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Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Nichola Turnbull

Email: nichola.turnbull@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622617

Date: Tuesday, 29 November 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, 7 DECEMBER 2022** at **2.00 PM**.

Yours faithfully

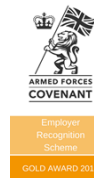
Rick O'Farrell
Interim Chief Executive

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



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
- 16)

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) 5 October 2022
- b) 26 October 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. 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
17 - 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

The Cabinet Members requested to attend for the following item are Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council and Councillor John Riddle, Portfolio Holder for Local Services.

5.1 Electric Vehicle Charging Tariff Setting Methodology

(Pages
21 - 26)

The Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy, approved by Cabinet in June 2022 authorised the Service Director for Local Services, in consultation with the Member for Environment and Local Services, to make in-year adjustments to the tariff. This report outlines the methodology and process by which the tariff is calculated and set.

The Cabinet Member requested to attend for the following item is Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

5.2 Corporate Feedback Performance 2021/2022

(Pages
27 - 36)

The purpose of the report is to review the operation of the complaints process over twelve months (01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022), including statistical data, and to provide the local Authority with the means by which it keeps itself informed about how effective its current arrangements are for handling customer complaints.

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

6. COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT

(Pages
37 - 42)

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.

PART II

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

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:

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

Agenda Item	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
9	3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

AND

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person / organisation; and could adversely affect commercial revenue.

SCRUTINY

The Cabinet Member requested to attend for the following item is Councillor Cllr Jeff Watson, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives.

9. LEISURE REVIEW - FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW OF NCC SUPPORTED LEISURE PROVISION AND CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND PROCUREMENT ARRANGEMENTS (Pages 43 - 64)

The report provides an overview of key findings and outlines a proposed course of action to maximise both the health and wellbeing potential, and value, of future investment, following completion of an extensive review of Council funded leisure provision.

When the Cabinet considered the report on 17 November 2022, it agreed

to the recommendations 1-7 as set out.

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

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

Name:		Date of meeting:	
Meeting:			
Item to which your interest relates:			
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):			
Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?		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.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. ‘Land’ excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor’s knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body

	<p>where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the councillor’s knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or ii. if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* ‘director’ includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* ‘securities’ means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:

- a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- b) any body
 - i. exercising functions of a public nature
 - ii. any body directed to charitable purposes or
 - iii. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

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, 5 October 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor J. Reid
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

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

CABINET MEMBER

Horncastle, C.	Community Services
Watson, J.	Healthy Lives

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

N. Carney	Strategic Tourism Project Manager
H. Hinds	Business Resilience and Emergency Planning Lead
P. Hunter	Interim Senior Service Director
M. McAllister (virtual)	Head of Tourism
S. Nicholson	Scrutiny Co-Ordinator
M. Taylor	Interim Executive Director - Communities and Business Development
N. Turnbull	Democratic Services Officer
N. Walsh	Head of Cultural Services
A. Ward	Communications Manager

1 member of the press.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities & Place OSC, held on 31 August 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

17. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (to December 2022). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes).

A member queried whether a report should be considered on the relationship between highway repairs and utility companies.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18. SCRUTINY

18.1 Endorsement of the Northumberland Destination Management Plan 2022-2032

The report sought approval from cabinet for the Vision, Partnership Principles, Strategic Aims and Priorities of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Northumberland 2022-32. (A copy of the report and presentation is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Councillor Watson, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives, referred to the importance of tourism to Northumberland given the number of employees working in the sector, numbers and expenditure of day and overnight visitors. He noted that the plan had regard to the needs of both residents and visitors.

Nigel Walsh, Head of Culture was in attendance with Neil Carney, Strategic Tourism Project Manager whilst Maureen McAllister, Head of Tourism was in attendance remotely. He commented that the importance of tourism was recognised in the Economic Development Strategy 2019-2024 and one of a few key industrial growth opportunities. Northumberland was a leading UK destination following a period of unrivalled growth in the previous 10 years and demonstrated in a comparison of visitor numbers and expenditure which had been assisted by the television series 'Tales from Northumberland with Robson Green'. The Destination Management Plan set out the challenge of growing private sector investment whilst balancing the needs of the environment, residents and communities.

Maureen McAllister, shared a PowerPoint presentation which gave some background information on tourism in Northumberland which had seen Visit Northumberland and the Council now operating as a single organisation with a 2 year partnership agreement, formation of a Board with strategic advisors, areas of focus and actions under three main headings of strategy, engagement and marketing.

Whilst visit numbers were not quite at the level prior to the pandemic, recovery was strong and she estimated that around 30% of new visitors to the county would come back, stop longer and recommended Northumberland as a destination. It was therefore important to manage the increase in vehicles, provide training, ensure the correct products were in place and the destinations and communities were ready to visitors. The aforementioned were the reason for the creation of the Destination Management Plan which

had been developed over the previous 18 months with key stakeholders. It included prioritisation of actions, allocation of resources and identification of stakeholders responsible for delivery.

Key areas of focus and the process for delivery by the Action Planning Forum, Partner meetings and DMP Board were summarised as follows:

- Data Evidence and Intelligence
- Destination Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Position and Profile
- Business, Product and People Development

There had been 2 meetings of the Action Planning Forum to date with the commitment from businesses and stakeholders acknowledged.

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

- The nature, quantity and length of the funding had been discussed by Cabinet when the arrangements for Visit Northumberland had been agreed, previously financing had been agreed on a yearly basis. The 2-year period allowed time for the new organisation to become embedded although it was hoped that resources would be allocated in the future for a longer period as the plan covered 10 years, from 2022 to 2032.
- A 10-year investment plan had been established for Hadrian's Wall with colleagues looking to optimise Borderland's funding. Attractions along Hadrian's Wall were also involved in the DMP.
- A new website had been launched for Visit Northumberland in 2021 and any difficulties accessing the website would be investigated.
- Coastal areas received high numbers of visitors which had been closely managed by stakeholders including local services, AONB, National Trust, coastguard, Northumbria Police. Promotional activity for the autumn encouraged the dispersal of visitors to attractions and locations across the county. The DMP enabled problems, such as parking, to be logged and solutions to be found.
- It was important that the right products were developed to ensure that any images of activities and experiences in campaigns could be easily booked.
- The plan would be included on the next agenda of the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board which was meeting in the next few weeks.
- Cycle tourism was important in the thematic development of product development and new business opportunities. The DMP had an active cycling group which met quarterly. They hoped to become a cycling tourism exemplar and create a virtual hub with information in one place to book suitable accommodation, hire cycles, plot circular routes etc.
- One of the DMP priorities focused on people development to ensure that the tourism industry was an attractive proposition. They were therefore working with colleges and businesses to facilitate this. Recruitment of some staff, such as chefs, was difficult across the country and best practice of those who were able to retain their staff was being shared. Accommodation for staff was also a key factor that was being considered and included at partner events.

