

# 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:** 22 August 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OSC** to be held in **CONFERENCE ROOM 2 - COUNTY HALL** on **WEDNESDAY, 31 AUGUST 2022** at **2.00 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Rick O'Farrell  
Interim Chief Executive

**To Communities and Place OSC members as follows:-**

**J Reid (Chair), M Mather (Vice-Chair), D Carr, E Cartie, G Castle, A Dale, R Dodd, B Gallacher, N Morphet and J Lang**



**Rick O'Farrell, Interim Chief Executive**  
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF  
T: 0345 600 6400  
[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://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  
- 14)

Minutes of the following meetings of the Communities and Place OSC, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair:

- a) 1 June 2022
- b) 29 June 2022

#### 3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required where a matter arises at a meeting;

- a) Which **directly relates to** Disclosable Pecuniary Interest ('DPI') as set out in Appendix B, Table 1 of the Code of Conduct, to disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote and not to remain in room. Where members have a DPI or if the matter concerns an executive function and is being considered by a Cabinet Member with a DPI they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with the matter.
- b) Which **directly relates to** the financial interest or well being of a Other Registrable Interest as set out in Appendix B, Table 2 of the Code of Conduct to disclose the interest and only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain the room.
- c) Which **directly relates to** their financial interest or well-being (and is not DPI) or the financial well being of a relative or close associate, to declare the interest and members may only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak. Otherwise, the member must not take part in discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.
- d) Which **affects** the financial well-being of the member, a relative or close associate or a body included under the Other Registrable Interests column in Table 2, to disclose the interest and apply the test

set out at paragraph 9 of Appendix B before deciding whether they may remain in the meeting.

- e) Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registerable Interest or Non Registerable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact [monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk). Members are referred to the Code of Conduct which contains the matters above in full. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

#### **4. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS** (Pages 15 - 20)

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

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **5.1 Fleet Replacement Update** (Pages 21 - 30)

To provide an overview of the work undertaken and challenges faced in delivering the Council's fleet replacement programme in 2021/2022.

*The Cabinet Member requested to attend for the following items is Councillor John Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Local Services.*

#### **5.2 Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2022/23** (Pages 31 - 98)

The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet, for its consideration and endorsement, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23.

*The Cabinet Member requested to attend for the following items is Councillor Colin Horncastle, Portfolio Holder for Community Services.*

### **REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR**

#### **6. COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT** (Pages 99 - 104)

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 2022/23 council year.

## **7. 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.

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Date of meeting:</b>	
<b>Meeting:</b>			
<b>Item to which your interest relates:</b>			
<b>Nature of Interest i.e. either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Table 1 of Appendix B to the Code of Conduct, Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest (as defined by Appendix B to Code of Conduct) (please give details):</b>			
<b>Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?</b>		Yes - <input type="checkbox"/>	No - <input type="checkbox"/>

## Registering Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

**"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest"** means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

**"Partner"** means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

### Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest.

Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

### Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

### Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in **Table 1**) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –

- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
- b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
- c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2** you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well- being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

This page is intentionally left blank



## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 1 June 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

#### PRESENT

Councillor J. Reid  
(Chair, in the Chair)

#### MEMBERS

Carr, D.	Gallacher, B.
Castle, G.	Lang, J.
Dale, A.	Mather, M.
Dodd, R.R.	Morphet, N.

#### CABINET MEMBERS

Horncastle, C	Community Services
---------------	--------------------

#### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

D. Feige (virtual)	Environment and Design Team Manager & County Ecologist
R. Murfin	Interim Executive Director of Planning & Local Services
S. Nicholson	Scrutiny Co-Ordinator
N. Turnbull	Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Hardy was also in attendance.

#### 1. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Membership and Terms of Reference, as agreed by Council at the meeting on 4 May 2022, had been circulated for information.

The Chair welcomed new Members to the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the Communities & Place OSC's membership and terms of reference, as agreed by Council on 4 May 2022, be noted.

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Cartie.

#### 3. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 6 April 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (June to September). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes).

Members agreed that they would like to include the 'Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Proposed Food Waste Recycling Pilot Schemes' within the work programme for the committee.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **5. SCRUTINY REPORT**

##### **5.1 Development of the Potland Burn Biodiversity Net Gain Site**

The report sought approval from Cabinet for the capital and revenue expenditure that would be incurred in the development of the first phase of the Potland Burn biodiversity net gain site, amendment of capital and revenue budgets and potential for further habitat creation to meet the biodiversity net gain requirements for future strategic inward investment. (A copy of the report and presentation are enclosed with the signed minutes).

David Feige, Environment and Design Team Manager and County Ecologist, explained that it had been necessary to identify a suitable site to meet net gain requirements of the Britishvolt planning application, prior to them becoming a mandatory element of the planning application system in 2023.

He described the process which assigned a numerical value to the site following an assessment of the ecological value of the proposed development site and habitats to be created. An area of land, which was of low ecological value and capable of being enhanced, had been required. The progress to date and next steps were also outlined.

Potland Burn had been identified as a suitable site where a significant uplift in ecological value could be gained from the former surface mine which was in the early stages of aftercare. Although only 67ha was required for the Britishvolt application, further investment in the county would also likely require offsite biodiversity net gain, and therefore the remaining 33ha would be available for other employment sites.

In order to meet the timeframe required to attract Britishvolt and their financing arrangements, the land needed to be in the ownership of the Council or capable of being secured by legal agreement within a very short timescale.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members:

- Planning applications determined after the date the Environment Act came into force would need to assess biodiversity net gain. The date was yet undetermined but expected in autumn 2023.
- The assessment had been used prior to it becoming mandatory, in line with practice at other local authorities. The metric had become available, and it was considered to be the most robust and transparent method to compensate for the loss of the significant ecological features at the Britishvolt coal stocking yard site.
- It was necessary to prepare for the additional inward investment that would be attracted to the south east of the county by the Britishvolt development, plans for possible expansion and the potential of attracting other firms in Britishvolt's supply chain. Ensuring provision was in place for environmental requirements would future proof the council's economic strategy and ensure that the county was in a favourable position when compared with other areas, which did not have provision in place.
- It had become an important part of the Council's economic inward investment and ecological strategies and information was being shared with other local authorities.
- Natural regrowth and improvement of the soil would take a considerable time as the material had been stored during the period that surface mining had taken place. Whilst it would eventually become more diverse, it would be delayed given that the majority was from arable land and therefore, did not have a good seed source and also due to the recent mining activity on the site. Section 106 money from Britishvolt provided an opportunity for acceleration to replace the ecological features at the coal stocking yard at Potland Burn. The work would also benefit climate change through pond creation which was very good at carbon sequestration. There would also be low intensity grazing which would assist meat production and food security, enhanced rights of way would be created for local residents which was important to their wellbeing. It was therefore considered that investment in the site would produce a broader range of benefits than abandonment.
- The sum of money had been calculated using the Defra impact assessment and costs for habitat creation and land as contained within the Environment Bill.
- The Government had introduced the biodiversity net gain requirements due to the degradation in ecological quality in recent generations. The damage was reaching a crisis point which had to be arrested. Therefore, ecological issues needed to be addressed when considering planning applications as was the case for highways, drainage and flood risk issues etc.
- The costs included establishment, maintenance and aftercare costs for a 30-year period.

- The Britishvolt scheme would construct one of the largest buildings in the world, and therefore the scale of the ecological offsetting required that a major step be taken. It was not representative of the typical planning applications considered each year which would require much smaller net gain or a cumulative pot approach.
- When the Britishvolt planning application had been determined, the Potland Burn site had been in the ownership of Advance Northumberland. They had therefore been party to the Section 106 agreement to allow the Council or a subsequent owner to manage the land for the purposes of habitat creation and management of biodiversity net gain. The land had been valued and a fair price for the transfer had been agreed. A review was being undertaken on the structure of Advance Northumberland and a final decision would be made on whether the land was transferred to the Council or some other vehicle.
- Only sites of low ecological value which were capable of being enhanced and at least 67 ha could be considered. Speed had been a key factor in ensuring that Britishvolt had come to Northumberland. It had been fortunate that the Potland Burn site had been available, as negotiations with other landowners would have taken valuable time within the period available. A couple of other sites had been considered which had been in the ownership of large institutional organisations in the area. However, there had been some technical issues as to whether those sites would have delivered the ecological enhancements and also if they could have been made available for the required 30-year period.
- The site at Potland Burn had more capacity than was required by the Britishvolt application. The extra land could be used to deliver biodiversity net gain for the next few major investment schemes.
- Biodiversity net gain would apply to almost all development in the county and there would need to be further opportunities across Northumberland. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was considering places which would benefit from enhanced ecological value and looked at smaller sites which would be of benefit to communities. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy also looked at the different methods of delivering ecology including abandonment or 'rewilding'.
- Abandonment often resulted in domination by a small range of species and therefore delivered disappointing ecological results, unless they were 'disturbed' by other forces of nature, such as wild animals, which brought variety. However, extensive grazing by cattle could inject diversity combining nature conservation with food production.
- Parcels of land designated for biodiversity and solar farms connected by corridors would enable species to travel and provide routes for walking and cycling.
- Grid connectivity was often a barrier for large scale solar farms.
- Although not expected to be required, provision for redundancy was required by the finance section for employees for any new project with ring-fenced funding.

Some concern was expressed regarding the amount of money to be invested in the site, given the current rising costs of living when some improvement would happen naturally. Designation as farm land would make a contribution to food and grain supplies, as opposed to being a drain on resources.

Other members welcomed the investment by Britishvolt and the potential for attracting other businesses. It was hoped that the local community and Ashington Town Council and Pegswood Parish Council could be involved. Whilst Members acknowledged that a rapid response had been required to secure the Britishvolt scheme, it was suggested that investment was also required around Sleekburn site and the nearby dunes.

The Chair disclosed that he was a Director of Advance Northumberland but had not been involved in any of the discussions regarding the arrangements for the Britishvolt site.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:

1. Supported the recommendations in the report.
2. The report and presentation be recommended for inclusion within the work programme for the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council with an invitation to Ashington Town Council and Pegswood Parish Council to involve them in the discussion.

## 6. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

### **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report**

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2022/23 council year. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes).

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator stated that following the discussion earlier in the meeting, the 'Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Proposed Food Waste Recycling Pilot Schemes' would be considered at the next meeting on 29 June 2022. Discussions were also to be held regarding an update on the Great Northumberland Forest.

In answer to a question, he confirmed that the Tree and Woodland Strategy was due for renewal in 2023 and needed to be programmed at the right stage in the consultation process, a report was therefore likely to be scheduled in the programme before the end of 2022.

Members who wished to suggest items for inclusion in the work programme were requested to contact the Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

This page is intentionally left blank

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a meeting of the **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 29 June 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor J. Reid  
(Chair, in the Chair)

#### **MEMBERS**

Gallacher, B.	Mather, M.
Lang, J.	Morphet, N.

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

M. Baker	Service Director, Climate Change, Business Intelligence and Performance
C. Curtis	Resources and Waste Contracts and Commercial Manager
N. Johnston	Project Manager, Climate Change
S. Nicholson	Scrutiny Co-Ordinator
N. Turnbull	Democratic Services Officer

#### **7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Carr, Cartie, Castle, Dale, Dodd, Riddle and Sanderson.

#### **8. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (July to October). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes).

Members agreed that a new item on 'Declaration of an Ecological Emergency' due to be considered by Cabinet in September, be included in the committee's work programme.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **9. SCRUTINY**

##### **9.1 Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2022/25**

The report proposed a strategy for funding, siting, installing and maintaining Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCP) for three years from 2022/23. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Matt Baker, Service Director, Climate Change, Business Intelligence and Performance, stated that as transport accounted for approximately one third of all positive carbon emissions, it was necessary to consider how the Council could assist use of electric vehicles in order to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Nick Johnston, Project Manager, Climate Change, explained that on street EVCP installations would remove one of the barriers to EV use by residents who did not have access to their own driveway. He made reference to the prioritisation of sites, the framework for the implementation and review of charges to ensure that the EV estate was sustainable.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members:

- Contactless payments for EVCP were likely to become mandatory and introduced in the future.
- Input from residents and town and parish councils regarding possible locations was welcomed. Suggestions could be sent to the Climate mailbox. Factors to be taken into consideration by officers included proximity of electrical supply and current parking arrangements.
- It was intended that capital and revenue costs be covered from EVCP income by year 10 the estimated life of the equipment. However, due to the volatility of energy prices, the current tariff did not cover running costs and therefore the fifth recommendation had sought authority to make in year adjustments to the tariff when necessary, whether this be an increase or decrease.
- The Council were working with the Energy Savings Trust to increase the success of application to the Office for Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV).
- Members Local Improvement Scheme funds could be utilised to part fund EVCP, if suitable locations could be found.
- A pilot programme had seen a number of on-street EVCP installed by a third party across the county in 2021/22. Knowledge gained from that project would be utilised when siting future EV chargepoints. It was intended that the work would be carried out in-house which would include opportunities for apprenticeships and improving local skills.
- Evidence suggested that EVs would become more attractive in the future with a growing secondhand market and technological advances.
- Proposed site locations were split across the county geographically and socio-economically.
- Tariffs would be set to be competitive and cover costs without being driven by profit.
- Decisions on locations would be informed by evidence of demand via expressions of interest by residents.



- Use of Traffic Regulation Orders with maximum limits of stays should ensure that bays were not occupied by one vehicle for long periods of time. Contraventions could be enforced with penalties, as with other parking restrictions. Depending on battery capacity, a full charge could often be obtained in 1-2 hours using a rapid charger. Restrictions would be applied during the day on a case-by-case basis.
- Emerging vehicle to grid technology could become part of the solution for power outages and improve grid resilience either on a house or community basis.
- Emergency vehicles were more likely to run on dual or hydrogen fuel cells as significant technological advances would be required before they could become all electric. It was noted that resilience issues had also been experienced with fuel shortages earlier in 2021.
- A synthetic fuel pilot was about to commence with some of the Council's refuse wagons which it was hoped would reduce emissions to 10% of an equivalent litre of diesel. Results would be shared with the fire service and North East Ambulance Service.
- Careful consideration of EVCP locations would be undertaken to ensure they were not in heavy footfall parking areas, not immediately adjacent to residential properties or high conflict areas for parking. They were likely to be located in car parks near terraced houses and therefore eligible for funding. It was hoped that in the future there would be behavioural change with increased use of electric vehicles it would become more desirable to live next to an EVCP. The tensions between those in favour of EV and in opposition, needed to be carefully managed.
- EVCP were required to be installed on new build properties.
- Approximately 2,000 electric vehicles were registered annually with DVLA in Northumberland.
- Provision had been made within the capital programme within local services and climate change budgets to increase the number of EVCP.
- Wifi connectivity needed to be considered when determining locations.
- Permission would need to be sought from Town and Parish Council's landowners if they owned the car parks where it was proposed an EVCP be located.
- Finance and the Energy Team would be involved in the calculation of tariffs.
- It was intended that the next version of the Climate Change Action Plan would include a section on emerging technology.
- Climate change training for elected members was to be rolled out and officers would liaise with colleagues in Democratic Services to arrange dates as soon as possible.

Members of the committee welcomed more accessible EVCP and made the following comments:

- Input by residents and town and parish councillors was welcomed to ensure use was optimised.
- The costs of the project should be recouped.

- Use of electric vehicles continued to have an impact on the environment including congestion and accidents.
- Residents needed to be a move away from individual car ownership via improvements to public transport and active travel infrastructure and encourage shared EV ownership.
- A protocol for the setting of EVCP tariffs be shared for transparency.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:

1. Supported the recommendations in the report.
2. The protocol for the setting of EVCP tariff be considered by Communities & Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting.
3. Encourage members to undertake the climate change training.

## **9.2 Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Proposed Food Waste Recycling Pilot Schemes**

The report set out future obligations to offer food waste collections to households arising from the Environment Act 2021 and sought approval for a weekly household food waste collection pilot scheme to assess the viability of collections across Northumberland, together with a home food waste composting pilot scheme to consider potential options in rural areas where weekly food waste collections may not be practicable or affordable. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Colin Curtis, Resources and Waste Contracts and Commercial Manager, explained that the kerbside food waste collection pilot would be undertaken at 4,800 properties in central Northumberland. The properties and route had been chosen due to their proximity to the waste transfer station at West Sleekburn and collection would be by a single specialist refuse vehicle. The provision of hot bin home compost bins in three rural locations (Chatton, Eldson and Gilsland) would enable the feasibility an alternative food waste disposal to be assessed where it was not technically, economically or environmentally practical to provide a weekly collection vehicle.

Examples of the 5-litre kitchen caddy, optional polythene lining bags and the external container with lockable lid were displayed and circulated.

It was hoped that the schemes would lead to increased awareness of food waste and eventually a reduction in the amount being sent for recycling and in residual waste. Whilst they hoped to have high participation rates and provide data on quantities, inform the Council's decisions and provide evidence for new burdens funding when the collection of food waste became a legal requirement, potentially in 2024/25.

