

Public Document Pack



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Nichola Turnbull

Email: nichola.turnbull@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622617

Date: Wednesday, 20 October 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **PETITIONS COMMITTEE** to be held in **MEETING SPACE - BLOCK 1, FLOOR 2 - COUNTY HALL** on **THURSDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2021** at **2.00 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Daljit Lally
Chief Executive

To Petitions Committee members as follows:-

C Ball, T Cessford, R Dodd (Chair), B Flux (Vice-Chair), B Gallacher, J Reid, M Swinburn, A Wallace and R Wearmouth

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. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The committee are asked to note the following membership and terms of reference for the Petitions Committee which were agreed by Council on 26 May 2021.

9 members(5:3:1 Ind Gp place to LD)

Quorum – 2

Chair: R. Dodd

Vice Chair: B. Flux

Conservative	Labour	Independent Group	Liberal Democrats	Green Party	Ind Non-Grouped
T. Cessford	C. Ball		J. Reid		
R. Dodd	B. Gallacher				
B. Flux	A. Wallace				
M. Swinburn					
R. Wearmouth					

Terms of Reference

To consider those petitions of a corporate or county wide nature which do not fall within the remit of the local area councils, planning and other regulatory committees (petitions about planning or licensing applications may not be considered), and to make appropriate recommendations to full Council, the Cabinet, or other committees, or on matters delegated to officers depending upon the subject matter. The Committee can also consider petitions about local issues in exceptional circumstances when agreed by the Chair.

The relevant Cabinet member and division member(s) are invited to attend as non-voting members.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. MINUTES

(Pages 1
- 6)

Minutes of the meeting of the Petitions Committee, held on 30 July 2020, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. 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.

N.B. Any member needing clarification must contact the Legal Services Manager at monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

5. PETITION REQUESTING A REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR NON-STATUTORY TRANSPORT TO SCHOOLS

(Pages 7
- 14)

To acknowledge the petition received requesting a review of arrangements for non-statutory transport to schools for rural communities and to agree the Council's response.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 26 January 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

7. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

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 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 3

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

At a virtual meeting of the **Petitions Committee** held on Thursday, 30 July 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor R. Dodd
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Cartie, E.
Foster, J.
Flux, B.

Rickerby, L.
Swinburn, M.

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Sanderson, H.G.H.

Portfolio Holder for Environment &
Local Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. Jones
R. Murfin
N. Snowdon

Ms. N. Turnbull

Service Director - Local Services
Director of Planning
Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Improvement)
Democratic Services Officer

6. PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED AT A VIRTUAL PETITIONS COMMITTEE

The Chair outlined the procedure which would be followed at the virtual meeting and of the changes to the petition protocol.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Campbell and T. Cessford.

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Petitions Committee held on Wednesday, 31 July 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Ch.'s Initials.....

9. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Foster declared an interest and would not participate in agenda Item 6.1 'Speeding Vehicles in Stakeford' as she raised the petition.

10. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, COMMERCIAL & ECONOMY

10.1 Solar Panels on all Newbuilds

The Petitions Committee were requested to acknowledge the petition received requesting that the Council require all new build homes in Northumberland to be built with solar photovoltaics installed and agree the Council's response. (Report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

A statement in support of the petition from Bethan Sproat, the Lead Petitioner, was read out by N Turnbull, Democratic Services Officer. The statement would be attached to the signed copy of the minutes and would be uploaded to the Council's website.

Councillor Sanderson, the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Local Services, which included responsibility for climate change, thanked Ms Sproat for the petition. They were aware of the value of solar panels and PV cells and were installing them when they could. Good progress was being made with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and they were doing as much as they were able, however, the Council was bound by national and regional policies.

The Director of Planning shared the petitioner's ambition when it came to sustainable construction techniques across the entire built environment and looked for every opportunity for all forms of sustainable construction methods in respect of residential and commercial buildings. However, the Government's Planning Inspectorate needed to be convinced that any additional requirements, beyond national requirements, were financially viable.

He made reference to the current examination process for the approval of the Northumberland Local Plan and the policy asks on the development industry which sought contributions for education, healthcare, affordable housing, public open space and highway works and evidence that these requests would not affect the viability of new build, given the different market conditions across the county. In some areas, they had been unable to seek contributions for affordable housing, as otherwise the development would not be feasible.

