

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Northumberland County Council** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 21 February 2018 at 3.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor R.R. Dodd
(in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Armstrong, E.
Bawn, D.
Beynon, J.
Bridgett, S.
Campbell, D.
Cartie, E.
Castle, G.
Cessford, T.
Clark, T.
Crosby, B.
Dale, P.A.M.
Daley, W.
Davey, J.G.
Davey, S.
Dickinson, S.
Dunbar, C.
Dunn, L.
Flux, B.
Gallacher, B.
Gibson, R.
Gobin, J.J.
Grimshaw, L.
Hepple, A.
Hill, G.
Homer, C.
Horncastle, C.W.
Hutchinson, J.I.
Jackson, P.A.
Jones, V.
Kennedy, D.
Lang, J.
Lawrie, R.M.G.

Ledger, D.
Moore, R.
Murray, A.H.
Nisbet, K.
Oliver, N.
Parry, K.
Pattison, W.
Pidcock, B.
Purvis, M.A.
Quinn, K.
Reid, J.
Renner-Thompson, G.
Richards, M.E.
Rickerby, L.J.
Riddle, J.R.
Robinson, M.
Roughead, G.
Sanderson, H.G.H.
Seymour, C.
Sharp, A.
Simpson, E.
Stewart, G.
Stow, K.
Swinburn, M.
Thorne, T.N.
Towns, D.
Wallace, R.
Watson, J.G.
Wearmouth, R.W.
Webb, G.
Wilson, T.S.

OFFICERS

Angus, K.	Director of Human Resources
Elsdon, A.	Director of Finance
Hadfield, K.	Committee Services and Scrutiny Manager
Henry, L.	Legal Services Manager
Lally, D.	Chief Executive
McCarty, M.	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Roll, J.	Democratic Services Manager

Around 25 members of the press and public were in attendance.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dungworth, Foster and Swithenbank.

72. MINUTES

With regard to Minute No.64(4), Health and Wellbeing OSC Minutes, Councillor Bridgett referred to the letter to the Secretary of State advising that this had been released several weeks ago. It had also been the subject of FOI requests which had been declined. He advised that if the letter was not made public by close of play on Friday, then he would release it himself as it was not confidential. Mr Henry responded that he would review the matter outside of the meeting and respond accordingly in due course.

With regard to the same minute, Councillor Dale advised that she had not received any details of ambulance response times and requested that they be sent out. Councillor Dodd agreed that this would be done.

With regard to Minute No. 65 (Motion No.1), Councillor Dickinson expressed disappointment that the live stream of the last Council meeting had only appeared in part on the Council's website and that some of the vital parts, including the voting, had been omitted resulting in a distorted view of proceedings. Councillor Dodd responded that this was a learning curve and improvements were being made each time. Councillor Oliver reported that there hadn't been an edit of the footage, the stream had in fact broken down.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on Wednesday 2 January 2018, be confirmed as a true record, signed by the Business Chair and sealed with the Common Seal of the Council.

73. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor Sharp declared a personal interest in any discussion on education in the west of the county as the governor of two first schools.

Councillor Dodd advised that he was a foundation trust governor on the NE Ambulance Trust

74. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Business Chair reported that international women's day would take place on 8 March 2018 at the Fuse Media Centre, Prudhoe.

Councillor Sanderson reported that an award had been made to Kevin Thompson, a front line operative based in Hexham, in recognition of his efforts in saving a member of the public from the River Tyne at Christmas. Members recognised Mr Thompson's efforts with a round of applause.

75. MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question 1 from Councillor G. Hill to the Leader

In light of recent developments within Local Government - in this authority, our neighbouring authorities, across the country and especially within the Town/Parish Council sector, what assurances can be given that NCC's current policies and procedures (and application of such) are fit for purpose and suitably robust to ensure a fair hearing and adequate protection of complainants and whistleblowers who try to hold public bodies to account?

The Leader advised that the Authority took this issue very seriously. The Council had, in only the past few months, reviewed the Whistleblowing Policy and the process under which such concerns could be reported and had introduced a new service "Safecall" which was independent and external to the Council in order to provide even greater assurances as to how such matters were treated and handled. In addition, all such whistleblowing concerns raised through the various routes that were available, were recorded on a centrally held log which recorded the nature of the whistleblowing complaint, action taken and the conclusion/outcome so that the Council could be assured that all such complaints were investigated and closed down accordingly.

As for public bodies external to the Council, the role which the authority had in respect of complaints and whistleblowing specifically against such bodies was, perhaps understandably, very limited

In respect of parish and town councils, Parliament had noted in recent years that there were few remedies available to constituents who may wish to complain about the decisions, procedures, or the conduct of members or staff of local councils outside of the four-yearly elections to those councils. The

Government had taken the view that these local councils were accountable to their electorate principally through the ballot box. A Parliamentary Question on the issue of complaints was answered as follows:

“Parish councils can put in place their own mechanisms for handling complaints, having regard to a model code of practice produced by the National Association of Local Councils. In addition every elector has the right to raise any matter affecting parish business at the annual parish meeting, and a group of electors has the power to call for a poll on any issue which affects the parish. Also, where electors consider there has been a possible waste or inefficiency or think that their council has spent money unlawfully, they can refer a complaint to their local district auditor.”

Though each local council had a relationship with the district or unitary council in whose area it lay – for instance, to collect the precept – the district or unitary council had no power of control or direction over the parish council. It was not possible, for example, to have a local council's decision reversed at a higher level unless it could be demonstrated that the decision was unlawful as, like other public authorities, parish councils were subject to action in the courts and judicial review.

The Local Government Ombudsman did not cover local councils in England, except as regards functions which they were undertaking on behalf of principal councils.

Each local council had to appoint an auditor. Allegations of financial irregularities in a local council could be reported to the auditor, who must then decide whether to investigate them.

The Localism Act 2011 abolished the Standards Board for England, which investigated allegations of councillor misconduct or failure to declare interests. Under the 2011 Act, local authorities had to establish their own standards regime, with at least one ‘independent person’ which the authority must consult when investigating an allegation of misconduct. Local councils too must establish a standards regime by adopting a members code of conduct, although it is for the principal authority to assess and, where appropriate, investigate allegations against parish and town councillors. Complaints about the behaviour of employees of local councils should be addressed to the chair of the relevant local authority.