- 30% of overnight visitors were staying with friends and relatives and it was therefore important to ensure residents had easy access to the right information at restaurants and attractions and considered as part of the Information Strategy. An annual 'days out' map was a useful tool for visitors and available locally. The links between attractions and communities were being developed by the tourism team.
- A wide variety of organisations were represented on the board from small independent businesses to larger hotel complexes as well as a geographical representation.
- The Service Director of Local Services was a key member of one of the working groups to ensure that investment opportunities were aligned with priorities for infrastructure improvements.
- Cabinet was aware of the impact on the availability of rental properties and Town and Parish Council funding arising from increasing numbers of properties becoming holiday accommodation in some areas. The Council was unable to prevent properties being bought as second homes or holiday lets although it was hoped new Council Tax legislation would provide some assistance.
- A membership list for Action Planning Forum and DMP Board would be shared with the committee when finalised. Representatives included individuals from The Alnwick Garden and Slaley Hall amongst others. Councillors were welcome to attend any of the meetings and were asked to contact officers if they wished to do so.
- In addition to the Council's annual financial contribution, income was also generated by a partner membership scheme and successful grant applications for marketing and product development.

Comments from members included:

- There needed to be cycling hubs and facilities for the hire of cycles.
- Camping facilities in the southeast.
- It was hoped that the creation of one organisation removed the previous duplication.
- Residents of Northumberland were rediscovering other areas of the county as evidenced by data from bus companies.
- New cost of living pressures with fuel and energy increases could have an impact on tourism; a 'normal' year was unlikely for a few years.
- Fair wages were needed for people working in tourism and other sectors in Northumberland.
- High-profile attractions were also experiencing difficulties recruiting staff in hospitality, despite salaries being significantly above minimum wage. It was also more difficult in the winter period and when students returned to university, particularly, when travel to rural areas were more expensive or problematic.
- The detrimental impact on residential rental markets and Town and Parish Council funding as a result of properties being converted to holiday accommodation.
- Officers needed to work with colleagues in the planning department regarding the provision of staff accommodation in rural areas.
- Awareness be raised of the 100th anniversary of Blyth Promenade in 2028.

The officers were thanked for the report and presentation which had been clear and informative.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Communities & Place OSC supported the recommendation contained in the report.

19. OVERVIEW

19.1 Storm Arwen, Community Resilience Update

The purpose of the report was to provide the Community and Place OSC with an update on progress about the Community Resilience workstream prior to the winter and in line with the recommendations from the Storm Arwen review task and finish group. (A copy of the report is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Helen Hinds, Business Resilience and Emergency Planning Lead summarised the report and confirmed that further progress had been made in a number of areas since the report had been written several weeks previously. The following acronyms were explained:

NPg – Northern Powergrid
SPEN – Scottish Power Energy Networks
NWL – Northumbrian Water Limited
BT – British Telecom

She highlighted the following:

- It had recently been announced that NWL had been fined £20 million for the disruption to residents' water supply, primarily in Northumberland and Durham, following Storm Arwen.
- Relationships had been strengthened with most of the utility companies through daily engagement and via the Local Resilience Forum.
- NPg had been particularly proactive in the identification of suitable community buildings to receive generators if there was loss of power in the future. They had also made £7.5 million of funding available to enable communities to become more resilient through the creation of a new Foundation. Whilst Charity Commission approval was awaited, a soft launch had been undertaken in the areas worst affected by Storm Arwen and information shared with Town and Parish Councils with, so far, 11 applications for funding being made to date for different types of back-up power.
- The Northumberland Community Resilience stakeholder group had been formed and had met in August 2022 to work with the utility companies and Northumberland Communities Together (NCT), Community Action Northumberland (CAN) and Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC), Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

- Engagement with BT had been much more difficult with concerns continuing regarding the resilience of telecoms. Alternatives were being investigated to enhance rural telecoms.
- A number of successful events had been organised in recent weeks by Guy Opperman MP at Hexham, Bellingham and NCC at Newbiggin by the Sea. These had been well attended and had enabled contact to be made with some where there had been no previous engagement with the Civil Contingencies Team.
- The 30 days 30 ways social media campaign of preparedness had been suspended during the period of national mourning following the death of Her Majesty The Queen. The campaign would recommence the following week.
- Visits had been arranged with approximately 20 parish councils and community groups as well as communication with many others. An exercise was planned to take place in Rothbury on 15 October 2022 in partnership with the parish council.

Councillor Horncastle, Portfolio Holder for Community Services thanked Helen Hinds and the Civil Contingencies Team for the many extra hours of work they had carried out during and following Storm Arwen which had an impact on the whole of the county, but in different ways. He also thanked all staff, officers and Councillors for the assistance they had given, particularly to those who had gone above and beyond. He reported that significant work had been carried out by Northern Powergrid to replace damaged and weakened poles.

He commented on the role of the Emergency Planning Committee and confirmed that a meeting would be arranged in the near future to assess the recommendations of the Storm Arwen report with a possible emergency scenario. He stressed that it was important for all residents to get prepared for the winter as well as any emergency events.

The following points were made by Members:

- Reference to the recommendation that a checklist of useful items leaflet be produced to help residents prepare for winter and / or any other emergency with a reminder to test equipment, such as generators.
- The Council needed to work with local radio as an alternative source of information for residents in the event of a power outage.
- The importance of checking that contact details for villages / community buildings were up to date.
- Councillors should be asked what the best method/telephone number to be used to contact them in an emergency.
- More winter preparedness events in the south east were welcomed as the urban areas had experienced different problems to those in the rural areas.
- A desire to see improved working arrangements and communication between utility companies and the Highways section as well as Civil Contingencies.
- Disappointment that BT were unwilling to engage with the Council.
- All residents in Northumberland needed to be prepared as well as Town and Parish Councils.

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

- The 30 days 30 ways campaign would have incorporated a checklist for residents. Officers would prepare something that could be circulated electronically or produce a paper version.
- A winter preparedness session had been held at Newbiggin by the Sea.
- Some NPg grants had been awarded for the acquisition of back up generators for community buildings. It was suggested that as it was unknown what NPg's criteria would be for distribution and prioritisation of generators, organisations should make an application for funding. It was noted that, if successful, organisations would then become responsible for the maintenance of the equipment.
- No date had been set as yet for the Emergency Planning Committee to test the Community Resilience Plan. It was to be arranged as soon as possible.
- The 28 recommendations of the Storm Arwen Task & Finish Group were being regularly monitored via Microsoft Planner with tasks assigned to responsible officers within the organisation, including the Civil Contingencies Team, the Director of Public Health etc. Officers were liaising closely, particularly around data and inequalities. Reports on the remaining recommendations would be brought to future meetings, when appropriate.
- The Civil Contingencies Team had contact details for approximately 90 community buildings. It was agreed that the list be shared with all Members to review and so they could provide details for any community buildings that should be included. Organisations needed to be willing to volunteer as a hub for the community if there were an extreme event.
- The Council was unable to assist residents with compensation claims for interruption to utility supplies.
- Officers were able to pre-nominate buildings for the distribution of water or other supplies, so they became a more useful hub.

