

Public Document Pack



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Rebecca Greally

Email:

Rebecca.Greally@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622616

Date: Friday, 25 February 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OSC** to be held in **MEETING SPACE, BLOCK 1, FLOOR 2, COUNTY HALL, MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND, NE61 2EF** on **MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2022** at **10.00 AM**.

Yours faithfully

Daljit Lally
Chief Executive

To Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC members as follows:-

D Bawn (Chair), J Beynon, L Dunn (Vice-Chair), P Jackson, M Murphy, N Oliver, A Wallace, C Taylor, M Robinson and P Ezhilchelvan

Any member of the press or public may view the proceedings of this 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.

Members are referred to the risk assessment, previously circulated, for meetings held in County Hall. Masks should be worn when moving round but can be removed when seated, social distancing should be maintained, hand sanitiser regularly used and members requested to self-test twice a week at home, in line with government guidelines.



Daljit Lally, Chief Executive
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
T: 0345 600 6400
www.northumberland.gov.uk



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. MINUTES

(Pages 1
- 6)

Minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC held on 7th February 2021, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. 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.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact the Monitoring Officer at monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this Agenda letter.

4. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

(Pages 7
- 12)

To note the latest Forward Plan of key decisions. Any further changes made to the Forward Plan will be reported to the Committee.

5. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND UPDATE

(Pages
13 - 18)

This briefing paper provides an update of Northumberland County Council's progress for delivery of the DWP Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 06th October 31st December 2022.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages
19 - 24)

The Committee is asked to review and note the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report for the 2021/22 council year.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

PART II

It is expected that matters included in this part of the Agenda will be dealt with in private. Reports referred to are enclosed for members and officers only, coloured pink and marked "Not for Publication".

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:

- (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
9	3 - Contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).
AND	The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person / organisation and could adversely affect commercial revenue.

9. TRADING COMPANIES FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2021-22 - DECEMBER 2021

The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2021-22.

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

- Declare it and give details of its nature before the matter is discussion 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.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 2

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Monday, 7 February 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor D Bawn
(Chairman in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Beynon, J.
Dunn, L.
Ezhilchelvan, P.
Murphy, M.

Oliver, N.
Robinson, M.
Taylor, C.

OFFICERS

Elsdon, A.
Lally, D.
Greally, R.

Hunter, P.
McEvoy Carr, C.

McNaughton, S.

Nicholson, S.
O'Farrell, R.
Willis, J.

Service Director - Finance
Chief Executive
Assistant Democratic Services
Officer
Service Director
Deputy Chief Executive and
Executive Director for Adult Social
Care and Children's Services
Head of Economy and
Regeneration
Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Executive Director
Executive Director of Finance
(Section 151 Officer)

ALSO PRESENT

Ball, C
Bowman, L.
Dodd, R.
Hardy, C.
Ploszaj, W.

Reid, J.
Riddle, J.
Sanderson, G.
Wearmouth, R.

Portfolio Holder for Business

Portfolio Holder for Local Services
Leader of the Council
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder
for Corporate Services

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors C. Humphrey, P. Jackson, W. Pattison J. Watson, A. Wallace and A. Watson

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 December 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

20. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

The Forward Plan of forthcoming Key Cabinet decisions was reported to the Committee. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of key decisions be noted

21. BUDGET 2022-23 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022-26

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Jan Willis, Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) presented the report to the committee.

The following comments were made in response to member's questions:

- It was confirmed to members that the addendum that was circulated wasn't broken down separately due to the Seaton Valley schools consultation which has only recently concluded.
- Members were assured that efficiencies made in Adult Social Care over the years had been scrutinised and appropriately reviewed. . Efficiencies made were not at the detriment to the service and care provided.
- Within Children Services efficiencies were also attained through careful review. It was highlighted that Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements were more costly than Local Authority placements, the service had managed to reduce the number of IFA placement significantly. The service would look to use internal resources first.
- Kyloe House was the secure unit. It was noted that there was a high demand nationally for secure beds. It was agreed that the price increase was appropriate and in line with the national pricing structure.
- Members noted that Children's Services were investing in early help and prevention with families to prevent statutory intervention to assist families in need.
- The management structure review was still taking place. The review of the top tier had been provisionally agreed but not yet formally approved. The

review would now be moving down the structure. It was noted that the £1 million savings was a target but members were assured that it was a robust estimate.

