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Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Nichola Turnbull

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Date: 26 January 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a virtual meeting of the **COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OSC** to be held on **WEDNESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2021 at 2.00 PM.**

Please note this will be a “virtual meeting” that will be streamed live on our Youtube channel at [youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV](https://www.youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daljit Lally".

Daljit Lally
Chief Executive

To Communities and Place OSC members as follows:-

J Reid (Chair), Gallacher (Vice-Chair), C Dunbar, L Dunn, R Gibson, C Horncastle, K Stow, E Cartie, E Armstrong and A Hepple

Any member of the press or public may view the proceedings of this virtual meeting live on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV>. Members of the press and public may tweet, blog etc during the live broadcast as they would be able to during a regular Committee meeting. However, the only participants in the virtual meeting will be the Councillors concerned and the officers advising the Committee.



Daljit Lally, Chief Executive
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AGENDA

PART I

It is expected that the matters included in this part of the agenda will be dealt with in public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required to disclose any personal interest (which includes any disclosable pecuniary interest) they may have in any of the items included on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 4 July 2012, and are reminded that if they have any personal interests of a prejudicial nature (as defined under paragraph 17 of the Code Conduct) they must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room. NB Any member needing clarification must contact Legal Services, on 01670 623324. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

3. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

(Pages 1 - 2)

To note the latest Forward Plan of key decisions. Any further changes made to the Forward Plan will be reported to the Committee. (Schedule enclosed as **Appendix A**).

OVERVIEW

THE CABINET MEMBER REQUESTED TO ATTEND FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IS COUNCILLOR RIDDLE, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES.

4.1 Environmental enforcement and public engagement activities in 2020

(Pages 3 - 10)

The report informs the Committee of environmental enforcement and associated public engagement activities during 2020, including headline statistics. (Report enclosed as **Appendix B**).

4.2 The Council's Response to Anti-Social Behaviour in 2020

(Pages 11 - 20)

The report informs the Committee of the approaches adopted by the Council and partners in response to reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) during 2020. (Report enclosed as **Appendix C**).

THE CABINET MEMBER REQUESTED TO ATTEND FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IS COUNCILLOR OLIVER, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES.

4.3 Customer Corporate Complaints

(Pages 21 - 30)

The report provides an overview of Customer Complaints for the last financial year, 1.4.2019 to 31.3.2020. Additionally, the report will cover some of the findings of the review of the Council's current Corporate Complaints reporting mechanisms and provide reassurance around future improvement plans. (Report enclosed as **Appendix D**).

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

- 5.1** Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report (Pages 31 - 38)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee operates within a work programme which is agreed at the start of the Council year. The programme is reviewed at each meeting so that it can be adjusted to reflect the wishes of the Committee and take account of any changes to the latest Forward Plan (which outlines decisions to be taken by the Cabinet). The Committee is asked to review and note its work programme for the 2019/20 council year. (Report enclosed as **Appendix E**).

6. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair, should, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

- Declare it and give details of its nature before the matter is discussed or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- Complete this sheet and pass it to the Democratic Services Officer.

Name (please print):

Meeting:

Date:

Item to which your interest relates:

Nature of Registerable Personal Interest i.e either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Annex 2 to Code of Conduct or other interest (as defined by Annex 3 to Code of Conduct) (please give details):

Nature of Non-registerable Personal Interest (please give details):

Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?

1. Registerable Personal Interests – You may have a Registerable Personal Interest if the issue being discussed in the meeting:

- a) relates to any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as defined by Annex 1 to the Code of Conduct); or

- b) any other interest (as defined by Annex 2 to the Code of Conduct)

The following interests are Disclosable Pecuniary Interests if they are an interest of either you or your spouse or civil partner:

(1) Employment, Office, Companies, Profession or vocation; (2) Sponsorship; (3) Contracts with the Council; (4) Land in the County; (5) Licences in the County; (6) Corporate Tenancies with the Council; or (7) Securities - interests in Companies trading with the Council.

The following are other Registerable Personal Interests:

(1) any body of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management) to which you are appointed or nominated by the Council; (2) any body which (i) exercises functions of a public nature or (ii) has charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purpose includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management); or (3) any person from whom you have received within the previous three years a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of more than £50 which is attributable to your position as an elected or co-opted member of the Council.

2. Non-registerable personal interests - You may have a non-registerable personal interest when you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are, or ought reasonably to be, aware that a decision in relation to an item of business which is to be transacted might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well being or financial position, or the well being or financial position of a person described below to a greater extent than most inhabitants of the area affected by the decision.

The persons referred to above are: (a) a member of your family; (b) any person with whom you have a close association; or (c) in relation to persons described in (a) and (b), their employer, any firm in which they are a partner, or company of which they are a director or shareholder.

3. Non-participation in Council Business

When you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are aware that the criteria set out below are satisfied in relation to any matter to be considered, or being considered at that meeting, you must : (a) Declare that fact to the meeting; (b) Not participate (or further participate) in any discussion of the matter at the meeting; (c) Not participate in any vote (or further vote) taken on the matter at the meeting; and (d) Leave the room whilst the matter is being discussed.

The criteria for the purposes of the above paragraph are that: (a) You have a registerable or non-registerable personal interest in the matter which is such that a member of the public knowing the relevant facts would reasonably think it so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest; **and either** (b) the matter will affect the financial position of yourself or one of the persons or bodies referred to above or in any of your register entries; **or** (c) the matter concerns a request for any permission, licence, consent or registration sought by yourself or any of the persons referred to above or in any of your register entries.

This guidance is not a complete statement of the rules on declaration of interests which are contained in the Members' Code of Conduct. If in any doubt, please consult the Monitoring Officer or relevant Democratic Services Officer before the meeting.

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Agenda Item 3

FORWARD PLAN OF FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS FEBRUARY TO MAY 2021

| DECISION | PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE | CABINET DATE |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| Budget 2021-22 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-24 The report presents the updated Budget 2021-22 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-24 to Cabinet following the receipt of the provisional local government settlement which is due to be announced during December 2020. The report will also include an update on the deliverability of savings. (N. Oliver/A. Elsdon 01670 622168) | CSEG 8 February 2021 | 9 February 2021 Council 24 February 2021 |
| Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23 To set out actions and objectives for the climate change programme up to March 2023 including existing or planned projects together with a potential route towards net-zero by 2030. (G. Sanderson/ N. Johnston – 07966334778) | CSEG 5 February 2021 | 9 February 2021 |
| Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal To seek approval of the final Growth Deal submission to the Government in accordance with the previously agreed Heads of Terms and its implications for both Northumberland and the County Council. (G. Sanderson/ J. Rose - 01670 624747) | CSEG 5 February 2021 | 9 February 2021 |
| Determination of School Admission Arrangements This report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2022/23 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2014. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston – 01670 622281) | FACS 4 March 2021 | 9 March 2021 |
| Financial Performance 2020-21 - Position at the end of December 2020 The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at 31 December 2020 for the Council against the Budget for 2020-21. (N. Oliver/A. Elsdon 01670 622168) | N/A | 9 March 2021 |
| Update of School Organisation Plan – 2018-21 This is the third and final report to update Cabinet on the latest iteration of the School Organisation Plan 2018-21 which has been refreshed to reflect the latest | FACS 4 March 2021 | 9 March 2021 |

| | | |
|--|--|-------------|
| <p>data schools and information on pupil forecasts by partnership in relation to school place planning. A new School Organisation Plan will be drafted to replace it from 2021.</p> | | |
| <p>Financial Performance 2020-21 - Provisional Outturn The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at 31 March 2021 for the Council against the Budget for 2020-21. (N. Oliver/A. Elsdon 01670 622168)</p> | | 11 May 2021 |



COMMITTEE: Communities and Place OSC

DATE: 3rd February 2021

Environmental enforcement and public engagement activities in 2020

Report of Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director for Regeneration, Commercial & Economy

Cabinet Member: John Riddle Cabinet Member for Community Services

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of environmental enforcement and associated public engagement activities during 2020, including headline statistics.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee receive and comment on the report