Councillor Hill asked if the Leader was aware that the Authority, along with many others, had placed too great a reliance on prescriptive, uniform codes in dealing with whistleblowers, when the emphasis should have been on the Nolan Principles. The use of vexatious complaints policies had been too great and not enough questions had been asked in the past. Given how broad and complex the topic was and how the Authority should be seen as a pioneer, she asked if the Leader would give a commitment to look further into these issues. The Leader advised that these issues were already taken very seriously, with good legal advice available on the subject matter, and an active Standards Committee.

Question 2 from Councillor G. Hill to the Leader

When is the Full Council going to have a proper debate and opportunity for meaningful input in to decisions relating to North of Tyne Devolution?

The Leader advised that a special meeting of Council would be arranged to take place in March to consider issues pertaining to North of Tyne devolution and, in particular the Authority's consent to the Order, which would create the new Combined Authority. The timetable also had to fit in with the other Councils and the parliamentary process, and members would be informed when it was set.

Councillor Hill welcomed this and asked whether the Council would have the opportunity to vote against it. The Leader responded that proper legal advice would be provided at the time, but the decision to devolve powers was one for the Government, so it was not a constitutional issue for Northumberland as nothing was being given up. This was the crux of the decision making process, which would be fully explained at the time.

77. CABINET MINUTES

- (1) Tuesday 19 December 2017**
- (2) Tuesday, 9 January 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of Cabinet, as detailed above, be received and the following resolution be approved:-

- (i) Minute No. 58 of the 9 January 2018** meeting relating to the new capital proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group.

78. COMMITTEE MINUTES

- (1) Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC**

These were presented by Councillor Bawn.

In relation to Minute No. 44 (Cabinet Reports Previously Considered) Councillor Grimshaw referred to the Chair's comments regarding the need to maintain the confidentiality of confidential reports, and advised that the information in question had been released to the press before Labour members of the Committee (who had been accused of leaking it, had received the report with their agenda papers. She wished to have this recorded in the minutes. The Chair responded that he was not aware of any leak to the press, but he was aware that after the committee meeting there had been information on the official Labour blog regarding the location of the shared service, which was sensitive confidential information.

Councillor Grimshaw responded that the information had been held by another Authority and this had been passed on. The comment that this had been a leak from Labour members were offensive and she sought an apology.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be received.

(2) Family and Children's Services OSC

These were presented by Councillor Renner Thompson.

With regard to Minute No. 76(c) (Schools Annual Report and Educational Outcomes) Councillor Dale wished to congratulate Children's Services and the work which had been undertaken in the last five years following the Ofsted report. She thanked everyone who had been involved in bringing about the tremendous improvements in education in the Authority.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Family and Children's Services OSC be received.

(3) Communities and Place OSC

These were presented by Councillor Reid.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Communities and Place OSC be received.

(4) Health and Wellbeing OSC

These were presented by Councillor Rickerby.

With regard to Minute No. 41 (Dental Services in Coquetdale), Councillor Dickinson thanked the Working Group for taking into account the points he had submitted about this issue, which he had also raised at Health and Wellbeing Board. He stressed that it was crucial for communities like Hadston to have access to dental provision given the limited public transport and the related issues which stemmed from poor dental hygiene. He welcomed that consideration was being given to the reintroduction of some kind of provision there. The health centre had received over £1m for a refurbishment including the dental area, which he felt was worth noting.

Councillor Bridgett echoed these comments and asked that the Scrutiny Committee kept pressure on NHS England about this as there had been a lack of understanding by NHS England regarding the areas that were covered in terms of how they proposed to engage with residents and what was being considered for potential options in the future. He had been waiting for several weeks to hear any further information from NHS England.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing OSC be received.

(5) Health and Wellbeing Board

These were presented by Councillor Dodd.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board be received.

(6) Audit Committee

These were presented by Councillor Hill who drew members' attention to Minute No. 29(4) (Arch Borrowing) and the outstanding officer work done on this. Some very complex information had been presented in a way which could be understood by the Committee and she thanked the officers concerned. Also, in respect of Minute No.34 (Strategic Review of Active Northumberland:Options), she informed members that the Chair of Active Northumberland had been invited to attend the next Audit Committee and added that there was also an outstanding invitation to the Leader of the Opposition.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit Committee be received.

(7) Standards Committee

With regard to Minute No.4(1) Berwick upon Tweed Town Council - Hoey Ainscough Review Progress Report), Councillor Roughead declared a personal interest as the Mayor of Berwick and a member of Berwick TC, and advised that he had attended the meeting in a personal capacity and given evidence of what he had witnessed. The report seemed to suggest that the bad behaviour, poor conduct etc had been the cause of the problem, whereas in fact they had been symptoms of poor governance, lack of transparency and unlawful decision making. He did appreciate the work which the Standards Committee had done and welcomed the fact the Berwick TC was no longer the focus of the Council's Standards Committee, but felt it would have been better if the Standards Committee had sent a delegation to the TC to witness for themselves the significant improvements.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Standards Committee be received.

79. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(1) Corporate Plan 2018-21

The report sought Council approval of the Corporate Plan 2017-21 as the basis for informing the preparation of the forthcoming Medium Term Financial Plan.

The report was presented by Councillor Oliver who referred to the key points:-

- This was the overarching directional document for the Administration and set the tone of what was hoped to be achieved in the next three

and a half years. It set the vision for the medium term financial plan and service plans so was very important in setting out the corporate strategy. This was a resident focussed document and worded in a way which was appropriate to them, rather than the kind of language which officers might use. However, it was also set in very challenging context so the Administration had to be bold and ambitious.

- Two substantive comments had been raised following presentation to Local Area Councils which had been taken on board. There was a need for greater reference to meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged, especially in the education sector. There were massive disparities between the best and the worst areas, and the Administration was happy to include that amendment. The second substantive comment was that there should be an equitable reference to the Tyneside and Edinburgh City regions as travel to work areas for Northumberland. This point was acknowledged because the County was geographically very large with many different types of local area within it. However, the Administration was determined to give a fair deal to the whole of the County.

Councillor J.G. Davey supported the Corporate Plan as presented but did not agree with the delivery of the Corporate Plan at the recent Local Area Councils. Information had been given out with no evidence to support it or reasoning provided, and the consultation had been badly organised and executed.