- Members expressed concerns regarding recommendation 38 which proposed to increase Housing rent. It was noted that the Government had previously put a freeze on Housing rent, and it was felt that the increase was necessary as a catch up. Due to the increase in living costs it was suggested that this recommendation needed further discussion with a possible deferral to next year. Glen Sanderson, the Leader of the Council agreed to discuss the recommendation further.
- Members were made aware that the Route 3 option for the Blyth Relief Road was no longer viable. A new bid had been organised and the outline business case had gone to Department of Transport. It was hoped that there would be a report brought to Cabinet soon.
- The New Homes Bonus came from Central Government. There was no expectation for further New Homes Bonus and it was assumed only for one year. The bonus was used to cover any shortfall between Council Tax and services provided. The issue was to be looked at the Fair Funding Review.
- Members noted there were 12 new infrastructure plans for cycling and walking. It was confirmed that Choppington was not one of the new areas.
- It was clarified to members that the caseload for the Revenues and Benefits team had reduced since the introduction of Universal Credit and therefore the Service was able to remove vacant posts. It was confirmed that there were no vacant posts in the Leisure services explicitly but the HR & OD directorate had made efficiencies in Services where possible.
- Members noted that Business rates collected went into a National pot and were redistributed through a complex system. A review of the system was expected. It was also confirmed that the Business Rate Baseline reset was National and guidance had not yet been received.
- Members noted that British Volt was not in the LEP Enterprise zone and it was expected that there would be additional income and benefits.
- Members were aware that fixing landslips was reactive. It was noted that the road outlined in the report was a difficult and technical problem to solve. It was hoped that the work set to be carried out would solve the issue once and for all.
- It was explained to members that it was normal practise for any changes to be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services. It was a pragmatic arrangement for minor adjustments as the final Local Government Settlement was usually received at a later stage into the budget papers. If there were significant changes needed the report would have had to go through the normal decision-making avenues.

RESOLVED the Committee agreed to note the recommendations subject to further consideration of the proposal to increase Housing rents.

22. REVENUES AND BENEFITS POLICIES FOR 2022/23

Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader of the Council, Jan Willis, Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Graeme Barnes, Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager presented the report to the Committee.

The following comments were made in response to member's questions:

- Members thanked Graeme and his team for their hard work and first-class report.
- Members welcomed the Council Tax discount policy that would provide a £200 hardship payment to working age people in need. The grant came from the Covid-19 support fund and it was not expected to continue for future years.
- Members noted that the Council Tax Energy Rebate would not go onto the Council Tax bill. The rebate was a payment that the Council would make to residents on the Council Tax list. It would be paid by either direct debit or cheque. It was acknowledged that this was to be an administratively heavy task and the Service was waiting for guidance from the Government.
- Members were advised that figures could be provided regarding the empty homes premium to show the collection rates on empty properties. Members were assured that all properties went through the appropriate channels in order to collect the necessary bills through statutory recovery and enforcement processes.

RESOLVED the Committee agreed to note the recommendations

23. BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT

Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader of the Council, Jan Willis, Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Phil Hunter, Senior Service Director presented the report to the Committee.

The following comments were made in response to member's questions:

- Members would be provided with demographical information collected from the consultation which would show the diversity of respondents.
- Members noted that way the consultation questions were asked will be looked at to try and receive a clearer picture of the public's view.
- Members noted that there was a statutory requirement to hold a consultation for Business rate users. However it was deemed good practice to have had a public consultation.
- Members noted that the consultation took place throughout December and January due to the Local Government Settlement. It was hoped that as the consultation ran slightly before and after Christmas and New Year it gave those the opportunity to respond. The consultation could be slightly extended in the future.
- Members were assured that all questions posed on online platforms would be responded to.