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is linked to the Living and Enjoying parts of the Corporate Plan 2018-21 that have the objectives 'We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for' and 'We want you to love where you live'

Key issues

1. Environmental enforcement is one part of an overall approach by the Council to tackle environmental issues that utilises the four 'E's: engagement, education, encouragement and enforcement. This recognises that only all these approaches together will successfully cause behavioural change. Although this report focusses on enforcement it also includes examples of the other approaches.
2. Most environmental enforcement activity is provided by the Environmental Enforcement & Animal Welfare team that forms a part of the Housing & Public Protection Service. The Team had not been at full strength during 2020 due to staff turnover and only returned to full strength on the 16th November 2020.
3. The Covid 19 pandemic has also significantly impacted on environmental enforcement particularly from March to July due to restrictions on officer activities. It has also impacted on the delivery of the council's Green Dog Walker initiative because no spring/summer events were able to take place. Also, final term educational visits to schools during the summer term could not take place. Furthermore, the courts only started to reopen in September, so a backlog of prosecutions occurred; some of which are still waiting for hearing dates.
4. The Council continues to deliver enhanced environmental enforcement activities through SLA agreements with some Town and Parish Councils that fund an additional three environmental enforcement officer posts. Also, a reconfiguration of

- Team structure has resulted in the number of County wide environmental enforcement officers being increased by one in 2020.
5. The Council's Green Dog Walkers Campaign, to promote responsible dog ownership through engagement and encouragement, has continued to be successful with membership reaching 3832. This makes it one of the most successful environmental campaigns in the North East. Members may recall that it achieved national recognition at the 2018 Keep Britain Tidy awards.
 6. A total of 989 dog fouling complaints were received to the end of November in 2020. A total of 20 formal enforcement actions for dog/animal control including dog fouling were taken in 2020. This includes 12 fixed penalty notices, 6 prosecutions with 2 prosecutions pending.
 7. A total of 1532 fly tipping investigations were carried out. Most cannot be progressed due to lack of sufficient evidence. But those that could resulted in enforcement actions including 18 fixed penalty notices, and one prosecution with a significant number of cases in progress some of which may proceed to prosecution. The team also issued 27 fixed penalty notices for littering. The large number of pending cases is due to a backlog created due to the absence of a Covid Safe interview room. One was fitted out and became available in October 2020.
 8. A total of 471 complaints regarding waste on private land/premises were received in 2020 to the end of November. This resulted in 91 enforcement actions including; 59 warning letters, 14 statutory notices, 5 prosecutions with another 3 pending.
 9. The Regulatory Team within Legal Services has taken a total of 15 prosecutions to the Magistrates courts for animal welfare and enviro-crime cases in 2020 to the end of November. It achieved a 100% success rate at court.
 10. The council took part in Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean although due to Covid restrictions it took place in September. This is a scheme in which local authorities work in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy and is about volunteers showing they care about the environment on their doorstep. It saw the council encouraging groups and individuals who want to 'do their bit' to help clear up the litter from streets, parks and beaches. The council supported 140 persons and these volunteers were working in 19 different locations across the county.

Background

1. Dog control

1.1 Dog control regulation is delivered by the Environmental Enforcement and Animal Welfare Team (EEAWT) within the Public Health Protection Unit. Functions of Team include: enforcement of the council's dog control Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) that specifies controls within Northumberland for dog fouling, dogs on leads and the two partial seasonal beach bans. It's also responsible for stray dog collection, regulation of the Animal Welfare Act and micro-chipping regulations. It also investigates complaints about animal cruelty.

1.2 The PSPO has four schedules:

- The first makes it an offence to allow your dog to foul publicly accessible land in Northumberland without picking up immediately.
- The second always requires dogs to be on leads in all graveyards or memorial gardens in Northumberland.
- The third requires that when instructed by an authorised officer of the council a dog walker must put a dog on a lead for reasons of public safety.

- The fourth is the only one that does not cover all of Northumberland because it specifies exclusion zones. Two beaches at Blyth & Newbiggin have partial seasonal bans running from May through to the end of September each year.

1.3 As well as enforcement the Council has run a very successful responsible dog ownership campaign since 2017. The Green Dog Walkers initiative continues to be popular with the public with the number of members at 3832. This has far exceeded officer expectations and makes it the most successful scheme of its type in the North East.

1.4 Green Dog Walkers pledge to always clean up after their dog and dispose of the bag in a bin, and when walking their dog to wear the Green Dog Walker armband, offer free dog bags to encourage others, hand out leaflets and at all times adopt a non-confrontational and friendly approach to changing attitudes about dog fouling. Green Dog Walkers was awarded the Northumberland Community Project of the Year 2018. It has also been recognized at a national level by Keep Britain Tidy who short-listed it as a finalist in their Community Engagement Award 2019. In doing so Keep Britain Tidy recognized the Council's: '*achievements in improving local environmental quality*'.

The table below shows the number of new GDW members joining the scheme in 2020

| Area | New Green Dog Walker members |
|---|------------------------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 213 |
| Castle Morpeth | 81 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 126 |
| North | 54 |
| Tynedale | 72 |
| Total | 546 |

1.5 Dog control enforcement 2020

1.5.1 The Covid 19 pandemic has significantly impacted on dog control enforcement since March 2020. Subject to corporate restrictions only essential work was conducted between mid March and July as such routine patrolling was suspended. It recommenced in mid-July. However this was also impacted by the Environmental Enforcement & Animal Welfare team being at reduced capacity due to post vacancies. The Team had not been at full strength for nearly 18 months due to staff turnover and only returned to full strength (following successful recruitment) on the 16th November 2020.

1.5.2 The table below shows the total dog fouling, dog control and animal welfare complaints for the County and each LAC areas in 2020 to the end of November 2020. Other dog control complaints comprises; stray dog reports, lost dog reports, dangerous dog reports and microchipping requests.

| Area | Dog fouling | Other dog control | Animal Welfare |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 278 | 296 | 95 |
| Castle Morpeth | 216 | 241 | 69 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|------|-----|
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 179 | 216 | 60 |
| North | 164 | 158 | 32 |
| Tynedale | 152 | 92 | 18 |
| Total | 989 | 1003 | 274 |

1.5.3 The table below shows enforcement actions for dog/animal control in 2020.

| Area | Fixed penalty notices | Prosecutions | Pending Prosecutions |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Castle Morpeth | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| North | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Tynedale | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 12 | 6 | 2 |

1.5.4 A particular prosecution was a professional dog walker from Wallsend who was prosecuted for breaching Northumberland County Council's Public Spaces Protection Order (Dog Control Order) after she failed to clear up after a dog she had taken to exercise on Cambois Beach. The offender was fined £550 and ordered to pay £100 costs and £55 victim surcharge by Mid and South East Northumberland magistrates.

2.Waste control

2.1 Fly tipping enforcement 2020

2.1.1 The Covid 19 pandemic has significantly impacted on waste control enforcement since March 2020. Subject to corporate restrictions only essential work was conducted between mid-March and July as such routine patrolling was suspended. It recommenced in mid-July.

The Teams activities were also impacted by the team being at reduced capacity due to post vacancies. The Team has not been at full strength for nearly 18 months due to staff turnover and only returned to full strength on the 16th November 2020.