Councillor Dale welcomed zero based budgeting but asked that the Administration look at the statutory services as they were the most important things where the Council had an input, but did not budget for, such as hospital and fire services. She felt there need to be more acknowledgement of the diversity of the County and more reference to partnership working in the Plan.

Councillor Oliver responded that the Administration had produced a zero based budget which included all of the statutory services and which were budgeted for. He acknowledged the point about diversity, which was a key theme of the Corporate Plan. Another key theme was collaboration, which was very similar in meaning to partnership.

Councillor Pidcock was disappointed that there was no reference to equality in the Plan and no levelling of the poorest with the richest in the ideas it contained. Councillor Oliver replied that it was a key theme of the Plan to address some of the disparities which existed, and this ran through the whole Plan.

RESOLVED that the final Corporate Plan 2018-21 (as included with the agenda attached) be endorsed as the basis for informing the Medium Term Financial Plan.

(2) Strategic Review of Active Northumberland

Council was asked to consider the final summary report.

The Chief Executive provided some information about the background to the review, which had been jointly commissioned by herself and the Board of Active Northumberland, and the key findings.

The review had been undertaken independently and its findings were a reflection of a period in time. The Audit Committee had also considered the review and would continue to monitor arrangements, and the Council continued to ensure accountability through the client function.

The evidence from the review showed that there was poor leadership, staff were unclear about the management arrangements and the cover for responsibilities in key areas; there was a lack of evidence of rational based decision making eg on the pricing strategy and the outsourcing of the marketing arrangements; there were significant concerns around weak governance, particularly on health and safety, which had been corrected very quickly, and on performance monitoring so expected outcomes were unclear; there was little evidence of forward strategic planning and no coherent business plan or operating framework; there was some ineffective due diligence and leadership processes and a lack of clarity about service transfers between the Council and Active Northumberland; there was a lack of appropriate organisational information and financial information, and a lack of assistance to Active Northumberland in managing their budgets, a lack of appropriate professional advice in some key areas and little opportunity for customer feedback.

One of her key concerns was that, for some areas of the service which ran children's services, there had been a lack of oversight of safeguarding processes and procedures, and there had been an intention to put in place some poor arrangements eg no lifeguard in place at the pool and the introduction of cameras, or DBS checking.

There had been some elements of progress, for example, in operational management the Council were looking to ensure that the organisation focussed on leisure services going forward, and officers were working on the gaps to ensure that the organisation was supported.

Councillor Homer felt it was important to say to all the staff involved that their patience had been appreciated whilst the results of the review had come into the public domain. There were a number of points she wanted to highlight as portfolio holder:-

- The lack of operating agreement and lack of direction from the County Council.
- No clear direction of what the Trust was to provide in return for the management fee.
- Withholding of budgetary information and increases to financial commitments without the knowledge of the management team and Board.

- Services added to the portfolio without an explanation or strategy, any change in the management fee or any business case.
- Limited opportunities to demonstrate robust governance based on continual changes of direction from the Council.
- Examples of ad-hoc and knee jerk decision making eg the 2016 pricing restructure.

This had resulted in a dysfunctional organisation with little ability or opportunity to achieve the required budget savings. The impact on staff morale had been significant, with 95% of staff saying that they did not want to work for, nor could recommend working for, the organisation.

Councillor Homer referred to the bailout of Active Northumberland in 2016 and the claim at the time that Active would produce a credible business plan, a budget, and a recovery strategy with a view to saving £2m in the next financial year and £1.5m the following year. This had not happened, and a £2m black hole in the finances had had to be met by the current Administration.

Since May 2017, a number of things had been happening:-

- The Board had been meeting on at least a monthly basis, three replacement members had been appointed and new members would be appointed in the next few weeks with skills in marketing and finance. An independent chair was also to be appointed.
- The County Council would ensure it managed the client relationship constructively going forward.
- An offer of appointment had been made for a permanent chief executive following a recruitment drive and it was hoped that he would be in place by late Spring. This was a hugely positive step.
- The Board would be meeting with the Council on Friday to discuss the budget and the management fee, and the operating principles for 2018-19 and SLAs would be agreed.
- From 1 April, Active Northumberland would be solely responsible for leisure provision at NCC facilities across the County.
- Previous directives such as unmanned gyms and swimming pools without lifeguards had ceased, and a lot of work had been done to implement policies and procedures across the organisation on finance, health and safety, risk appraisal etc.
- The interim accountable officer met regularly with finance officers in between Board meetings when finance statements were presented to Board members.
- Job evaluation was now nearing completion and terms and conditions were being harmonised. Staff matters could now be raised and managed appropriately by the head of service, and independent staff survey results were expected shortly. Safecall had also been introduced.
- On safeguarding, interim arrangements were in place with an accountable person in areas where there was a nursery and a programme of staff DBS checks had begun.
- A review of facilities had begun with a business case being produced for each centre, and decisions on facilities would be based on financial

facts and health and wellbeing community outcomes. A business case would also need to support bids to the Capital Programme.

- The contact centre had been taken in house and resources put into marketing and communications resulting in a significant number of new members at minimal cost. The Board would be considering a paper on member development options and would be looking to benchmark its performance indicators against the wider leisure industry.

The next steps for Active Northumberland were:-

- A commitment to continue the positive steps already undertaken
- Regular updates to the Audit Committee
- Regular staff communications and an aim to complete the job evaluation and harmonisation process as soon as possible.

Councillor Homer then paid testimony to the commitment of all of the staff involved across all of the service areas who had shown great resilience in often challenging circumstances. She looked forward to reporting on more positive outcomes as the year progressed.

A number of member comments were then made:-

- Councillor Bridgett commented that his previous fears that the price restructure would result in users going elsewhere had been proved correct as many of his residents had gone to private facilities. He sought assurance that the list of facilities detailed on pg 154 did not represent a list of possible closures. If this was something the Administration was considering, he suggested that the possibility of having the separate library and leisure facilities in Rothbury co-located on one site be investigated, which would reduce the Council's revenue commitment. He urged the Administration to consider all of the options before decisions were made as he felt many of the County's smaller towns were missing out. Councillor Homer responded that the Administration had given a commitment as part of the budget to address those issues through the management fee and operating agreement. The Board had conducted a facilities review and were meeting the following week to look at the different areas within the portfolio. She could not give any categorical response to the question but added that this was not just about finances, but also about community outcomes and health and wellbeing outcomes, and the business cases had to stack up. Each individual case would be looked at properly within the business framework, and people talked to who would be directly affected.
- Councillor Dale referred back to the initial creation of Leisure Tynedale and the clear legal advice given at the time that the Trust had to be arms length, and there was an arms length decision which needed to be made here. She felt that a strategic approach should be taken and that the priority should be for the Council to decide how much it would financially support the services it wanted Active Northumberland to deliver, and to consider how much the council tax payer could afford to contribute.