- Members would be provided with further details regarding the feedback from the consultation and what action would be taken.
- Members noted that the aim was to keep the consultation as straightforward as possible. It was also beneficial to keep similar questions year on year so a comparison can be made.
- It was suggested that a draft consultation be brought to scrutiny in advance of the consultation.
- Members noted the report from the consultation was shared with Executive Directors, Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council. The report was used as part of the decision making for the budget at Cabinet and Council level.
- Members noted that Community Services were the services covered by Councillor Horncastle's portfolio such as regulatory and community safety. Members will be given the detailed list of the services.
- Members were advised that any suggestions around the questions for the consultation could be used as part of a work stream looking at the next years consultation. The work stream would work together to ensure the consultation was a meaningful exercise. It was suggested that looking at how other Local Authorities carry out their consultation could be beneficial.

RESOLVED the committee agreed to note to recommendations.

24. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received an update on its Work Programme for the 2021/22 council year.

Members noted that British Volt had confirmed they would attend the meeting in April.

RESOLVED that this information was noted.

25. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED 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
- 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

11 7 - Contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).

AND The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure at this stage may prejudice the ongoing Transport and Works Act Order process.

25. NORTHUMBERLAND LINE

Wojciech Ploszaj, Cabinet Member for Business, Rick O'Farrell, Interim Executive Director Regeneration and Stuart McNaughton, Head of Economy and Regeneration presented this report to the Committee.

The Committee thanked the Officers and welcomed the report.

RESOVLED the Committee agreed to support the recommendation.

Chairman

Date

FORWARD PLAN FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS MARCH TO JUNE 2022

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021</p> <p>The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2021-22 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p>	<p>CSEG OSC 7 March 2022</p>	<p>8 March 2022</p>
<p>Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021</p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at 31 December 2021 for the Council against the Budget for 2021-22. (R. Wearmouth/S. Dent 01670 625515)</p>		<p>8 March 2022</p>
<p>Final Decision on statutory proposals for Atkinson House</p> <p>This report sets out an analysis of the representations (responses) received from interested parties to the statutory proposal published in relation to prescribed changes for Atkinson House Special School in Seghill, a secondary provision for boys with Social, Emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in Northumberland during the four week statutory consultation that began on 13 January and closed on 10 February 2022.</p> <p>Cabinet will be required to make a final decision on whether or not to approve the prescribed changes set out in the Statutory Proposal for implementation with effect from 1 September 2022. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 622281)</p>	<p>FACS OSC 3 March 2022</p>	<p>8 March 2022</p>
<p>Household Support Fund Update</p> <p>This briefing paper provides an update of Northumberland County Council's progress for delivery of the DWP Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 06th October 31st December 2022 and the initial MI report</p>	<p>CSEG OSC 7 March 2022</p>	<p>8 March 2022</p>

submitted to DWP on 21/01/2022. (R. Wearmouth/M. Taylor/P. Brooks - 07770981864)		
RDA relocation from Tranwell (Pegasus Centre) to Kirkley Hall Campus (Northumberland College) To summarise an evidence-based cost proposal to prepare Kirkley Hall equestrian area in readiness to accept Morpeth Group RDA as a base for their ongoing operation. (Confidential report) (G. Renner Thompson/ N. Dorward - 07811 020 806)	FACS OSC 3 March 2022	8 March 2022
Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan To seek approval to formally 'make' the Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan passed independent examination in October 2021 . A local referendum held in the Parish of Longframlington on 20th January 2022 returned a majority vote in favour of using the Plan to make decisions on planning applications. The Council is now obliged by statute to make the Neighbourhood Plan unless it considers that doing so would breach European Union obligations. (C. Horncastle/Chris Anderson 07966 329338)		8 March 2022
Development of the Potland Burn Biodiversity Net Gain Site A report setting out the expenditure required for the creation and management of new habitats at Potland Burn former surface mine to provide biodiversity net gain for Britishvolt, and setting out likely net gain requirements for future inward investment such as for supply chain companies associated with Britishvolt. (C. Horncastle/D. Feige - 01670 622653)	TBC	8 March 2022
Climate Change Update To update on progress against the climate change action plan 2021-23 and next steps (G. Sanderson/M. Baker - 07957 385638)	C&P OSC 2 March 2022	8 March 2022
Adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) To present the Inspectors' Report into the		29 March 2022 Council 30 March 2022