The petition requested use of solar pv on all new builds and the Director of Planning did want to be so prescriptive as solar would not be the best cost effective solution for some buildings and some site locations. The Council wanted to incorporate as many sustainable construction technologies as possible and a new policy was included within the Local Plan and was supported by Friends of the Earth. They supported the ideology, however

national legislation needed to change to require it / solar pv on every development, due to the viability argument.

Members of the Petitions Committee noted that:

- Building orientation was an important factor as not all houses were south facing.
- Whilst sympathising with the petition ideology, concerns about the future cost implications and whether house buyers should have a choice.
- Feed in tariffs were no longer as generous and vat had increased from 5% to 20%. Peak demand did not match peak output often occurred when most household occupants were away from the house at work. The resultant requirement for batteries for storage purposes with the associated environmental implications.
- In principle, it was an excellent suggestion at first glance, however, there were many different solutions and they did not think it was right to be too prescriptive requiring one particular method, there should be flexibility to ensure the best option for each property.
- Hydroelectric technology was another method to be considered which ran best in winter when wind turbines were unable to operate.

In response to questions from Committee the following information was provided:-

- Building orientation was important to design discussions and negotiations. Solar PV could give fantastic opportunities for buildings with large roof spaces such as warehouse sheds if aligned correctly. If site restrictions, or constraints such as the shape, did not allow PV, other technologies of sustainable construction might give a better result.
- Building control standards and regulations required improvements to the thermal efficiency of homes and all new properties were expected to be built that way. Due to the importance of the issue, the Government had decided that gas central heating would not be fitted to new homes from 2025 onwards.
- Technological improvements meant that solar panels were becoming more efficient compared to the first generation and the cost per Kwh ratios was improving all the time. It was likely that they would look more like conventional roof tiles in the future.
- At the moment, the evidence suggested that a prescriptive approach was not affordable in terms of housing market conditions in Northumberland. The Government might decide to make it mandatory in the future.
- Homes for Northumberland were checking the environmental impact assessments for its own housing stock to see what efficiencies and improvements could be made in a sustainable way.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The issues raised in the petition, be noted.
- (b) The Council's approach to solar photovoltaics being installed on all new build homes, be noted.

- (c) The request to require all new build homes to be built with solar photovoltaics installations is not supported for the reasons set out in this report.

The Chair thanked the petitioner and asked them to note that they were listening and acting when it was within the Council's control.

Councillor Foster switched her camera and microphone off and took no part in the following item.

11. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - LOCAL SERVICES

11.1 Speeding Vehicles in Stakeford

The Petitions Committee were requested to acknowledge receipt of the e-petition received regarding excessive vehicle speeds on the A196 between Stakeford and Guide Post and agree the Council's response. (Report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

A statement in support of the petition from Councillor Julie Foster, the Lead Petitioner, was read out by L Little, Democratic Services Officer. The statement would be attached to the signed copy of the minutes and would be uploaded to the Council's website.

Councillor Sanderson, the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Local Services, commented that speeding vehicles was a common problem throughout the country and a strict and disciplined approach was required. Monitoring was required in areas where issues were identified but sometimes perception was different to reality. The approach adopted needed to be fair, transparent and equal to all. Some Members had funded solutions through their Members' Local Improvement allowance and this was one of the key uses of the fund.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) reported that the results of the speed surveys regrettably did not meet the current speed criteria for enforcement, the 85th percentile needed to be 35mph or above. However, the information would be passed to Northumbria Police as there was an identified issue in the evening by 'boy racers' and it was hoped that they would take appropriate action by neighbourhood officers. He added that Northumbria Police were working on a new enforcement strategy which it was hoped would be in place in September 2020. The current process was lengthy and it was hoped that the issue would meet the criteria in the new strategy which would allow other areas to be included in the monitoring of known problem areas.

An 20mph advisory speed in the area at school start and finish times seemed to be working and this would be monitored when schools went back in September.