The following information was provided in response to questions from Members:

- Around 1.3kg of food waste within residual bins was avoidable and expected to be collected on a weekly basis. (This amount was technically greater, but more material would be adhered to packaging which could not be extracted).
- Arrangements had been to take between 500-700 tonnes per annum of the estimated food waste from the trial to plants in Gateshead or Durham.
- None of the material collected during the food waste trial would be sent for conventional composting. Anaerobic digestion plants at Gateshead and Durham were designed to create renewable energy and were bottling gas as an alternative to it being sold as electricity to the national grid, due to connection difficulties. The digestate at the bottom of the tank was removed and used as a fertiliser / soil improver which was monitored and tested by the Environment Agency.
- Defra estimated that capacity would be required for 100,000 tonnes to process food waste from residential properties between Teesside and Northumberland.
- It was anticipated that collection rates would be highest in the first half of the pilot and then decrease as residents became more aware.
- Consideration would need to be given for facilities to dispose of the estimated 10,000 tonnes of food waste in Northumberland when mandatory as the plants at Durham and Gateshead would not have sufficient capacity for all of the waste collected by local authorities and commercial entities such as restaurants, schools, prisons and hospitals.
- Suez had recently started a consultation exercise to build an anaerobic digestion plant in the Ashington area which would replace the existing in-vessel compost at the Ellington land fill site.
- There was a limited market to source the receptacles to be used by households. The samples handed round members was currently being used elsewhere in the country and recommended by the Government's consultants.
- Officers had been looking at the costs and sources of lining bags currently available. The polythene liner bags cost 1.5p each whereas corn starch bags costs 4p each and would significantly increase annual costs. However, some residents may choose to not use a liner bag or participate in the trial.
- *The AD plants charged commercial entities around £15 per tonne to dispose of food waste which was approximately 15% of the cost of disposing of residual waste. The cost of separately collecting the food waste had to also be factored in.*
- The calorific value and minimum tonnage of residual waste would need to be monitored to ensure there was not a negative impact on energy from waste / residual waste contracts with the removal of food and plastic from residual waste. The contracts had broad upper and lower tolerance limits but would need to be renegotiated, if the calorific value fell outside these.
- The home compost hot bin trial would be commencing later than originally planned. Local members and Town and Parish Councils would be informed.
- Residents who volunteered for the home compost trial would be provided with information from the manufacturer. There would also meetings held

locally, and a support group established with assistance from the Climate Change Team.

- The supplier of the specialist refuse vehicle required for the pilot had recently informed officers that there was a 4–5-month delay sourcing the vehicle. Officers were considering whether an adapted vehicle be used or whether the pilot scheme be delayed until circa November 2022. The vehicle was to be hired for the duration of the trial.

The following points were made by Members:

- Provision was required for enforcement and advice regarding cleansing of bins to avoid material in the street.
- There was some concern regarding the design, size and weight of the bins, particularly on collection days when there was adverse weather or interference from wildlife.
- Whether the indoor caddy and plastic bags were required or if other materials could be used such as paper.
- Facilities in the county were welcomed but it was queried whether the location proposed was Suez was the most appropriate.
- There be better communication with County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils regarding facilities and locations of the hot bin home composting pilot to enable them to assist with promotion of the scheme.
- Whether the food waste receptacle could sit within one of the larger wheeled bins.
- Whilst the home compost bin trial was aimed at residential properties, it was suggested that officers consider working with local schools.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee had expressed a number of concerns but were informed that the Council was piloting the Government’s recommended food waste collection and the pilot would explore the issues that had been raised.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:

1. Supported the recommendations in the report.
2. Consider involvement by local schools in the home compost bin trial.
3. Receive an interim report on the home compost trial in Autumn 2022 with a final report on the kerbside collection in the summer of 2023.

## **10. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR**

### **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report**

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2022/23 council year. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes).

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator outlined the reports due to be considered at the meetings on 31 August 2022 and 5 October 2022. It was agreed that no more

than 2 items be scheduled per meeting to enable a thorough discussion of subjects.

In answer to a question, the Scrutiny Coordinator reported that the Chairs' Group had recommended that the Chief Constable and Police Crime Commissioner be invited to attend a meeting of the County Council rather than a scrutiny committee. It was also noted that area commanders attended the Local Area Councils in the Autumn each year.

It was agreed that Items suggested for inclusion in the work programme:

- Space for Shore Birds Project funded by Section 106 contributions.

Members who wished to suggest items for inclusion in the work programme were requested to contact the Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

This page is intentionally left blank

## FORWARD PLAN OF FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2022

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p><b>Bamburgh Conservation Area Character Appraisal</b> Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas”, but, more than that, a conservation area appraisal is a tool to help people understand what is important about a place and manage change within it. Bamburgh Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) provides an evidence base for managing change. By adopting a conservation area appraisal, planning authorities are better placed to give due and proportionate weight to the special interest of conservation areas. This will, in turn, result in better informed and balanced decisions in relation to the historic environment. An appraisal can also be used to support potential strategic plans and policies for the area, and to promote its conservation and regeneration. (C. Horncastle/S, Rushton 01670 622650)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Energising Blyth: Culture and Placemaking Programme</b> This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval and key decisions regarding the development and delivery of the Energising Blyth Culture and Placemaking Programme (CPP). The CPP is a package of culture and placemaking measures in Blyth. This aims to catalyse Blyth’s cultural revival, supporting the benefits of the wider investments in the town. This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal. (W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker - 07919 217457)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Energising Blyth: Energy Central Campus Phase 1: Learning Hub</b> This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval and key decisions regarding the development and delivery of the Energy Central Campus Phase 1: Learning Hub.</p>	N/A	13 September 2022

<p>The Energy Central Campus (ECC) is a transformational, business-led skills, education and innovation development supporting growth in the low carbon energy sector in Blyth and the wider Northeast.</p> <p>This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal.</p> <p>(W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker - 07919 217457)</p>		
<p><b>Energising Blyth: OREC Technology and Innovation Centre</b></p> <p>This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval of the Business Case and other key decisions regarding the development and delivery of the OREC Catapult new Centre. This is a business-led skills, education and innovation development adding to the cluster of facilities at OREC's site at the Port of Blyth and supporting Research and Development and growth in the low carbon energy sector in Blyth and the wider Northeast. It will be a key national asset driving forward the Government's Zero Carbon agenda and will generate.</p> <p>This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal. It is also being funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority, Innovate UK and OREC</p> <p>(W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker 07919 217457)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</b></p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 30 June 2022.</p> <p>(R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Food &amp; Feed, Safety &amp; Standards Service Plan 2022/23</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet, for its consideration and endorsement, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23.</p> <p>(C. Horncastle/Peter Simpson 07920 806260)</p>	C&P OSC 31 August 2022	13 September 2022
<p><b>Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan</b></p> <p>To seek approval to formally 'make' the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan passed independent examination in March 2022. A local</p>	N/A	13 September 2022



<p>referendum will be held in the Parish of Haydon on 30 June 2022 and it is expected that there will be a majority vote in favour of using the Plan to make decisions on planning applications. The Council will then be obliged by statute to make the Neighbourhood Plan unless it considers that doing so would breach European Union obligations, and that action should be completed within 8 weeks of the date of the referendum. (C. Horncastle/S. Brannigan 07966 335 508)</p>		
<p><b>Proposals for the Coquet Partnership</b> This report sets out the feedback received from stakeholders arising from consultation on a proposal to reorganise the Coquet Partnership of schools to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of education, with accompanying relevant recommendations in the light of this proposal.</p> <p>Cabinet may also be recommended to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal in relation to this proposal, which if approved would require Cabinet to make a final decision on the proposal at a later date. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston – 01670 6222810)</p>	<p>FACS OSC 8 September 2022</p>	<p>13 September 2022</p>
<p><b>Proposals for the allocation of the Public Health ring-fenced grant reserve</b> This report describes the process undertaken to agree proposals for additional investment in public health interventions from the ring-fenced public health grant; and to make recommendations.</p> <p>There is a requirement when using any funds from underspend to comply with the conditions of the use of the annual public health grant, which means that the funds must be spent on public health functions.</p> <p>This report describes a prioritisation exercise undertaken for allocation of part of the public health reserve that has accumulated from underspend. Criteria were developed and weighted to score bids that were sought from within the public health team and from other teams across the council. Criteria with the highest weighting were: 'Aim to reduce inequalities' (20%); and 'local need', 'evidence of impact/ effectiveness', and 'prevention' (each 15%). A higher score was given if the goal was primary prevention (preventing illness or maintaining health), in line with public health principles. (W. Pattison/J. Brown, 07796 312409/ L. Morgan,</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing OSC 6 September 2022</p>	<p>13 September 2022</p>

07920 360093)		
<p><b>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</b>  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
<p><b>Alnwick and Hexham Shopfront Design Guides</b>  Northumberland County Council is committed to retaining the special character of its conservation areas. In market towns such as Alnwick and Hexham, shops and commercial premises are a key element of the conservation areas and have a considerable impact on their overall appearance. Achieving a high standard of design in relation to shops and other businesses is important in underpinning commercial success.  · The Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide, 2021 replaces the 'Design Guide for Shop Fronts' which was adopted by Alnwick District Council in 1995. It has been produced in partnership with Alnwick Civic Society.  · The Hexham Shopfront Design Guide, 2018 is an update of the 'Interim Design Package for Shopfronts and Their Advertisements', which was adopted by Tynedale Council in January 1990 and produced in association with the Hexham Civic Society.  The updated Shopfront Design Guides are in line with national and local planning policies and contain guidance to assist developers, retailers, design professionals and building owners to prepare designs for shopfronts and other commercial premises which respond well to local character. They provide the Council with a set of criteria against which to assess the quality of proposed works when determining applications for planning permission and listed building consent.  (C. Horncastle/S, Rushton 01670 622650)</p>	N/A	11 October 2022
<p><b>Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24</b>  Since 1 April 2013 the Council is required to have its own council tax support scheme to provide assistance to council taxpayers on low incomes. The scheme needs to be approved annually and assistance is by way of a reduction in the amount of council tax that is due.  The Council Tax Support Scheme needs County Council approval.</p>	CSEG OSC 10 October 2022	11 October 2022 Council 2 November 2022

(R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes – 01670 624351)		
<p><b>Revised Joint Charter with Town, Parish and Community Councils</b></p> <p>This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval for the publication of the revised joint Charter between the Council and the Town, Parish and Community Councils (TPCCs) in Northumberland.</p> <p>This revised Charter includes minor amendments to the 2019 edition and has been prepared following consultation with Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC). It defines joint principles to enable the Council and TPCCs to work effectively together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Northumberland. (G. Sanderson/Iain Hedley -07747 473687)</p>	TBC	11 October 2022
<p><b>Council Tax Base 2023/24</b></p> <p>The Council is required to set its council tax base annually. The tax base must be set between the 1st of December and 31st January. The tax base is a measure of the Council's taxable capacity which is used for the setting of its council tax. Legislation sets out the formula for calculation. Cabinet have delegated authority to approve the tax base. (R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes – 01670 624351)</p>	CSEG OSC 12 December 2022	13 December 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of September 2022</b></p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 30 September 2022. (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	13 December 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of December 2022</b></p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 December 2022. (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	14 March 2023
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 – Position at the end of March 2023 (Provisional Outturn)</b></p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 March 2023 (provisional outturn) (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	9 May 2023

This page is intentionally left blank



## Northumberland County Council

### COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2022

---

#### OVERVIEW ON THE FLEET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2021/2022

**Report of: Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services, Rob Murfin**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle, Local Services**

---

#### **Purpose of report**

To provide an overview of the work undertaken and challenges faced in delivering the Council's fleet replacement programme in 2021/2022.

#### **Recommendations**

To note the work undertaken to deliver a challenging fleet replacement programme during this period.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

The Fleet Replacement Programme is relevant to the following themes in the corporate plan:-

*'Enjoying - We want you to love where you live'*

*'Connecting - We want you to have access to the things you need'*

The allocation of capital funding to support a rolling fleet replacement programme is essential to ensure that key front-line services have reliable, cost effective and modern vehicles and equipment to enable them to deliver services to individuals and communities across the County. An effective, modern and well managed vehicle fleet also ensures that the council minimises the impact that its transport activities have on the environment, makes a positive contribution to tackling climate change and keeps pace with innovation and best practice.

#### **Overview of 2021/2022 Programme**

#### **Key issues**

1. It is essential that the Council delivers its fleet replacement programme in a timely manner that meets service requirements, whilst also ensuring that there is a robust

challenge over service need, harmonising vehicle specifications and delivering value for money through effective procurement arrangements.

2. The process for undertaking the replacement of vehicles has been established for several years with clearly documented responsibilities assigned for each stage of the process and robust governance arrangements put in place to regularly monitor and review progress. The process ensures that services are robustly challenged over both the need for replacement vehicles and the specification of the vehicle (so that there is a greater degree of standardisation across the fleet).
3. When developing the programme, consideration is given to the service department's needs over the timing of replacement vehicles, the time required to undertake the procurement exercise and manufacturers' build times once orders are placed. This means that Fleet staff must look across both the current and future years replacement programmes so that service critical/long lead-in time vehicles are given priority.
4. There are always challenges in fulfilling the need to replace such a wide range of vehicles and plant due to transport industry changes, new legislation, and current new vehicle demand outstripping supply from manufacturers. These hurdles have always required careful consideration; however, the programme was impacted hugely by the pandemic primarily due to vehicle manufacturers and their supply chains being disrupted which affected production levels. These impacts can be summarised as follows:-
  - a) Vehicles manufacturers were unable to meet demand due to the world-wide shortage of semi-conductors resulting in reduced numbers of vehicles being produced.
  - b) Commercial dealerships and associated supply chains were operating on reduced capacity due to staff absences, impacting on their responsiveness and increasing lead-in times for quotes, responses to queries, adaptations to specifications and delivery timescales.
  - c) Major manufacturers closing down production lines for 2-3 months in the summer.
  - d) Any conversions or adaptations to the base vehicle requiring involvement of the manufacturer and external body shops suffered delays, as supply chains for materials were on back order.
  - e) Some manufacturers closed order books and were unwilling to provide quotes as the increased material costs resulted in uncertainty with the total costs on delivery.
  - f) Build times increasing from ~12 months for standard vans up to ~18 months. Suppliers are also indicating that the uncertainty on costs and materials for conversions may result in some specialist LCV's taking 18-24mths from point of order to delivery.
  - g) The demand for electric vehicles (EVs) has also exceeded supply, causing significant delays to delivery and impacting on the number of EV's we expected to have in place in 2021/2022.
5. The uncertainty of vehicle delivery times has reinforced the Council's decision to finance vehicle purchases on the capital programme, with these financing arrangements being kept under regular review to ensure value for money is being secured. The complete ownership and the flexibility to decide when to sell these assets has proven to be highly beneficial when responding to the difficulties being faced as a result of the Covid-19

pandemic. In addition to avoiding the financial and operational risks associated with either having to negotiate extensions to lease financing arrangements or secure short-term vehicle hire provision, the Council has benefited from significantly higher than forecast resale values. The second-hand market has been buoyant due to reduced new vehicle production, in some cases residual values have increased by 40% in 18 months providing the council with higher than anticipated capital receipts from auction sales.

6. There were 121 new vehicles registered in this budget year at a cost of £6.487 million.
7. We have increased the number of small EV's from 7 in 2020/21 to 36 currently in operation with services. A further 11 vehicles are waiting for service user agreements and confirmed prices.
8. The delivery of the fleet replacement programme is always challenging but in 2021/22 this proved to be extremely difficult. The high number of vehicles scheduled for replacement; the items carried forward from 2020/21, together with supply delays, resulted in 73 vehicles worth £2.530 million that were ordered with suppliers but remained undelivered by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
9. It should however be noted that due to effective forward planning arrangements all 'service critical' replacement vehicles were delivered with no adverse effect to service delivery.
10. The council has committed to a 'net zero' target for carbon emissions by 2030 and has also pledged an earlier 50% reduction in emissions by 2025. Taking this policy into consideration, Fleet have acted now to adopt EV technology within the programme to assist and contribute towards achieving these climate change targets. Progress in increasing the number of electric vehicles within the fleet has been slower than anticipated, again due to production issues, but also the increased demand globally as companies seek to move towards the government's targets. Release dates on new models of EV commercial models have also been pushed back by manufacturers delaying the opportunity to assess the suitability of larger Transit sized EV panel vans.
11. Due to the current financial and operational limitations when looking at replacing Large Commercial Vehicles (LCV) and Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV), due to a lack of suitable alternatives that can meet the Council's operational requirements around range/payload and the significantly higher purchase prices – between 40 and 70% higher than diesel powered. The Fleet Team with support from the Climate Change Team are implementing a 3-month trial project to determine the viability of changing the Council's diesel fleet to operate on a low carbon alternative fuel using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), otherwise known as Renewable Diesel. This drop-in replacement fuel for diesel is equal in terms of power but produces up to 88% less kgCO<sub>2e</sub> than diesel. There has been a slight delay in introducing the pilot which is being run from the Stakeford Depot due to a requirement to run down the bulk stock of Rebated Fuel (Red Diesel) following changes in HMRC exemptions. It is intended that the trial will run from August this year and following a review of its performance, it is anticipated that a report will be presented to Cabinet to enable consideration to be given to the option and timing of switching all of the Council's diesel fleet onto HVO as a transitional arrangement to significantly lower the carbon emissions from our fleet, as we continue the process of moving to zero-carbon

emission vehicles as technologies develop and viable replacement vehicles become available. A quick summary is presented below:

- a) HVO is practically identical to diesel in chemical and physical characteristics.
- b) HVO can be used as an immediate drop-in fuel replacement to diesel in any engine using diesel, with no further modifications to the engine and no impacts on manufacturer's warranties.
- c) This fossil free fuel is made from 100% renewable waste residues and vegetable oils.
- d) The kgCO<sub>2</sub>e produced by HVO compared to diesel are up to 88% less, making an outstanding alternative to reduce the emissions from the council's diesel vehicle fleet while waiting the EV or other zero-emission alternatives to be ready on the market.
- e) HVO is anticipated to cost an additional ~12% more but may be offset by improved mpg but this will be determined following the trial.
- f) Performance and mpg comparisons will be monitored over 3mths.