<p>independent examination of the Northumberland Local Plan and to seek Cabinet's approval to recommend that the Council approve the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016-2036), including the Policies Map, as amended by main modifications and additional minor changes, following its Independent Examination by the Planning Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State. (C. Horncastle/ Joan Sanderson (01670 623626))</p>		
<p>Blyth Relief Road To provide an update on progress made towards Blyth Relief Road and secure approval for next steps. The report will outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Route alignment proposals - Key information from the Outline Business Case - Next steps <p>(W. Ploszaj/S. McNaughton 07827 873139)</p>	<p>CSEG OSC 11 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>
<p>Berwick Partnership Organisation This report sets out the findings of the informal meetings that have taken place with schools in the Berwick Partnership since April 2021 to discuss the organisational issues facing the partnership and to identify potential models of organisation that could address those issues. The results of an informal survey with parents and the wider community in the area served by Berwick Partnership are also included in the report. Cabinet is also asked to permit the initiation of a further period of informal consultation with stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership schools to establish whether any models of organisation that may be brought forward at a later date for consultation should consist of only 3-tier models of organisation or include 3-tier and 2-tier (primary/secondary) models of education. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 622281)</p>	<p>FACS OSC 7 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>

<p>Bus Service Improvement Plan/Enhanced Partnership For Cabinet to approve, subsequent to a prior consultation and objection period and statutory consultation period, the proposed Enhanced Plan and Scheme(s). The Enhanced Plan and Scheme is a proposed statutory partnership with regards to a statutory transport plan including the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Cabinet is asked to approve prior to the Enhanced Plan and Scheme(s) being submitted to Central Government by 30th April 2022. (W. Ploszaj/R. O’Farrell/H. Lancaster – 01670 623323)</p>	<p>C&P OSC 6 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>
<p>English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) Reimbursement Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, at the behest of the Department of Transport (DfT) and the Cabinet Office, NCC have continued to reimburse bus operators at pre Covid levels in respect of concessionary travel reimbursement.</p> <p>DfT have now advised transport authorities to revert to reimbursing concessionary travel based on actual usage with effect from the 1st April 2022, albeit with a phased approach to the reduction of payments during the early part of the 2022/23 financial year. This report will seek endorsement to implement the DfT recommended approach. (W. Ploszaj/ N. Easton - 07979 233477)</p>	<p>C&P OSC 6 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>
<p>Community Chest 2022/23 To consider proposed changes to the operation of the Community Chest scheme in line with recommendations made by Elected Members as part of the recent review of Local Area Councils. (B. Flux/T. Kirsop - 07917 266864)</p>		<p>12 April 2022</p>
<p>Procurement of Specialist Dementia Service The report will seek approval for funding of a Specialist Dementia Service. Cost of the service is approximately £967,000 per year. The costs will be shared with the NHS and come from within existing resource. (W. Pattison/Neil Bradley 01670 622868)</p>	<p>H&WB OSC 6 December 2022 (Post Scrutiny)</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>