- Councillor J.G. Davey welcomed the report but referred to Councillor Homer's response to Councillor Bridgett which suggested that the Board were making the decisions on behalf of the Council on whether facilities stayed open or not. The County Council was the client and therefore could not make any decision on the report's recommendations, which would be made by the Board at their meeting. He felt the report should be deferred until after that meeting.
- The Leader firstly paid tribute to Councillor Homer for her work on the review and the content of the report. He condemned the last Administration's mismanagement of the leisure service over the last four years as evidenced in the most damning report any member was likely to see on a leisure service. £2m had had to be found to balance Active Northumberland's budget, otherwise staff would not have been paid and leisure centres would have closed, which was shameful. He himself had raised concerns about governance as there had been only one Labour Cabinet member on the Board. This was a business with a turnover of £12m pa and it had no business plan. There was clear governance failure as responsibility lay with the previous audit and auditors, and the Council had been given seriously poor information which had led to the current crisis. However, the service would be properly managed from now on.
- Councillor J.G. Davey responded that Active Northumberland had run under separate borough and district council contracts until 2015 when it had been brought together into one organisation, which had been a massive task. A new Board had been created with members recommended by others, and he felt a good job had been done in the circumstances. He felt that the review was written in a way which would resolve the issues which needed addressing, adding that any administration would have had the same issues to deal with, but he was concerned about the prospect of loss of services.
- Councillor Dale referred to the new Board which had been set up and then had left within a very short time. Neither Cabinet nor Scrutiny had looked at the situation yet the Audit Committee were getting regular reports though it was not within their terms of reference to direct any action. She suggested that members stopped looking for someone to blame and move forward.
- Councillor Bawn expressed his disgust at the damning report and the refusal by the previous Administration to take any responsibility for it. The report was independent and contained direct criticism of the County Council as the client for failing to set the parameters of Active Northumberland's role and for not acting properly as a client. He agreed with previous comments about working together, but that required accountability and honesty and only then could everyone move forward.
- Councillor J.G. Davey advised that his Group had been in support of the report and did want to work together on this to get it right, but a query had been raised about the future of a number of facilities. He asked Councillor Homer to report the Board's view to the next meeting of Council. Councillor Homer explained that the position was the Council identified what they expected Active Northumberland to provide within the operating agreement, and then Active would advise what they could provide within those budgetary terms. She was happy to bring

something back to the next Council meeting if required, but she reminded members how difficult it had been to get quality information to the Arts, Leisure and Culture OSC in the past so proper scrutiny could be done. Often reports were delivered on the day without giving members the opportunity to properly prepare and ask appropriate questions. This would not be the way going forward.

Councillor Dodd then reminded members that the report was for members' information and Active Northumberland Board would need to make decisions about the report's recommendations .

RESOLVED that the report and its recommendations be noted.

80. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Medium Term Financial Plan 2018-22 and Budget 2018-19 and Council Tax 2018-19

The report provided the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018-22 and Budget for 2018-19, following the Government's Autumn budget of 22 November 2017 and the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 19 December 2017.

The report also provided Council members with the financial information to enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2018-19.

The Leader introduced the report and referred to some of the factual inaccuracies circulating since consultation had begun on the budget and to the constructive input from Local Area Councils and Scrutiny. Feedback from these meetings had been used to update some proposals. A different approach to budget setting had been taken. The proposals were based on a prudent and considered approach, proposals that could actually be delivered. The budget position which had been inherited from the previous administration had been far from ideal, with last year's budget proposals actually being unachievable. If it had continued with this budget, the Administration would have had to find £65m, plus inflationary increases, plus cost pressures.

The £65m was made up of £30m savings target from the last administration, a £16m package of unspecified savings in last year's budget, a £20m capital repayment on loans to Arch, budget caps for adults and children's services, then the issues of Arch and Active Northumberland. Last year's budget had not been delivered and the accounts, for the first time ever, had been set as qualified by the external auditors. The plan to move headquarters to Ashington had been stopped immediately, as well as a proposal to lend £75m to a developer for a housing scheme which did not have planning permission. The loans granted to Arch for the purchase of Manor Walks had been exposed by the Audit Committee as a massive risk with an annual cost to the Authority of around £600,000. He referred to the £1.4m write off of public money in the revaluation of Ashington Football Club, and revealed that the cost per seat in the new stand was the second highest in the whole country. Regarding Active Northumberland, Labour's plans had been to reduce the Council's payments to

zero, which would have resulted in the closure of the leisure centres and the loss of many jobs.

His Administration had taken a zero based budgeting approach and established where the real needs lay in serving the most vulnerable in the County. This prudent approach would help stabilise core services by putting resources where they were most needed.

The need to save £65m over the next four years would be really challenging. The Administration had ambitious plans for the future but it had to get its own accounts in order first. Savings of £8.2m were proposed for the coming year rising to £65m over the term of the MTFP. Modest savings in the first year would allow time to work through a series of service reviews to deliver achievable and measured savings. One change he was very pleased to introduce was the scrapping of the post 16 transport charge which would maintain fair access to education and equal treatment for young people wherever they lived.

Tough decisions had had to be made, such as increasing the council tax, but this would protect vital daily services and the Administration was still very ambitious for the future of the County. An ambitious capital programme would invest £588m in infrastructure like schools, transport and highway improvements and homes. The North of Tyne deal would generate £1.1 billion for the local economy, create 10,000 jobs and lever in more than £2.1 billion of private sector investment. Also, the Borderlands deal would bring new life into some of the most neglected areas of North and West Northumberland. Over the coming years, he pledged to continue investing in Northumberland's future to ensure a fair deal which worked for everyone. He sought Council's approval to proceed with the budget plans outlined, which would deliver equitable savings and protection of vital services.