12. The Council currently determines the timing for planned replacement of vehicles based on the economic lifespan of the different categories of vehicles within its fleet using historic data on vehicle maintenance costs by vehicle category and residual value, to ascertain when it is most economic to replace a vehicle (namely at a point when failing to replace the vehicle would result in the additional maintenance costs being greater than the cost of maintenance & financing for the provision of a new more reliable vehicle). This information is used to plan and finance the fleet replacement programme, with each individual vehicle identified as being due for replacement then being subject to an assessment to ascertain its overall condition/mileage/maintenance history to determine whether its economic life can be extended further. The fleet team also work closely with the service user departments to challenge the need for vehicles and replacements taking into consideration vehicle utilisation levels, changes to service provision and any new technologies/vehicles available. In addition to the above processes which have been in place for several years, the Council also routinely reviews and benchmarks its replacement cycles against other similar local authorities. A benchmarking review is currently being undertaken to help inform and shape the replacement cycle costs that need to be built into the Council's next MTFP period. This review is on-going with data only received from one other LA so far, but from the limited data obtained to date the Council's standard replacement cycles are broadly comparable, the key differences being a variation for small vans/panel vans (NCC being 2 years earlier) and refuse collection vehicles (NCC being 1 year longer).

### **Details of the Replacement Programme in 2021/22**

The year-on-year increase in lead-in and delivery times across all vehicle types resulted in a backlog of items having to be carried over from the 2021/22 period – this meant that at the start of the 2021/22 programme there were 376 items listed for replacement. In addition to this a further 21 new items at a cost of £0.460 million were added to the programme. Service reviews and challenging the need for vehicles has resulted in 11 vehicles or items of plant



being removed from the programme, with a saving of £0.172 million. The final vehicle replacement count following these changes was 386.

The 21 additional items included:

- a) A new specialist JCB Pothole Pro (£0.160 million) to support £1.000 million of carriageway refurbishment/patching work being undertaken per year within the Council's LTP highway maintenance programme and reduce subcontractor costs.
- b) Various agricultural tractors and mowing equipment to enable for Ponteland Leisure Centre (£0.087 million)
- c) Various agricultural and horticultural machinery to support Neighbourhood Services
- d) A Ford Ranger pick-up for Cramlington Youth Project (£0.028 million)
- e) A 3.5ton Caged Tipper Vehicle for NEAT Berwick (£0.041 million)
- f) Mini Excavator with attachments for Technical Services to support the increasing numbers of electrical vehicle charging points being installed across the county by the EV Charging Infrastructure team (£0.024 million)
- g) Nissan eNV200 Electric Van for Housing (£0.025 million)

## **Overall Fleet Replacement Budget: £10.131 million**

A budget summary for the 2021/22 fleet replacement capital programme is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

<b>Description</b>	<b>2021/2022 £m</b>
Approved within MTFP	7.932
Reprofiling from previous year	2.199
Total Available Budget	10.131
Mid-year Review reprofiling and reflected in 2022-23 MTFP	(3.292)
Revised Budget	6.839
Actual Expenditure	6.487
Reprofiling at 31st March 2022	0.352

### **A) Actual Expenditure incurred (up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022): £6.487 million**

121 Vehicles have been delivered to fleet users. Service critical vehicles were prioritised on the programme to ensure there was no impact to front line delivery including:

- 10 Refuse Trucks
- 7 x Caged Tipper Vehicles
- 4 x 18ton Gritters with quick release tipper bodies for dual use (summer - highways maintenance; winter – salting)
- 13 Ride on Mowers
- 2 x Pavement Sweepers
- 12 x Tipper Vehicles for road maintenance and street cleansing

### **B) Vehicles Ordered with Suppliers: £2.530 million**

There were 73 vehicles ordered with suppliers that did not get delivered before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

These vehicles include:

- 4 x 18ton Gully Emptiers (now delivered)
- 6 x Pavement Sweepers (now delivered)
- 2 x 26ton with Gritters/Surface Dressing Bitumen Tank Bodies
- 1 x 18ton Hotbox Vehicle for highway repairs

- 58 x Large Panel Vans for Housing

**C) Vehicles with Procurement: ~ £0.001 million**

The Procurement Team are in the process of procuring a scrub deck attachment that fits to the new pavement sweepers with Neighbourhood Services SE

**D) Vehicles In Progress: ~£3.029 million**

Fleet are finalising 116 vehicle specifications with service users, sourcing manufacturers and body convertors.

They include:

- 12 x Ride On Mowers.
- 15 x 3.5ton Tippers with various cab options
- 1 x Chipping Spreader to support Surface Dressing Programme in 2023
- 7 x 7ton Tippers including Countryside Woodland Arborists
- 38 x large panel vans – potential EV replacements
- 3 x 3.5t Caged Vehicles – potential EV replacements
- 19 small vans - potential EV replacements

**E) Rescheduled Replacements: ~£2.248 million**

This figure is the budget to replace 75 vehicles that could not be progressed and agreed with services before the 31st March 2022 due to:

- Electric Vehicle Review
- Weight capacity review
- Uncertainties within the service
- Utilisation reviews.
- The scheduled replacement date being moved forward to the next financial year following vehicle condition assessment.

The Fleet team work closely with Finance and Procurement staff and review progress with delivery of the fleet replacement programme on a monthly basis and profiling of spend against budget estimates, with this information feeding into the Council’s budget monitoring and reporting arrangements.

**Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	Challenging service users over both need to replace and the specification of the vehicles and plant required helps to ensure that the Fleet Replacement Programme supports the Corporate Plan objectives of innovation to deliver improvements in service delivery and efficiencies, and the Council’s climate change action plan targets.
---------------	--

<b>Finance value and for money</b>	<p>The timely replacement of vehicles and plant as they reach the end of their economic life ensures value for money. The use of framework contracts and packaging of vehicle supply requirements to cover several years provides economies of scale, ensures that the most cost-effective means of obtaining new vehicles and plant are being used.</p> <p>The use of NCC capital to purchase vehicles rather than using finance lease arrangements has proven to be highly beneficial in responding to the issues faced during the pandemic, with NCC securing significantly better than forecast resale values at auction and minimising the risks associated with negotiation of extensions to leases.</p> <p>HVO is anticipated to cost an additional ~12% more but may be offset by improved mpg but this will be determined following the trial.</p>
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Procurement</b>	Close working arrangements are in place between Procurement and Fleet Management to ensure the delivery of the programme. All procurement activity is undertaken by the corporate Procurement Team in accordance with legal and constitutional requirements.
<b>Human Resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	Additional EV charging infrastructure has been installed at the Council's depots to facilitate the increased use of EV fleet vehicles.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	None
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The main risks associated with the fleet replacement programme are the delay in replacement of vehicles/plant that are critical to service delivery. Robust arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these risks, there have been no adverse impacts for service provision associated with vehicle delivery arrangements in 2021/22.

<b>Crime Disorder &amp;</b>	All new vehicles are fitted as standard with a GPS tracking device, speed limiters and, where suitable, in cab driver behaviour devices and digital cameras.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Providing fit for purpose vehicles will impact positively on musculoskeletal health.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	New vehicles are branded with the new NCC livery so that customers and the general public are aware that it is NCC staff/vehicles that are being used to provide services to them.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	The Council's vehicle fleet uses £3.037 million worth of fuel each year. Ensuring that the fleet is modern, well maintained and robustly managed is vital if the Council wishes to reduce its carbon impact from the provision of services. The Council already utilises electric vehicles for pool cars within the fleet and is in the process of replacing its small diesel vans with full electric models, and continues to investigate the viability of replacing larger types of vehicles with full EV as new commercial vehicle models become available. Low carbon fuel (HVO) is also being trialled as a replacement for diesel as a transitional approach to greening the fleet.
<b>Wards</b>	All

**Background papers:**

None

**Report sign off.**

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

	Name
Monitoring Officer/Legal	SB
Interim Executive Director of Finance and S151 Officer	JW
Relevant Executive Director	RM
Chief Executive	RF
Portfolio Holder(s)	JR

**Author and Contact Details**

Davey Robertson, Fleet Manager  
 Tel: 01670 622943  
 Email: [davey.robertson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:davey.robertson@northumberland.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



## Northumberland County Council

COMMITTEE: **Cabinet**

DATE: **13<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

---

### **Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2022/23**

**Report of** Liz Morgan - Executive Director of Public Health and Community Services

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Colin Horncastle - Community Services

---

#### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet, for its consideration and endorsement, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Cabinet receives and adopts the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

The Plan is linked to key aims of the corporate plan 2021-24 in that its overarching purpose is to help to provide a safe and thriving food sector within Northumberland.

#### **Key issues**

1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has produced a framework agreement on Local Authority food law enforcement. The framework sets out the FSA's expectations of Local Authorities in relation to the planning and delivery of food law enforcement.
2. The framework agreement requires Local Authorities to take account of the Government's better regulation agenda when planning, resourcing and delivering their services. This means that resources need to be targeted where they will be most impactful and in the areas of highest risk in order to provide the public with an effective service.
3. From March 2020 to July 2021 the FSA suspended the Food Law CoP requirements for interventions so resource could be diverted into the local authority COVID response. During this period interventions were prioritised on public health risk. No formal food service plan was generated during this time however the FSA drafted and introduced the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Recovery Plan which sets out

guidance and advice to local authorities for the period from 1 July 2021 to March 2023.

4. A new delivery model for food standards was being piloted in some local authorities in England and Northern Ireland until the end of December 2021. Subject to the findings of an evaluation of the pilot and stakeholder consultation, it is anticipated that the new model will be rolled out nationally from April 2023. Work to review and revise the food hygiene intervention rating scheme is planned to commence shortly with a view to implementation in 2023/24.
5. In 2021/22 Public Protection was heavily involved in fulfilling statutory duties brought into temporary existence due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This included deployment of staff from the teams that normally deliver food and feed services. A temporary team was formed led by an officer from the Commercial Team. As an indicator of the work carried out on Covid, in 2021-22 alone the service responded to over 200 service requests, 335 complaints and investigated over 240 outbreaks. Our proactive work also included over 2600 Covid secure checks and 1200 Covid area checks.
6. In addition, the team was providing a new service due to the UK's exit from the European Union. For the first time since the early Seventies Environmental Health Officers now inspect food exports (food of animal origin) requiring an export health certificate. 2021-22 was the first full year providing EHCs within the new system and the service provided 167 certificates during this time. With the ongoing increase in exports, we are not expecting this to reduce in 2022-23.
7. The framework agreements requires that the Food and Feed Safety and Standards Service Plan 2022/23 (Appendix 1), which sets out the Council's 'Farm to Fork' approach to the safety & standards of the food chain and a review of service performance in 2021/22.
  - € To be approved at a relevant level with the Local Authority in order to ensure local transparency and accountability.
  - € To be produced in a specific format
8. There are over 3950 food premises in Northumberland subject to food safety and food standards regulation and in excess of 1700 businesses, mainly farm premises subject to the Animal Feed (Hygiene, Sampling etc. and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2015. They are risk assessed in accordance with prescribed schemes in both the food law and feed law codes of practice, which specify inspection intervals based on the risk category of the premises. The inspection programme is delivered by Public Protection within the Housing & Public Protection Service. The Plan shows the delivery structure and required staff resourcing.



9. The review of performance in 2021/22 has found that overall, the service completed the targets set out for the end of March 22 within the FSA recovery plan meeting all key performance measures in what was a very challenging year.
10. The percentage of food businesses in Northumberland with a food hygiene rating of satisfactory to very good (3 to 5 stars) is 98.3% which continues to compare favourably with both the national average of 96.9 % and regional average of 98.0%.
11. As well as programmed inspections, Public Protection provides a reactive response to a wide variety of food safety, food standards & animal feed safety issues. These include complaints about food which does not meet legal standards or which is thought to have caused illness, or premises deemed to be unhygienic. Officers also work in partnership with Public Health England to investigate notifications of infectious disease outbreaks. In 2021/22 a total of 109 infectious disease investigations were carried out and 152 complaints regarding food hygiene, 131 complaints about food premises were received and 69 complaints about food composition, labelling or quality. 99% of these received an initial response within 3 working days in accordance with Service Standards.
12. The Public Health Protection Unit continues to deliver the 'Produced in Northumberland' (PIN) food source verification scheme. This voluntary food verification scheme (that was launched in February 2016) covers any food manufacturer, retailer and caterer within Northumberland who applies and meets the requirements of the scheme. The aim moving into 2022/23 is to continue to support and develop the scheme. For our existing members we will be offering another free year along with a remote assessment as we want to try and provide as much support as we can. But not burden businesses with additional cost at a time where businesses are recovering from the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic.
13. During 2022-23 we will also bring on new PIN members with, an inspection and onsite audit being carried out in line with the requirements of the certification scheme. The long-term plan will be to bring back the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits in 2023-24. This will be done in consultation with our partners and members to ensure the integrity of the scheme and support business as much as we can.

**Background**

No background papers

**Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	none
---------------	------

<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Costs are given consideration in the plan. It is intended that performance management of plan delivery will increase the value for money provided. There are no new financial implications arising from this report. All costs for providing these services within the agreed service standards are included within the existing budget.
<b>Legal</b>	None, statutory provision
<b>Procurement</b>	none
<b>Human Resources</b>	none
<b>Property</b>	none
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No x <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal contained in this report does not present potentially-significant equality issues.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Adopting the plan will assist in providing a framework to ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	The adoption of the proposed plan will assist in ensuring the enforcement of statutory regulations.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The plan would be delivered in such a way as to ensure that a consistent and proportionate approach is taken in all circumstances.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	none
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Will contribute to the protection and improvement of health through a safe food and drinks sector. Also contributing to a fair & safe trading environment.
<b>Wards</b>	All

**Background papers:**

**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	Liz Morgan
Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Colin Horncastle

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Food and Feed Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23**

#### **Author and Contact Details**

Peter Simpson, Public Health Protection Unit Manager.

Tel: 07920806260 email: [peter.simpson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:peter.simpson@northumberland.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



# Northumberland

## County Council

**Housing & Public Protection Service**

**Public Health Protection Unit &  
Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit**

**Food and Feed  
Safety and Standards**

**SERVICE PLAN 2022-2023**

# **CONTENTS**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

## **2.0 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

2.1 Aims (page 5)

2.2 Link to the corporate Plan 2021-24 (page 5)

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 Profile (page 6)

3.2 Organisational structure (page 6)

3.3 Scope of the Food Service (page 7)

3.4 Demands on the Feed and Food Service (page 9)

3.5 Enforcement policy (page 12)

## **4.0 SERVICE DELIVERY**

4.1 Interventions at Food and Feed Establishments (page 13)

4.2 Food and Feed complaints (page 24)

4.3 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme (page 25)

4.4 Advice to business (page 26)

4.5 Food and Feed sampling (page 27)

4.6 Control and investigation of outbreaks and food related infectious disease (page 29)

4.7 Food and Feed safety incidents (page 31)

4.8 Liaison with other organisations (page 31)

4.9 Food and Feed Safety and Standards promotional work and other non-official controls and interventions (page 33)

4.10 Export Health Certificates (page 34)

4.11 Produced in Northumberland (page 35)

## **5.0 RESOURCES**

5.1 Financial allocation (page 37)

5.2 Staffing allocation (page 37)

5.3 Staff development plan (page 38)

## **6.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

6.1 Quality assessment and internal monitoring (page 39)

## **7.0 REVIEW**

7.1 Review of the Food Service Plan 2017-18 (page 40)

7.2 Identification of any variation from the Service Plan (page 47)

7.3 Areas for improvement (page 48)

7.4 Export Health Certificates (page 51)

7.5. Produced in Northumberland (page 48)

7.6. Customer satisfaction survey results 2017/18 (page 51)

7.7 North East regional benchmarking results (page 51)

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

## **APPENDIX**

Appendix A – Public Protection & Commercial Team Structure

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Plan details how the food law enforcement service will be delivered in Northumberland. It has been produced by the Public Health Protection Unit and Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit, which encompasses Food Hygiene / Safety, Food Standards and Feed Hygiene. In delivering our services, we aim to protect, improve public health and ensure a fair-trading environment for all businesses in Northumberland.

Interventions will be:

- Transparent
- Accountable;
- Proportionate;
- Consistent;
- Targeted (risk based)

This approach will ensure that the Food Service is delivered in an efficient and effective manner with the aim of improving regulatory outcomes without imposing unnecessary burdens, in line with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform agenda.

Effective delivery of the food service involves a range of partnerships and joint working arrangements with other Council teams, other Local Authorities and stakeholders.

The Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Framework Agreement on Local Authority Food Law Enforcement. It has also taken account of the changes to food law enforcement by the FSA. The Plan also refers to the continued use of the Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS).