<p>Financial Performance 2021-22 – Provisional Outturn 2021-22 The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at Provisional Outturn for the Council against the Budget for 2021-22 (R. Wearmouth/S. Dent 01670 625515)</p>		7 June 2022
<p>Trading Companies’ Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of March 2022 The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2021-22 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p>	CSEG OSC 6 June 2022	7 June 2022
<p>Trading Companies’ Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022 The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2022-23 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p>	CSEG OSC 12 September 2022	13 September 2022

This page is intentionally left blank



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

DATE: 8 MARCH 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: **Household Support Fund Update**

Report of Maureen Taylor Interim Executive Director Communities and Business Development

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Corporate Resources
Cllr Wendy Pattison, Adult Well-being

Purpose of report

This briefing paper provides an update of Northumberland County Council's progress for delivery of the DWP Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 06th October 31st December 2022.

Recommendations

- To note the content of the report and the DWP initial Management Information return for 31st December 2021
- To help promote awareness of the Households Support Fund with those residents who may need support and assistance.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to Thriving, Living, Learning and Connecting priorities in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018- 2022

Background

On 30 September 2021 the Government announced that a new Household Support Fund (HSF) grant will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this winter. This new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and totals £500m. **Northumberland County Council indicative funding allocation is £2,480,330.00.**

Local Authorities are encouraged to use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area. As **support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits**, Local Authorities are encouraged to identify vulnerable households

through advice and support from other professionals and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector partners.

Reporting requirements

Authorities are required to make two Statements of Grant Usage and management information (MI) returns.

MI return	Reporting period		Deadline
Interim MI return	From: 06 October 2021	To: 31 December 2021	Deadline: 21 January 2022
Final MI return	From: 06 October 2021	To: 31 March 2022	Deadline: 22 April 2022

An interim MI return was required by 21 January 2022 for spend for the period 06 October 2021 to 31 December 2021. The interim MI return will be used to determine eligible spend to 31 December 2021 and an interim grant payment will be made to the Local Authority for this period once the information in the return has been verified.

Interim MI Return Summary:

- Total Expenditure as of 31st December 2021: **£780,623.79**
- Committed Expenditure as at 31st December 2021: **£1,645,048.77**
- Remaining Available Fund for period 01/01/2022 - 31/03/2022: **£835,281.23**
- Total planned expenditure for period 06/11/21 – 31/03/2022 **£2,480,330.00**

The table below shows the Interim MI Return as of 31st December 2021 for all receipted expenditure.

Table 1: Initial MI Return for period 06/11/21-31/12/21

Total Awards	
Item	Spend (£s)
a) Total amount provided to vulnerable households	£777,378.79
b) Administration Costs	£3245
c) Total LA spend (a+b)	£780,623.79

Total Value of Awards split by Household Composition			
	a) Households with Children	b) Households without Children	c) Total (a+b)
Spend (£s)	£700,398.47	£76,980.32	£777,378.79
Volumes	19097	1830	20927

Total Value of Awards Split by Category						
	a) Food	b) Energy and Water	c) Essentials linked to Energy and Water	d) Wider Essentials	e) Housing Costs	e) Total (a+b+c+d+e)
Spend (£s)	£571,912.44	£180,190.29	£12,635.47	£12,640.59	£0.00	£777,378.79

Delivery Plan

The MI return does not capture committed expenditure for weeks 50, 51 and 52 where receipts have not yet been processed for payments. This includes funding for Christmas/New Year 2021 School Holiday period. Expenditure is performing against delivery plan, and we have a high confidence in fully exhausting the fund by 31/03/2022.

Deliberate action has been taken not to exhaust the fund in the first half of the reporting period due to other financial support available in the period such as:

- DFE Holiday Activity & Food programme (HAF),
- DHSC Practical Support Payment (PSP);
- Northumberland CAB Fuel support pathway
- DHSC Test & Trace Self-Isolation payments.

There will be an anticipated increase in referrals for support through HSF over the coming period, as the impact of both increasing fuel and utility bills and the reductions in universal credit payments start to take hold within households.