2.1.2 The statistics below are the number of reports received together with those pro-actively identified by Neighborhood Services staff during litter pick patrols. Those where there may be some evidence of the perpetrator are investigated by the environmental enforcement officers. However many incidents cannot be investigated because no evidence is left behind. Additionally the team proactively deploy covert CCTV in fly tipping hotspots to try and gather evidence.

| Area | Fly tipping incidents | Fly tipping investigations |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 2926 | 839 |

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| Castle Morpeth | 184 | 104 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 588 | 323 |
| North | 309 | 150 |
| Tynedale | 165 | 116 |
| Total | 4172 | 1532 |

2.1.3 The table below shows enforcement statistics for fly tipping in 2020 up to the end of November. FPNs are served for a variety of particular offenses: fly tipping, waste carrier offenses, duty of care. Progress in many investigations has been delayed due to the absence of a PACE interview room that met Covid Safe requirements. This was only rectified through building work at the end of October 2020 hence the significant number of pending investigations due to interviews of suspects not being carried out March to October 2020.

| Area | Fixed Penalty Notices | Prosecutions | Investigation progressing |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 10 | 0 | 31 |
| Castle Morpeth | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 6 | 1 | 46 |
| North | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Tynedale | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | 18 | 1 | 93 |

2.1.4 As well as enforcement the EEAWT has taken part in a number targeted action campaigns to change public behavior.

| Area | Advice letters | Warning Letters |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 1378 | 23 |
| Castle Morpeth | 29 | 8 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 413 | 87 |
| North | 55 | 28 |
| Tynedale | 21 | 0 |
| Total | 1896 | 146 |

2.1.5 A particular prosecution for Fly-Tipping was of a male from the Cambois area who cleared out an elderly relative's flat. He then deposited the waste items including carpets, furniture and documentation on an area of land in Cramlington. The offender was fined £200.00 plus Investigation Costs of £301.14, Court Costs of £100 and a Victim Surcharge of £76.00 by Mid and South East Northumberland Magistrates.

2.2 Accumulations on private land in 2020

2.2.1 These are complaints regarding waste accumulations on private land. Most are accumulations in backyards or in gardens. Sometimes but not always associated with void properties.

| Area | Complaints | Community Protection Warning Letters | Community Protection Notices | Prosecutions | Pending Prosecutions |
|---|------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 261 | 45 | 11 | 5 | 3 |
| Castle Morpeth | 29 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 114 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| North | 38 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tynedale | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 471 | 59 | 14 | 5 | 3 |

2.2.2 A particular prosecution for a Breach of a Community Notice was at an address in Castle Terrace, Ashington where an absentee Landlord failed to remove a large quantity of household waste accumulated on the premises. The offender was fined £660.00 plus costs of £334.03 and a Victim Surcharge of £66.00 by Mid and South East Northumberland Magistrates.

2.3 Littering enforcement in 2020

2.3.1 the table below shows littering enforcement statistics to the end of November 2020. Patrolling for littering was suspended from March to July due to Covid 19 restrictions on activities.

| Area | Fixed penalty notices | Prosecutions | Pending Prosecutions |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Ashington & Blyth | 22 | 1 | 4 |
| Castle Morpeth | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cramlington, Bedlington & Seaton Valley | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| North | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Tynedale | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 27 | 3 | 5 |

2.3.2 A particular prosecution for a Littering Offence was of a male from the Morpeth area who was issued with a Fixed Penalty Ticket for a parking offence. The male confronted the Civil Enforcement Officer threatened him and tore up the ticket before throwing it at the officer. The offender was fined £100.00 for Littering, £660.00 for a Sec 5 Public Order Offence, Costs of £100.00 and a Victim Surcharge of £76.00 by Mid and South East

Northumberland Magistrates. Civil Enforcement Officers support the Environmental Enforcement team with littering enforcement in locations where they are also carrying out parking enforcement patrols.

2.3.3 The Regulatory Team within Legal Services has taken a total of 16 prosecutions to the Magistrates courts for animal welfare and enviro-crime cases in 2020 to the end of December. It achieved a 100% success rate at court.

2.4 Waste control campaign in 2020

2.4.1 With a climate emergency declared in the county, the council is keen for everyone to do their bit to help create a greener and cleaner planet. Originally intended to take place 20th March to 13th April but delayed because of Covid 19 restrictions we took part in the Great British Spring Clean 11-27th September 2020. The Great British Spring Clean is a scheme in which local authorities work in partnership by Keep Britain Tidy and is about volunteers showing they care about the environment on their doorstep, as well as making a positive impact by clearing litter pollution from your local street, park or beach.

2.4.2 The Council have engaged with the public, initially in specific areas of the South East of the County, on a Fly-Tipping initiative called 'Love Where You Live' which highlights how to dispose of household waste correctly and raises the issue of Fly-Tipping and how it impacts the community.

2.4.3 It saw the council once again encouraging and supporting groups, individuals and their own staff and councillors who want to 'do their bit' to help clear up the litter from streets, parks and beaches. Officers were on hand to give advice, and essential equipment was loaned to groups who wanted to collect litter for this year's September clean up event. The council supported 140 persons by providing them with equipment to go out litter picking in their local areas and provided litter pickers, gloves, vests and bags and also collected the litter afterwards. These volunteers were working in 19 different locations across the county. As Covid restrictions applied no large groups were involved, but some schools and a cub pack took part but worked in smaller groups this year.

Implications

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Policy | none |
| Finance and value for money | Costs are met from existing budgets |
| Legal | none |
| Procurement | none |
| Human Resources | none |
| Property | none |

| | |
|--|--|
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Informative report Does not present potentially significant equality issues. |
| Risk Assessment | none |
| Crime & Disorder | Contributes to reduction |
| Customer Consideration | The campaigns are delivered in such a way as to ensure that a consistent and proportionate approach is taken in all circumstances. |
| Carbon reduction | none |
| Health and Wellbeing | Contributes to overall council objectives |
| Wards | all |

Background papers:

None

Report sign off.

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

| | Full Name of Officer |
|--|----------------------|
| Monitoring Officer/Legal | Neil Masson |
| Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer | Alan Mason |
| Relevant Executive Director | Juliemma McLoughlin |
| Chief Executive | Daljit Lally |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | John Riddle |

Author and Contact Details

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COMMITTEE: Communities and Place OSC

DATE: 3RD FEBRUARY 2021

TITLE OF REPORT: The Council's Response to Anti-Social Behaviour in 2020.

Report of Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director for Regeneration, Commercial & Economy.

Cabinet Member: John Riddle Cabinet Member for Community Services.

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the approaches adopted by the Council and partners in response to reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) during 2020.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) receive and comment on the report

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is linked to the Living and Enjoying parts of the Corporate Plan 2018-21 that have the objectives 'We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for' and 'We want you to love where you live'

Key issues

1. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is a statutorily defined term and can encompass a wide range of activities and behaviours which can impact negatively on both individuals and the community in general. The Council has statutory duties both operationally and strategically in relation to ASB.
2. The COVID outbreak and lockdown restrictions impacted on both the volume and pattern of complaints the CST received during 2020 and their response to them. Officers were unable to visit residents for a significant part of the year and multi-agency meeting were unable to be held in person. However, officers have successfully maintained service levels using telephone-based mediation approaches and all VOL meetings are now taking place virtually.
3. The drinking of alcohol in public related ASB Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were reviewed in 2020 as part of the statutory three-year cycle. The (Alcohol) PSPOs for Northumberland was renewed as one Order with a schedule of

areas across the County which are subject to its restrictions. Two new areas (West Bedlington and Wylam) were added to the renewed Order following recent issues and representations from key stakeholders including town and parish councils and Northumbria Police.

4. Youth disorder and vehicle disorder continue to cause significant concern to residents and often present the Team with complex and difficult cases. Both issues are associated with a range of practical and legal issues which can make their investigation problematic. Successful resolution is dependent on effective partnership working and the use of the full range of community safety techniques.
5. The Violence Reduction Unit is part of a national Home Office initiative based within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Unit uses a 'Public Health' approach to identify and tackle the root cause of serious violence within local communities. Their recent 'Insight Report' has provided a useful reference point to assist with both the strategic planning and operational response of the community safety function. Although early in the programme, the VRU potentially offers significant scope to address problems of serious violence within the County.
6. Nitrous oxide is a commonly available product legitimately used in the catering industry. When inhaled it has psychoactive properties and produces a short term 'high' which leads to it being used as a recreational drug. Its sale and use are controlled by the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 which is enforced by the police. Enforcement of the legislation is problematic as its possession is not an offence nor is its sale age restricted. The Police have appointed a single point of contact (SPOC) to co-ordinate information about the issue. The CST liaise with the SPOC passing on information from NEAT regarding where they are finding evidence of its use. Supply of the nitrous oxide canisters appears to be from online sale from catering wholesalers. Where these are identified the sale can be investigated by the Council's Trading Standards team.