Following the Covid Pandemic this plan has also been developed to take into account the FSA recovery plan which sets out the Agency's guidance and advice to local authorities for the period from 1 July 2021 to 2023/24. This includes targeted programmed inspections for high-risk premise, rollout of a new food standards delivery model and development of a new food hygiene delivery model.



## **2.0 SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 Aims**

To strive to ensure that:-

- i) Food and drink intended for human consumption which is produced, stored, distributed, handled or consumed in the County is without risk to the health or safety of the consumer.
- ii) Food and food packaging meet standards of quality, composition and labelling and that reputable food businesses are not prejudiced by unfair competition.
- iii) Feed is of satisfactory quality and composition and is correctly labelled.
- iv) Standards in food and animal feed businesses are improved across the county.
- v) Livestock is healthy, disease free, and suitably cared for, thereby protecting the public.

### **Objectives**

- i) To secure hygienic conditions in food businesses and minimise the risks associated with food handling.
- ii) To ensure food businesses meet legal requirements in respect of hygiene, quality, composition and labelling.
- iii) To promote continued improvements in standards through the adoption and application of good practice.
- iv) To enhance the awareness of food safety and food standards issues amongst food businesses and consumers through education and advice.
- v) To reduce the incidence of food poisoning and foodborne disease in the community.
- vi) To monitor the wholesomeness and sufficiency of water supplies.
- vii) To ensure all feed meets legal requirements in respect of quality, composition and labelling

- viii) To ensure that feed business operators meet legal requirements in respect of hygiene, traceability, quality control, equipment and storage.
- ix) To ensure that primary food and feed producers meet legal requirements in respect of hygiene, traceability, quality control, equipment and storage.
- x) To provide of an Export Health Certificate service and support businesses as a result of the UK leaving the EU.

## 2.2. Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

The Council integrates and delivers its policies and priorities through a Corporate Planning Framework. In April 2022, the Council updated its Corporate Plan, which outlines the Council's priorities in the coming years while recovering from the Covid pandemic through its Corporate Plan 2021-24. This plan is in alignment with the plans aims in that its overarching purpose is to help to provide a safe and thriving food sector within Northumberland.

## 3.0 BACKGROUND

### 3.1 Profile

Northumberland County Council is a unitary authority comprising the main urban conurbations of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Alnwick, Morpeth, Ashington, Blyth, Hexham and many smaller towns and rural villages. It covers over 5,014 Sq Km in total and has a population of 320,600 (2021) with the higher proportion of the population being concentrated in the industrial south east corner. Northumberland is England's most sparsely populated County with a population density of 64 persons per square km. Please see table below to see the area breakdown for the region. The structure of the County's businesses is weighted towards smaller companies & sole traders.

	Authority	Population	Area (sq. km) <sup>1</sup>
E06000057	Northumberland	320,600	5,014
E06000047	County Durham	522,100	2,226
E08000037	Gateshead	196,100	142

E08000024	Sunderland	274,200	137
E08000021	Newcastle upon Tyne	300,200	113
E08000022	North Tyneside	209,000	82
E08000023	South Tyneside	147,800	64

The Authority covers an area from the Scottish Borders to the boundaries of the Tyne and Wear Authorities, Cumbria and County Durham.

### 3.2 Organisational Structure

There are 67 Elected Members. Council elections were held in May 2021 where the Council's Administration remained a Conservative administration. The Council is run through a Cabinet, the Leader of the Council is Councillor Glen Sanderson and the Cabinet holder in respect of food & feed safety & standards is Councillor Colin Horncastle.

The Council's management structure organisation is led by the Chief Executive. The Food Service is delivered through the Public Health Protection Unit and Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit within the Housing & Public Protection Service, managed by Phil Soderquest the Service Director of Housing and Public Protection. The lead unit manager is Peter Simpson Public Health Protection Unit Manager. The Commercial Team is managed by Principal Environmental Health Officer, Mark Mitchell. Its remit covers; food safety, food standards, port health, health & safety, Safety at Sports Grounds and infectious disease control. Other teams within Housing & Public Protection Service also contribute to food and feed enforcement, namely the Trading Standards and Animal Health Team, managed by Laura Brooks. Its remit includes food standards, fair trading, weights and measures, animal health and feed hygiene.

See **Appendix A** for details of the Housing & Public Protection Service organisational structure as it relates to the Food Service.

### 3.3 Scope of the Food Service

The Commercial Team has lead responsibility for enforcement work related to food safety and food standards matters. The Trading Standards and Animal Health Team lead on Feed.

The service is available to the public between Monday to Thursday 8.30am to

5.00 pm and Friday 8.30 am to 4.30 pm. Outside of these hours, messages can be left on voicemail or by e-mail. Emergency arrangements are also in place through the Council's Customer Service Centre for incident reporting after normal working hours by dialling the single council contact number (0345 600 6400). Flexible hours working arrangement are in operation for staff. Whilst most inspections and other visits are made to businesses during the day, many are also carried out outside normal working hours in order to inspect businesses such as restaurants and takeaways that do not open through the day. Visits carried out as part of planned programmes are usually unannounced unless there are specific reasons to give prior notification.

All aspects of the Food and Feed Service are delivered from:-

Food and Feed Service office location:
<p>Public Health Protection Unit &amp; Business Compliance &amp; Public Safety Unit West Hartford Fire Station West Hartford Business Park Cramlington Northumberland NE23 3JP</p> <p>Telephone number: (01670) 623870 e-mail: <a href="mailto:public.protection@northumberland.gov.uk">public.protection@northumberland.gov.uk</a></p>

The operational teams within the Housing & Public Protection Service are responsible for enforcement work related to food and feed matters, including;

- planned visits to food businesses including full and partial inspections/audits
- other official control visits as defined in the Food Law Code of Practice issued by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which include monitoring, surveillance, and verification visits
- the investigation and control of foodborne diseases including food poisoning outbreaks
- investigation of food complaints and food premises complaints
- sampling of food for microbiological contamination
- sampling of water at the Port of Blyth to ensure potable supplies on ships
- monitoring of pest control at the Port of Blyth
- the processing of sanitation certificates at the Port of Blyth
- maintenance of the food premises database
- responding to Food & Feed Alerts (issued by the Food Standards Agency)

- contributing to imported food controls through inspection and checks of imported foods at retail and catering premises
- enforcement of compositional standards (including safety) descriptions and labelling of animal feeding stuffs
- maintenance of a register in accordance with the Animal Feed (Hygiene, Sampling etc. and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2015
- planned inspections of premises for food and feed hygiene having regard to the Feed Law Code of Practice
- inspections relating to metrology and fair trading
- provision of advice and guidance to new and existing food businesses and the general public, including the promotion of 'Safer Food Better Business' the food safety management tool developed by the FSA.
- response to enquiries from other local authorities in relation to food manufactured in Northumberland
- contribution to wider public health agenda issues
- consultation responses to the Planning Section, Building Control and the Licensing Section
- publication of the results of food hygiene inspections in line with the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
- The provision of an Export Health Certificate service as a result of the UK leaving the EU.

### **3.4 Demands on the Food Service**

There are over 3950 food premises in Northumberland subject to food safety and food standards regulation and in excess of 1700 businesses, mainly farm premises subject to feed composition/labelling and hygiene regulation. Due to the nature of the county there are a large number of seasonal businesses associated with holiday accommodation and tourism, including:

- Bed & Breakfast accommodation
- Seasonal restaurants and cafes
- Holiday let accommodation
- Caravan parks (static and touring) & camping
- Farm Stay accommodation
- Ice cream vans and kiosks

The Port of Blyth and the docks at Berwick currently does not import food of animal origin and only low risk products not of animal origin at the present time. Grain can be imported intermittently. Incoming checks on goods (feed) is currently on hold and will be reviewed as the legislation changes. There are two External Temporary Storage Facility (ETSF) in the County, however these currently deal in non-food products only.

The food premises (safety & standards) and feed (composition & hygiene) profile at 1 April 2022 was:-

Premises Type	Number
Primary Producers	40
Manufacturers and Packers	192
Importers / Exporters	6
Distributors/Transporters	74
Retailers	869
Restaurants and Caterers	2789
<b>Total: Food Safety &amp; Standards</b>	<b>3970</b>
Feed Hygiene Premises	1741
<b>Total: Feed &amp; Food</b>	<b>5711</b>

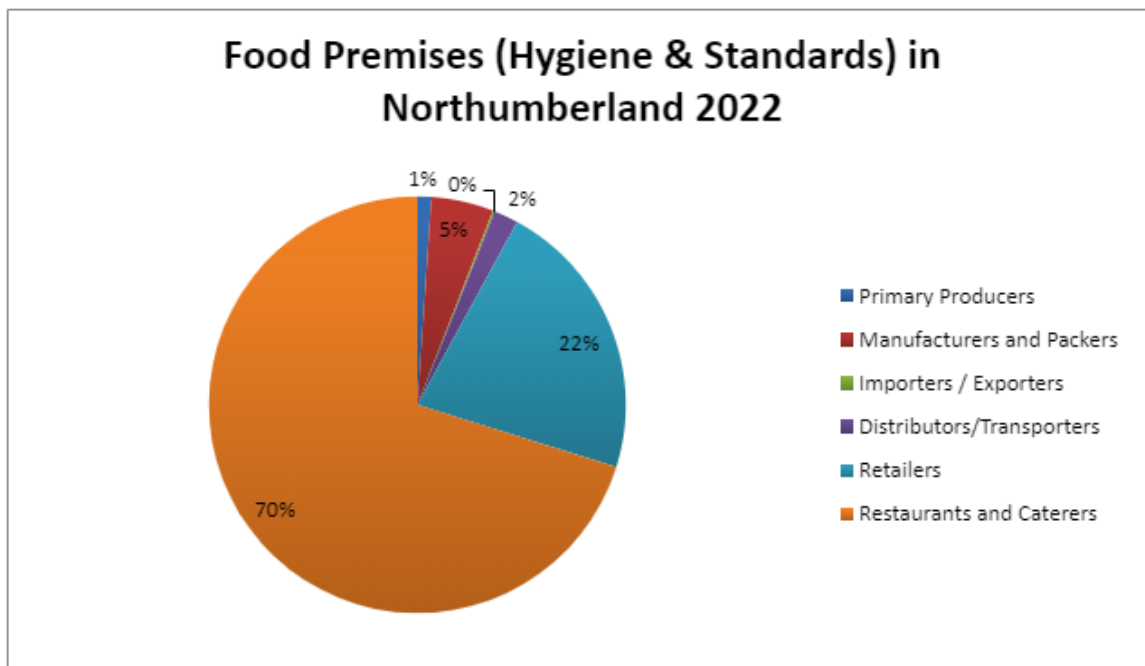
This includes 20 premises which require approval under specific European legislation to ensure they meet a higher food safety standard. They are categorised as follows: meat products (2), dairy products (4), fishery products (7), egg products (7).

Within the food premises these activities require a specialist approach:

- Large scale pastry and food products manufactures
- Fish smokehouses
- Egg Packers
- Cheese manufacturers
- Oyster bed
- Live and cooked shellfish

In addition, these premises, where exporting, require the provision of an Export Health Certificate service which is complex and very labour intensive.

Excluding feed hygiene premises (which are not subject to detailed food safety or standards inspection), grouping the food premises into broader categories shows that most (92%) are retailers, restaurants, or caterers. These are predominantly small single businesses which require individual attention, particularly to food safety procedures and record systems during the inspection process. The figures also show that about 65% of food premises are in the rural areas of the County making travel a significant factor for the inspection service.



### 3.4.1 Food Safety

The Commercial Team received 1069 service requests in 2021-22, a decrease of over 200 requests compared to 2020-21. It is worth noting however that the service also responded to in excess of 200 requests for advice regarding the COVID pandemic, with a high number relating to food businesses reopening following lengthy closures. Requests are usually for verbal advice on food hygiene requirements; design, layout and materials used in catering areas; documentation; staff training; infectious disease control if food handling staff become ill; and toilet facilities for customers in new or altered premises. Information packs are sent out to general enquiries, including both food safety and food standards general advice. Visits are made depending on the complexity and risk of the proposed business.

The Food Law Code of Practice expects that once new businesses are operational or registered, inspection should be carried out within 28 days. The service operates a risk-based system for new registrations to ensure high risk premises are inspected as a priority.

The service received 283 complaints about food in 2021-22, for example, foreign objects, food causing illness, the hygiene of food premises or food handlers. This is an increase compared to 2020-21.

### 3.4.2 Food Standards

Business enquiries for food standards advice remained stable in 2021-22, with the service responding to 103 requests. The service requests tend to be of a more complex nature as businesses were looking for advice on compliance with the Food Information Regulation EC.1169/2011.

The Service receives a steady number of complaints about food, for example, its labelling and/or description, issues with allergens or selling food past its best before date/use by date. As with the majority of complaints and service requests dealt by the service the response time is 3 working days from receipt. The service received 69 complaints about food standards in 2021-22.

Northumberland County Council acts as 'Home Authority' (see section 4.3) for a range of local food manufacturers who trade beyond the boundaries of the Council. In this role, help and advice is offered in respect of the composition of new and developing products, and their permissible labelling. The latter can place an uneven, heavy demand on officer time. The team would also take a lead role in the investigation of complaints by other Local Authorities about businesses for which the Council acts as Home Authority.

The last year saw the implementation of Natasha's Law, which is named after Natasha Ednan-Laperouse who, at the age of 15, passed away due to a severe allergic reaction. Natasha had a sesame allergy and was not made aware that sesame seeds had been baked into the bread of a sandwich she had purchased.

From 1 October 2021, the requirements for prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food labelling changed in Wales, England, and Northern Ireland. The new labelling will help protect your consumers by providing potentially life-saving allergen information on the packaging. Any business that produces PPDS food is required to label it with the name of the food and a full ingredients list, with allergenic ingredients emphasised within the list. Businesses need to check if their products require PPDS labelling and what they need to do to comply with the new rules.

Prepacked for direct sale or PPDS is food which is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to consumers and is in this packaging before it is ordered or selected. It can include food that consumers select themselves (e.g. from a display unit), as well as products kept behind a counter and some food sold at mobile or temporary outlets.

This was a huge section of work for the service with detailed advice and guidance needed for our businesses. In addition, additional time was required during interventions to check compliance and provide advice if needed.

`Produced in Northumberland` is an initiative from Northumberland County Council which recognises Northumberland food producers and also businesses



that use and promote food and drink that is made in Northumberland. The core of the scheme is a source verification carried out by lead auditor trained officers of the Public Health Protection Unit. Additionally, scheme members must reach a compliant food safety standard so this provides additional reassurance to the public that food produced or retailed with this branding is both safe and sourced locally.

This verification scheme is offered to local businesses with the aim of raising the profile, value and public confidence in Northumberland food & drink. With regard to helping tourism within the County the scheme also helps to add value to the visitors overall experience of Northumberland as food & drink is such an important and memorable part of their visit.

Due to the COVID pandemic from March 2020 the scheme moved from its normal proactive inspections to a remote assessment and an increased prioritisation on promotional work. The aim being to continue to support our members during the pandemic, promote the amazing local product and where possible identify local delivery's to provide products to customers doors. As we move forward in 2022 the aim is to restart the inspection aspects of the scheme, continue to promote Northumberland foods and bring in new members

### **3.4.3 Feed**

In 2021/2022 work on feed hygiene began to take first steps back to normality when physical inspections began to be carried out rather than virtual desktop inspections which had been favoured, for obvious reasons, during the Covid pandemic.

In 2017 the National Trading Standards board agreed grants with the Food Standards Agency for local authorities to continue for another 3 years to undertake work at feed premises. The work is to concentrate on inspections for food and feed hygiene purposes. This strategy has not been updated due to Covid, and the Food Standards Agency plan to produce their next 3-year strategy in late 2022 when a decision on future funding will be made.

The inspections of businesses are carried out by the Trading Standards and Animal Health Team. The team is now managed on a day-to-day basis by a Senior Trading Standards Officer due to the retirement of the Senior Animal Health Inspector who previously conducted this management. The Senior Trading Standards Officer also conducts coordination of feed hygiene work regionally and liaises with the other 11 Local Authorities in the North East region to ensure that this work is undertaken.

### **3.5 Enforcement Policy**

The Authority has signed up to the Enforcement Concordat and the corporate Enforcement Policy embraces the policies and procedures detailed in the Concordat and the Regulators Compliance Code. This is publicly available from the council website.

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Corporate-Enforcement-Policy-3-November-2015.pdf>

## **4.0 SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **4.1 Interventions at Food and Feed Establishments**

Local Authorities are required by the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice and Feed Law Code of Practice to document, maintain and implement an Interventions Programme for all food premises for which they have food law enforcement responsibility. The Commercial Team & Trading Standards and Animal Health Team undertake interventions in accordance with relevant legislation, the code above and centrally issued guidance and to meet realistic targets given the available staff and resources and other service demands.

Different types of interventions (actions) allow Officers to use their professional judgement to apply a proportionate level of regulatory and enforcement action to each business. They are applied in a risk-based manner such that more intensive regulation is directed at those businesses presenting the greatest risk to public health. Official controls include:-

- Inspections
- Audit
- Surveillance
- Verification
- Sampling
- Monitoring

Other interventions that are effective in supporting food businesses to achieve compliance with food law include:-

- Education, advice and coaching
- Information and intelligence gathering

This range of interventions allows Local Authorities to choose the most appropriate action to be taken to drive up levels of compliance, taking into account the recommendations in the Hampton Review “Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement”.