Several members expressed their gratitude for the update in the report and also the assistance that the officers had provided in local areas.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The report be received.
- b) The Communities and Place OSC continues to support the concept of community resilience within Northumberland.

19.2 Winter Emergencies Communications Plan

The purpose of the report was to consider the Winter Emergencies Communications Plan, a key recommendation of the Storm Arwen Review. (A copy of the briefing note is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Andrew Ward, Communications Manager, highlighted the following key points:

- The plan could be used for an emergency of any description, despite its title of 'Winter Emergency Communications Plan'.
- There had been a lot of excellent communication work carried out in November and December 2021, when the county had been at the centre of regional and national focus.
- There had been a number of tactics that had worked well, including:
 - The distribution of flyers for residents without power. The information was being reviewed should it be needed again in the future.
 - Use of local members as media spokespersons, where appropriate.
 - Daily briefings for members to be reviewed to ensure that all members were able to receive the information.
- People expected information in the way that best suited them, this was more challenging if residents did not have power.
- 3 areas for improvement included:
 - Working more closely with local radio to enable communication in a crisis to warn and inform communities. The first meeting had been postponed and would be rearranged. The relationship with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) had developed over the previous 12 months with regular meetings. It was a useful channel for messages.
 - Build better relationships and dialogue with key communications contacts within the utility companies. The preparedness communications campaign would recommence during October. Additionally, messages would be shared about winter preparedness, gritters etc.

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

- Media links would be shared with members to encourage residents to sign up to the weekly e-newsletter which was currently received by 10,000 residents.
- They wanted to ensure there was 2-way communication between the county council and town and parish councils in an emergency through working with the Civil Contingencies Team.
- Methods of distributing emergency flyers would be reviewed to ensure that organisations received it via the most appropriate method, electronic sharing of PDFs was desirable, but consideration be given to the distribution of paper versions, if this was required. Reference was made to the leaflet drop to the worst affected households following Storm Arwen which had been undertaken by county Council staff and military personnel. Delivery of bulk copies for distribution by parish or town councils would be of assistance. The action taken would depend on the circumstances at the time.
- Leaflets could not be finalised in advance as information from utility companies, such as booking hotel accommodation or other assistance available, would be determined at the time of an incident.
- Other agencies referred to in news releases would be provided with copies but would not require their approval to avoid slowing the process down for the timely release of information.

The Chair confirmed that the discussion had referred to production of 2 leaflets, one for winter preparedness which had been suggested by members. The other was a leaflet circulated when responding to an emergency. It was agreed that the 'be prepared' message could be included as an article within the next edition of Northumberland News which was circulated in early December.

Members commented on the following:

- Whether magnetised signs with useful contact numbers could be attached to the sides of refuse vehicles in advance of adverse weather.
- Other methods of distributing leaflets were also suggested, such as delivery by personnel on refuse collections.
- The ability of town and parish councils to disseminate information varied across the county and it would therefore be useful to liaise with elected members regarding the best methods in their wards.
- Any leaflets/articles would need to be carefully worded regarding the suggestion of household items needed for winter. Residents be as asked to think about what might be needed and referring them to relevant guidance. Some councillors were concerned regarding the inclusion of candles which could be dangerous if left unattended.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The information be received
- b) An article on winter preparedness be included within the December edition of Northumberland News with input from members of the Storm Arwen Task and Finish Group.

20. 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 reported that he was hoping that the Woodland Strategy would be ready for the meeting on 11 January 2023. He confirmed that the concerns raised by members at the previous meeting regarding Ash Die Back had been relayed to the Service Director - Regeneration, Commercial and Economy who was responsible for the aforementioned strategy.

Following the discussion earlier in the meeting, he would add an item to the work programme on the relationship between highway repairs and utility companies. He had also noted a previous suggestion regarding recruitment of retained firefighters.

Members sought clarity regarding the presentation of scrutiny minutes to Full Council. They were frustrated that they were unable to discuss matters as only the accuracy of the minutes could be challenged.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator explained that the minutes of OSC meetings were presented to Council to receive and consider. The respective Chairs would present the minutes highlighting the work of the Committee and members could ask questions or seek clarification on the issues contained therein.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

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, 26 October 2022 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor M. Mather
(Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Carr, D.	Dale, A.
Cartie, E.	Dodd, R.R.
Castle, G.	Morphet, N.

CABINET MEMBER

Watson, J.	Healthy Lives
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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. Metcalfe	Director of Operations, Active Northumberland
S. Nicholson	Scrutiny Co-Ordinator
M. Taylor	Interim Executive Director - Communities and Business Development
N. Turnbull	Democratic Services Officer
M. Warnes	Chief Executive, Active Northumberland

1 member of the press.

21. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gallacher, Lang and Reid and Nigel Walsh, Head of Cultural Services.

22. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (November 2022 to January 2023). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes).

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reported that the Leisure Services Review would be considered by the committee at the next meeting on 7 December 2022.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. OVERVIEW

23.1 Active Northumberland Annual Outcome Report 2021-22 including Service Plan Successes 2021-22

The Committee received the Active Northumberland Annual Outcome Report 2021-22 which also contained a review on how the Active Northumberland Service Plan had been delivered for the previous year. (A copy of the report and presentation is enclosed with the signed minutes).

Mark Warnes, Chief Executive of Active Northumberland shared a powerpoint presentation which included:

- Active Northumberland, a registered charity was formed in 2014 following the merger of 5 leisure service providers. It currently had 670 employees across 9 leisure centres, 2 sports and welfare centres, the Dave Stephens Centre and Blyth Beach Huts. Some Sporting Club facilities at Cramlington, Prudhoe Bedlington Cramlington and the Pegasus Riding School had transferred to other operators.
- Their vision was to be the best community leisure and wellness provider in the UK. The strategy was to get more people being active, more often, for longer.
- The national context – average customer return rates were 70-80% when compared to pre-covid levels.
- Financial Performance for 2021-22
- Increases in
 - membership numbers, particularly at centres where there had been recent investment, new junior membership. Establishment of Membership Experience Advisors.
 - Learn to swim lessons.
 - Spa membership. Three recent hair/beauty awards. Industry
 - The exception was the over 65 age category which had not returned to pre-Covid levels of exercise. This was the subject of additional focus and engagement.
- Usage data for gym, general swim, fitness class attendance.
- Health programs and availability at the different centres.
- Details of workforce numbers, apprenticeships, external learning and employee training. The industry was experiencing a lack of qualified staff and was a problem across the country.
- An update on the investment at Berwick, Concordia, Blyth, Newbiggin, Ponteland, Morpeth.
- Digital launch of new Transformation Strategy.