In presenting the budget, Councillor Oliver wanted to dispel some myths circulating on social media. Since 1 January 2018, there had been 17 inaccuracies on the Northumberland County Council Labour facebook page and blog, and in the context of debating the budget with factual information, he felt it was important to address some of these inaccuracies:-

- The cost of heating County Hall was not £3m pa, but £225,692 in total for gas and electricity.
- A decision by the Conservatives to forego an Arch dividend of between £4.8m and £25m was not true. There was no dividend available to spend.
- The cost of the severance package of the former Chief Executive had been massively over exaggerated. He could not say what it was because it was confidential, but it was disappointing that members who knew what the correct figures were, then reported highly exaggerated figures in the press which were just not true, and not the right context for a serious debate on the Council's budget. Also, comments about the current Chief Executive's salary being for five days a week when all Labour members knew it was for two and a half days a week were very irresponsible.

- Claims that 200 jobs being lost from the County as a result of the changes to Transactional Services were totally inaccurate as jobs were actually moving **into** the County.
- The claim that a clean bill of health had been given to the Council's accounts when the correct and opposite picture had been spelled out in the Audit Committee's minutes.

These were only some of the issues he had identified. He urged members to have a proper debate on the budget and advised that further inaccuracies on the blog would be corrected publicly at the following Council meeting. A budget had been presented which he believed was prudent and demonstrated the intention to improve the lives of residents. He outlined some of the key themes and aims and urged members to support it.

Councillor Bridgett commented that the state of the roads was the single biggest issue for his residents. The majority of the funding which had been committed had come from Government and he hoped going forward that the Administration would lobby as much as possible for a fair deal for the County. A recent LGA report showed that some Councils were receiving £1m per mile in funding, but rural councils were getting £21,000 per mile. The backlog of repairs in the County was quoted at £250m-£270m and the funding from the Government would not address the current problems, let alone the backlog. More investment was desperately needed to do long term, effective works.

Post 16 transport was also a major issue in his area, especially where there were two children. As the Government was now requiring young people to stay in education until they were 18, they should fund that transport, and if they wouldn't, then the Council should assist.

Councillor J.G. Davey moved, duly seconded, an amendment represented by the alternative budget as set out in Year two of last year's medium term financial plan and budget. The current Administration had been managing the first year of that since May and had got itself into a black hole with the decisions it had made. He referred to the Leader's claims last May that the previous Chief Executive had left the Council in a strong and stable position, and the information from the Auditors that the base budget was correct. £35m had immediately been lost between May and the current time on a budget that Labour had not worked on. He suggested that if the Administration had set an emergency budget on taking control as Labour had done, then they would have only had to find £30m for the next four years, which were the cuts from the Conservative Government.

He referred to some of the detail in the Administration's budget. Labour's budget had been about area based need; the Conservative budget was not and had the effect of splitting the Council. The budget proposed was a fully fixed one with no flexibility between departments. Labour had drawn on this flexibility during times of emergency, and a lack of flexibility would cause problems in the future. He acknowledged that the Administration had given some thought to the need for flexibility, as he noted that £700,000 had been set aside for spy in the cab equipment for the DLO. This was because the DLO would be run down during the course of this budget. £240m had also

been dropped from the capital programme, the budget made substantial cuts from many different areas, jobs would be lost and not enough funding had been set aside for planning appeals. The whole budget was based on supposition, such as assumed funding from the Better Care Fund. The Authority was partners with the CCG which was £45m in debt and wasn't mentioned in the MTFP - was the Council responsible for any of this debt?

In terms of Ashington Football Club, Wansbeck DC had provided funding for it, the change in formula was non material as reported by the external auditor so the Administration's claims had been misleading, and the only comment he had seen regarding the severance package of the former chief executive had come from the Hexham Courant.

In response, Councillor Oliver advised that the current Administration had not had time to create a £65m black hole as suggested. However, how this had been achieved had been set out on the Labour blog. With reference to the £30m for scrapping Labour's business plan for savings, it had been mentioned on the blog that the auditor had advised that there was significant risk attached to the phasing of savings of £30m in the final two years of the MTFP. This had been presented as the current Administration's risk. However, this could only refer to Labour's MTFP, as the current Administration had not written one by the time it was presented to the Audit Committee on 22 November 2017.

He agreed that having a contingency was important for major things, but he did not agree with the kind of contingency which involved an annual £150m delegation to the Leader and Chief Executive. As regards the Ashington Football Club valuation not being material, in his view, £1.5m was material.

Following some comment from members, and at the invitation of the Chair, Mr Henry provided some advice to members about the validity of taking last year's budget as an amendment. Whilst there was no set procedure for dealing with amendments to the budget, the clear expectation was that the proposals should be advertised. He advised members that it was for them to decide whether they had had sufficient information on the amendment to be able to vote on it. The budget had to be set by 11 March 2018, so members might take a pragmatic view in those circumstances.

Before moving to the vote, Councillor Oliver suggested why members should not support the alternative budget represented by the amendment including £450m of unregulated spending over three years, unrealised savings of £4.8m, a constant Children's Services overspend of £3m, minimum revenue protection provision for Arch loans of £6.7m that hadn't been included and recurrent pressures in leisure and tourism of £1.2m.

A named vote was required on budgetary matters and the votes were cast on the amendment as follows:-

FOR: 21 as follows:-

Campbell, D.	Nisbet, K.
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Cartie, E.	Parry, K.
Clark, T.S.	Pidcock, B.
Davey, J.G.	Purvis, M.
Davey, S.	Reid, J.
Dunn, L.	Richards, M.E.
Gallacher, B.	Rickerby, L.J.
Gobin, J.J.	Simpson, E.
Grimshaw, L.	Webb, G.
Lang, J.A.	Wilson, T.S.
Ledger, D.	

AGAINST: 36 as follows:-

Armstrong, E.	Lawrie, R.M.G.
Bawn, D.L.	Moore, R.
Beynon, J.A.	Murray, A.H.
Castle, G.	Oliver, N.
Cessford, T.	Pattison, W.
Dale, P.A.M.	Quinn, K.R.
Daley, W.	Renner-Thompson, G.
Dodd, R.R.	Riddle, J.R.
Dunbar, C.	Roughead, G.A.
Flux, B.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Gibson, R.	Seymour, C.
Hill, G.	Stewart, G.
Homer, C.	Stow, K.
Horncastle, C.W.	Swinburn, M.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Thorne, T.N.
Jackson, P.A.	Towns, D.

Jones, V.	Watson, J.G.
Kennedy, D.	Wearmouth, R.W.