#### **4.1a Impacts of Coronavirus on Interventions**

2020-2022 was an unprecedented time. From March 2020 virtually all of the Commercial Team resource was moved into the COVID-19 pandemic response. This was then reduced as we moved through to the start of 2021 where we were able to start some FH / FS intervention work, prioritising unrated or non-

complainant premises. The closure of many businesses and the adaptation of others to work in new / different ways significantly impacted the food safety interventions carried out. The guidance produced by the Food Standards Agency in prioritising interventions during this time was implemented as was appropriate. At this time the FSA suspended the Food Law CoP requirements for interventions so resources could be diverted.

It was not possible to record every intervention carried out by the various teams, but at every restriction change relevant businesses were contacted and where information about new businesses or changes in how a business operated (e.g. takeaway) was available, contact was made and advice was issued.

As an indicator of the work carried out on Covid, in 2021-22 alone the service responded to over 200 service requests, 335 complaints and investigated over 240 outbreaks. Our proactive work also included over 2600 Covid secure checks and 1200 Covid area checks. In each case premises were visited, compliance with the current legislative controls checked and importantly advice provided on how to protect staff and the public from Covid, in line with central government and local guidance.

Investigations into workplace and community cases of COVID 19, supporting contact tracing, participation in outbreak management teams, enforcement of the rules on businesses closures and the increase in complaints dealt with by the wider service such as noise, bonfires etc. affecting people staying at home placed additional demands on the service.

#### **4.1b FSA COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan**

The Service intends to comply with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Recovery Plan which sets out guidance and advice to local authorities for the period from 1 July 2021 to 2023/24. The guidance and advice aim to ensure that during the period of recovery from the impact of COVID-19, local authority resources are targeted where they add greatest value in providing safeguards for public health and consumer protection in relation to food. It also aims to safeguard the credibility of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS).

The Recovery Plan provides a framework for re-starting the delivery system in line with the Food Law Codes of Practice (for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) for new food establishments and for high-risk and/or non-compliant establishments while providing flexibility for lower risk establishments. This should be implemented alongside delivery of:

- official controls where the nature and frequency are prescribed in specific legislation and official controls recommended by FSA guidance that support trade and enable export

- reactive work including enforcement in the case of non-compliance, managing food incidents and food hazards, and investigating and managing complaints
- sampling, and
- ongoing proactive surveillance.

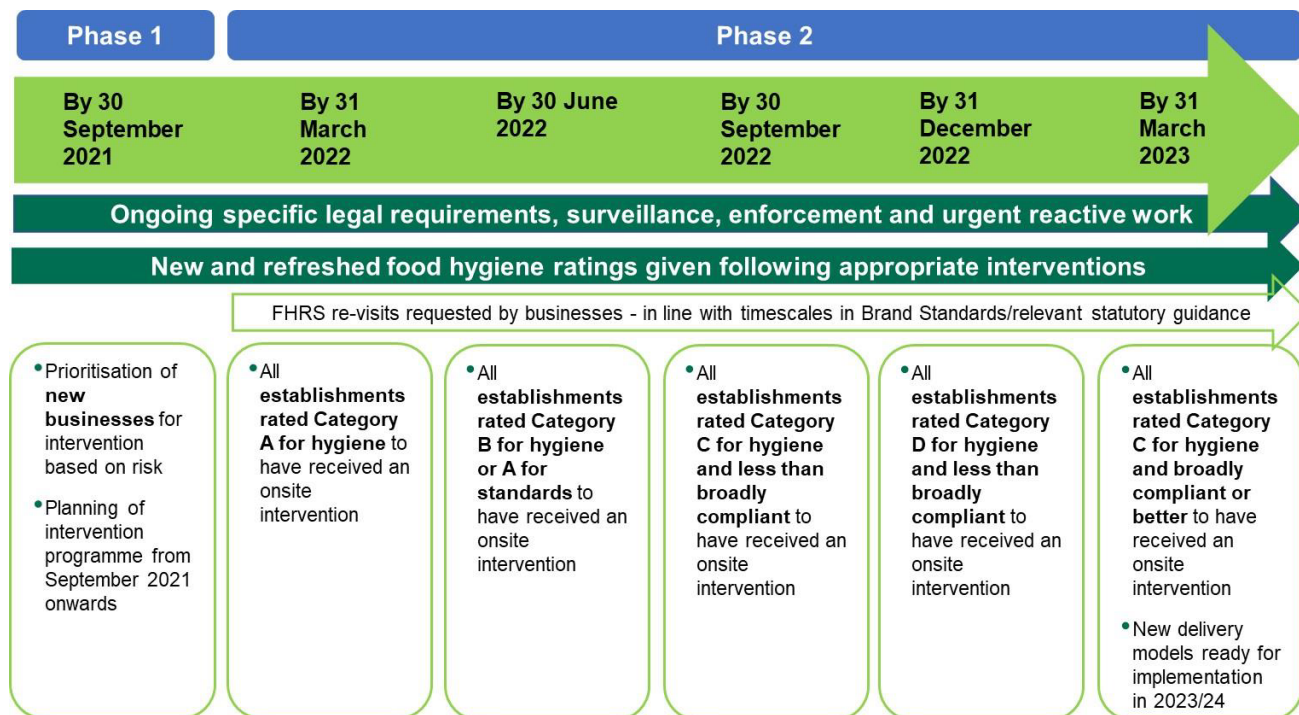
In order to achieve our stated service aims, we need to set out some key priorities for our Food Safety Service Delivery. These key priorities are in line with the FSA Recovery Plan.

There are two phases to the Recovery Plan:

- Phase 1 - 1 July to 30 September 2021
- Phase 2 – 1 October 2021 to 2023/24

In essence, Phase 2 will continue until a new food standards delivery model and a revised intervention rating scheme developed. The new delivery model for food standards was being piloted in England and Northern Ireland until the end of December 2021. Subject to the findings of an evaluation of the pilot and stakeholder consultation, it is anticipated that the new model will be rolled out nationally from April 2023. Work to review and revise the food hygiene intervention rating scheme is planned to commence shortly with a view to implementation in 2023/24. We are still awaiting full details of the new models and will develop future plans taking these into account. It is worth noting that any new delivery model will require implementation, which from past experience has required a significant amount of resource.

An outline of the recovery plan is provided at Figure 1.



The key milestone dates within the Recovery Plan for higher risk establishments are shown.

For lower risk establishments not shown in the figure, local authorities have the flexibility to defer planned interventions and only undertake intervention where information/intelligence suggests that risks have increased/standards have fallen or if the establishment is otherwise considered a priority for intervention due to the risk posed.

In the case of food standards, the impact on the business of the new requirements on allergen labelling for products prepacked for direct sale - that apply from 1 October 2021 - should also be taken into account.

The recovery plan itself is seen as the minimum for local authority planning, and this has been used for the planning below, however we will aim to overachieve this minimum if resources allow.

#### 4.1.1 Food Safety

Under Chapter 5 of the Food Law Code of Practice, premises are rated according to risk in Categories A-E, which determines their frequency of inspection as follows:

The full food safety premises risk rating profile at 1 April 2022 was:-

Category	Intervention Plan	Interventions required by risk category
A	Inspection at 6 monthly intervals	6
B	Inspection at 12 monthly intervals	63
C	Inspection at 18 monthly intervals	367
D	Alternate between official control and other interventions every 2 years.	1314
E	Alternative Enforcement Strategy every 36 months.	1964
Unrated	To be visited and risk rated.	173 (+ new businesses arising during the year)
Outside Programme		43*
Total		3930

\* 'Outside Programme' are registered premises with no inspectable risk, for example haulage companies registering in case food is kept on a vehicle overnight.

In addition to the programme, interventions may be made in response to the following triggers:-

- consumer complaints
- change of ownership
- implication in a food poisoning outbreak
- a food alert
- change in business operations which may lead to a higher risk rating
- request for a re-rating under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

#### 4.1.1.1 New Registrations

The Food Standards Agency Code of Practice requires that all new premises should receive an initial inspection and this should normally take place within 28 days of registration or from when the Authority becomes aware that the establishment is in operation.

Due to the increasing number of new registrations received by the authority, 394 food registration forms received in 2021-22, and the existing premises workload, the requirement to undertake initial inspections within 28 days does present a challenge to resources. This is particularly the case where there are a large number of new business registrations that are received in respect of home bakers or childminders. These are likely to be low risk and when inspected and

risk rated would most likely be Category E premises. As such these premises would require no further inspection in future years as they would be subject to the Alternative Enforcement Strategy approach (see 4.1.1.2)

On the 1st April 22 Northumberland had 173 unrated food premises. Of the outstanding 173 premises, 86 were received within the past 6 months. Of these premises 30 have been identified as likely to be 'high' risk based on usage type. Of the remaining 87 registrations 90% are likely to be low risk, again based on premises type. Any premises identified as 'high' risk is given priority by the inspecting officer to ensure resources are targeted where there is potential risk to public health.

Where there is a conflict for resources, all new registrations are allocated to the appropriate area officer, who would use the information provided on the form and by the food business operator, to determine when to carry out the initial inspection, giving priority to premises which in the officer's opinion present a high or medium risk, for example a public house serving meals, a cafe or restaurant. Low priority would be given to a child-minder who only provides a drink and snack and home bakers who do not produce any meat products for example.

#### **4.1.1.2 Enforcement Strategy for low risk category E food safety premises**

An alternative enforcement strategy has been adopted for dealing with Category E rated low risk premises. Alternative enforcement strategies (AES) are methods by which low risk premises establishments are monitored to ensure their continued compliance with food law.

It is not intended to preclude inspection, partial inspection or audit at such establishments where this would be the preferred official control option.

An establishment must have been subject to an initial formal inspection, and have been subsequently risk rated in accordance with Annex 5, of the Food Law Code of Practice before it can be determined to be a low risk establishment and therefore appropriate for it to be included in the alternative enforcement strategy.

#### **Risk category E premises**

Currently Cat 'E' premises are not within the recovery plan for intervention in 2022-23, however if we have the resource, we would like to carry out some form of review through an AES. AES typically use questionnaires, with a sample of the businesses receiving a follow up visit to verify the information provided. This follow up visit can be recorded as a verification visit.

Visits may also be made to:



- any premises not returning a questionnaire
- any premises giving rise to a consumer complaint
- any premises where the returned questionnaire indicates significant changes in activities.
- any premises where a new food premises registration form is returned advising of a change in food business operator.

### Specialised processes

Appropriate training, and refresher training, will be made available to officers required to inspect specialised processes in the county. Where training is not accessible appropriate expertise will be sought from suitable consultants.

#### 4.1.1.3 Food Safety 2022-2023 intervention programme

The proposed 2022-2023 programme of work is detailed below:-

Category	Minimum intervention rating	Intervention type	Number of premises due	Target
A	At least every 6 months	Inspection, partial inspection, audit or sampling	6*	100% planned inspections
B	At least every 12 months	Inspection, partial inspection or audit or sampling	63	98% planned inspections**
C	At least every 18 months	Inspection, partial inspection or audit or sampling	170*	95% planned inspections
D - less than broadly compliant	At least every 24 months	Alternate between official control and other interventions every 2 years.	3	90% Official Interventions
E	At least every 36 months	Alternative Intervention Strategy	0	
Unrated	Not known until inspection	Inspection	173***	90%
<b>Total</b>			<b>415***</b>	

\* Plus any in year Cat A & C rated inspections

\*\* The aim is to inspect 100% of premises due, but a lower target has been cited to allow for contingencies.

\*\*\* Plus new businesses commencing during the year, estimated at 35 per month

The programme of inspections aims to meet the requirements of FSA COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan

The intervention programme figures will alter during the course of the year as a consequence of premises closing and as new food businesses open.

#### 4.1.1.4 Other Food Safety interventions

In addition to the recovery programme the team also carries out a number of other interventions to promote food safety and support businesses, for example.

- Increase the number of premises with a Food Hygiene Rating Score (FHRS) rating of 3 or more
- Carry out revisits to follow up non 'broadly compliant' businesses
- Respond to complaints and service requests within 3 working days of receipt
- Review local markets & events for food safety compliance
- On-going national, regional and local food sampling programmes

In 2022-23 we will continue to work with persistently low scoring premises Food Hygiene Rating Score (FHRS) rating of 0-2 to improve their standards as they not only pose significant risk to the public but also failure to improve may result in possible closure or prosecution.

#### 4.1.2 Food Standards

Under Chapter 5 of the Food Law Code of Practice, premises are rated according to risk in Categories A-C, which determines their frequency of inspection as follows. The full food standards premises risk rating profile at 1 April 2022 was:-

Category	Intervention Plan	Interventions required by risk category
A	Inspection at 12 monthly intervals	55
B	Inspection at 24 monthly intervals	931
C	Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES) every 5 years	2717
Unrated	To be visited and risk rated.	123 (+ new businesses arising during the year)
Outside Programme		144*
<b>Total</b>		<b>3970</b>

\* 'Outside Programme' are registered premises with no inspectable risk, for example haulage companies registering in case food is kept on a vehicle overnight.

In addition to the programme, interventions may be made in response to the following triggers:-

- consumer complaints
- change of ownership
- a food alert
- change in business operations which may lead to a higher risk rating
- results of a sampling exercise

#### 4.1.2.1 New Registrations

Please see 4.1.1.1.

#### 4.1.2.2 Enforcement Strategy for low risk category premises

An alternative enforcement strategy has been adopted for dealing with Category C risk premises. Alternative enforcement strategies (AES) are methods by which low risk premises establishments are monitored to ensure their continued compliance with food law. It is not intended to preclude inspection, partial inspection or audit at such establishments where this would be the preferred official control option.

An establishment must have been subject to an initial formal inspection, and have been subsequently risk rated before it can be determined to be a Category C establishment and therefore appropriate for it to be included in the alternative enforcement strategy.

Currently Cat 'C' premises are not within the recovery plan for intervention in 2022-23, however if we have the resource, we would like to carry out some form of review through an AES. AES typically use questionnaires, with a sample of the businesses receiving a follow up visit to verify the information provided. This follow up visit can be recorded as a verification visit.

Visits may also be made to:

- any premises not returning a questionnaire
- any premises giving rise to a consumer complaint
- any premises where the returned questionnaire indicates significant changes in activities.
- any premises where a new food premises registration form is returned advising of a change in food business operator.

#### 4.1.2.3 Food Standards 2022-2023 intervention programme

The proposed 2022-2023 programme of work is detailed below:-

Category	Minimum intervention rating	Intervention type	Number of premises due	Target
----------	-----------------------------	-------------------	------------------------	--------

A	At least every 12 months	Inspection, partial inspection, audit or sampling	55	*98% planned inspections
B	At least every 24 months	Inspection, partial inspection or audit or sampling	0	
C	At least every 5 years	Alternative Intervention Strategy	0	
Unrated	Not known until inspection	Inspection	123*	90% planned inspections
<b>Total</b>			<b>178**</b>	

\* The aim is to inspect 100% of premises due, but a lower target has been cited to allow for contingencies.

\*\* Plus new businesses commencing during the year, estimated at 35 per month

The programme of inspections aims to meet the requirements of FSA COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan.

As with food hygiene the intervention programme figures will alter during the course of the year as a consequence of premises closing and as new food businesses open.

#### 4.1.2.4 Other Food Standards interventions

In addition to the risk based intervention programme the team also carries out a number of other interventions.

- Liaise with other County Departments on food standards matters as appropriate e.g. Facilities and Procurement (school meals & catering)

#### 4.1.3 Port Health

The following work programme is proposed for Port Health:

- Visit 90% of high-risk ships\* entering the Port of Blyth and Berwick
- Carry out monitoring of the Port of Blyth's pest & waste controls
- Contract sampling of the Port private water distribution network

\* High risk ships are categorised as any vessel entering the port directly from a non-EU country or has a previous history of non-compliance.

#### 4.1.4 Feed Hygiene

Under Section 5 of the Feed Law Code of Practice, premises are rated according to risk in Categories A-E, which determines their frequency of inspection as follows:

The Feed Hygiene risk rating profile at 01 April 2022 was:-

Category	Intervention Plan	Interventions required by risk category
A	Inspection at 12 monthly intervals	5
B	Inspection at 24 monthly intervals, except where Type 1 earned recognition applies	8
C	Inspection at 36 monthly intervals, except where Type 1 earned recognition applies	57
D	Inspection at 48 monthly intervals, except where Type 1 earned recognition applies	267
E*	Inspection at 60 monthly intervals, except where Type 1, Type 2 earned recognition or NTMS applies	227
Never Been Inspected		1,177
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,741</b>

\*Low risk premises mostly livestock farms.

The Feed Law Code of Practice introduced the term 'earned recognition' to provide business with good levels of compliance and members of an approved FSA Scheme to reduce the frequency of inspection to them.

The code of practice states the following:

#### **Earned Recognition:**

This is at the heart of the FSA approach to rewarding responsible businesses and encouraging industry to promote the positive role of regulatory standards;

Aims to reduce the burden on compliant businesses whilst concentrating enforcement activity at those businesses which are less compliant.