Background

1. What is Anti-Social Behaviour

1.1 The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 defines anti-social behaviour (ASB) as;

- Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person,
- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
- Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

1.2 As such the term can encompass a wide range of behaviours and activities. Northumberland County Council has a statutory duty with regard to the prevention and control of ASB at both the strategic and operational level. Under s17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities, amongst others, have a duty to exercise their functions with 'due regard' to the issue and do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their area. The rationale for this responsibility is that levels of crime and

disorder are influenced by the policies, decisions and practices of Northumberland County Council together with other partner agencies and organisations working in a locality.

1.3 How the Service is delivered

1.3.1 The Council's principal response to ASB is delivered by the Community Safety Team (CST) which forms part of the Community and Environmental Health Team located within the Housing and Public Protection Service. Where an alleged perpetrator is a tenant in a Council owned property, complaints are dealt with by the Interventions Team located within Housing Services.

1.3.2 The CST comprises 6.6. FTE including a Senior Community Safety Officer, 5 CSOs and Technical Support. To facilitate joint working with the Police, who are a principal partner in many aspects of the team's work, individual officers are allocated geographical areas coterminous with the nine Police sectors within the Northern Area Command.

1.3.3 Given the wide-ranging nature of ASB joint working is critical to many cases and this takes place at an informal officer level daily. However, there are also permanent formalised multi-agency structures in place. Foremost of these are the seven CST chaired Victim, Offender, Location (VOL) meetings which are held routinely on a four weekly basis. Their areas again reflect the Police Command structure; they are attended by a wide range of both Council services including Adult and Children's Services as well as the Police, Fire Authority and Housing Providers. VOLs typically deal with cases with a low to mid-level of risk. More complex cases or those with higher levels of risk can be referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC). These bespoke meetings are chaired by a more senior Council Manager and those attending from other services are expected to have authority over both financial and policy matters allowing the group to act decisively. Member access to these processes is via a nominated Single Point of Contact (SPOC) within the CST.

1.3.4 In addition to its ASB responsibilities the CST also,

- Controls the use of the Council's deployable CCTV cameras
- Provides the Co-ordinator role for the Council's PREVENT responsibilities under the CONTEST counter terrorism strategy.
- Responds to activations of the 'Community Trigger', a statutory mechanism which allows residents to request a review of how ASB related complaints have been investigated either by the Council or other relevant body.
- Implements Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) in relation to ASB and related matters.
- Provide secretariat support to Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

1.3.5 Joint and multi-agency working is key to many investigations and the CST is organised to facilitate close working with the Police who are a principal partner. Informal day to day partnership working at officer level is supported by formal multi-agency structures including monthly Victim, Offender, Location (VOL) meeting and the Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference (ASBRAC) which are held as required.

1.3.6 CST performance and customer satisfaction rates are consistently high with two internal performance indicators above target and 100% of satisfaction surveys indicating customers are either satisfied or extremely satisfied with overall level of service.

2. What has happened in 2020?

2.1 Workload

2.1.1 The overall demand terms of complaints (by specific category) is shown for the last four years in Table One below. Complaints average approximately 850 per annum with the most common complaints being intimidation/harassment and rowdy/inconsiderate behaviour.

2.1.2 Table One

Complaints by sub-category 2017 -20

| Category | 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018 | 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 | 01/04/2019 - 31/03/2020 | 01/04/2020 – 31/10/2020 |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| B01 (C1) Hate Crime | 3 | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| B02 (C1) Domestic Abuse or Violence | 6 | 5 | 7 | 2 |
| B03 (C1) Assault | 4 | 1 | 8 | 3 |
| B04 (C1) Intimidation or Harassment | 167 | 161 | 153 | 129 |
| B05 (C1) Drug Use or Dealing | 53 | 79 | 94 | 85 |
| B06 (C1) Substance Misuse | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| B07 (C1) Vandalism or Damage to Property | 110 | 72 | 64 | 43 |
| BA0 (C2) Rowdy or Inconsiderate Behaviour | 245 | 240 | 255 | 260 |
| BA1 (C2) Anti Social Street Drinking or Alcohol Related Disorder | 10 | 12 | 14 | 14 |
| BA2 (C2) Intimidating Gatherings of People in Public Places | 16 | 13 | 15 | 14 |
| BA3 (C2) Throwing Missiles | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 |
| BA4 (C2) Misuse of Airguns | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| BA5 (C2) Noise Nuisance | 97 | 61 | 62 | 42 |
| BA6 (C2) Vehicle Nuisance | 61 | 58 | 70 | 56 |
| BA7 (C2) Setting Fires | 9 | 5 | 9 | 0 |
| BA8 (C2) Riding Mopeds, Mini-Motos, Motorcycles etc Not on Public Highway | 50 | 29 | 33 | 29 |
| BA9 (C2) Games in Restricted or Inappropriate Areas | 24 | 16 | 12 | 9 |
| BAA (C2) CYCLING, SKATEBOARD, ROLLERBLADE/SKATE ETC. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| BAB (C2) Uncontrolled Pets and Animals | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| BAC (C2) Begging or Vagrancy | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| BAE (C2) Inappropriate Use of Fireworks | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| BAF (C2) FLY-POSTING | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| BAG (C2) Nuisance from Empty or Neglected Property | 9 | 5 | 9 | 2 |
| BAH (C2) Nuisance from Private Property from Alleged Business Use | 20 | 3 | 7 | 2 |
| BAJ (C2) Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| BAK (C2) ASB FLYTIPPING | 12 | 19 | 11 | 0 |
| BAL (C2) ASB GRAFFITI | 2 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| BAM (C2) ASB ABANDONED VEHICLES | 6 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| BAN (C2) ASB Dangerous Dogs | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| BAO (C2) ASB LITTERING | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| BAP REQUEST FOR PERSONAL ALARM | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| BCC Request for CCTV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| BCT Community Trigger | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| BSG Safe Guarding / Vulnerability | 0 | 14 | 16 | 14 |
| TOTAL | 916 | 811 | 877 | 717 |

2.2. Response

2.2.1 The CST adopt a problem-solving approach with a strong emphasis on joint and multi-agency working. Home visits/ site meeting and formal and informal working with partners therefore made up a significant part of the investigation process. Historically, Community Safety had limited formal enforcement powers however, these were increased substantially by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Police Act 2014. Consequently, legal tools such as the Community Protection Warning (CPW) and the Community Protection Notice (CPN) are increasingly being used especially in more serious cases where informal approaches are either inappropriate or not effective. In extreme cases the CST can apply to the Magistrates Court to have a particular premise temporarily closed. A summary of the team activity for 2020 is shown in Table Two below

2.2.2 Table Two

CST activities 2020/21 YTD

| Activity | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Home/site visit | 164 |
| VOL meetings | 60 |
| Other multi-agency meetings | 189 |
| Community Protection Warnings issued | 5 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Community Protection Notices issued | 4 |
| Closure orders made | 2 |
| Community Triggers activations | 1 |
| PREVENT referrals | 19 |
| Total | 444 |

2.3 Public Space Protection Orders

2.3.1 Public Space Protections Orders PSPOs were introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Police Act 2014. They built on the previous alcohol related Designated Space Protection Order regime but allowed the Council to either prohibit or require a broader range of behaviours in specified public areas. First introduced in 2017 the orders have a duration of three years and were therefore due to expire in 2020. During the year the CST undertook an extensive review of all of the PSPOs resulting in the renewal/modification of the existing Order to remove two areas previously covered and the introduction of two new areas which previously had no restrictions in place.

2.3.2 This power enables the Council and Police to take positive action if a person is found to be consuming alcohol in a public place in any manner which amounts to, or which is reasonably likely to lead to, the occurrence of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or annoyance affecting those in the locality.

2.4 Performance

2.4.1 The CST report on two internal performance indicators relating to the speed at which initial complaints are responded to and the overall time required to resolve a complaint. The results for the first two quarters of 2020 are shown in Table Three and Four respectively.