ABSTENTIONS: 4 as follows:-

Bridgett, S.	Robinson, M.
Crosby, B.	Wallace, R.

The Business Chair therefore declared the amendment lost.

A number of comments were then made, including:-

- Councillor Castle supported the Administration's budget proposals because they added up, and he queried whether a report in The Journal that the Council had lost 17% of its spending power between 2010-11 and 2017-18 was correct. Councillor Oliver replied that he did not have the exact figures but there had been a change in income from 2012-13 of around ££732m to £790m in the current year. The sources of funding changed every year but the total income to the County Council had actually increased.
- Councillor Reid welcomed that the Leader and members had attended the Local Area Councils on the budget and that the budget figures appeared to add up, but he was disappointed that much time had been spent looking backwards and arguing. He felt that many of the savings identified as a result of reviews would not be achievable and would result in reserves having to be used with a subsequent impact on the following financial year. He raised questions about the deliverability of a number of proposals including a £1m saving on the review of individual risk management, management of vacancies £1.7m, and reduction in pension fund deficit lump sum payments £900,000. He queried how £100,000 of funding for technical services was being allowed for but S106 funding couldn't be identified. He also queried whether the Council was seeking major road network funding from the Government. Council tax was going to rise by nearly 5% with 2% of that for social care, and he objected to council tax payers of Northumberland having to pay to solve a national problem.
- Councillor Daley expressed his disappointment that the Labour Group seemed to be unaware of rural poverty. He added that he was proud to support a budget which included so much capital investment in schools. He also made reference to the number of additional school places which had been created under the new Administration.
- Councillor Pidcock felt that last year's and this year's budget proposals were very similar as they had both been written by officers. He referred to the special relationship between members and officers, and asked whether the Administration's criticisms of the way things had been run were directed at officers not members, because members and officers had worked very closely as a team. He also advised that he had asked someone at Arch about whether

the development in Bedlington was likely to be profitable. The reply that he had been given was that profit was not the motive of Arch. The Arch development in Bedlington was about services to the people and about enhancing the quality of life. These were socialist principles which would continue to drive the Labour agenda.

- Councillor Dale reiterated that she had never been part of a coalition with the Labour Group as had been mentioned. She referred to the concerns she had regarding social care and looked after children pressures, cuts to the fire service, cuts to neighbourhood services, the cost of planning appeals, the use of reserves, the risks to the Council from business rates and the cost of providing services.
- Councillor Hill commented that a budget was needed and there had been two on the table, one of which had been rejected. What was clear was the gulf in the financial management competence between the current and previous administrations. Regarding Berwick, she sought assurances that there would be a fair deal for everyone in terms of capital investment.
- Councillor Robinson commented that the Council Tax went up every year and services provided went down. Residents wanted to know where the money was going. The Leader replied that the main pressure on the budget stemmed from servicing additional debt, which had increased from £500m to £780m in the last four years, and increased demand for essential services.

In response to some of the other points made, the Leader advised that:-

- The pensions contribution was a recommendation from the pension Fund Panel.
- S106 funding could not be included in the budget until legally agreed.
- The Administration was committed to dualling the whole of the A1, had lobbied for improvements to the A69, was looking at the possibility of a Blyth relief road and was working hard to reintroduce rail passenger services between Ashington and Newcastle.
- Additional funding had been put into the winter services budget, supplementing the extra funding from the Government, which was being dedicated to longer lasting repairs.
- Regarding Berwick and the north area, he referenced the Borderlands deal, adding that the Administration would work with Berwick councillors in the Berwick Regeneration Commission on a programme to make a real difference to Berwick and the surrounding area.

He commended the budget to members and the people of Northumberland.

On the recommendations being put to the vote, the votes were cast as follows:-

FOR: 37 as follows:-

Armstrong, E.	Murray, A.H.
Bawn, D.L.	Oliver, N.

Beynon, J.A.	Pattinson, W.
Castle, G.	Quinn, K.R.
Cessford, T.	Renner-Thompson, G.
Crosby, B.	Riddle, J.R
Daley, W.	Robinson, M.
Dodd, R.R.	Roughead, G.A.
Dunbar, C.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Flux, B.	Seymour, C.
Gibson, R.	Stewart, G.
Hill, G.	Stow, K.
Homer, C.	Swinburn, M.
Horncastle, C.W.	Thorne, T.N.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Towns, D.
Jackson, P.A.	Wallace, R.
Jones, V.	Watson, J.G.
Lawrie, R.M.G.	Wearmouth, R.W.
Moore, R.	

AGAINST: 19 as follows:-

Campbell, D.	D. Ledger
Cartie, E.	Nisbet, K.
Clark, T.S.	Parry, K.
Davey, J.G.	Pidcock, B.
Davey, S.	Purvis, M.
Dunn, L.	Richards, M.E.
Gallacher, B.	Simpson. E.
Gobin, J.J.	Webb, G.
Grimshaw, L.	Wilson, T.S.

Lang, J.A.	
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ABSTENTIONS: 5 as follows:-

Bridgett, S.	Reid, J.
Dale, P.A.M.	Rickerby, L.J.
Kennedy, D.	

It was therefore **RESOLVED:-**

(A) Medium Term Financial Plan 2018-22 and Budget 2018-19

- (1) to approve the Medium Term Financial Plan covering the period 2018-22 detailed within Appendix 1 and the revenue budget for 2018-19; including the requirement to deliver budget balancing targets equating to £8.2 million in 2018-19 and £65.1 million over the period 2018 to 2022, against last year's spending plans;
- (2) to note the Government's assessment of Core Spending Power for the Council assumes an annual inflationary uplift for Council Tax; that the additional Adult Social Care Council Tax precept is charged annually; and, that the Council grows its Council Tax Base year on Year;
- (3) to note the estimated retained Business Rates and the Top-Up grant funding received by the Council over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (4) to note the estimated receipt of Rural Services Delivery grant funding of £1.9 million for 2018-19 and £7.5 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (5) to note the estimated receipt of the New Homes Bonus of £5.8 million for 2018-19 and the indicative allocation of £24.1 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (6) to note the total estimated receipt of Improved Better Care Funding of £8.7 million in 2018-19 and £10.6 million in 2019-20;
- (7) to approve a 2.99 per cent increase in Council Tax for 2018-19, noting that this is in line with the Government's assumptions regarding the Council's Core Spending Power. Note that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018-22 includes a 1.99 per cent annual increase in Council Tax over the remaining period of the plan, and, that a prudent estimate of

annual Tax Base growth has been included;