He thanked NCC and members for the support that had been given over the past few years as it had been an extremely tumultuous time for the business.

Comments from members included:

- Congratulations to the officers on the recovery made by Active Northumberland following a difficult period.
- Difficulties experienced booking swim sessions via the app.
- The economy and increasing energy prices continued to make operating difficult for Active Northumberland and others.
- Active Northumberland and staff had made a significant contribution during the pandemic with facilities made available as hubs and vaccination centres.
- Many older residents in rural areas were participating in Zumba and other classes run by private organisations.

The following information was provided in response to questions:

- All staff were paid the National Living Wage.
- There had been reports of anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of Ponteland Leisure Centre, but not within the centre itself. Junior membership was extremely high at Ponteland.
- Users could turn up and use facilities without pre-booking if sessions were available. Membership at Ponteland had increased threefold with the new centre being extremely well used. If there were no sessions at a particular location, the app was able to show if there was availability elsewhere.
- A 65+ Steering Group had been established to see how they could engage better with the those in the older age bracket and work with some of the groups.
- A successful trial of junior memberships at Ponteland had not had a negative impact on adult users and therefore had been extended across the organisation. Members could choose to attend specific adult only time slots.
- The 9 main Active Northumberland leisure centres were participating in the warm spaces and places scheme which could be utilised by residents throughout the winter to stay warm and charge equipment. It was hoped that on seeing the facilities some might start using the centres.
- Officers worked closely with the NCC Sports Development Team and comments regarding affordability and reestablishment of fitness sessions at community facilities would be referred to them.
- Whilst they aspired to implement cheaper swim sessions at less popular times, shortages of qualified staff meant that this was unlikely at present.
- Generally, 15% of the population were gym members. Analysis of market share had been assessed at each of the centre locations with Active Northumberland having significant percentage when compared with other facilities in the area. The information would be provided after the meeting to Councillor Watson, Portfolio Holder.
- A copy of the presentation would be circulated to all committee members.
- Prudhoe had been identified as a location where improvements were needed and would be undertaken when resources were available. The remedial budget was required to be able to respond to emergencies. Investment in the café area and soft play equipment was planned at Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham.
- It wouldn't be possible to provide online access by providing computer access for the public at Active Centres.

- Prices had increased in 2022/23 for the first time in 4 years. Active Northumberland had a range of membership types with discounted prices for junior and senior members as well as concessionary membership.
- The statistics previously discussed did not indicate that participation was impacted in more deprived areas. They were competitively priced with a 5* product. Membership numbers continued to grow and outpaced cancellations. However, the weather in October had been mild and maintaining membership levels could be more challenging during the winter period.
- A revised environmental plan was in the process of being implemented to manage utility costs. Following the relaxation of Covid guidelines recirculation of warm air was now happening at sites where this was possible. Retrofitting waste recovery systems was likely to be expensive and cost prohibitive. Other measures included the reduction of water temperature in swimming pools, up to 1.5c at some centres, but within national operational guidance.
- Cabinet had approved capital expenditure for the installation of ground source heat pumps at Willowburn Leisure Centre, Alnwick. The project had been approved as it would be beneficial to the environment and the costs of the scheme would break even within a set period of time. Although there had been technical issues which had increased the cost and payback period, this was balanced against increasing energy costs. Other green measures included the installation of solar panels on the roof of the new building at Berwick.
- Fitness membership had increased by 14% when compared with pre-pandemic levels.
- Improvements to changing areas included redecoration and provision of soap etc to improve standards so they were more in line with the high-quality modernised spa areas.
- DFC, an external company, had previously collected electronic payments. This was now carried out in-house.
- The Membership Experience Advisers had been created to assist members using equipment who were less confident or had disabilities to maximise their experience with bespoke programs. Decisions were also undertaken on an individual basis to enable participation, such as looking after an assistance dog to enable a member to swim. Recent investment also ensured that buildings were able to be used by individuals with a variety of disabilities, including pool hoists, accessibility through turnstiles and changing room facilities. They were also exploring use of personal trainers.
- The Leisure Service Review had considered accessibility, health inequalities, inclusion, locations and other factors given the significant investment and need to maximise use. The report would be considered at the next meeting of the committee. Use of community facilities may be considered to see how else the service could be delivered as part of leisure development.
- They were working with an increased number of schools regarding PE provision. They had continued to work with schools during the pandemic and deliver activities as they used qualified teachers. Participating schools also benefitted from discounts on activities at the leisure centres.

- An event held under the Commonwealth Games legacy programme had been held out at The Alnwick Gardens with several hundred participants.
- Information of the locations of where wellbeing walk leaders were needed and Active Northumberland's recycling programme was to be provided to Councillor Morphet outside of the meeting.

The officers were thanked for the report and presentation which had been found informative.

RESOLVED that that Active Northumberland's Annual Outcomes Report 2021-22, be received.

24. 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 provided an update on items to be considered at meetings for the remainder of the year. He had received confirmation from officers that the Tree and Woodland Strategy, due to be considered on 11 January 2023, would incorporate Ash Dieback.

Members enquired if when the aforementioned strategy was considered, if officers could explain how Members accessed expert advice on tree safety as it was understood that internal resources were no longer available to them.

In answer to queries, he stated that:

- A report on bus services and subsidies would be included in the work programme in the near future.
- A report /presentation would be requested on Woodhorn Museum Charitable Trust.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

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**FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS
DECEMBER 2022 TO FEBRUARY 2023**

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p>Council Tax Base 2023/24 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>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 12 December 2022</p>	<p>13 December 2022</p>
<p>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of September 2022 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>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>13 December 2022</p>
<p>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of September 2022 The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2022-23 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 12 December 2022</p>	<p>13 December 2022</p>
<p>Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023-27 This report will provide an update on the development of the 2023-24 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period 2023 to 2027. This report will also detail the budget proposals for 2023-24 to meet the budget gap and provide an update on the Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24 if it has been received. (R. Wearmouth/A. Elsdon – 01670 622168)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 16 January 2023</p>	<p>17 January 2023</p>
<p>30 Year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account The report presents to Cabinet the 30 year Business plan for the Housing Revenue Account. (R. Wearmouth/A. Elsdon – 01670 622168)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 16 January 2023</p>	<p>17 January 2023</p>
<p>Notification of the Estimated Collection Fund</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>17 January 2023</p>