2.4.2 Table Three

2020: Percentage of complaints responded to within three working days (Target 93%) YTD

| 2020 | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Percentage achieved | 97% | 96% | | |

2.4.3 Table Four

Percentage of complaints resolved within three months of receipt (target 90%)

| 2020 | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Percentage achieved | 93% | 97% | | |

2.4.4 Public Protection carry out an internal customer satisfaction survey across all of its services. In 2020 100% of all community safety related responses indicated they were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the overall service they had received.

2.4.5 In 2019 three Community Safety Officers from the team were awarded the 'Outstanding Partnership and Volunteering Award' by Chief Superintendent Janice Hutton. The awards stated the officers had 'been pivotal in the reduction and detection of crime and disorder throughout Northumberland'.

3. COVID

3.1 The COVID outbreak and the restriction put in place to address it have had a significant effect on both the workload of the CST and their activities. For example, the usual seasonal rise in reported youth disorder has not occurred this year. However, neighbour disputes rose in the Spring and early Summer. It is thought this was as a result of more residents spending longer periods of time at home especially during the day. The team continued to visit residents in high-risk cases only and did so in COVID secure ways such as in private gardens however, during this period many complaints were resolved through telephone discussion and mediation which prevented a more general escalation of community tension. Site visits also continued where officers were not meeting residents including CCTV deployments and downloads where these could be achieved with no contact.

3.2 Multi-agency meetings in particular the VOLs continued to be held 'virtually' with good attendance. The restrictions also impacted on the ability to deploy CCTV cameras at this time although exceptions were made for Police requests in respect of serious crime. Appropriate risk assessments were put in place in June to allow the Team to deliver as close to a 'business as usual' service as possibly

4. Current and Emerging Issues

4.1 Youth disorder

4.1.1 Youth disorder is a perennial and often seasonally related problem in many areas of the County. Rates typically rises in the Spring and peak in late Summer as groups of young people congregate in public area such as green spaces and car parks. Whilst the groups themselves are not intrinsically a problem such gatherings can be associated with issues such as vandalism, substance abuse and harassment and intimidation of other residents. Responses to complaints need to be both measured and proportionate to ensure residents feel safe and reassured whilst not being unnecessarily restrictive on legitimate social gatherings which are a normal part of youth culture.

4.1.2 Joint approaches which involve more overt Policing, CCTV deployment and detached youth work are usually most effective. In more serious cases identification of key individuals within the groups is usually necessary. Once identified officers can ascertain if the youth in question is open to other services, which is common and whether further support and/or enforcement is necessary.

4.2 Violence Reduction Unit

4.2.1 The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is a 2019 Home Office national initiative to tackle the root causes of serious violence. The programme recognises that law enforcement alone will not eradicate violent crime and seeks to embed an early intervention and preventative approach.

4.2.2 Within Northumberland the VRU forms part of the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and utilises a public health approach towards violence, that is, recognising its symptoms, understanding its causes, stopping its transmission, helping people avoid it and providing the tools to tackle it.

4.2.3 The Unit is supported by a Strategic Board and the strategy itself has four broad themes,

- Youth diversion
- Reduce offending
- Working with families
- Connecting Communities

4.2.4 The strategy is supported by an ‘Insight Report’ developed collaboratively with local partners which will be used to develop ‘harm hotspots’, that is, key areas where targeted intervention is required. Although operationally at a very early stage, moving forward the VRU offers significant opportunities to tackle serious violence within the County.

4.3 Vehicle disorder

4.3.1 Although not reported in substantial numbers vehicle disorder can significantly affect some local communities. Whether inappropriate use of public footpaths by off-road motorcycles, children’s motorcycles or quad vehicles on green spaces or gatherings of vehicle enthusiasts in car parks the associated noise and safety issues can lead to disturbance and feeling of intimidation.

4.3.2 Issues of this nature can be problematic to address. The primary legislation governing these matters is usually enforced by the Police and offenders can be difficult to apprehend as the vehicles in question give them high mobility. Some of the activities in question in particular gatherings of vehicle enthusiasts are not inherently illegal although they can cause substantial disturbance.

4.3.3 A multi-agency approach is often required combining elements of enforcement coupled with approaches such as physically restricting access to areas and traffic calming measures. In more persistent or severe cases PSPOs can be considered and such an order has been carefully considered in 2020 in conjunction with legal services however other options such as changes to the physical environment are expected to be more impactful in this case.

4.3.4 Local Police teams are trialling the use of ‘Smart Water’ a proprietary system which sprays a liquid marker onto vehicles which can later be used to identify them. Additionally, COVID related legislation has been used to the Police in relation to gatherings of vehicle enthusiasts which have breached of COVID restriction. This has resulted in the issuing of fixed penalty notices.

4.4 Nitrous Oxide substance abuse

4.4.1 Nitrous oxide is a common product in the catering industry where it is used in cream chargers usually in the form of a small canister. However, the gas does have psychoactive properties and if inhaled in sufficient quantities produces a short term 'high'. It is therefore increasingly been used as a recreational drug with its sale and use being controlled by the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

4.4.2 The primary responsibility for the Act lies with the Police however, its enforcement can be problematic. Possession of the canisters and their sale (for legitimate purposes) are not criminal offences nor is it an age restricted product. It is readily available for online sale from catering suppliers and whilst these companies would be expected to have appropriate due diligence checks in place the delivery of the product is often contracted to third party drivers.

4.4.3 The Police have appointed a SPOC to monitor this issue and co-ordinate responses to it. The CST regularly liaise with the area NEAT Teams to gather information on where used canisters are being found. This information is fed back via the SPOC to enable the Police to patrol these areas. If individuals are found with canisters the Police try to ascertain where these were obtained from. If the supplier can be identified Trading Standards can then investigate the sale.

Implications

| | |
|--|--|
| Policy | There are no policy implications |
| Finance and value for money | There are no finance or value for money implication |
| Legal | There are no legal implications |
| Procurement | There are no procurement implications |
| Human Resources | There are no Human Resource implications |
| Property | There are no property implications |
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no equality implications |
| Risk Assessment | There are no risk implications |
| Crime & Disorder | The report details the contribution made by Community Safety in addressing crime and disorder within Northumberland highlighting current significant and emerging issues |
| Customer Consideration | There are no customer implications |
| Carbon reduction | There are no carbon reduction implications |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Health and Wellbeing | There are no health and wellbeing implications |
| Wards | There are no Ward implications |

Background papers:

None

Report sign off.

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

| | Full Name of Officer |
|--|----------------------|
| Monitoring Officer/Legal | Neil Masson |
| Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer | Alan Mason |
| Relevant Executive Director | Juliemma McLoughlin |
| Chief Executive | Daljitt Lally |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | John Riddle |

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Communities and Place OSC

3 February 2021

CUSTOMER CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

Report of Julie Dennitts-Seal, Corporate Complaints Manager

Cabinet Member: Councillor Nick Oliver, Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary

1. Purpose of report

This report provides an overview of Customer Complaints for the last financial year, 1.4.2019 to 31.3.2020. Additionally, this report will cover some of the findings of the review of the Council's current Corporate Complaints reporting mechanisms and provide reassurance around future improvement plans.

2. Background

The Corporate Complaints Manager has carried out a review of the current Complaints Reporting mechanisms as part of the wider Complaints Improvement Framework. The framework uses six themes of good practice derived largely from the requirements of Local Government Ombudsman's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP). The assessment should be regarded as a positive tool, to help understand and clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the current corporate complaints and feedback handling in different areas.

3: Key Findings

The current software being used to record Complaints is outdated and because it was not specifically designed for capturing, managing and reporting on complaints and feedback, it proves difficult to adhere to regulations, record consent and confidentiality agreements.

Due to its inappropriateness for case management the system is underutilised, and staff engagement is sporadic, with many services opting to manage their caseload using a spreadsheet to support case management.

Although it is widely accepted that complaints are dealt with promptly, due to the obvious issues with the use of the system and inconsistent ways data is captured, it is proving unreliable as performance data.

Therefore, this report is based on the current data sets available within the confines of the existing software.

4: What we do well?