The period 01/01/2022 to 31/03/2022 will see an increase in both targeted support and universal referral aimed at vulnerable households with and without children with a particular focus on:

- supporting Free School Meals during the non-term times February 2022 and Easter 2022.
- vulnerable residents experiencing fuel stress and hardship due to high fuel and/or energy costs
- households experiencing food poverty or insecurities

DWP has allowed flexibility within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and allows Northumberland County Council to apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility. The list above is not exhaustive.

Widespread communication is planned through NCC and NCT channels to ensure maximum awareness and to promote the fund.

Access to the fund will be facilitated by NCT via telephone during the following times (with the exception of bank holidays):

- Monday to Friday – 9:00am to 18:00pm

Northumberland Communities Together Tel: 01670 620015

Email: NCT@Northumberland.gov.uk

- Out of Hours & Weekends

Out of hours and weekends are handled by NCC OneCall emergency duty system. An out of hours voicemail service is also available including directing callers to other potential avenues of support. Tel: 01670 536400

Table 2: Progress against draft delivery plan.

Area of Funding	Planned Activities	Total		
		Anticipated spend (£s)	Actual	Committed as of 31/012/21
Support for Food of which is supporting Households without children 0-19yrs...	Continue to support food poverty and insecurities across communities. Direct food provision, emergency food provision, Pay point Payments, Shopping Vouchers sustainable community food offers	£700,000	£71,012	£350,000 (£421,012)
Support for food of which is supporting children eligible for Free School Meals during holidays	Support for families through shopping vouchers, Pay Point Payments, direction to Holiday Activity & Food (HAF) programme where eligible	£820,330	£450,900.44	£288,800.98 (£739,701.42)
Support for food of which is supporting children not currently eligible for FSMs (£s)	Emergency welfare support and assistance to needs and support for universally funded Holiday Activity & Food Programmes	£100,000	£50,000	(£50,000)
Support for Energy and Water.	Continue to support the Northumberland Fuel partnership and Warmer Homes partnership to address fuel poverty and insecurities through offer of Fuel Payment Vouchers, Pay Point Payments, and other discretionary support offers such as Greener Homes Grants. Targeted provision to vulnerable households living in cold homes, experiencing fuel poverty.	£240,000	£180,190.29	£150,000 (£330,190.29)
Support for Essentials linked to Energy and Water.	Support to households experiencing emergency with heating, electrical appliances such as cookers, boilers etc or other equipment essential for cooking, heating . Payment via Pay Point or through VCS organisations supporting provision of refurbished/recyclable goods	£120,000	£12,635.47	£40,000 (£52,635.47)
Support for Wider Essentials (Please specify in planned activities).	Support to households for emergency assistance with warm winter items, cooking utensils, bedding and other essentials - targeted provision for those experiencing homelessness, or experiencing transition due to domestic abuse, leaving prison, care etc and are deemed eligible and vulnerable and have no other means of support. Support to those households who meet HSF scheme eligibility but have no recourse to public funds	£100,000	£12,640.59	£30,000 (£42,640.59)
Support for housing costs (Please specify in planned activities).	Support with housing costs associated with connectivity bills to ensure individuals keep connected addressing social isolation; can process online transactions such as food deliveries, medical appointments, prescriptions, etc. Scheme allows discretion for other emergency housing bills, call out cost's plumber, electrician etc if aligns to scheme criteria.	£40,000	£0.00	£5,624 (£5,624)
Other spend (Please specify in planned activities).	Support with the delivery of prescriptions or other deliveries to help maintain households during periods of practical hardship or isolation. Continue to support the Northumberland Clothing Partnership to help provide and distribute clotting essentials to families in need of support and assistance.	£40,000	£0.00	(£0.00)
Scheme Administration.	Administration Charges for Pay Point transactions, Voucher Schemes etc. There is no provision for staff costs Northumberland waives the right to ensure maximum allocations goes to households in need.	£20,000	£3245	(£3245)
Overall as of 31/012/2021.		£2,180,330.00	£780,623.79	£864,424.98 (£1,645,048.77)