<p>Balances 2022-23 – Council Tax and Business Rates</p> <p>The report will advise members of the estimated surplus or deficit balances on the Collection Fund in relation to Council Tax and Business Rates at 31 March 2023. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) requires the Council as the Billing Authority to calculate a Council Tax Collection Fund estimate by 15th January each year. The Non-Domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations 2013 require the Council as the Billing Authority to calculate a Business Rates Collection Fund estimate on or before 31st January each year. (R. Wearmouth/A. Elsdon – 01670 622168)</p>		
<p>Recommissioning of an Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service for Adults in Northumberland</p> <p>To seek permission from Cabinet to commission an Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service for Adults in Northumberland. This Service will be commissioned using the Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant. The grant conditions state that Local Authorities must improve the take up of, and outcomes from, its drug and alcohol misuse treatment services, based on an assessment of local need. The contract will be greater than £2m, therefore there is the need to ask Cabinet to delegate the expenditure to the Director of Public Health. (W. Pattison/John Liddell M: 07929 775559)</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing OSC 6 December 2022</p>	<p>17 January 2023</p>
<p>Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27</p> <p>The report presents the updated Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27 to Cabinet following the receipt of the provisional local government settlement which is due to be announced during December 2022. The report will also include an update on the deliverability of savings. (R. Wearmouth/A. Elsdon 01670 622168)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 13 February 2022</p>	<p>14 February 2022 Council 22 February 2022</p>
<p>Produced in Northumberland Scheme</p> <p>An update on the status of the Produced in Northumberland Scheme. A review of the scheme in 22-23 together with the intended further promotion and development of the scheme in 2023/24 (C. Horncastle/P. Simpson – 07920806260).</p>	<p>TBC</p>	<p>14 February 2023</p>
<p>Revenues and Benefits Policies for 2023/24</p> <p>The report sets out the policies that the Revenues and Benefits services operate for the administration of council tax, business rates, housing benefit and council tax support.</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 13 February 2022</p>	<p>14 February 2022 Council 22 February 2022</p>

<p>The report is for information and approval of any updates or legislation changes that need to be made.</p> <p>The policies need County Council approval on 22 February 2023.</p> <p>(R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes 01670 624351)</p>		
<p>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of December 2022</p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 December 2022.</p> <p>(R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	14 March 2023
<p>Service Charges in Sheltered Accommodation</p> <p>The report requests permission to introduce Service Charges to all tenants in 8 Sheltered Housing Schemes in line with those currently charged at Arnison Close in Allendale. The HRA is currently subsidising these tenants at a cost of approx. £200k per year</p> <p>(C. Horncastle/ S. Ogle – 07976851270)</p>	TBC	14 March 2023
<p>Financial Performance 2022-23 – Position at the end of March 2023 (Provisional Outturn)</p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 March 2023 (provisional outturn)</p> <p>(R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	9 May 2023

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Northumberland County Council

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee 7th December 2022

Electric Vehicle Charging Tariff Setting Methodology - For Information only

Matt Baker, Service Director for Climate Change, Business Intelligence and Corporate Performance

Paul Jones, Service Director for Local Services

Report of Cabinet Member: Cllr Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council, Cllr John Riddle, portfolio holder for Local Services.

Purpose of report

This report follows the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy, approved by Cabinet in June 2022 which authorised the service Director for Local Services in consultation with the Member for Environment and Local Services to make in-year adjustments to the tariff.

This paper, as requested by the chair of Communities and Place OSC, sets out the methodology and process by which the tariff is calculated and set.

Executive Summary

1. The Council currently owns and operates 195 EV charging outlets.
2. Funding has recently been secured from the Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles towards an additional 150 outlets. This funding is matched by NCC capital from both the Local Services EV Charging budget and Climate Change Capital Fund.
3. Since 2021, customers have been charged 35p per kWh excluding VAT (42p inc VAT). Since this tariff was set, electricity prices have increased by over 80% from around 18p/kWh to 35p/kWh and we are seeing a revenue deficit from EV charging.
4. Accurately forecasting the precise wholesale cost of electricity to NCC across all EV chargepoints is extremely complex.
5. When reviewing the tariff, we will calculate the cost to customers based on the most recent electricity price point plus the cost of maintenance and ensure that the tariff is adjusted in a timely manner so that the service is self-financing.
6. NCC will also monitor the tariff set by equivalent private sector companies (e.g. BP Pulse).
7. This approach has been reached through collaboration between the Climate Change Team, Technical Services, and the Energy Team.

The following **key challenges** should be noted:

1. Due to the way NCC purchases electricity through the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO), it is extremely challenging to forecast the wholesale cost to NCC in a reliable way.

2. There are some inconsistencies between the data we receive from the EV charging back-office system and the data we receive from the meters supplying the electricity. This is being investigated.

By increasing our tariff, there is a risk that usage and consequently revenue from our EV chargers will fall.

Note that the approach adopted to setting the EV charging tariff is to calculate based on the cost of wholesale electricity plus the cost of maintenance. The approach to recalculating the tariff has been agreed by the Climate Change Team, Technical Services and the Energy Team. The tariff can be changed as often as is necessary through delegated authority already assigned to the director of Local Services to be exercised in consultation with Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services. The costs of electricity and maintenance will be reviewed on a regular basis.

1. EV Charging Tariff

1.1 EVCPs maintenance, repair and electricity costs

The approximate maintenance cost (repairs/damaged excluded) for the chargers owned by Northumberland County Council is circa £35,000 yearly. Including some repair, replacement and installation costs (guns, screens), the total maintenance costs could be increased up to £57,000 yearly, which is circa £4,750 monthly. Table 1 provides a summary of these costs.

Concept	Cost/price (£, VAT included)
Maintenance costs (repairs/damage excluded) yearly	~ 35000
Repair costs (guns and screens replacement and installation others) yearly	~ 22000
Total maintenance and repair costs	~ 57000
Total maintenance and repair costs per month	~ 4750

Table 1

The above costs have been aligned to the kwh cost of electricity to ensure we can apply them alongside this rate. They come out at 17p/kwh.

The electricity costs across all chargepoints come to an average of 35p/kWh. This number was reached using the energy management system and the rate values for all the rapid chargers owned by NCC.

Since 2021 the tariff has been set at the following rate:

Electricity cost per kWh : 18p

Maintenance Cost per kWh : 17p

Total Cost : 35p (+VAT = 42p/kWh)

The tariff charged to the customer since 2021 of 35p/kwh exc. VAT is therefore not enough to cover both the cost of electricity and the cost maintenance.

1.2 Increasing the tariff

A deficit across our EV chargers is not sustainable. Considerable work has taken place to forecast the cost of electricity to NCC in order to set a charging tariff accordingly. However, due to the way electricity is purchased dynamically through the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO), this has proven impossible.

We must therefore be reactive in setting a tariff which must be based on known costs rather than forecast costs.