The Code describes two approaches as to how a feed business may qualify for Earned Recognition:

**Type 1:** a business which is a member of an FSA approved assurance scheme and demonstrates at least a satisfactory level of current compliance, with relevant feed law;

**Type 2:** a business which is not a member of an FSA approved assurance scheme and demonstrates a broad level of current compliance, with relevant feed law.

**National Targeted Monitoring Strategy (NTMS):** The NTMS is a mechanism to allocate appropriate resources to monitor compliance at low-risk farm establishments (livestock and arable farms) achieving at least a satisfactory level of current compliance.

The code now allows low risk feed businesses (livestock & arable farms) who are part of an FSA approved scheme to have earned recognition allocated to them and a current level of compliance in accordance with the Code.

In addition to the programme, interventions may be made in response to the following triggers:-

- Consumer complaints
- A feed alert
- Change in business operations which may lead to a higher risk rating
- Additional funding from the Food Standards Agency.

Any existing 'unrated' premises i.e. those which have never been visited, will be reviewed when resources permit. A large portion of these premises will be low risk farms.

#### **4.1.4.1 Feed Hygiene at Primary Producer 2022-2023 intervention programme**

The Feed Law Code of Practice recognises earned recognition and the benefits it gives to businesses. Businesses which are part of a recognised FSA assurance scheme or are found on inspection to be broadly compliant have an amended frequency of inspection. As a result, consideration to 5.3 of the Code will be given when deciding premises due for inspection each year.

The code provides an inspection programme to be based on a number of factors, such as premises type, current level of compliance and if they are a member of an approved FSA scheme.

The proposed 2022/2023 programme of work is detailed below:-

Category	Minimum intervention rating	Intervention type	Visits required by FSA
A	At least every 12 months	Inspection	3*

B	At least every 24 months	Inspection	3*
C	At least every 36 months	Inspection	4*
D	At least every 48 months	Any official control (except where NTMS applies)	11*
E	At least every 60 months	Any official control (except where NTMS applies)	4*
Unrated	Not known until inspection	Inspection	20*
<b>Total</b>			<b>45</b>

\* The visits required do not match the interventions due as part of the feed risk rating scheme. Visits required are calculated by the FSA, based on a desktop assessment of the database and based on premises type and the current level of business compliance.

The service is aware of the National Enforcement Priorities for England and Wales which is produced by the Food Standards Agency which looks at animal feed law enforcement (at all stages of production, processing, storage, transportation and distribution, including import and the primary production of feed) and food hygiene law enforcement at the level of primary production.

The Animal Feed National Priorities for 2022/2023 are;

- ⊘ Verification of effective implementation and maintenance of feed safety management systems
- ⊘ Verification of effective implementation and maintenance of feed safety management systems at businesses supplying former foodstuffs or co-products
- ⊘ Effective monitoring of feed on farms
- ⊘ Effective monitoring of storage arrangements at feed premises
- ⊘ Verification of the accuracy of feed labelling
- ⊘ Effective monitoring of consignments of feed originating from non-EU countries, at points of entry
- ⊘ Effective identification, registration and inspection of food businesses producing higher-risk fresh produce operating at the level of primary production

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/Final%20NEPs%202022-23%20.pdf>

The service continues to carry out inspections based on the feed grant which may include a sampling programme. There is no specific sampling carried out by the service separate to this.

Since 2010 the Food Standards Agency via National Trading Standards (NTS) has funded local authorities an agreed amount to carry out a number of feed hygiene inspections. The project has been a great success, and in 2021/22 96% of national planned work was achieved. In the North East region, 99% of planned work was undertaken.

A regional budget of £86,066 has been granted to the North East Authorities in 2022/2023.

Feed hygiene inspections are currently only carried out when funded by the Food Standards Agency, unless a complaint is received.

#### 4.1.4.2 Other Feed Standards interventions

- FSA Food and Feed Hygiene Grant

The Food Standards Agency grant for 2022/2023 is made up of the following:

#### Northumberland Figures

Inland Feed	£9,581	36 Inspections
Primary Production	£2,025	9 Inspections
Port Work	£2,500	

Coordination Fee	£25,500
------------------	---------

<b>Northumberland Total</b>	<b>£39,606</b>
-----------------------------	----------------

Where appropriate, Animal Health Inspectors will carry out Feed Hygiene inspections at premises which are subject to an Animal Health planned inspection to maximise efficiency. Trading Standards Officers will undertake inland feed hygiene inspections which are generally commercial and retail premises.

#### Summary of resources required for Food and Feed Interventions

Intervention programme	Food Safety	Food Standards	Feed	Port Health	Technical support
Resources required (FTE)	3.5	1.2	0.5	0.8	1.0

## 4.2 Food and Feed Complaints



It is the policy of this Authority to investigate all complaints regarding food, food premises and feed premises in accordance with local policies and procedures and in line with Local Government Regulation guidance and the Home Authority and Primary Authority Principle.

We will respond to all food safety complaints reported to us following our local procedure with a view to:-

- Ensuring the wider public health has not been put at risk
- Preventing a recurrence
- Taking appropriate action under the Food Safety Act and/or relevant regulations

We will respond to all food standards complaints reported to us following our local procedure with a view to:-

- Ensuring that the composition of food meets legal requirements
- Preventing a recurrence
- Taking appropriate action under the Food Safety Act and/or relevant regulations
- Ensuring that food is accurately labelled and advertised

We will respond to all feed complaints reported to us following our local procedure with a view to:-

- a) Ensuring that feed is wholesome and correctly described
- b) Preventing a recurrence
- c) Taking appropriate action under the Animal Feed (England) Regulations 2010 and/or other relevant regulations

### Summary of resources required for Food and Feed Complaints

	Food Hygiene complaints	Food premises complaints	Food Standards complaints	Feed complaints	Technical support
<b>2018-19</b>	117	134	123	3	-
<b>2019-20</b>	120	149	97	0	-
<b>2020-21</b>	124	113	62	2	-
<b>2021-22</b>	152	131	69	0	-
<b>Resources required (FTE)</b>	0.2	0.2	0.25	(incorporated into programme)	0.2

#### 4.2.1 Use of other agencies

The Authority will call upon the expertise of its food examiners and public analysts as deemed necessary in the investigation of feed and food complaints. In addition the North East Food Liaison Group and UK Health Security Agency (formerly the Public Health England) are sources of local expertise. NETSA (North East Trading Standards Association) a Regional liaison group comprising 12 Local Authorities, has a technical group that focuses on "Farm to Fork" issues, thus providing a further resource of expertise.

Where access to local expertise is not available, the Authority will seek the assistance and guidance of the Food Standards Agency and/or Local Government Regulation (LGR - formerly LACORS). The food service is also an active founder member of the Northumberland Business Alliance, which represents a range of regulatory and business organisations in order to improve consistency and reduce any unnecessary burdens on business.

### **4.3 Home Authority Principle and Primary Authority Scheme**

#### **Home Authority**

With regard to trading standards and food safety matters, local government has developed a Home Authority scheme where the Home Authority is the authority where the relevant decision-making base of the business is located.

So for example, if the business is a sole trader and only has one site or office, the Home Authority will be the local authority where this site or office is located. For a business with multiple branches, stores etc. throughout the UK, the Home Authority will generally be the local authority where the head office (or decision making centre) is located.

The scheme is designed to help businesses by providing contact points for advice and guidance in order to maintain high standards of public protection encourage fair trade and develop a consistent approach to enforcement. Northumberland acts as Home Authority for some 26 food companies, requiring maintenance of dialogue with management to update on operations, products and labels etc.

#### **Primary Authority**

Under the provisions of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 Local Authorities may agree to become a "Primary Authority" for food businesses. The Commercial Team would respond to any requests to act as Primary Authority although currently it does not act as one.

Primary Authority companies can form a statutory partnership with a single local authority, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or dealing with non-compliance. This leads to simpler, more successful local regulation. Businesses should be able to rely on the environmental health, licensing and trading standards advice received from local authorities, in the knowledge that it is expert opinion, applicable across the UK, and a secure basis for investment and operational decisions.

### **Summary of resources required for Home Authority and Primary Authority Scheme**

<b>Home &amp; Primary Authority</b>	<b>Food Safety</b>	<b>Food Standards</b>	<b>Feed</b>	<b>Technical support</b>
<b>Resources required (FTE)</b>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0

#### **4.4 Advice to Businesses**

It is the Authority's policy to provide all necessary advice to food and feed businesses to help them comply with legislative requirements and the adoption of good practice.

Advice will be available during the course of all inspections and visits and also through [Northumberland County Council's website](#)

New food businesses seeking help are provided with advice and guidance on legislation and best practice (safety and standards), food hygiene training, premises registration, the Food Hygiene Rating System, and as needed useful contacts both within and outside the Council such as planning, building control, licensing and the Fire Service.

The service also has a wide range of information and trader advice leaflets available to businesses and consumers. Material is often displayed at information sites at local livestock markets on various subjects including feeding stuffs and animal health issues.

Press releases are also made when a topic is considered to be of general interest to businesses and consumers, or when a survey has revealed newsworthy issues.

### **Summary of resources required for Advice / Service Requests to Business**

New business contacts	Service Requests – Food Safety	Service Requests – Food Standards	Service Requests – Feed Hygiene	Technical support
2018-19	1115*	123	64	-
2019-20	1065*	82	61	-
2020-21	1278*	77	30	-
2021-22	1069*	103	57	-
Resources required (FTE)	0.4	0.25	0.1	0.2

\* The number of service requests in relation to food safety includes new food registration forms.

#### 4.5 Food and Feed Sampling

The Authority recognises the important contribution sampling makes to the protection of public health of residents and honest traders. Sampling is undertaken for the following purposes:-

- Microbiological sampling and examination of food is an important part of food safety enforcement which enables authorised officers to gain an insight into the microbiological safety of food and which may reveal shortcomings in its safe handling, preparation and/or storage.
- The sampling and analysis of food is undertaken for compositional quality and safety purposes and for determining compliance with regulations relating to labelling and claims is an essential part of food standards enforcement.
- The analysis and/or microbiological examination of complaint samples is often vital in the investigation of consumer complaints.
- With all livestock entering the food chain, sampling is an important area of work to ensure that animal feed does not contaminate the human food chain. In some instances, materials used in the production of animal feed have been illegal and led to the withdrawal of products.

The Authority will:-

- coordinate with other local authorities in the North East Food Liaison Group (microbiology sub-group) to agree local sampling surveys
- participate where possible in UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) regional and national surveys
- coordinate for the purposes of food standards and feed with other local authorities in submitting samples to the Metrology Screening Laboratory
- participate in any sampling required by the Food Standards Agency

The sampling programme will have regard to the nature of food businesses in Northumberland and will focus on locally manufactured/produced foods and

foods targeted as a result of previous sampling experience, complaints or centrally coordinated sampling initiatives.

Whilst placing a strong emphasis on local foods this risk-based approach will also include nationally and internationally produced foods where problems are suspected or identified. Where routine feed samples are taken, priority will be given for analysing levels of undesirable substances and feed additives. The priority for routine sampling is:-

- High risk businesses
- Consumer complaints
- Home Authority businesses
- Local producing businesses

A Service Level Agreement has been reached with UKHSA for the microbiological examination of food. This agreement involves the allocation of credits which are used for the examination of food and environmental samples as well as non-drinking water samples.

The Food Examiner for the Authority is:-

**Public Health England Microbiological Services**

Food Water & Environment Microbiology Laboratory  
Block 10, The Food and Environmental Research Agency  
Sand Hutton  
York  
YO41 1LZ

The Public Analysts appointed by the Authority are:-

**Public Analyst Scientific Services Ltd**

i54 Business Park  
Valiant Way  
Wolverhampton  
WV9 5GB

All laboratories are official food laboratories as notified to the EC under Council Directive 93/99/EC.

**Summary of resources required for Food and Feed Sampling**

Feed & Food sampling	Reactive sampling to complaints – food safety	Reactive sampling to complaints – food standards	Planned sampling - food safety	Planned sampling - food standards	Planned sampling - feed	Technical support

<b>Resources required (FTE)</b>	0.05	0.05	0.1	0.05	-	0.1
---------------------------------	------	------	-----	------	---	-----

#### **4.6 Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease**

It is the policy of this Authority to respond to all cases of food poisoning or foodborne illness reported to the Council. This is carried out under the general direction, guidance and advice of the designated 'Proper Officer' appointed by the council in accordance with the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (as amended). This is the Centre Director, North East UK Health Security Agency and specified deputies. The principal contact is Dr Kirsty Foster, Consultant in Health Protection, Health Protection Team, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). Standard Operating Procedures are in place which detail the responses required for particular diseases.

Notifications from UKHSA and self-referrals are followed up either by posting information and advice, making a visit, or by telephone questionnaire depending upon the nature of the illness and risk assessment. This is carried out by food safety staff within the Commercial Team of the Public Health Protection Unit.

In the event of an outbreak the Authority will act in accordance with the Policy for the Control of an Outbreak of Communicable Disease, which was developed and agreed between UKHSA and the Northumberland, Durham and Tyne & Wear Local Authorities. The Principal Environmental Health Officer or representative will be a member of an Outbreak Control Team.

A representative of the team will attend the North & South of Tyne Area Health Protection Group. This group provides a link between the Consultant in Health Protection and the regional local authorities to determine and develop: policy; training; updating on legislative changes; case discussions aimed at consistency; statistical analysis of regional infections and advice on case control.

On the basis of previous year's figures infectious disease control will require the resources estimated below. This is reactive work and the number of cases requiring a response is outside of the service's control. Typically 55-60% of the cases requiring a visit are located in the rural areas of the county, which can involve considerable travel.

The resources required for outbreak investigation is unpredictable. An outbreak of viral illness will be managed in the main by PHE, an outbreak associated with food (food poisoning) can take officers out of their routine work for extended periods. Food borne outbreaks are typically 2-5 per year. Typical actions following such a foodborne outbreak include:

- Liaison with PHE
- Attendance at Outbreak Control Team if declared (may be several meetings)
- direct contact with cases to gather information, this can be a large number where a group event is involved e.g. wedding reception
- food premises investigation to identify cause(s)
- food samples taken to confirm source food or water
- faecal specimens to be collected from cases and contacts as part of the epidemiological investigation and case finding
- sample transport to laboratory etc.
- formal action with the food business to prevent recurrence
- consideration of other enforcement

### Summary of resources required for Infectious Disease Control

	Cases – officer investigation	Infectious disease outbreaks (inc viral outbreaks where no intervention required)	Cases - postal information only (Technical support)	Total
2018-19	161	69	430	660
2019-20	144	49	446	639
2020-21	71	11	357	439
2021-22	109	36	498	643
Resources required (FTE)	0.2		0.1	

#### 4.7 Food Safety Incidents

It is the policy of this Authority to:

- respond promptly to all Food Alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency; and
- notify the Agency of any serious localised incident or wider food safety incident that has been identified

The Authority will comply with the Code and in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures. The response to Food Alerts will be appropriate to their category and to any specific instructions that are given. Food Alerts are received electronically by email via the Food Standards Agency to a dedicated email in-box.

It is difficult to estimate the resource required to respond to these alerts since this varies dependent upon the number and status of alerts received. Most alerts are

for information only and do not require contact with businesses. However for example during 2012-13 a considerable response over several weeks was required for food standards officers in respect of the discovery of horse meat in food products.

### Summary of resources required for Food Safety Incidents

Responding to feed & food incidents	Food Safety	Food Standards	Feed	Technical support
Resources required (FTE)	0.03	0.06		0.03

### 4.8 Liaison with Other Organisations

The Authority actively participates in local and regional activities. It is a member of the North East Food Liaison Group, its Microbiological and Food Standards Sub-Groups; attends meetings called by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) for food lead officers; the North & South of Tyne Area Health Protection Group; North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA).

The Food Liaison Group meets quarterly to discuss technical issues and agree standards with the aim of ensuring consistency of enforcement throughout the North East area. The meetings are attended by regional representatives from the FSA.

The sub group looks at food sampling initiatives to assess the microbiological quality of food manufactured, distributed and retailed in the area and where appropriate to give advice and guidance to businesses.

NETSA meets quarterly and like the food group is used to discuss issues and agree standards with the aim of ensuring consistency throughout the North East area. It also has a number of technical focus groups to promote consistency of interpretation and enforcement and to coordinate projects in the Northeast Region. The main sub groups at the moment are 'Metrology' and 'Animal Health & Feed'.

The Authority is also represented on the following;

- NETSA Animal Health Panel
- National Agriculture Panel
- Association of Port Health Authorities

There is also liaison with other organisations including the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, Local



Government Regulation, Public Health England, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Food Standards Agency and the Care Quality Commission for Social Care Inspections.

Officers also work in liaison with other teams within the service particularly the Planning, Building Control and Licensing Sections, and other services such as the Fire and Police services and the Council's Facilities Management service (school catering).

Northumberland has acted as the coordinator for the region with regard to feed hygiene and has received a sum of £25,500 to cover the cost of the co-ordinators time, effort and management of the project.

### Summary of resources required for Liaison

Liaison with professional bodies (preparation, attendance, actions)	Food Safety & Infectious Disease control	Food Standards	Feed	Technical support
Resources required (FTE)	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.1

## 4.9 Food and Feed Safety and Food Standards Promotion

The promotion of food and feed safety and food standards will be achieved through local initiatives and publicity and by supporting national initiatives. The Authority is committed to further developing promotional opportunities where possible.