Implications

Policy	This is a government initiative providing support to all Local Authorities for the period to 31 March 2022
Finance and value for money	The draft delivery plan outlines the indicative areas of spend as per the criteria in the national guidance. The Council is required to submit monthly returns to the Department on spend. Funding is paid to the Council in arrears
Legal	There is no requirement for Authorities to undertake a means test or conduct a benefit check unless this specifically forms part of the Authority's local eligibility criteria
Procurement	Not Applicable this a grant allocation under section 13 of the Local government Act 2003
Human Resources	NCT staffing resources will administer the grant. A small allowance can be ring fenced from the Fund should that be necessary. This is not expected.
Property	Not applicable
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities are encouraged to use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area. Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of debt advice provision). Authorities have the local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those most in need and ensure an inclusive and equitable offer.
Risk Assessment	Not applicable
Crime & Disorder	Potential positive impact on crime and disorder prevention when vulnerable residents feel supported
Customer Consideration	Open access to the Fund will encourage dialogue and provide support from this Fund. Where that is not appropriate, NCT will maximise its networks to find solutions to meet the needs of our vulnerable residents. Customer satisfaction is expected to be good.
Carbon reduction	Not directly applicable. Funding to support fuel insecurities will lead to conversations with residents about green energy supplies

Health and Wellbeing	Supporting vulnerable people to maintain their health and wellbeing over the winter period by providing targeted and personalised support
Wards	All

Report sign off.

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

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Maureen Taylor
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth Cllr Wendy Pattison

Author and Contact Details

Paul Brooks
Head of Northumberland Communities Together
Mobile: 07770981864
Email: paul.brooks@northumberland.gov.uk

Northumberland County Council

Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2021-2022

1. Terms of reference:

- (1) To maintain an overview of the Council's Annual Budget and Budgetary Management via the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- (2) To review the state of Northumberland and the County Council's activity in delivering its Corporate Plan.
- (3) To maintain an overview of the Council's performance management arrangements; highlighting areas of poor performance and monitoring recovery delivery plans.
- (4) To maintain an overview of the Management Agreements in place between the Council and Advance Northumberland.
- (5) To monitor, review and make recommendations about:
 - Corporate Services: Organisational Development, Health and Safety, ICT Strategy, Corporate Governance, Financial Services, Procurement Strategy, Risk Strategy, Shared and Traded Services
 - Partnership development coordination with local organisations
 - Relationships with external bodies
 - Regeneration and Economic Development
 - Strategic Transport Network and Infrastructure
 - Employability, Skills, and removing barriers to work
 - Capital Programme and Asset Management
 - Support to VCS organisations and the Council's relationship with town and parish councils.

Reports to be scheduled:
Green Homes Grant – May 2022

Northumberland County Council
Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-2022

7 March 2022

**Trading Companies Financial
Performance 2021-22 - December 2021**

To receive the quarterly report prepared for Cabinet.

Household Support Update

To update the Committee on the delivery of the Fund.

11 April 2022

British Volt

To update the Committee on plans to establish a giga plant in the county.

Advance Northumberland

To update the Committee on Advance's operations.

Blyth Relief Road

To provide an update on progress made towards Blyth Relief Road and secure approval for next steps.

Northumberland County Council
Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2021-2022

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1.	12 July 2021	Borderlands	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee support the recommendations as outlined in the report.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 13 July 2021.
2.	12 July 2021	Workforce Report	RESOLVED that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of this report. ii. Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee continue to receive an annual update of this report for every financial year. iii. The data that was contained in the whistleblowing report and the ongoing work to promote a safe environment for staff to raise concerns through various mechanisms across the Council was noted; and iv. The Members Working Group review the Whistleblowing policy in regards to Elected Members and a report be brought back to this Committee. 	<p>The Committee will continue to receive this report annually.</p> <p>The Members Services Working Group will review the Whistleblowing Policy insofar as it affects elected members. The outcome should then be reported back to this Committee.</p>
3.	12 July 2021	Statutory Consultation on the new timetable for the East Coast mainline between Edinburgh and London	RESOLVED: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee supported Councillor Sanderson efforts in relation to the proposals; and 2. A representative of the body proposing the cuts be invited to attend this Committee to explain the reasoning behind the proposals. 	The Committee will continue to monitor this issue as appropriate.
4.	2 August 2021	Northumberland Enterprise Holdings Limited	The Committee therefore RESOLVED to advise the Cabinet of the issues raised	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 17 August 2021.