In addition however, it is extremely complex to calculate the exact costs of every EV charger across our estate as they are metered in different ways depending on their type and installation. A manual, time consuming process would be needed at a minimum once a month to do this.

An approximate average cost along with overall revenue generation can however, be calculated using the back office systems of the charging network.

At the time of writing costs are as follows:

Current electricity cost per kWh : 35p

Maintenance Cost per kWh : 17p

Total Cost : 52p (+VAT = 62p/kWh)

It costs more to maintain rapid chargers than fast chargers, we also want to keep costs as low as possible for residents who use fast chargers overnight, particularly if they need to do so because they have no off-street parking of their own. Therefore the cost will be split with rapid chargers becoming more expensive and fast chargers, subsidised slightly by the rapids.

The cost charged to the user based on current prices therefore would be **57p/kWh for fast chargers and 65p/kWh for rapid chargers**. At this rate, Northumberland County Council will see sufficient revenue to break even and make a surplus to cover other expenses.

Monitoring will also take place of private sector competitors who invest considerable resource into adjusting their tariffs to cover costs and generate profit without putting off users with unattractive costs. Private sector tariffs at time of writing can be seen below.

Company	AC cost (£/kWh, VAT included)	Rapid DC cost (£/kWh, VAT included)
BP pulse	0.57	0.65
Shell	0.45	0.59
Instavolt	N/A	0.66
Tesla	N/A	0.67

NCC should aim to offer prices lower than the private sector if at all possible in order to provide value for money for our residents and visitors and to encourage uptake of electric vehicles as part of our climate change strategy. NCC is not driven to create profit in the same way as the private sector.

It can be concluded then that by ensuring that the tariff is reviewed on a monthly basis and that the cost to the customer reflects the cost of electricity to the Council plus the cost of maintenance, enough revenue will be generated to ensure costs are covered.

1.3 Ongoing monitoring

The EV tariff working group will continue to liaise on a monthly basis and monitor the following:

1. Private sector tariff changes
2. Cost of electricity to NCC (as accurately as possible)
3. Cost of maintenance
4. Surplus/deficit.

The EV charging tariff will be changed accordingly to ensure any surplus generated is not disproportionate and residents and visitors to Northumberland are assured of value for money when charging their electric vehicles.

Implications

Policy	Decisions on EV Charging tariff changes can be made through existing delegated authority.
Finance and value for money	Sets out mitigation for revenue deficit currently incurred across EV chargers.
Legal	The Climate Change Act 2008 establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	EV chargers are Council property
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment	See corporate risk register
Crime & Disorder	N/A

Customer Consideration	Value for money will continue to be a priority balanced against the need to cover operating costs.
Carbon reduction	Building a sustainable and well maintained EV charging network is essential to the Council's climate change action plan
Wards	All

Background papers:

Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23

Northumberland Climate Change Update Feb 2022

EV Charging Strategy June 2022.

Report sign off.

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

	Full name of officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Interim Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Rick O'Farrell Rob Murfin
Portfolio Holder(s)	CLlr Glen Sanderson CLlr John Riddle

Authors and Contact Details

Nicholas Johnston

Climate Change

Programme Manager

nick.johnston@northumberland.gov.uk

Diego Perera-Solis

Assistant Project Manager – Climate Change

Matthew Baker

Climate Change, Business Intelligence and Corporate Performance

Service Director

matthew.baker@northumberland.gov.uk



Northumberland County Council

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OSC

7 DECEMBER 2022

Corporate Feedback Performance 2021/2022

Report of Julie Dennitts, Corporate Complaints Manager

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of the Annual Report is to review the operation of the complaints process over twelve months (01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022), including statistical data, and to provide the local Authority with the means by which it keeps itself informed about how effective its current arrangements are for handling customer complaints.

The same statutory reporting framework does not govern the Corporate Complaint process as Adults and Children's Complaints; however, it is deemed best practice to provide an analysis of Corporate Complaints received from customers. It should be noted that Corporate Complaint Annual reports from here on will be produced in alignment with the framework for Adult and Children's Complaints.

2. Background

The 2020/2021 Annual Report advised that the Corporate Complaints Manager had reviewed the current complaints reporting mechanisms as part of the broader Complaints Improvement Framework. A comprehensive action plan has been drafted, providing more detail.

One of the main improvements identified was to update the case management system. The existing system needs to be updated and bespoke for complaints management, it is cumbersome to use, and staff engagement is sporadic. This makes data retrieval and analysis challenging and unreliable. A new case management system has since been procured, and work is currently being undertaken to ensure it is implemented efficiently.

This report is based on the current data sets available within the confines of the existing software.

3: Summary

The key findings in this report are:

- 115 complaints were resolved within 24 hours and recorded as informal resolutions.
- 1758 stage 1 complaints were received, and 94 (5.3%) were escalated to stage 2.
- 1317 (75%) stage one complaints were closed in timescale, and 46 (49%) stage two complaints were closed in timescale.
- 15 cases were upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) following detailed investigations

4. What we did well:

- Understand that sometimes the best way to deal with a complaint is to initiate local resolution. As a matter of course, any staff member being presented first-hand with a complaint will attempt to resolve the issue.
- Continuously review processes to ensure these are consistent and current
- Able to resolve complaints at stage one, negating the need to escalate to stage two
- Demonstrated a positive culture to the LGSCO about the benefits of responding to and learning from complaints.
- Identifying individual needs and treating everyone respectfully
- Continuously review processes to ensure these are consistent and current
- Manage complaints in line with policy and legislation

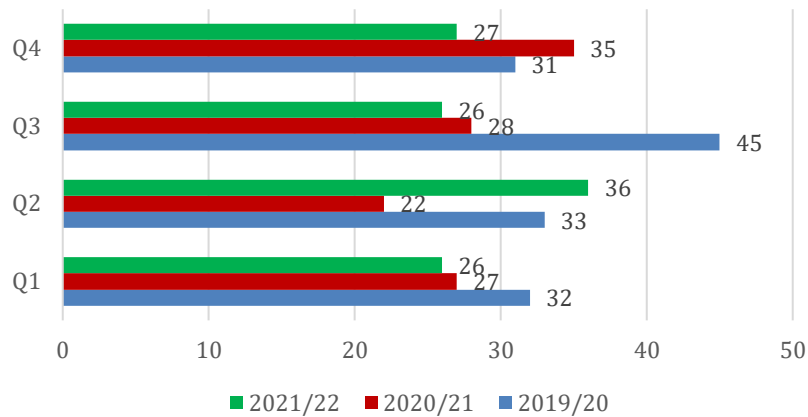
5. What do we need to improve?