Promotional activities will continue to include participation in:

- Promotion of Safer Food Better Business

Safer Food, Better Business, the FSA's food safety management guidance for businesses, is actively promoted during each planned intervention as it is usually the choice of food safety management system for most food business operators. The catering pack is available in English and Chinese, but it is also tailored for Asian cuisine, childminders, and care homes. There is also a version for the use of retailers.

Currently the service provides a paid service providing printed copies of both the SFBB catering pack along with the associated dairy.

- Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS)

The above scheme was introduced on 2 April 2012 and the scheme involves the scoring of businesses on their management systems, their standard of cleanliness and their hygiene practices. The scoring is then translated into a rating from zero, where major improvement is needed, to 5, which is very good. Businesses receive a sticker showing their rating, which they are encouraged to display.

The aim of the scheme is to promote self-improvement by businesses.

- 5 – hygiene standards are very good
- 4 – hygiene standards are good
- 3 – hygiene standards are generally satisfactory
- 2 – some improvement is necessary
- 1 – major improvement is necessary
- 0 – urgent improvement is required

Administration of the scheme includes producing printed stickers, associated correspondence and data handling.

- Prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food labelling

From 1 October 2021 the requirements for prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food labelling changed in Wales, England, and Northern Ireland. The new labelling will help protect consumers by providing potentially life-saving allergen information on the packaging. Any business that produces PPDS food will be required to label it with the name of the food and a full ingredients list, with allergenic ingredients emphasised within the list. Businesses need to check if their products require PPDS labelling and what they need to do to comply with the new rules. The service will continue to advice and guide business on the new controls

- Information and guidance posted on website

A wealth of information exists on the Northumberland County Council website covering Environmental Health and Trading Standards issues. The entire site has been reviewed and the information provided refreshed to make it more user friendly and much easier to navigate and find information. We will continue to try and improve our existing online resources and proved new content when possible.

### Summary of resources required for Promotion

Food safety & standards promotion	Food Safety	Food Standards	Technical support
Resources required (FTE)	0.05*	0.05*	0.5

\* Note FTW time for FHRS & PPDS promotion built into the programmed inspection work resource

#### **4.10 Export Health Certificates**

The impact of leaving the EU has been substantial and one of the main consequences for the service has been the increased requirement to provide Export Health Certificates to local businesses.

Export Health Certificates (EHC's) may be required by food manufacturers / exporters who wish to export food of an animal origin outside England, Wales and Scotland.

These certificates confirm that a specific business complies with all relevant legislation and the food produced is without risk to health.

Dependent on the destination importing country and the commodity type an EHC may have to be sourced from the Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA), Northumberland County Council or Private Sector qualified officer, depending what is being exported and to where.

If a certificate is being issued from the APHA this is likely to be signed by a vet (commonly for meat and dairy products), although fishery products, honey and certain composite products may be certified by a local authority EHO.

In all cases, the council advises the embassy or consulate of the relevant country, food authority, as well as the importer, be liaised with by the food manufacturers/exporters to find out about any import conditions and if the certificate meets the stipulated requirements.

Currently the service is providing EHC support attestations for 3 approved fishery products premises in Berwick who are using export hubs within Scotland. In addition we are providing regular EHC's for fishery products for a large approved premise in Amble.

The resource required for this provision has been substantial, this has been exacerbated with the time frame we are required to turn around the EHC. With the certificate submitted in the morning, reviewed, stamped and signed off within a few hours. This process is very intensive and puts officers under significant pressure. With some certificates requiring over 50 stamps, each stamp requiring a signature to coincide with the appropriate areas crossed out, any error potentially invalidating the certificate, which could result in the consignment being refused entry into the EU at the port.

2021-22 was the first full year providing EHC within the new system and the service provided 167 certificates during this time. With the ongoing increase in exports we are not expecting this to reduce in 2022-23

Export Health Certificates	Food Safety	Feed	Technical support
Resources required (FTE)	0.5	-	-

#### 4.11 The 'Produced in Northumberland' Verification Scheme

'Produced in Northumberland' is a business support initiative that recognises Northumberland food producers and also businesses that use and promote food and drink that is made in Northumberland. The verification scheme is delivered by the Public Health Protection Unit and is offered to local businesses with the aim of raising the profile, value and public confidence in Northumberland food & drink.

The Unit also works in partnership to actively support and promote the scheme. A scheme focus group that is made up of local food businesses.

The Council has trademarked both the Produced in Northumberland and Produced in Northumbria as certification trademarks.



At the core of the scheme and what makes it unique at this time is the scheme is underpinned by a thorough food source verification audit that any aspiring business must pass. The officers within the Public Health Protection Unit carry out the verification audits who are trained to Lead Auditor standard that means that the audits are to the standard of the ISO 22000 family of food management standards. In particular ISO 22005 - Traceability in the feed and food chain.

As well as the requirements of the verification audits any business must pass a food safety threshold. That is, they must have at least a 3-star food hygiene rating. So the scheme also offers assurance to the public of the safety of the food & drink products provided by member businesses.

Food Hygiene Rating	Percentage of PIN members
FHRS 5	90%
FHRS 4	8%
FHRS 3	2%

Producers who are members of the scheme have to prove to auditors who visit their premises that the food and drink is made in Northumberland. For butchers, checks are carried out on the origin of the animals from which their meat comes.

Produced in Northumberland is intended to contribute to the success of the tourism sector. In 2016 tourism contributed £307 million to the local economy.

Tourism businesses (including restaurants, hotels, guest houses, B&B's and food & drink retailers) who join the scheme are provided with a mark of recognition for their customers that they believe in the quality of the food and drink that is Produced in Northumberland. The hospitality businesses have to prove that a certain number of main foods used on their menu are produced in Northumberland. For example in the case of a B&B it could be that the sausage, eggs and kippers are produced in Northumberland.

Retailers who are part of the scheme are expected to provide food and drink that is made in Northumberland by a variety of different producers. It is recommended that these are identifiable by use of the 'Produced in Northumberland' logo e.g. a designated 'Produced in Northumberland' section within the shop.

Our goal is to obtain national recognition of the unique regional distinctiveness of Northumberland food & drink. It is hoped that by encouraging local businesses to use Northumberland food and drink this will make a positive approach in reducing food miles, lead to increased production and sales within the local economy and ultimately job creation in an area that relies heavily on tourism.

For further information and a list of food & drink businesses visit:

[www.producedinnorthumberland.co.uk](http://www.producedinnorthumberland.co.uk)

Through COVID the team moved from its core inspection based verification, to a supporting / promotional role showcasing Northumberland's amazing local produce and were possible when our members could provide local delivery etc. Not only maintaining a local outlet for our manufacturers but also providing a service to Northumberland residents. Through this process we were able to maintain the core values of the scheme as well as directly supporting our local

businesses in line with councils 'Thriving' vision & aims set out in the 2021-24 corporate plan.

The aim moving into 2022/23 is to continue to support and develop the scheme. First of all, for our existing members we will be offering another free year along with a remote assessment. We understand local businesses are struggling at this difficult time, as such we want to try and provide as much support as we can yet not burden businesses with additional cost. During 2022-23 we will also bring on new members with, an inspection and onsite audit being carried out in line with the requirements of the certification scheme.

The long-term plan will be to bring back the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits in 2023-24. This will be done in consultation with our partners and members to ensure the integrity of the scheme and support business as much as we can.

### **Summary of Resources required for Produced in Northumberland**

<b>Produced in Northumberland</b>	<b>Verification</b>	<b>Administration</b>
<b>Resources required (FTE)</b>	0.9*	0.4*

\*The verification scheme currently has no dedicated admin support and the 0.4 FTE is provided by the inspectors themselves.

## 5.0 RESOURCES

### 5.1 Financial Allocation

The annual expected expenditure the Food Service for 2022-2023 is:-

Staffing costs (approx. including on costs)	£642,390
Travel	£ 10,816
Contractor & casual staffing costs	£ 32,330
<u>Sampling &amp; Analysis</u>	<u>£ 12,180</u>
<b>Total service cost</b>	<b>£697.716</b>

### 5.2 Staffing

The total staff resource allocated to the delivery of the work detailed in this plan is estimated to be approximately 13.87 full time equivalent (FTE) posts as shown in the tables below.

Work area	Team Manager (TS & AH Team)	Senior Trading Standards Officer	Trading Standards Officer	Animal Health Officer	Technical Support officer
<b>Feed</b>	0.08	0.6	0.25	0.3	0.1
<b>Feed total (FTE)</b>	<b>1.33</b>				

Work area	Principal EHO (commercial team)	Senior Environmental Health Officer	Environmental Health Officer / EHTO	Port Health Officer	Technical Support Officer
<b>Food Hygiene</b>	0.6	1	4.2		1.33
<b>Infectious Disease</b>			0.15		0.1
<b>Port Health</b>				0.9	
<b>Food sampling</b>			0.05	0.1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.53</b>
<b>Food Safety total (FTE)</b>	<b>8.53</b>				

Work area	Team Manager (Commercial Team, TS & AH Team)	Trading Standards Officer	Fair Trading Officer	Technical Support officer
<b>Food Standards</b>	0.5	1.01	1.5	1
<b>Food Standards total (FTE)</b>	<b>4.01</b>			

### **5.3 Staff Development Plan**

Training and development needs are identified by annual Appraisals and by ongoing assessment and monitoring throughout the year. Where specific training is identified, including refresher training, this becomes a requirement of their continuing authorisation as a service officer, the extent and currency of training is reviewed at the officer's annual appraisal.

Food Safety Officers/Environmental Health Officers, Food Standards Officers/Fair Trading Officers, will receive a minimum of 20 hours and Animal Health Inspectors 10 hours, on-going/update training for Continual Professional Development and this will take the form of in-house training (including personal research), external courses, and joint training initiatives with the North East Local Authorities via the NE Public Protection Partnership.



## **6.0 QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

### **6.1 Quality Assessment**

There are management arrangements in place to assess the quality of an officer's work and to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice, this is documented in the 'Monitoring the Quality of the Service' procedure. The Commercial Team & Trading Standards and Animal Health Team hold bi-monthly team meetings at which issues relating to consistency and competency are routinely discussed.

A system to allow service users to provide their perceptions of the Authority's performance has been introduced in the form of an on-line survey questionnaire. This is being requested through contact letters and emails following inspections and complaint / service request completion.

## 7.0 REVIEW

### 7.1 Review of the Food Service 2021-22

The respective Unit service managers and Head of Service annually review performance against the Plan. Regular reviews of food hygiene performance against targets will take place at team level. Where there are variances from the Plan the Unit Managers and Head of Service will be informed together with details of any action necessary to address the variance.

During 2020-2022 the FSA suspended the Food Law CoP requirements for interventions so resource could be diverted into the LA COVID response. No formal food service plan was generated during this time however the FSA drafted and introduced the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Recovery Plan which sets out guidance and advice to local authorities for the period from 1 July 2021 to 2023/24. The following review is based on the services response in relation to the recovery plan. It should be noted that during this period a significant portion of the service resource was still responding to COVID.

#### 7.1.1 Food Safety

##### 7.1.1.1 Inspections in 2021-22 (Food Safety)

Type	Programmed	In Year changes	% Target	Actual	% Completed *
High Risk Category A	5	0	98%	5	100%
Category B	40	-	98%	57	100%
Category C non-compliant	36	-	95%	24	100%
Category C complainant	15	-	95%	193	
Category D non-compliant	6	-	90%	11	100%
Category D complainant	0	-	N/A	111	100%
Category E	0	-	N/A	301	100%
Unrated	208 (570)	362**	95%	435	99%*** (76.3%)

\* % completed was based on phase targets in the FSA recovery plan, in which the service was able to overachieve.

\*\* New businesses commencing during the year, all new registrations are risk assessed and prioritised. High or medium risk, for example a public house serving meals, a cafe or restaurant is inspected as a priority. Low priority would be given to a child-minder who only provides a drink and snack and home bakers who do not produce any meat products for example.

\*\*\* Percentage completed based upon tagged unrated at the beginning of the year. Remaining premises are not yet in operation, have closed and reopened or are very low risk.

Overall the service completed the targets set out for the end of March 22 within the FSA recovery plan. In addition the service was able to work towards and over achieve its month targets for the future phase 2 milestones.

#### **7.1.1.2 Unrated Premises**

New and unrated premises have continued to require a lot of resource from the service, with the team receiving on average 31 new food registrations a month in 2021-22. The number of new registrations peaked at 53 in June 2021. This peak was as premises started to reopen and return to operation.

#### **7.1.1.3 Enforcement**

As a result of programmed food hygiene inspections, as well as service requests and complaints investigated by the Food Team, in 2021-2022 food businesses were issued with the following enforcement activities.

Enforcement Action	Totals
Written warning*	1144*
Voluntary closure agreement	3
Improvement Notices	16

\* Includes onsite reports left at the time of inspection where non compliance was identified.

#### **7.1.1.4 Complaints (food safety & standards)**

152 complaints regarding food hygiene, 131 complaints about food premises were received and 69 complaints about food composition, labelling or quality. 99% of these received an initial response within 3 working days in accordance with Service Standards.

#### **7.1.1.5 Service requests for advice (food safety and standards)**

1069 requests for advice were received, 98% were responded to within 3 working days in accordance with service standards.

#### **7.1.1.6 Sampling**

A total of 118 microbiological food samples were taken in 2021-22. These were a mixture of local reactive and monitoring samples. Due to the pandemic no programed sampling was carried out.

### 7.1.1.7 Promotional Activities

- Safer Food Better Business (SFBB)

Work continues to promote 'Safer Food Better Business' during inspections, revisits and service request visits. SFBB is a food safety management tool produced by the Food Standards Agency for small businesses to help them comply with legislation that requires a written management system to be in place. It is based on HACCP principles and helps businesses to identify where problems may occur.

- General Advice

Ongoing advice and assistance was provided during the year. This was particularly important as businesses were reopening following periods of closure due to the pandemic

- Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS)

This is a national scheme; full details are available on their website [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings). In the county the scheme is applied to 3210 food premises giving them a food hygiene star rating. 3157 food businesses out of the total achieved three, four or five star ratings (98.3%) which means the vast majority of our food businesses are compliant.

This scheme includes all businesses that supply food direct to the consumer but some businesses are exempt, based on the low risk nature of food business activities, for example, chemists.

The FHRS breakdown of ratings is as follows:

Star rating	Description	Number of premises
5	Very good	2770
4	Good	306
3	Generally satisfactory	81
2	Improvement required	19
1	Major improvement required	31
0	Urgent improvement required	3

As of 1 April 2022 please see a breakdown below of the percentage of 3-5 rated premises for Northumberland, NE Region and England;

Area	Percentage of 3-5 rated Premises

Northumberland CC	98.3%
North East Region	98.0%
England	96.9%

- Prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food labelling

The service provided detailed advice and guidance to our businesses before the roll out of the new prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) food labelling requirements from 1 October 2021. This was a challenge with not only the level of detail in each requires but that every business is slightly different. Over the year we responded to over 50 requests for service on the new legislation, often providing advice based on guidance only released hours before.

In addition to the requests for advice we also checked compliance with the new requirements during routine inspections. This was during both food hygiene and standards visits, meaning we checked compliance at over 2000 premises. This required additional time during interventions putting pressure on our resources. As per our enforcement policy we are working with business to ensure compliance, but we can move to enforcement if necessary.

### 7.1.1.8 Infectious Disease Investigation

643 notifications of infectious disease were received by UK Health Security Agency. Of these notifications 109 (27%) required an officer investigation. This involves: contacting the case to obtain information about their symptoms, food history, contacts and occupation then giving advice on preventing the spread of the illness and in some cases e.g. food handlers, requiring them to remain off work until clearance specimens have been provided. A total number of 36 outbreaks were notified, with the vast majority occurring in institutional settings, and were viral in nature spread person to person.

### 7.1.2 Food Standards

#### 7.1.2.1 Inspections in 2021-22 (Food Standards)

Type	Programmed	In Year changes	% Target	Actual	% Completed *
Cat 'A'	36	-	98%	43	100%
Cat 'B'	0	-	90%	194	97%
Cat 'C'	0	-	95%	49	100%
Unrated	563 (925)	362**	90%	801	99%***

\* % completed was based on phase targets in the FSA recovery plan, in which the service was able to overachieve

\*\* New businesses commencing during the year

\*\*\* Percentage completed based upon tagged unrated at the beginning of the year. Remaining premises are not yet in operation, have closed and reopened or are very low risk.

Overall the service completed the years 2021-22 food standards inspection programme.

### 7.1.2.2 Unrated Premises

Please see 7.1.1.2

### 7.1.2.3 Enforcement

As a result of programmed food standards inspections, as well as service requests and complaints investigated by food officers, in 2017-2018 food businesses were issued with the following enforcement activities.

Enforcement Action	Totals
Written warnings*	592*
Improvement Notices	0

\* Includes onsite reports left at the time of inspection where nonconformities were identified.

### 7.1.2.4 Complaints

Please see 7.1.1.4

### 7.1.2.5 Service Requests

103 requests for advice were received, 98% were responded to within 3 working days in accordance with service standards. It is worth noting that food standards service requests tend to be complex in nature requiring detailed advice on how the premises can comply with regulations.

For more details please see 7.1.1.5

### 7.1.2.6 Sampling

In 2021-22 the authority completed its local sampling programme, with a total of 13 samples taken within Northumberland, primarily in relation to allergen controls.