- (8) to note the use of protected Collection Fund balances of £4.5 million in 2018-19 to support the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (9) to approve a 2 per cent increase in Council Tax in 2018-19 for use on Adult Social Care services; raising an additional £3.3 million in 2018-19. To note that the Medium Term Financial Plan assumes an increase of 1 per cent in 2019-20 which would raise an addition £1.8 million for use on Adult Social Care services;
- (10) to note the schedule of Service Specific grants of £132.8 million contained within Appendix 2;
- (11) to approve the schedule of recurrent and non-recurrent pressures that have been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, detailed in Appendices 3 and 4;
- (12) to approve the Inflation Funding Schedule (£4.3 million) detailed in Appendix 5;
- (13) to approve the schedule of Growth and Commitments detailed in Appendix 6;
- (14) to approve the identified 2018-19 and 2019-20 budget balancing measures contained in Appendix 7 of £8.2 million 2018-19, and £11.3 million 2019-20 and note that £65.1 million of spending reductions are required over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan. In addition note that the reductions required to balance the budget and Medium Term Financial Plan would have been higher, at £16.0 million 2018-19 and £72.9 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan had the recurrent contingency of £7.8 million not been utilised in lieu of additional savings in 2018-19;
- (15) to note the 2018-19 budget by service area detailed in Appendix 9;
- (16) to note the Summary of the Reserves and Provisions contained within Appendix 10;
- (17) to approve the use of £3.2 million of the Strategic Management Reserve in 2018-19 to support the budget. Also, note the proposed use of £8.1 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (18) to note the overall reduction in the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant of £10.1 million in 2018-19. This is a result of six schools converting to academies during 2017-18;
- (19) to agree the Housing Revenue Account 2018-19 budget as detailed within Appendix 11, which will reduce the estimated balance on the

HRA reserve from £23.6 million at 31 March 2017, to £11.1 million at 31 March 2023. This will fund an investment reserve over the same period which will allow £17.0 million of new investment in council housing;

- (20) to note that 2018-19 is the third year of a four year compulsory 1 per cent reduction for Council tenant rents and that the budget detailed in Appendix 11 assumes that rents will rise by CPI plus 1 per cent from April 2020 in line with the recently announced Government guidance;
- (21) to note the indicative 30 year Housing Revenue Account business plan as detailed within Appendix 11. A further report to be presented to Cabinet, (it is anticipated in April 2018), setting out proposals for a Housing Investment Programme covering the period to 2022-23 to utilise the investment reserve totalling £17.0 million over this period;
- (22) to note the debt cap of £109.5 million and the additional amount that could be borrowed to support capital investment is £4.3 million;
- (23) to agree to refinance a maturing Housing Revenue Account loan of £10.0 million during 2018-19;
- (24) to approve the Capital Strategy 2018-19 to 2020-21 contained within Appendix 12;
- (25) to approve the revised Capital Programme as detailed within Appendix 13;
- (26) to approve the delegation of the detail of the final Local Transport Programme and any subsequent in year amendments to the Service Director – Local Services and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services;
- (27) to agree delegation to Cabinet to approve individual projects which propose to utilise the flexibilities of capital receipts;
- (28) to approve the Prudential Indicators based on the proposed Capital Programme detailed within Appendix 14;
- (29) to approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy detailed in Appendix 15;
- (30) to approve the proposed Treasury Management Strategy detailed in Appendix 16;
- (31) to approve the Revenues and Benefits Service Policies contained within Appendix 17 and note the proposed changes to the Rates Relief Policy, Corporate Debt Recovery Policy and the Council Tax Discount

Policy;

- (32) to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2018-19 at Appendix 18;
- (33) to approve a delegation to amend the budget 2018-19 and Medium Term Financial Plan in light of any changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services; and

(B) Council Tax 2018-19

(1) County Council resolve:

- (a) that the Council Tax Requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2018-19 (excluding parish precepts) is £167,726,122;
- (b) that the following amounts be calculated for 2018-19 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - i) Being the aggregate amount of gross expenditure which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31 A (2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils: £711,020,253.
 - ii) Being the aggregate of the gross income which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31 A (3) of the Act: £534,732,022.
 - iii) Being the amount by which the aggregate at (b) i) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) ii) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31 A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act) (including parish precepts): £176,288,231.
 - iv) Being the amount at (b) iii) above (Item R), all divided by Item T, above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax at Band D for the year (including parish precepts): £1,717.06.
 - v) Being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (total all parish precepts): £8,565,163.
 - vi) Being the amount at (b) iv) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (b) v) above by Item T, above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax at Band D for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates: £1,633.63
- (c) that the Council Tax for 2018-19, excluding the Police precept, will be increased by 4.9% (including the Adult Social Care Precept of 2%),

equating to a charge per Band D household of £1,633.63 (excluding special expenses). For other bands different proportions will apply. For example, Band A properties will be charged 6/9 (two thirds) of a Band D property and Band H properties will be charged 18/9 (double) of a Band D property.

The relevant valuation bands are as follows:

Valuation	Northumberland County	Adult Social	Total
Band	Council	Care Precept	
	£ : p	£ : p	£ : p
A	1,019.59	69.50	1,089.09
B	1,189.52	81.08	1,270.60
C	1,359.45	92.67	1,452.12
D	1,529.38	104.25	1,633.63
E	1,869.24	127.42	1,996.66
F	2,209.10	150.58	2,359.68
G	2,548.97	173.75	2,722.72
H	3,058.76	208.50	3,267.26

- (d) under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2018-19 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZC(1) of the Act.

(i.e. the proposed Council Tax increase for 2018-19 means that the Council does not need to hold a referendum on its proposed Council Tax. The regulations set out in Section 52ZC of the Act requires all billing authorities (council and precept authorities (i.e. Fire and Police authorities)) to hold a referendum on their proposed level of basic Council Tax each year if they exceed government guidelines which are set out annually. For 2018-19 the guideline increase is 6% (including the Adult Social Care Precept).

As the Council is proposing a Council Tax increase of 4.9% (including Adult Social Care and special expenses) for 2018-19 then the above regulations have no impact for 2018-19.

(2) County Council approve:

- (a) that the matters listed in section 3 (c) of the report are identified as special expenses and that all other matters which might otherwise be considered to be special expenses under the prevailing legislation are deemed to be general expenses.