In response to a question regarding the location of the speed enforcement cameras, the Service Director - Local Services commented that the Council

worked with the police and others as part of the Northumbria Safer Roads Initiative (NSRI) which included looking at enforcement arrangements on an evidence led basis. Officers worked with the police to identify areas of speeding concern to ensure locations were targeted and where the camera enforcement vehicle could be safely parked. Officers had requested a more even spread instead of a focus on busier locations. The police had been responsive and were working to make sure resources were best targeted to help reduce vehicle speeds at locations where this was identified as being a concern in order to improve road safety.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Local Services commented that the speed van should be deployed at locations based on accident data and where there were safety issues. Locations had been more varied recently.

Members of the Petitions Committee noted that:

- Similar speeding problems regularly occurred in their own wards.
- Some Members had purchased hand held cameras used by volunteers which resulted in motorists receiving a letter from the police.
- Information regarding locations where speeding was a known issue and monitored by the police was available on the NSRI website.
- The number of complaints regarding speeding vehicles had increased since lockdown

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The Committee noted that officers were working with Northumbria Police and all Local Authorities in the force area to develop a new enforcement strategy which will assist the police with dealing with this type of issue. The petition will form part of the evidence gathering process and be forwarded to the Camera Enforcement Unit for further investigation and necessary action.
- (b) It was noted that preliminary design work was to be funded by Councillor Foster through her Members Local Improvement Scheme allowance which would allow the design team to identify possible measures which would encourage reduced vehicle speeds along this route.
- (c) Depending on the scale of measures proposed during preliminary design, it be agreed that these may need to be considered for inclusion in a future Local Transport Plan Programme following the assessment process, as funding was already allocated for 2020/21.

Councillor Foster returned and recommenced participation in the meeting at this point.

11.2 Petition requesting to erect a fence or barrier between Crofton Grange Estate and land opposite Stardale Avenue Blyth

The Petitions Committee were requested to acknowledge the recently received petition and respond to petitioners and the Local Area Council on the issues raised. (Report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Service Director - Local Services outlined the report including the land ownership issues, children's safety and the necessity to reinstate damaged areas from deep ruts which were a trip hazard for pedestrians.

Under normal circumstances, the Council would not normally invest in fencing on land it did not own. However due to the aforementioned reasons, prevention of vehicle movement across the green space and removing the need to undertake annual repairs for public safety, it was recommended that birdsmouth fencing be installed near Wooler Grange at a cost of £2,250 from the grounds maintenance budget.

Discussions about the issue had been held with Councillor Grant Davey, the local Councillor for the ward, who had agreed to fund the fencing near Stardale Avenue out of his Members Local Improvement Scheme allowance, at a cost of £4,850. This would be accepted as it would be preferable to have fencing erected at both locations to close off vehicular access to the green space from both areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Local Services expressed his appreciation to the petitioner for organising the petition and raising awareness that vehicles crossing the land were putting pedestrians lives at risk and causing costly damage to the land. He thanked the officers and local member for finding a solution to the problem.

Members' agreed with the proposed solution and moved the recommendation.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) The contents of the report, including the work undertaken by the Council's Neighbourhood Services Team who has given careful consideration over how to prevent vehicles driving across the open grassed area between Stardale and Crofton Grange estate, be noted.
- (b) The proposal from the Neighbourhood Services Team will arrange for the erection of birdsmouth fencing at Wooler Grange to help address the safety concerns being raised and also to reduce the damage being caused to this grassed area of open space, be noted.
- (c) The birdsmouth fencing near Stardale Avenue be funded by The local Councillor for the Kitty Brewster ward, be noted.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Thursday, 29 October 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

Ch.'s Initials.....
Petitions Committee, 30 July 2020



Northumberland County Council

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

28 OCTOBER 2021

PETITION REQUESTING A REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR NON-STATUTORY TRANSPORT TO SCHOOLS

Report of: Rick O'Farrell, Interim Executive Director of Regeneration and Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Wojciech Ploszaj, Cabinet Member for Business & Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Purpose of report

To acknowledge the petition received requesting a review of arrangements for non-statutory transport to schools for rural communities and to agree the Council's response.