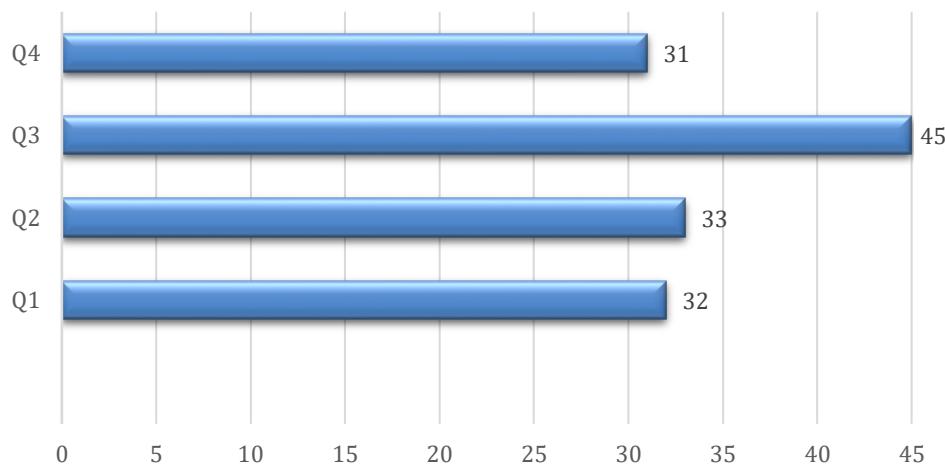
- NCC staff understand that sometimes the best way to deal with a complaint is to initiate local resolution and as a matter of course, any staff member being presented first-hand with a complaint will attempt to resolve the issue.
- Staff are engaged and want to pursue better processes and gain a clearer understanding of their role and responsibilities in complaint handling.
- Complaints at the Investigation stage are acknowledged within three working days of receipt.
- Locally prepared complaints forms are fully compliant with the model CHP and ensure that the layout is user-friendly, captures specifically the complaint being made and the outcomes expected.

4: Customer Complaints for the last financial year, 1.4.2019 to 31.3.2020

4.i Informal Complaints

The current process for corporate complaints involves customers submitting their complaint which is then sent to the appropriate service area. If the service can fully resolve it for the customer, within 24 hours of receipt, it can be closed as an informal resolution.

Informal Resolutions received



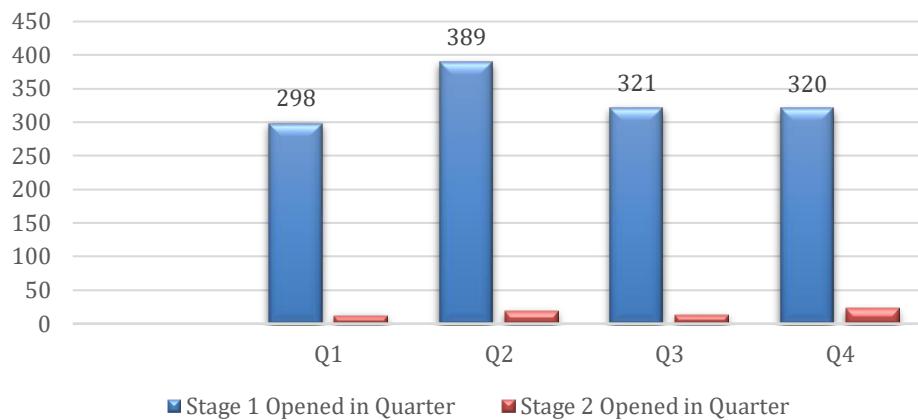
4.ii Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints Received

During 2019-2020, the Council received 1393 corporate complaints. Of these, 65 (5%) were escalated to stage 2.

The total Stage 1 complaints received were 1328 cases and Stage 2 complaints received were 65 cases.

It should be stressed that the number of complaints, taken alone, is not necessarily a reliable indicator of an authority's performance. The volume of complaints should be considered alongside the uphold rate (how often we found fault when we investigated a complaint). An Indicator which will be included on the Improvement Framework.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received

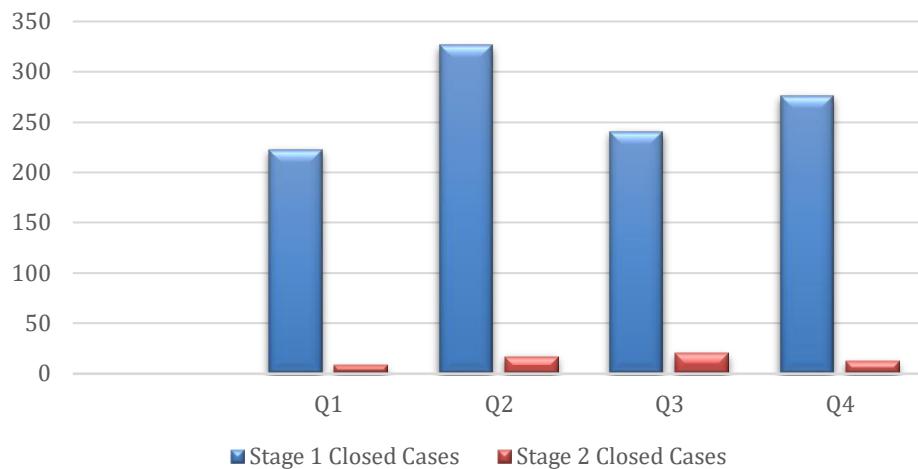


4.iii Closed Complaints

Closed complaints are those that have been allocated an outcome and a response has been given to the customer. The number of closed complaints differs to the number of received complaints because some of the 2019/20 closed complaints were received in 2018/19, while some of the 2019/20 received complaints will be closed in 2020/21 as their target date falls into the next reporting cycle.

Of the 1114 Stage 1 cases received in total across all Directorates, 902 (81%) were closed in timescale, whilst 30 (85%) of the 35 Stage 2 cases were closed in timescale.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints Closed



4.iv Cases referred to Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the organisation that handles complaints about public services in England. The Ombudsman service is independent of government and has a duty to act impartially. The LGSCO also shares learning from its work to improve service delivery across the public services spectrum in England. The office carries out awareness raising activities with the general public, and bodies under their jurisdiction and promotes good complaints handling by public service providers.

Using the current software available it is not possible to identify any learning or recommendations made by the LGSCO to the Authority. A total of 25 cases were accepted by the LGSCO for detailed investigations. 35% of complaints the LGSCO investigated were upheld. This compares to an average of 56% in similar authorities.

In 100% of cases the LGSCO were satisfied the Council had successfully implemented the recommendations. This compares to an average of 99% in similar authorities.

The recommendations made for the 9 upheld cases were as follows:

| Case | Service Area | Decision | Decision reason | Recommendations |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|--|
| 18011628 | Planning & Development | Upheld | maladministration no Injustice | Apology, Training and guidance Procedure or policy change/review |
| 18014755 | Education & Children's Services | Upheld | maladministration and injustice | Apology, Procedure or policy change/review |
| 18018034 | Housing | Upheld | maladministration and injustice | Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review |
| 18018320 | Benefits & Tax | Upheld | maladministration and injustice | Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide services |

| | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|--|
| 18019153 | Highways & Transport | Upheld | maladministration and injustice | Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review |
| 19001727 | Education & Children's Services | Upheld | maladministration and injustice | Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble |
| 19002538 | Education & Children's Services | Upheld | maladministration and injustice | Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble |
| 19004535 | Planning & Development | Upheld | maladministration no Injustice | Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble |
| 19011956 | Planning & Development | Upheld | maladministration no Injustice | Provide training and/or guidance |

Not all cases are accepted by the LGSCO, on occasions cases may not fall within their remit to investigate or they may be referred the Authority for further local resolution.

The breakdown of all cases which were considered by the LGSCO are as follows:

| Feedback | Total cases |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Closed after initial enquiries | 34 |
| Incomplete/Invalid | 5 |
| Not Upheld | 16 |
| Referred for local resolution | 25 |
| Upheld | 9 |

4.v Data Performance comparative to the previous year

| Feedback Type | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | Direction of travel |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Informal Complaints | 153 | 141 | |
| Stage 1 Complaints | 970 | 1328 | |
| Stage 2 Complaints | 50 | 65 | |
| Stage 1 closed within timescale | 683 (70%) | 902 (81%) | |
| Stage 2 closed within timescale | 28 (56%) | 30 (85%) | |
| LGSCO detailed Investigations | 18 | 25 | |

5: Next Actions

Although the evidence outlined in this report suggests that overall complaint handling performance is reassuring, due to the issues highlighted with the use of the system and inconsistent ways data is captured, it is proving unreliable as performance data.