- Keep sight of what we do well.
- Share trends and outcome reports more widely across the service area to ensure everyone handling complaints has the opportunity to view and consider these.
- Provide guidance and training sessions on all aspects of complaint management
- retrospective sessions with the service to consider what could have been done better and highlight areas of good practice

6. Informal Complaints

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

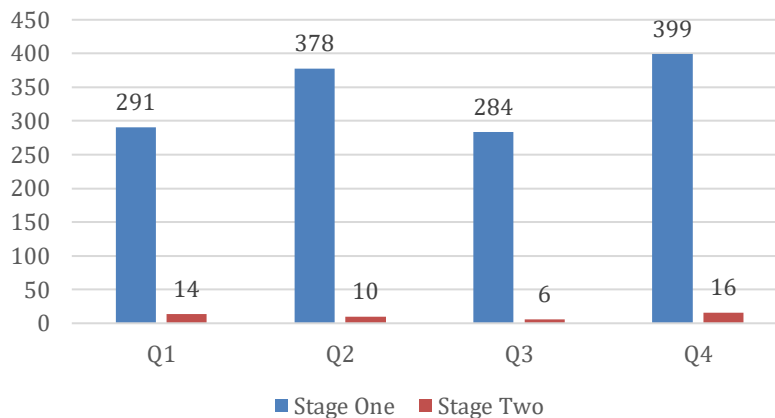
Number of Informal Resolutions by year



7. Complaints Received

During 2021-2022, the County Council received 1758 Stage one corporate complaints. Of these, 94 (5.3%) stage one complaints were escalated to stage 2.

Stage One and Stage Two complaints received



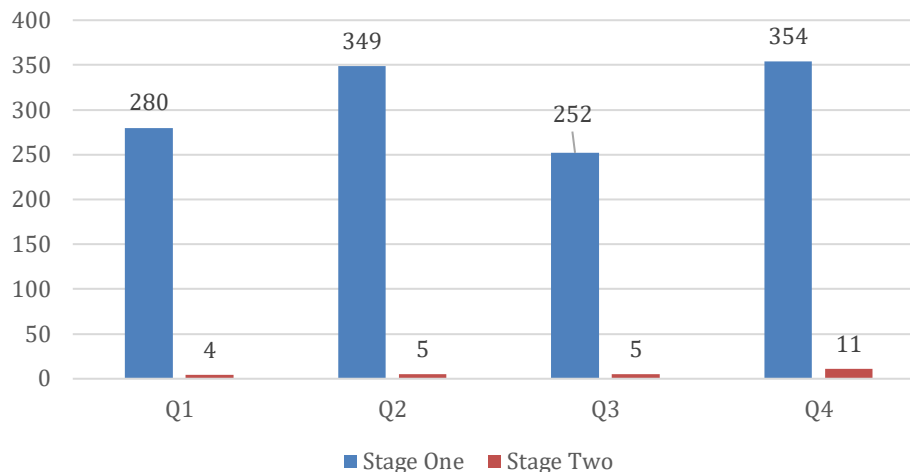
8. Closed Complaints

Closed complaints have been allocated an outcome, and a response has been given to the customer. The number of closed complaints differs from the number of received complaints. This is because some 2021/22 closed complaints were received in 2020/21. Similarly, some 2021/22 complaints will be completed in 2022/23 because their target date falls into the next reporting cycle.

Of the 1758 Stage 1 case received, 1317 (75%) were closed in timescale, and of the 94 Stage 2 cases received, 46 (49%) were closed in timescale.

Services are encouraged to analyse those complaints escalated to stage 2 to see what was done differently to resolve these. The aim is to establish some practical learning that can be provided to those staff that deal with complaints at stage 1 to reduce escalation and resolve complaints earlier for the customer.

Stage One and Stage Two complaints closed



9. Local Government Ombudsman (LGSCO)

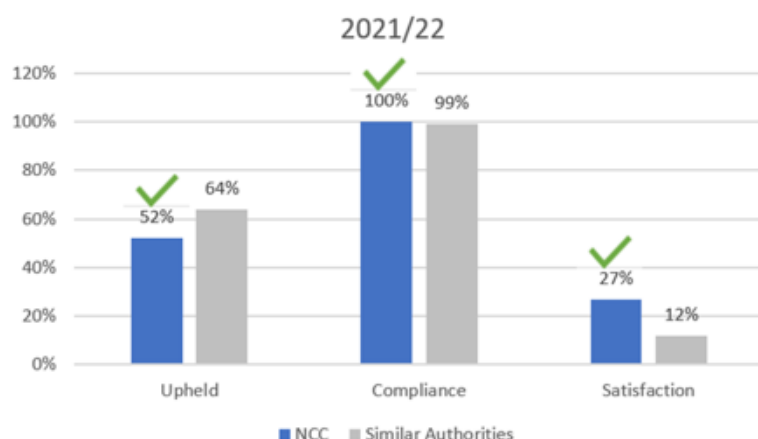
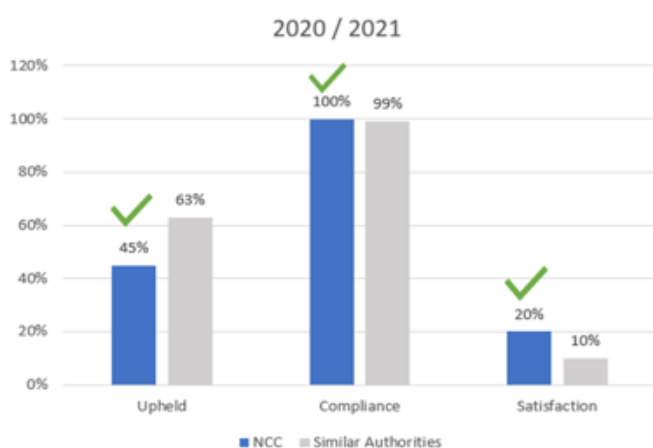
The (LGSCO) is the organisation that handles complaints about public services in England. The Ombudsman service is independent of the government and must act impartially. The LGSCO also shares learning from its work to improve service delivery across the spectrum of public service in England. The office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

The LGSCO does not differentiate between Corporate or Statutory Complaints when providing annual data; therefore, the following includes oversight of all complaint functions within the County Council. The Ombudsman upholds complaints when they find fault in an authority's actions, including where the Authority accepted fault before they investigated.

10. LGSCO detailed investigations

The Ombudsman accepted 29 complaints for detailed investigation. Of the 29 cases, the Ombudsman upheld 15 complaints (52%). The Ombudsman was satisfied that 4 (27%) of these cases offered complete remedies to the complainant (27%).

When the Ombudsman is not fully satisfied with the remedies offered, it will recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice and then monitor their compliance with their recommendations. Failure to comply is rare, and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern. In **100%** of cases where additional remedies were recommended, they were satisfied that the Council had successfully implemented the proposed recommendations.



The LGSCO compares the three key annual statistics with similar authorities to provide an average performance marker. It is noted that the Council continues to perform well against other similar authorities.

