57.52</b> |

11. The Unit responded to 16,989 service requests in 2018/19 from residents and businesses. It also carried out over a thousand proactive visits and inspections to protect and improve food standards and labelling, the safety of consumer products, the safety of taxis and drivers, the fitness for purpose of zoos and animal boarding premises, the safety of farm animals and feed and associated records and the safety of building materials and building practices, environmental quality and standards. The Unit investigates many different issues including allergens in food, adult safeguarding in relation to taxi drivers, the safety of licensed premises, different types of infestations by rodents or insects, mis-described and dangerous vehicles, dangerous structures, pricing of goods in shops, online sales of counterfeit items and underage sales of alcohol, tobacco and knives.

12. The table below shows a breakdown of the service requests received by the Unit in 2018/19 and illustrates the number and variety of matters that the officers within the Unit responded to during the year.

| <b>Category</b>                            | <b>Sub-category</b>  | <b>Number of service requests</b> |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Trading Standards</b>                   | Business Advice  | 765                               |
|  | Food Labelling Advice  | 17                                |
|  | Feed Hygiene   | 64                                |
|  | Explosives Licensing   | 22                                |
|  | <b>Total</b>   | <b>868</b>                        |
|  | Trading Standards also dealt with 2405 complaints from residents about businesses they had dealt with. |                                   |
|  |  |                                   |
| <b>Animal Health</b>                       | Animal Health  | 437                               |
|  | <b>Total</b>   | <b>437</b>                        |
|  |  |                                   |
| <b>Pest Control</b>                        | Residential Requests, including revisits   | 3302                              |
|  | NCC Housing Service inc revisits   | 1457                              |
|  | NCC Properties   | 312                               |
|  | Commercial   | 111                               |
|  | Other (inspection, complaints and contract)  | 236                               |
|  | <b>Total</b>   | <b>5414</b>                       |
|  |  |                                   |
| <b>Building Control &amp; Land Charges</b> | Full Building Regulations Applications   | 929                               |
|  | Building Notices   | 595                               |
|  | Regularisations  | 53                                |
|  | Initial Notices  | 129                               |



|                          |   |               |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|
|                          | Partner Applications  | 12            |
|                          | Disabled Applications                                       | 11            |
|                          | Street Naming and Numbering                                 | 333           |
|                          | Land Charges Applications                                   | 2464          |
|                          | <b>Total</b>  | <b>4526</b>   |
|                          |   |               |
| <b>Licensing</b>         | Taxi Vehicles   | 875           |
|                          | Taxi Drivers  | 1321          |
|                          | Animal Licensing  | 236           |
|                          | Caravan Site Licensing                                      | 14            |
|                          | Gambling Act  | 396           |
|                          | Collections Street/House to House                           | 264           |
|                          | Licensing Act   | 1913          |
|                          | Scrap Metal   | 11            |
|                          | Street Trading  | 67            |
|                          | Licensing Other   | 220           |
|                          | <b>Licensing Total</b>                                      | <b>5317</b>   |
|                          |   |               |
| <b>Technical Support</b> | Miscellaneous (Incl. General Enquiries, consultations, etc. | 61            |
|                          | Safety Advisory Group Notifications                         | 385           |
|                          | FOI/EIR Requests  | 52            |
|                          | <b>Total</b>  | <b>498</b>    |
|                          |   |               |
|                          | <b>Business Compliance &amp; Public Safety Unit Total</b>   | <b>17,060</b> |

**Trend in number of Public Protection Service Requests.**

13. A trend analysis of the service requests KPI shows that service request levels have been relatively steady with only small percentage fluctuations.

## **The development of Public Protection service delivery in the context of budget savings.**

14. The service was established following Local Government reorganisation in April 2009, bringing together the regulatory functions of the former district council and the County Council Trading Standards service.

In the years that have followed, the service has undergone restructure on several occasions and has produced significant budget efficiencies, becoming very lean and efficient in its approach to service delivery, a priority of which has been protecting and supporting front line service provision.

15. The current staffing establishment of Public Protection is 104.69 FTE, with a net revenue budget of £2,297,300.

16. The service has successfully introduced lean systems of work to ensure a good, continuing service. The Service continues to perform well against its service performance measures and when benchmarked against other neighbouring authorities it compares favourably. For example:

- The last Food Service Plan benchmarked favourably against neighbouring authorities.
- A “Which” Magazine assessment using FSA data to assess all 500+ LAs on food safety protection positioned NCC in the top quartile.
- When benchmarked on dog control enforcement (based on 2017/18 data) we are top of the seven North East authorities in terms of the numbers of Fixed Penalty Notices.
- The majority of key service performance measures for the Public Protection service were achieved in 2018/19
- Annual customer service satisfaction surveys show more than 90% of customers (business & residential) consider the service they received either good or very good.

17. As well as developing an efficient delivery model Public Protection has also sought to create resilience, with staff being multi-skilled to work across a range of services and managers that are experienced regulators themselves. This ensures the necessary high level of professional review of decision making that is essential to ensure the service is fair and proportionate but also protective of the Council against potential legal challenge and reputational risk.

## Implications

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Policy</b>  | None  |
| <b>Finance and value for money</b>   | There are no additional resource requirements arising from this report. The resources highlighted in the report are contained within the Council's overall approved budget. |
| <b>Legal</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Procurement</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Human Resources</b>   | None - details of the current agreed establishment are as set out in the report.  |
| <b>Property</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Equalities</b><br>(Impact Assessment attached)<br>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/><br>X <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Protection services are available to and for the benefit of all of Northumberland's residents and businesses.  |
| <b>Risk Assessment</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Customer Consideration</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Carbon reduction</b>  | N/A   |
| <b>Wards</b>   | ALL   |

**Background papers:**  
**NONE**

**Report sign off**

**Authors must ensure that relevant officers and members have agreed the content of the report:**

|  | Full name of officer |
|--|----------------------|
| Monitoring Officer/Legal                     | LH                   |
| Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer | AM                   |
| Relevant Executive Director                  | Paul Johnston        |
| Chief Executive                              |                      |
| Portfolio Holder(s)                          | John Riddle          |

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