A service plan has been drafted capturing all actions from the Improvement Framework, which provides more detail and lines of responsibility for actions.

In summary, the key actions are:

- **Establish a central Feedback Team.** The team will be responsible for the receipt, allocation, follow up, progress chasing, checking and sending of feedback, quality assurance, system updating, collation and analysis of data and publishing of key performance. Based on benchmarking information, the volume of corporate complaints, members enquiries, compliments, comments and suggestions, and the training and service improvement aspect of the role, a draft structure has been developed and is being reviewed.
- **Explore the procurement of a specifically designed case management system** for capturing, managing and reporting on complaints, members enquiries and all other feedback across the council (the software can also be further developed to include additional modules such as GDPR case management solution for information request handling and Statutory Social Care Complaints).
- **Draft a Corporate Complaints Policy.**
- An **updated Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Contact Policy** has been drafted, to replace the current Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy, which was drafted in 2010, and is awaiting approval.
- A local process has already been implemented to better capture the details of **recommendations made to the Authority from the LGSCO**.
- Taking into consideration the proposed changes outlined in this report and covered in more detailed in the Improvement Framework, these changes will allow for **new reporting indicators to be introduced** and included in future Complaint Reports.
 1. Indicator 1 – Complaints received per thousand population
 2. Indicator 2 – Complaints closed at each stage as a percentage of all complaints closed.
 3. Indicator 3 – The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at each stage.
 4. Indicator 4 – Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.
 5. Indicator 5 – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescale of 15 and 20 working days.
 6. Indicator 6 – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 15 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised.
 7. Indicator 7 – Customer satisfaction statement about complaints service provided.
 8. Indicator 8 – A statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedure's as a result of the consideration of complaints.

6. Creating and embedding a culture needs strong leadership

Crucial to good complaints handling is an underpinning culture that truly values complaints. Creating and embedding that culture needs strong leadership. This calls for senior management to visibly support good complaints handling and develop a culture within their organisation that values complaints. The following paragraphs demonstrate a brief insight into how each Executive Director at Northumberland County Council supports their directorates' complaints function.

- **Adult Social Care and Children's Services**

Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, Cath McEvoy-Carr, is aware of the importance of ensuring that learning is shared, and good practice is celebrated. The outcome of complaints is shared with Heads of Service and included within the Quality Assurance Framework. This forum considers any practice issues which are raised as a result of various processes, including complaints.

The Client Relations Team are responsible for any Statutory Complaints and provide regular updates to ensure the Executive Director is fully briefed on any 'high profile' or 'high risk' complaints. This allows for a coordinated approach to concerns raised, which may span across multi-disciplinary teams.

Additionally, the Executive Director and Corporate Complaints Manager meet regularly to discuss any complex or challenging cases.

- **Finance**

Chris Hand, Executive Director of Finance, regularly liaises with the Corporate Complaints Manager to identify areas of concern or trends. This proved especially helpful when faced with additional challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no formal appeal process for those we have notified that they are not entitled to a small business grant fund payment or a retail, hospitality and leisure grant fund payment. Therefore, an increasing amount of complaints were being raised by individuals who felt the incorrect eligibility decision had been reached.

It was identified that it would be good practice to implement a process for reviewing those decisions. A process has been established to review those decisions. This is carried out by an officer who was not involved in the original decision. This process aimed to respond in 10 working days and significantly reduced the number of complaints received.

The Executive Director now also receives regular reports that provide insight into the process's effectiveness and where necessary, raise this at appropriate forums with Head of Service and key staff.

- **Regeneration, Commercial and Economy,**

Executive Director of Regeneration, Commercial and Economy, Juliemma McLoughlin, ensures the complaints process following within the Directorate is consistent and of a high standard by approving all outward correspondence. This ensures findings are monitored, and areas of concern are highlighted.

Additionally, the Executive Director ensures that good practice and learning areas are identified and discussed at a weekly Regeneration Commercial and Economy Leadership Team meeting. Any upcoming cases with actions or needing outcomes agreed.

Furthermore, the Executive Director receives weekly updates from the Feedback handler on all cases in hand, which guarantees a senior oversight of trends and case management. Challenging cases are identified, and high-level communication occurs with Heads of Service and the Corporate Complaints Manager.

- **Local Services**

Within Local Services, Rick O'Farrell, Executive Director, supports several pilot ideas for improving complaint management within the Directorate. Due to the nature of front-line services, a higher volume of complaints is inevitably. All staff are being empowered to respond to concerns directly. The aim is to make the customer feel as though their problem is being treated as a priority, with a more effective communication line.

Lou Hayward, Service Director for Improvement and Innovation Team, supports the Directorate in implementing a more robust process. With the assistance of the Corporate Complaints Manager, they are looking at more ways to streamline the process with a strong focus on local, early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff.

The Executive Director and Heads of Service receive a weekly report on complaints that captures all governance areas and provides an overall compliance assurance. Areas of good practice and improvements are identified. This is in addition to complaints discussions taking place during other forums every week.

- **Human Resources/Organisation Development**

Kelly Angus, Executive Director for HR/OD also has the responsibility of employee grievances and disciplinary action, these are dealt with separately to the Corporate Complaints Process and are therefore not covered in this report.

The Executive Director fully supports and acknowledges the need to have robust systems in place to increase efficiency and consistency in complaint response. It has been identified that a Customer Services Digital review which incorporates the complaints function, is being undertaken. This will help the organisation assess and demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of their overall complaints handling arrangements.

The Executive Director provides clear direction to Heads of Service on the responsibilities in resolving complaints, including the ability to identify failings, take effective remedial action and apologise where necessary. This ensures that complaints are central to the overall governance of the Directorate, and that staff are supported both in handling complaints and where they may be involved in the investigation of a complaint.

A new local process has been established to monitor and manage complaints within Legal Services, this has improved the timeframe for responding to complaints and ensured a more consistent approach is applied.

The Corporate Complaints Manager is currently supporting the Executive Director to identify a more robust way to ensure that organisational learning from complaints is captured and reported.

The Executive Director ensures complaints data and learning from complaints is considered routinely as part of the management information and discussed with Heads of Service at regular forums.

7. Implications

| | |
|--|--|
| Policy | By collecting and analysing corporate feedback, services can use the results to determine, shape and influence future policies |
| Finance and value for money | There are no financial implications directly associated with this report. |
| Legal | Where appropriate, advice is sought from the Legal Team on specific matters regarding complaints. |
| Procurement | Not applicable |
| Human Resources | Not applicable |
| Property | Not applicable |
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Risk Assessment | Not applicable |
| Crime & Disorder | Not applicable |
| Customer Consideration | As a Council it is important that customers can give us their feedback and feel that their views and opinions are fully considered and dealt with appropriately. |
| Carbon reduction | Not applicable |

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Wards | All |
|--------------|-----|

Background papers:

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2019/20

Report sign off:

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

| | Name |
|---|------|
| Monitoring Officer/Legal | |
| Service Director Finance & Interim S151 Officer | |
| Relevant Executive Director | |
| Chief Executive | |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | |

Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland County Council

Communities and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2019-2020

1. Terms of reference:

- (a) To maintain an overview of the Management Agreements in place between the County Council and Active Northumberland, Woodhorn Museum Charitable Trust and Northumberland Tourism.
- (b) To monitor, review and make recommendations about:
 - Development Planning
 - Neighbourhood Planning
 - Conservation
 - Housing
 - Climate Change
 - Countryside, Biodiversity and Landscape Quality
 - Waste Management and Energy Use
 - Public and Community Transport Network and Travel to School
 - Highway Maintenance, Streetscape and the Local Environment
 - Local and Neighbourhood Services
 - Crime, Community Safety, and Fear of Crime
 - Antisocial Behaviour and Domestic Violence
 - Fire and Rescue
 - Emergency Services and Emergency Planning
 - Customer Services
 - Provision of Cultural and Leisure Facilities
 - Improving Quality of Life Through Access to Culture and Leisure
 - Supporting Economic Growth in the Arts, Culture and Leisure Sectors