			above and to consider the additional recommendations as agreed.	
5.	9 August 2021	Advanced Propulsion Centre UK	RESOLVED that the presentation and members' comments be noted.	No further action required at this stage.
6.	9 August 2021	Dissolution of the Council's Partnership with Northumbria Healthcare/ Proposed Partnership for 0-19 Public Health Services - Consultation	RESOLVED that (a) the information provided by the representatives of the Trust and the responses provided by the Chief Executive be noted, and (b) the Cabinet be recommended to direct officers of the Council to meet officers of the Trust to determine whether a practical solution can be achieved to salvage what is an excellent relationship.	This issue was subject to call-in to the Health and Wellbeing OSC on 18 August 2021. That Committee will continue to oversee the transition.
7.	9 August 2021	Advance Northumberland	RESOLVED that (a) the report be noted, and (b) further updates be presented to the Committee.	Further updates will be presented to the Committee as appropriate.
8.	6 September 2021	Northumberland Line	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee support the recommendations as outlined in the report and specifically to the proposal of the two years' free parking.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 7 September 2021.
9.	11 October 2021	Council Tax Support Scheme	RESOLVED to advise Cabinet they would like to see a commitment to utilise the household support fund to offer relief above 92%.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 12 October 2021.
10.	11 October 2021	Establishing a Pilot Culture and Creative Zone in Northumberland	RESOLVED the Committee supported the recommendation contained in the report.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 12 October 2021.
11.	11 October 2021	Energising Blyth Programme	RESOLVED the Committee supported the recommendation contained in the report.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 12 October 2021.
12.	11 October 2021	Newcastle Airport – Shareholder Loan Guarantee	RESOLVED the Committee supported the recommendation contained in the report	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 12 October 2021
13.	17 November 2021	Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (LAD2) Grant Funding	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 18 November 2021

14.	17 November 2021	Corporate Plan Refresh 2021-24	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 18 November 2021
15.	17 November 2021	Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-25	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 18 November 2021.
16.	6 December 2021	Household Support Fund	RESOLVED the Committee agreed to advise the Cabinet that it supported the recommendations in the presentation, subject to consideration of the issues raised above.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 7 December 2021. A further update will be presented to the OSC.
17.	6 December 2021	NCTA Digital Programme	RESOLVED that the presentation be received.	No further action required at this stage.
18.	6 December 2021	Debt Recovery Update	RESOLVED that the report be received.	The OSC will continue to receive six monthly updates.
19.	6 December 2021	Trading Companies Financial Performance 2021-22	RESOLVED that the recommendations in the report be supported and to continue to receive quarter reports as they are prepared for the Cabinet.	The OSC will continue to receive regular updates.
20.	7 February 2022	Budget 2022-23 and MTFP 2022-26	RESOLVED the Committee agreed to note the recommendations subject to further consideration of the proposal to increase Housing rents.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 8 February 2022
21.	7 February 2022	Revenues and Benefits Policies for 2022/23	RESOLVED the Committee agreed to note the recommendations	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 8 February 2022
22.	7 February 2022	Budget Consultation Report	RESOLVED the committee agreed to note to recommendations.	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 8 February 2022
23.	7 February 2022	Northumberland Line	RESOVLED the Committee agreed to support the recommendation	The Cabinet considered the comments of the OSC when it determined the report on 8 February 2022