Recommendations

The Petitions Committee is recommended to note:

- **the issues raised in the petition;**
- **the changes to the 688 Service timetable made in conjunction with Go North East addressing the concerns highlighted in the petition; and**
- **the ongoing regional work on the establishment of an enhanced bus partnership and the associate funding and network improvement opportunities arising from this initiative.**

Key issues

A petition of 109 signatures has been received requesting a review of arrangements for non-statutory transport to schools for rural communities.

The petition has been submitted to highlight the difficulties in using public transport to access non catchment educational establishments when living in remote communities

such as Allenheads.

The petition states. *“Whilst the Council have made it clear that no changes will be made in the provision of transport outside of a school catchment area, they surely have a responsibility to work with public transport companies to ensure that school children have services running at the right times and to and from the correct locations (where feasible).”*

BACKGROUND

1. Other than supporting travel arrangements for pupils with disabilities and mobility problems, the Council's statutory duty in relation to travelling to and from educational establishments is limited to supporting a child's attendance at school by providing transport arrangement for those families that live beyond the statutory walking distance from the nearest appropriate school (section 508B, Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and inspections Act 2006)
2. The Council only provides free travel support to children who are:
 - Of compulsory school age;
 - Resident in Northumberland;
 - Attending their nearest and appropriate qualifying school, or
 - Attending their nearest school chosen on grounds of religion or belief;
 - Living beyond the statutory walking distance for their age, or
 - Living within the statutory walking distance for their age but the walking route is deemed "unavailable" for safety reasons by the County Council, or
 - Qualifying for "extended rights" on the grounds of low income, or
 - Unable to walk to school as a result of their disability, mobility problems or special educational needs.
3. As a rule, the County Council does not provide travel support to enable pupils to attend other schools outside of their catchment area. However, there is sometimes spare seating capacity on contracted school transport vehicles arranged for pupils who meet the eligibility criteria, and the Council may be able to make these spare seats available to children not qualifying for free school transport for this reason. There is a charge for transport provided on this basis. The Council cannot guarantee that this will continue throughout a child's attendance at an establishment, so families should not make school choices which rely on this.
4. On the 29th June 2021, the council received a request to create an e-petition calling for a Review of School Transport Arrangements for Rural Communities the petition went live on the 7th July 2021 and closed on the 1st September 2021, having amassed 109 signatories (Appendix 1). The petition states, 'people should have a choice as to where their child goes to school and in rural areas especially, appropriate transport and subsidised tickets are the only means to give those children a choice' and 'they [NCC] surely have a responsibility to work with public transport companies to ensure that school children have services running as the right times and to and from the correct locations'.
5. The specific example highlighted in this petition concerns students travelling to non-catchment schools and being reliant on parents making independent travel

arrangements as the current public bus network in the area did not support travel to and from the chosen educational establishment.

6. The area in question was served by the Northumberland County Council supported 688 Service and operated by Go North East. The service offered 9 return trips a day between Hexham and Allendale with 6 of those journeys extending to Allenheads. An abridged version of the 688 Service timetables is set out below:

Monday to Friday from 7 September 2020

Hexham >> Allendale >> Allenheads

Hexham	0549	0724	0855	1045	1200	1350	1545	1730	1835
Allendale	0613	0750	0922	1112	1227	1417	1612	1757	1901
Allenheads	0631	-	0940	-	1245	1435	1630	-	1919

Allenheads >> Allendale >> Hexham

Allenheads	0631	-	0941	-	1246	1436	1636	-	1921
Allendale	0650	0750	1000	1115	1305	1455	1655	1800	1940
Hexham	0717	0817	1027	1142	1332	1522	1722	1827	2007

7. The timings allowed students travelling between Allendale and Hexham to use this public bus service to travel to and from Hexham based educational establishments and the later journeys allowed for return journeys for those students accessing after school activities.
8. However, the absence of key journeys extending to Allenheads meant this service was unsuitable for travel to and from Hexham based educational establishments for any students living south of Allendale and extending down to Allenheads.
9. It should be noted the Council was aware of the issue, having received a number of queries regarding the service and had embarked on a review of the 688 Service timetables in advance of receiving the petition.
10. In May 2021 Northumberland County Council met with Go North East to review all Hexham based services, with a number of changes identified for implementation. Included in these changes was the development of a new timetable for the 688 Service. An abridged version of *NEW* 688 Service timetable is set out below:

Monday to Friday from 24 July 2021

Hexham >> Allendale >> Allenheads

Hexham	0550	0650	0910	1110	1310	1530	1730	1830
Allendale	0617	0717	0937	1137	1337	1557	1757	1857

Allenheads	0635	0735	0955	1155	1355	1615	1815	1915
<i>Allenheads >> Allendale >> Hexham</i>								
Allenheads	0635	0735	0955	1155	1355	1615	1815	1915
Allendale	0654	0754	1014	1214	1414	1634	1834	1934
Hexham	0721	0821	1041	1241	1441	1701	1901	2001

11. The new timetable came into effect on the 24 July 2021, in time for the start of the 2021/22 academic year. Whilst the total number of return trips per day dropped from 9 to 8, the hours of operation remained unaltered, with all journeys now extending to Allenheads.
12. The newly added 0735 departure from Allenheads, provides a new direct link for students south of Allendale who attend Hexham’s educational establishments.
13. Other improvements include the 1730 departure from Hexham, again extending to Allenheads, which allows return travel for those students participating in extra circular activities.
14. Northumberland County Council is committed to working closely with bus operators to provide services that meet the needs of users, both in terms of frequency of service and value for money. Local Authority funding constraints coupled with operators need for services to be commercially viable, means that communities, particularly rural communities, don’t have the level of service we aspire to. To that end, Northumberland County Council funds a range of mostly rural supported services to ensure, where possible, residents have access to public transport for essential journeys such as those to educational establishments.
15. The future of the bus network in the region is in a precarious position with the Covid-19 pandemic having decimated ridership, with a return to pre-Covid patronage essential to maintaining the existing network and avoiding a significant reduction in service levels. To further this aim Northumberland County Council, in collaboration with Transport North East, has committed to the establishment of an enhanced bus partnership. With a 3-year package of central government funding linked to this partnership, it will be possible to look at developing further improvements to the network coupled with ticketing incentives that will make travelling on bus services more affordable and help rebuild patronage.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy	The response to the issues raised in this petition is consistent with the Council’s current home to school transport policy and supported services policy.
---------------	--

Finance and value for money	Any changes to the Council's Home to School transport policy would increase costs.
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"/>
Risk Assessment	None
Crime & Disorder	None
Customer Consideration	None
Carbon reduction	None
Health and Wellbeing	None
Wards	Hexham and South Tynedale

Background papers:

[Home to School Travel and Transport Policy](#)

Report sign off

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

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Helen Lancaster
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Directors	Rick O'Farrell
	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wojciech Ploszaj
	Guy Renner-Thompson

Author and Contact Details

Neil Easton, Public Transport Manager, Economy and Regeneration Service

Telephone: 07979 233477

Email: neil.easton@northumberland.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Petition Information

Review of School Transport Arrangements for Rural Communities

This petition requests that the Council review current transport services and works with public service transport companies to ensure school transportation in the area meets the needs of the community and gives more choice to our children and their education.

If your child attends a school not within the catchment area for your postcode, the current policy of the Council is not to provide transport unless certain criteria are met. You are therefore reliant on either Public Transport or making alternative arrangements to take your child to school.

Currently, the 688 Hexham to Allendale/Allenheads provides a bus service from Allenheads at 06:31 and 09:41. The service which runs in-between terminates at Allendale, returning to Hexham at 07:50. Any parents who live further up the valley, have to transport their children by car to Allendale to catch the service bus.

A number of other parents have also stated that services to schools do not take into account children who may do extra-curricular activities after school. Whilst the Council have made it clear that no changes will be made in the provision of transport outside of a school catchment area, they surely have a responsibility to work with public transport companies to ensure that school children have services running at the right times and to and from the correct locations (where feasible).

People should have a choice as to where their child goes to school and in rural areas especially, appropriate transport and subsidised tickets are the only means to giving those children a choice. The Council try to encourage environmentally friendly ways of travelling to school with their 'Go Smarter Northumberland' initiative and yet there appears to be a disconnect between this and the current working arrangements with Public Services.

Opened for signatures on 07.07.21

Closed for signatures on 01.09.21

Number of signatures as at 01.09.21 - 109