2. Issues to be Timetabled/Considered

- Domestic Violence - Implications of the Domestic Abuse Act (currently a bill)
- Performance
- Local Services - Service Improvements

Northumberland County Council
Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019-2021

3 February 2021

Enforcement Overview
Anti-Social Behaviour Overview
Customer Services Feedback

3 March 2021

Seasonal Grounds Maintenance
Section 106 Agreements
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Assessment

7 April 2021

Northumberland County Council
Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2019-2021

| Ref | Date | Report | Decision | Outcome |
|------------|-------------|--|---|---|
| 1. | 5 June 2019 | Market Strategy | RESOLVED that (a) progress made against the strategy action plan be noted, and (b) a review of alternative operating arrangements that could be adopted for all markets currently managed by the County Council's Neighbourhood Services team, be supported. | The Committee will continue to monitor this issue. |
| 2 | 5 June 2019 | Additional LTP Capital | RESOLVED that the programme of schemes undertaken through the additional £7.732m of capital maintenance funding and progress in delivering the programme, be noted. | No further action required. |
| 3. | 5 June 2019 | Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Support Services Commission Update | RESOLVED that (a) the report be noted, and (b) a further update be provided to the Committee at a time when a meaningful assessment of progress can be made. | A further update will be presented to the Committee in due course. |
| 4. | 5 June 2019 | Domestic Violence and Abuse | RESOLVED that (a) the update be noted, and (b) a further report on the outcome of the Government's consultation on domestic violence and abuse, be presented to the Committee in due course. | A further update will be presented to the Committee in due course. |
| 5. | 3 July 2019 | Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-21 | It was RESOLVED that:- (a) Cabinet be informed of the divided view of the Committee regarding whether the Strategy should | The Cabinet considered the Committee's comments when it determined the report on 6 August 2019. |

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| | | | (b) have a three or five year term, and that Cabinet should consider which was more appropriate; and a request be made to Chairmen's Group for a report to a future meeting of the Committee on EMDOs and the empty property list. | A further report on Empty Dwellings Management Orders be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. |
| 6. | 3 July 2019 | Public Protection Service Requests 2018-19 | RESOLVED that the content of the report, and the member comments made above, be noted. | No further action is required at this stage. |
| 7. | 30 August 2019 | Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2019/20 | RESOLVED that (a) subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendation in the report, and (b) the Committee's thanks be conveyed to staff for all their hard work as set out in the report. | The Cabinet considered the Committee's comments when it determined the report on 10 September 2019. |
| 8. | 30 August 2019 | Northumberland County Council Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy 2019 | RESOLVED that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendation in the report. | The Cabinet considered the Committee's comments when it determined the report on 10 September 2019. A further update on the implementation of the Policy be provided to the Committee in the New Year. |
| 9. | 2 October 2019 | The proposed implementation of the Northumberland Street Works Permit Scheme | RESOLVED that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendation in the report. | The Cabinet will consider the final report which will include consultation responses on 12 November 2019. |
| 10. | 30 October 2019 | Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (NIFCA) Annual Plan 2019-20 | RESOLVED that the information provided be noted. | No further action during the term of the current Council. |
| 11. | 4 December 2019 | Empty Homes in Northumberland | RESOLVED that (1) the report be noted. (2) Council be recommended to ring fence the additional Council Tax raised on empty properties | Recommendation to be considered by Council on 8 January 2020. |

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| | | | as agreed at Council on 6 November 2019 for use in bringing empty properties back into use. | |
| 12. | 4 December 2019 | Northumberland Homefinder Common Allocation Policy | RESOLVED that the report be noted. | No further action required at this stage. |
| 13. | 5 February 2020 | Fleet Replacement Programme | RESOLVED that the report be noted. | The Committee will continue to receive this report annually. |
| 14. | 4 March 2020 | Street Lighting LED Project | RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted. | No further action required at this stage. |
| 15. | 4 March 2020 | Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Control | RESOLVED that: (a) The report be received. (b) The email containing the Single Point of Contact details be recirculated to all Members with the report and minutes from the meeting. | A copy of the original email, together with the minutes and report from this meeting be circulated to members. |
| 16 Par 93 | 4 March 2020 | Environmental Enforcement Website | RESOLVED that the presentation be received. | No further action required at this stage. |
| 17. 93 | 3 June 2020 | Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2020-24 | RESOLVED that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendation in the report for the adoption of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan for 2020-24. | The Cabinet considered the Committee's comments when it determined the report on 9 June 2020. |
| 18. | 3 June 2020 | Update concerning a potential boundary review for the Northumberland Coast AONB | RESOLVED that a review of the Northumberland AONB be postponed until DEFRA's response to the Glover Review is published and certainty regarding the review process in the future is known. | The Committee be updated on any further progress. |
| 19. | 3 June 2020 | 'Our Way' Vision for Cycling and Walking in Northumberland | RESOLVED that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendation in the report. | The Cabinet considered the Committee's comments when it determined the report on 9 June 2020. |
| 20. | 15 July 2020 | Covid-19 - Northumberland County Council Response | RESOLVED that the reports be noted and the issue identified by members be included in the work programme. | The issues raised will be considered by Chairmen's Group for inclusion on the work programmes of the relevant OSC. |

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| 21. | 15 July 2020 | Covid-19 - Planning for Recovery in Northumberland | RESOLVED that the reports be noted and the issue identified by members be included in the work programme. | The issues raised will be considered by Chairmen's Group for inclusion on the work programmes of the relevant OSC. |
| 22. | 16 September 2020 | Fly-Tipping | <p>RESOLVED that the Committee noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The report and options for reducing fly tipping in Northumberland. (b) That the majority of the increased incidents of flytipping relate to items of household waste that have been encountered in Ashington and Blyth and that these areas will be prioritised when taking actions to reduce fly tipping. (c) The enforcement and collection staffing resources deployed to prevent and remove fly tipping have increased in the last 18 months, so the increase in fly tipping is not a result of reduced investment, be noted. (d) There are a range of options available for households to dispose of their bulky household waste legally and that demand for these services remains at a high level and there is no evidence of a link between the increase in flytipping incidents and the introduction or increase in charges for waste services. (e) That overall bulky waste service performance in terms of availability of collection slots and undertaking collections on the agreed date is good and improving, so focusing on enhancing education and enforcement messages and activity is likely to have a bigger impact on this problem than further improvements in service performance. (f) Officers engage as actively as possible with officers in other departments, local members, Town and Parish Councils, community associations and other groups to tackle the issue of fly tipping. | The Committee will continue to monitor this issue as appropriate. |

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| 23. | 7 October 2020 | Northumberland Waste Management Strategy Proposed Trial of Kerbside Glass Collections | RESOLVED that, subject to the comments as set out above, the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supports the recommendations in the report. | The Chairman presented the Committee's comments when the report was determined by the Cabinet on 13 October 2020. The Committee requested a further update around the end of the trial period. |
| 24 | 7 October 2020 | Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service Improvement Action Plan Update | RESOLVED that: (a) the contents of the report be noted. (b) further reports be provided to the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide assurance on the progress of the Improvement Action Plan, and (c) an update be provided to the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee following receipt of the formal letter following the second inspection. | The Committee will receive an update following receipt of the formal letter on the second inspection. |
| 29 38 | 28 October 2020 | COVID-19 : Response and Recovery Update | RESOLVED that the information be noted | The Committee will continue to receive updates on the Council's response to the Covid 19 Pandemic as appropriate. |
| 26. | 28 October 2020 | Local Transport Plan 2020/21 – Capital Programme Update | RESOLVED that the report be noted. | The Committee will continue to monitor this issue as appropriate. |
| 27. | 13 January 2021 | Active Northumberland | RESOLVED that the report be noted. | The Committee will continue to receive updates annually. |