#### 7.1.2.6.1 Sampling for allergens.

In previous years sampling for allergens has been carried out within Northumberland. There has been proven non-compliance with allergens provisions in relation to food from caterers, in particular Indian restaurants and takeaways.

The service receives regular complaints about allergens and sampling is used in some cases to check the compliance of a food establishment if a complaint is received. The service is currently engaged in an investigation where a child was hospitalised due to the presence of undeclared peanuts.

#### **7.1.2.6.2 Illicit Alcohol**

Spirits are still checked for ABV and authenticity during routine inspections in pubs and Restaurants. Where anomalies are found formal sampling will occur. Occasional complaints of this nature are received but due to the amount of previous work done on this area the problem is very much reduced.

Illicit alcohol has been found in Convenience stores in previous years. Offending bottles were voluntarily surrendered and destroyed where they were found to be illicit or counterfeit. Spirits have been a particular problem in the past. However, the price marking of spirits sold from wholesalers has reduced the amount of illicit spirits found in shops in Northumberland. During 2021/22 Northumberland County Council have noted a problem with counterfeit wine. 104 bottles of counterfeit wines have been removed from shop shelves from 10 offending shops. The bottles were confirmed as counterfeit by the manufacturer and no adequate traceability could be provided for the wine. This has resulted in 6 warning letters, 1 licence variation and 1 ongoing investigation.

#### **7.1.2.6.3 Previously frozen meat sold as 'Fresh'**

During 2021/22 sampling and analysis of meat was used to resolve ongoing complaints about a Northumberland trader who was selling meat as 'fresh' when it had been previously frozen. Following the results of analysis, liaison with the trader has led to the business changing their business practices. Further sampling established that they were no longer selling previously frozen meat as 'fresh'.

#### **7.1.2.7 Promotional Activities**

Please see **7.1.1.7 Promotional Activities**

### **7.1.3 Feed Hygiene**

#### **7.1.3.1 Inspections in 2021-2022 (Feed Hygiene) - FSA Funded**

Type	Programmed	Actual	% Completed
High Risk Category A	0	0	N/A
Category B	3	3	100%
Category C	2	2	100%
Category D	6	6	100%
Category E	38	57*	150%
Unrated	4	4	100%

**\*actual is higher due to the fact that inspection funding was taken from Local Authorities who could not commit to their allocation**

To reduce the burden on business, all feed hygiene inspections planned to livestock premises in 2021/2022 were combined with an animal health inspection. Where possible, inland feed inspections i.e. those to retail premises, were undertaken alongside a food standards inspection.

### 7.1.3.2 Enforcement

As a result of programmed feed hygiene inspections, as well as service requests and complaints investigated by feed officers, in 2021-2022 feed businesses were issued with the following enforcement activities.

Enforcement Action	Totals
Written warnings*	25*
Voluntary closure	0

\* Includes onsite reports left at the time of inspection where non conformities were identified.

### 7.1.3.3 Sampling

In 2021-2022 the service took no samples of feed materials on behalf of the FSA as sampling funding was diverted elsewhere.

## 7.2 Variations from the Service Plan

### 7.2.1 Food Safety



There was no variation from the plan, all work was achieved

### **7.2.2 Food Standards**

There was no variation from the plan, all work was achieved

### **7.2.3 Feed Standards**

There is by nature small variations from the plan, this is due to other local authorities not achieving their own inspections. This can mean that additional inspections are undertaken by Northumberland County Council to ensure as far as possible that the regional grant is spent rather than being returned.

### **7.3 Areas for development**

The following areas for service development have been identified:-

- Continue to develop the service in line with the principles of Better Regulation.
- Continue to improve the quality of data held on the database
- Continue to develop new ways of working to improve service provision
- Continue to promote and further develop the 'Produced in Northumberland' verification scheme.

### **7.4 Export Health Certificates**

The provision of Export Health Certificates has been a highly complex and constantly changing area of work for the service. The professionalism and effort by officers within the team cannot be underestimated in trying to support our local businesses.

2021-22 was the first full year providing EHC within the new system and the service provided 167 certificates during this time. With the ongoing increase in exports we are not expecting this to reduce in 2022-23.

	Export Health certificates
2021-22	167

### **7.5 Produced in Northumberland**

As detailed in the planning section in 2021-22 and during the whole COVID pandemic the team moved from its core inspection based verification, to a

supporting / promotional role showcasing Northumberland's amazing local produce and were possible when our members could provide local delivery etc. Not only maintaining a local outlet for our manufacturers but also providing a service to Northumberland residents. Through this process we were able to maintain the core values of the scheme as well as directly supporting our local businesses in line with councils 'Thriving' vision & aims set out in the 2021-24 corporate plan.

Unfortunately, we were unable to further expend the scheme, but we were able to maintain its current numbers with 93 members. This is predominantly food & drink producers however there are still a good number of hospitality and retail premises that are members of the scheme.

PIN Members	Total
Verified	93
Provisional Verification	0
Pending	0
Expressions of Interest	30*

\*Recent expressions of interest.

The aim moving into 2022/23 is to continue to support and develop the scheme. First of all, for our existing members we will be offering another free year along with a remote assessment. We understand local businesses are struggling at this difficult time, as such we want to try and provide as much support as we can yet not burden businesses with additional cost. During 2022-23 we will also bring on new members with, an inspection and onsite audit being carried out in line with the requirements of the certification scheme.

The long-term plan will be to bring back the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits in 2023-24. This will be done in consultation with our partners and members to ensure the integrity of the scheme and support business as much as we can.

#### Produced in Northumberland financial 2021-22

Resource	Budget
Staffing costs	£8 650*
Income from membership	-£0.00

Balance	£8 650
---------	--------

*Note – Based upon a 0.2FTE*

The cost to the service for 2021-22 was not representative of its full operation, as we provided the service for free and were not proactively inspecting, the cost was significantly less than previous years. As we support businesses again in 2022-23, developing full roll out in 23-24 it is expected that our cost to the service will move back to a net £41,000+ operation costs as seen in 2018-19, which was met from existing budget.

#### **7.6. Customer satisfaction survey results 2021-22**

Due to the pandemic the customer satisfaction surveys were put on hold and as such we have no data to present

#### **7.7 North East Regional Benchmarking Results**

Due to the pandemic the regional benchmarking has been put on hold and as such we have no data to present

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Alternative Enforcement

In this context a means of assessing compliance with food law by means of self-assessment or provision of advice to the food business operator, via a questionnaire or letter

- Broadly Compliant

A premises which has good compliance with food law

- Due Diligence Defence

The due diligence defence is available to anybody accused of a breach of food safety regulations. Essentially, the defence is that the accused took all reasonably practicable steps to avoid the breach.

- Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement

The Framework Agreement on Local Authority Enforcement provides the Agency with a mechanism for implementing its powers under the Food Standards Act to influence and oversee local authority enforcement activity.

- Food Alerts

Food Alerts are the way the Food Standards Agency tell local authorities and consumers about problems associated with food and, in some cases, provide details of specific action to be taken.

They are issued 'For Information' where a solution to the problem has been put in place or 'For Action' where intervention by enforcement authorities is required. They are often issued in conjunction with a product withdrawal or recall by a manufacturer, retailer or distributor.

- Food Standards Agency

The Food Standards Agency is an independent Government department set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000 to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food.

- High risk premises

A food business which falls into risk category A or B, inspected every 6 or 12 months. May be a premises with poor standards (and thereby subject to enforcement action) or a use a high risk process and/or have a vulnerable customer base.

- Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System

LAEMS is a web-based system used to report local authority food law enforcement activities to the Food Standards Agency. Local authorities upload data, that has been generated from the local system, 'CIVICA' on which they record data on food law enforcement activities, to LAEMS. Once uploaded to LAEMS, the local authority data are aggregated to the pre-defined categories required by the FSA, including 'interventions', 'sampling' and 'enforcement'.

- Medium risk premises

A food business which falls into risk category C, subject to an official control such as a full inspection or audit every 18 months, this is where the bulk of our restaurants, cafes etc. are rated.

- Non-Compliant

In breach of food law requirements. Further action needed by the food business operator to avoid formal enforcement action.

- Regulators' Compliance Code

The Regulators' Compliance Code asks regulators to perform their duties in a business-friendly way, by planning regulation and inspections in a way that causes least disruption to the economy.

- Safer Food Better Business

Safer food, better business (SFBB) is an innovative and practical approach to food safety management. It has been developed to help small businesses put in place food safety management procedures and comply with food hygiene regulations.

- UKFSS

The UK Food Surveillance system (UKFSS) is a national database for central storage of analytical results from feed and food samples taken by enforcement authorities (local authorities and port health authorities) as part of their official controls. Information about the sample and the results of analysis are entered onto the system, and then validated, using the data entry tool.

- Unrated Premises

The unrated premises are those which have recently opened or changed proprietor since the last inspection. These are identified via new food premises registrations or identified by an officer which on district. These premises are, where notification takes place, visited initially and are assessed according to risk for further inspection.

- Verification

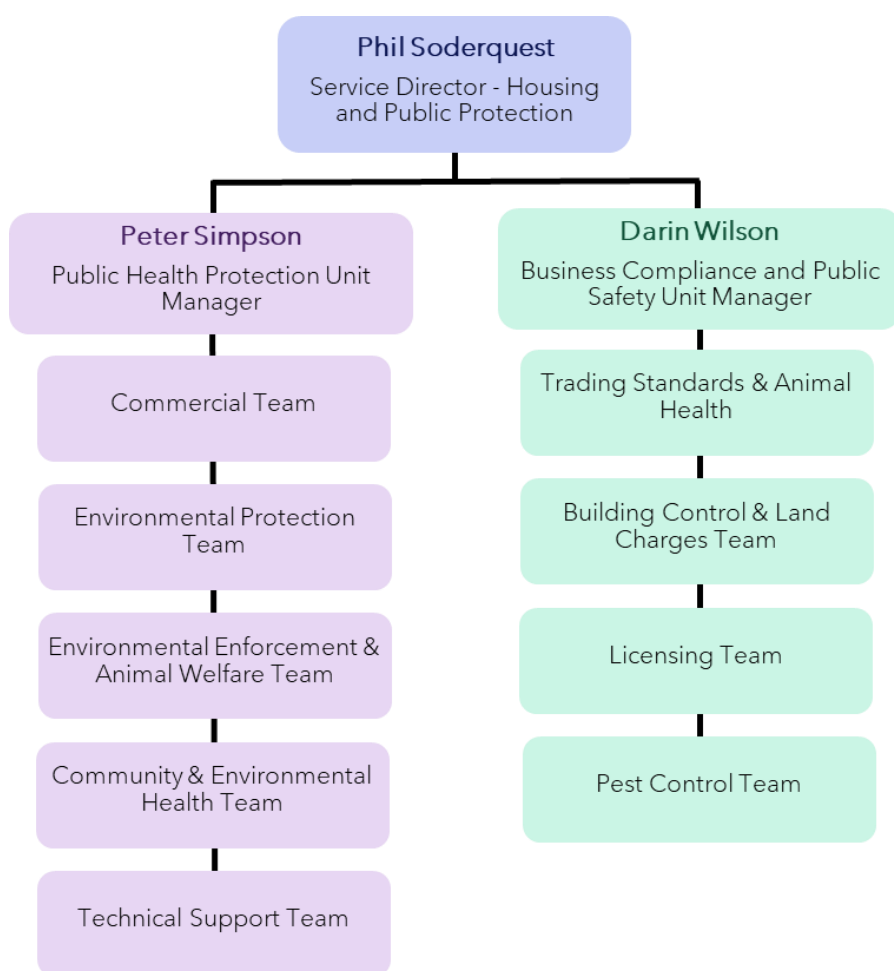
The checking, by examination and the consideration of objective evidence, whether specific requirements have been fulfilled

- Written Warning

Any relevant communication with the proprietor/owner/manager of a premises stating that infringements of legislation have been detected.

## APPENDIX A: Organisational Structures

### A. Housing & Public Protection Service - Public Protection Units.



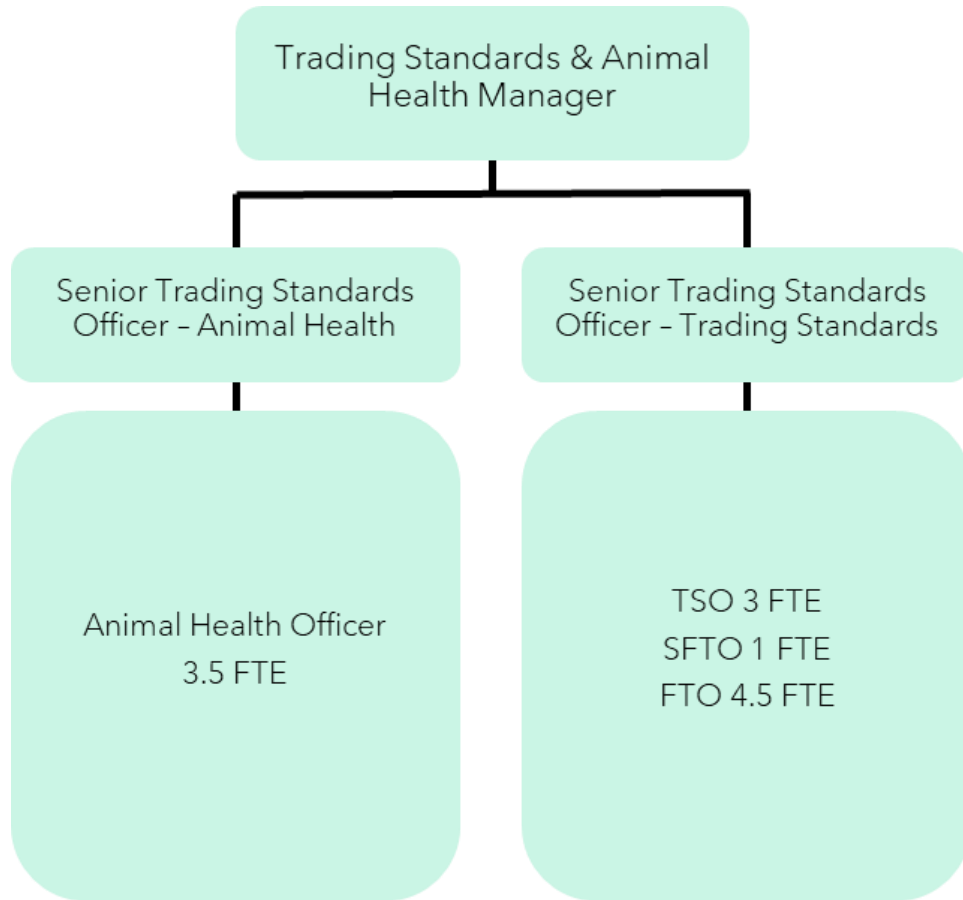




## B: Commercial Team Structure



### C: Trading Standards & Animal Health Team Structure



Northumberland County Council

Communities and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2022-2023

## 1. Terms of reference:

- (1) To maintain an overview of the Management Agreements in place between the County Council and Active Northumberland, Woodhorn Museum Charitable Trust and Northumberland Tourism.
- (2) 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, including CONTEST, Prevent and Channel
  - 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

Tree and Woodland Strategy  
Great Northumberland Forest  
Openreach

Northumberland County Council  
Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022-2023

**5 October 2022**

**Emergency Communications Winter Plan**

A Key recommendation in the Storm Arwen Review was for the Council to establish an emergency communications winter plan.

**Community Resilience Update**

To advise the Committee of progress on the implementation of the Storm Arwen recommendations.

**26 October 2022**

**Active Northumberland Annual Outcome Report**

The Annual Outcome Report will contain a review on how the Active Northumberland Service Plan had been delivered for the previous financial year.

**7 December 2022**

**Annual Customer Complaints Report**

To consider this annual report.

**11 January 2023**

**8 February 2023**

<b>Northumberland Infrastructure Funding Statement</b>	To consider the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement in respect of Section 106 Agreements.
<b>8 March 2023</b>	
<b>Library Service Strategy 2021-26</b>	To update the Committee on the implementation of the Strategy.
<b>5 April 2023</b>	
<b>26 April 2023</b>	

Northumberland County Council  
Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2022-2023

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1.	1 June 2022	<b>Development of the Potland Burn Biodiversity Net Gain Site</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supported the recommendations in the report.</li> <li>2. The report and presentation be recommended for inclusion within the work programme for the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Council with an invitation to Ashington Town Council and Pegswood Parish Council to involve them in the discussion.</li> </ol>	No further action at this time.
2. Page 103	29 June 2022	<b>Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2022/25</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supported the recommendations in the report.</li> <li>2. The protocol for the setting of EVCP tariff be considered by Communities &amp; Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting.</li> <li>3. Encourage members to undertake the climate change training.</li> </ol>	The Committee be consulted prior to the setting of the EVCP Tariff.
3.	29 June 2022	<b>Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Proposed Food Waste Recycling Pilot Schemes</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supported the recommendations in the report.</li> <li>2. Consider involvement by local schools in the home compost bin trial.</li> <li>3. Receive an interim report on the home compost trial in Autumn 2022 with a final report on the kerbside collection in the summer of 2023.</li> </ol>	The Committee to receive an update on the trial before the end of the year.

This page is intentionally left blank