- (b) that the Council Tax Leaflet continues be made available via the Council's website, rather than enclosed with Council Tax bills, and that the final document be delegated to and finalised by the Section 151 Officer.

(3) County Council note:

- (a) that the Police and Crime Commissioner has agreed the recommended level of precept of £11,327,437 for 2018-19. This represents an increase of 12.2%, equating to an additional £12.00 on a Band D property; the resulting valuation bands will be as follows:

Valuation Band	Northumbria Police Authority
	£: p
A	73.55
B	85.81
C	98.07
D	110.33
E	134.85
F	159.37
G	183.88
H	220.66

- (b) the Aggregate of Council Tax requirements, including that of Northumbria Police Authority, the Council's own requirement and that for Adult Social Care purposes (excluding Parish Precepts), are as follows:

Valuation Band	Northumberland County Council	Adult Social Care Precept	Northumbria Police Authority	Total
	£ : p	£ : p	£ : p	£ : p
A	1,019.59	69.50	73.55	1,162.64
B	1,189.52	81.08	85.81	1,356.41
C	1,359.45	92.67	98.07	1,550.19
D	1,529.38 1,743.96	104.25	110.33	
E	1,869.24	127.42	134.85	2,131.51
F	2,209.10	150.58	159.37	2,519.05

G	2,548.97	173.75	183.88	2,906.60
H	3,058.76	208.50	220.66	3,487.92

- (c) the total amount of parish precepts requested is £8,562,109 and is detailed in Appendix 1. This represents an increase of £393,695 when compared to 2017-18.

Changes in total Council Tax range from an increase of 4.6% in Hartleyburn to an increase of 10.4% in Kirkwhelpington

- (d) special expenses of £3,054 are applied to North Sunderland Parish only in relation to play area inspection and maintenance. This has remained the same as 2017-18.

4. County Council note:

- (a) the basic Council Tax valuation bands are shown in paragraph 3 (b).
- (b) the detailed Council Tax calculations are set out in Appendices 2 and 3. Analysis of the Council Tax by parish is provided at Appendix 2 excluding Northumbria Police precept. Appendix 3 shows the total Council Tax charge by parish (including the Council only element and Adult Social Care Precept, Northumbria Police Precept, Special Expenses and Parish Precepts).

81. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 24 JANUARY 2018

Policing and Crime Act 2017 - Request from Police & Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

Council, at its meeting on 1 November 2017, referred a request from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria to be co-opted as a member of the authority for the purposes stated in the report under statutory amendments brought into effect last year by the provisions of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, to the Communities and Place OSC for consideration. The Committee considered that request at their meeting on 24 January 2018.

Councillor Reid urged all members to support the report's recommendations. He did not feel that the approach of the PCC was a good way to cultivate a fair and equitable relationship with the Police, and feared it was an attempt by the Government to find things for the PCC to do. He was concerned about the possible development of a civilian uniformed service of the police, fire service and ambulance service which would be a disaster.

Councillor J.G. Davey disagreed with this, commenting that the Tyne and Wear authorities had invited the PCC to attend their Fire Authority meetings, which were also attended by the Chief Constable and they were working

together to reduce the precept to Councils. He added that the reason given in the report for refusal, that the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable collude, was wrong, and that it was wrong to exclude the PCC, who was very influential in the level of precept being levied.

Councillor Riddle commented that Northumberland's fire service was the smallest fire service in England and was inextricably linked to the Council's other services such as public protection. There was already a strategic collaboration board which he sat on, along with the Chief Fire Officer, the Chief of Tyne and Wear and the Chief Constable. The PCC had demonstrated a lack of understanding of how a retained service operated, so he did not believe she would add any value.

On the recommendations being put to the vote there voted **FOR: 40; AGAINST: 15; ABSTENTIONS: 1.**

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to endorse the recommendation from Communities and Place OSC detailed below:-

*to Council, in respect of the Police and Crime Commissioner ("the Commissioner") for Northumbria's request to attend, speak and vote at meetings of Council and all decision making bodies that Northumberland County Council have in relation to Fire and Rescue Service issues, including the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS) Local Pension Board, and the Disputes Panel - Fire and Rescue Service, in relation to business which relates to the functions of the Council as a fire and rescue authority should **be refused** for the reasons set out in (i) - (ii) below:*

- (i) the Council have not received from the Commissioner a satisfactory explanation as to how she believes her ability to attend, speak and vote at meetings of the Council will achieve the objectives of the provisions of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 in relation to greater collaborative working between the emergency services and the enhancement of the democratic accountability of Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and, that, in any event*
- (ii) the Council considers that greater collaborative working between Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service can be achieved by more effective and meaningful strategic and operational partnership working between the two services without the need for the Commissioner's formal involvement as a co-opted member of the authority which would add little or nothing, it is felt, to the democratic accountability of either service"*

82. ANNUAL TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2018-19

Council was asked to approve a timetable of meetings for 2017-18. A slightly revised version was circulated. Councillor Dodd drew members' attention to the main changes.

RESOLVED that the revised timetable for 2018-19, as circulated, be agreed.

83. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

- (a) That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
14	<p>3 - Information relating to any individual, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)</p> <p>The public interest in seeking this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure would adversely affect the Authority's ability to conduct its affairs.</p>

84. REPORT OF THE LEADER

Strategic Management Changes and Changes to the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer for the Council

The report had been circulated to members. The Chief Executive drew members' attention to the main points, and the Leader advised that the portfolios would remain as they currently were and not be realigned to the structure.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the proposed changes to the Service Director role under the Place portfolio be agreed and the proposed portfolios of responsibility outlined in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service and the Executive Director of HR/OD to facilitate any required changes to the

expansion and merging of senior management/Head of Service roles at Band 17 to ensure key roles are recruited going forward;

- (c) the proposed arrangements to give express authority to the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service to appoint to the roles of the Returning Officer (RO) and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) be agreed. The latter appointment is to include the authority to appoint a deputy to the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) from the existing management structure; and
- (d) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service and the Executive Director of HR/OD to facilitate the proposed changes to the Service Director roles within the Place Directorate in conjunction with the Staff and Appointments Committee (if required).

The Common Seal of the County Council
of Northumberland was hereunto affixed
in the presence of:-

.....
Chair of the County Council

.....
Duly Authorised Officer