11. LGSCO recommendations for upheld complaints

The final decisions and recommendations made for the 15 upheld cases were as follows:

Service Area	Allegation	Recommendation
Children's and Special educational needs (21 004 239)	Miss X complained the Council failed to regularly review her son, Y's, Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), resulting in a loss of support. The Council failed to ensure Y's EHCP was reviewed when it should have been.	Provide apology Make payment for time, trouble, and uncertainty, and remedy any similar fault affecting others.
Adults - Charging (21 016 768)	We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's actions regarding Miss X's late father when he was in care. This is because the Council already provided a remedy for the injustice caused to the family, which goes beyond what we would usually recommend.	Satisfied with Councils remedy
Looked after Children (21 004 295)	Mr X complained that the Council failed to conduct a sufficiently independent and robust investigation into his children's statutory complaint. The Council was at fault for failing to investigate Mr X's concerns about some of the care homes he lived in. This caused avoidable Mr X distress.	Apology provided
Licensing (21 006 778)	The Council was at fault when it incorrectly advised Mr X about the type of licence needed for his new business.	Pay £300 to recognise avoidable frustration and raised expectations caused by this fault. Service improvement recommendation.
Refuse and Recycling (21 001 827)	Mrs X complained that the Council failed to have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty in dealing with a complaint about rubbish in her yard. The Council was at fault. It failed to consider whether Mrs X required reasonable adjustments when she advised it of her disabilities.	Provide an apology and cancel penalty notice and take no further action. Remind officers of the Public Sector Equality duty and the

		need to keep accurate contact records.
Enforcement (21 001 763)	Mr B complained that the Council lost planning documents for a site near his home. As a result, the Council could not take planning enforcement action when development was carried out on the site. The work meant numerous heavy vehicles were using the road which serves Mr B's property. The road was damaged and has only been partly repaired. There was a fault, but it did not cause injustice to Mr B.	Satisfied with Councils remedy
Planning applications (20 010 205)	Mr X complained that there were faults in the Council's consideration of a reserved matter planning application. He said the approved development would increase flood risk to his home, has reduced its value, and the process caused him and his wife considerable stress. There was fault by the Council, but it did not cause significant injustice to Mr X.	Satisfied with Councils remedy
Education & Children's Services (19 009 373)	Mr C says the Council refused to provide him with information about his daughter, failed to act on safeguarding concerns, produced an unbalanced child and family assessment, failed to see his daughter away from the family home when completing the evaluation and delayed considering his complaint. There is no evidence that the Council refused to provide Mr C with information about his daughter or any fault in how the Council obtained his daughter's views. The Council failed to record its view of one of the safeguarding concerns, included some factually inaccurate information in the child and family assessment and delayed considering his complaint.	An apology, training for officers and payment to Mr C is a satisfactory remedy.
Cemeteries and Crematoria (21 003 085)	We will not investigate this complaint about the management of a burial plot. We are satisfied with the Council's actions to resolve the complaint. Further investigation is unlikely to lead to a different outcome.	Satisfied with Councils remedy
Enforcement (20 005 626)	Mr B complained that the Council failed to take appropriate action regarding non-compliance with planning permission for development near his home. We found no fault by the Council regarding the substantive planning matters associated with this complaint. However, there was a fault in the Council's communications about the matter and in handling his complaint. Those faults led to injustice for Mr B, for which a remedy has already been agreed.	Satisfied with Councils remedy
Adult Care - Direct payments (20 000 293)	Ms X complains about how the Council has dealt with Ms Y's direct payment account and its decision to decline to arrange a further independent audit of her account. The Council is not at fault for declining to offer a further independent audit to Ms Y. The Council is at fault as its communication with Ms Y lacked clarity which caused upset to her. The Council has apologised to Ms X and Ms Y for the confusion and upset caused, which is an appropriate remedy. I have therefore completed my investigation.	Satisfied with Councils remedy

<p>Councillor Conduct and Standards (20 010 945)</p>	<p>Mr B complains about the Council's handling of his complaint against a councillor whom he says breached the Members Code of Conduct. We will not investigate this complaint. While there was a delay in the Council's response to the complaint, it apologised, and we consider this a suitable remedy to this part of the complaint. Further investigation of the process the Council followed is unlikely to lead to a different outcome. Finally, Mr B can ask the courts to consider whether the Council has breached the Equalities Act.</p>	<p>Satisfied with Councils remedy</p>
<p>Planning applications (20 005 324)</p>	<p>Ms X complained that the Council failed to revoke her neighbour's planning permission. The Council accepted its flawed decision, and approval should not have been granted. The Ombudsman found the Council was entitled to decide not to revoke planning permission, but it agreed to provide Ms X with a remedy for the impact of its fault.</p>	<p>Satisfied with Councils remedy</p>
<p>Planning applications (20 008 220)</p>	<p>Mr X complained the Council failed to specify ground levels on a development site adjacent to his property and failed to take prompt action when he first complained. The failure to include ground levels was a fault, but the development does not cause an impact significant enough to warrant the refusal of the application. The Council took too long to tell Mr X that ground levels had not been specified, which was fault.</p>	<p>Satisfied with Councils remedy</p>







Not all cases referred to the LGSCO are accepted for detailed investigation on occasion. Cases may not fall within their remit to investigate or be directed to the Authority for further local resolution.

12. Comparative analysis against previous years

The Council has been through a period of adaptation as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic lifted. While some pre-pandemic practices returned, many new ways of working are here to stay. Therefore, consideration must be given to the ongoing impact and work undertaken to address those challenges. The increase in complaints received in 2021-22 could reflect services returning to usual, new ways of working or increased accessibility to feedback mechanisms.

While the evidence outlined in this report suggests that overall complaint handling performance is reassuring, due to the issues highlighted in the 2019-20 Annual Complaints report concerning the use of the system and inconsistent ways data is captured, it is proving unreliable as performance data.

It should be stressed that the number of complaints taken alone is not necessarily a reliable indicator of performance. The volume of complaints should be considered alongside the uphold rate (how often we found fault when we investigated a complaint). This new indicator will be incorporated into future frameworks and reporting mechanisms when using a new case management system capable of more granular analysis.

Feedback Type	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	Direction of travel
Informal Complaints	153	141	112	115	
Stage 1 Complaints	970	1328	1366	1758	
Stage 2 Complaints	50	65	83	94	
Stage 1 closed within the timescale.	683 (70%)	902 (81%)	1038 (79%)	1317 (75%)	
Stage 2 closed within the timescale.	28 (56%)	30 (85%)	31 (42%)	79 (84%)	
LGSCO complaints upheld	15 (83%)	9 (35%)	10 (45%)	15 (52%)	

13. Service update

Given the amount of contact the Council received in the past year, these figures suggest that the Council is well placed to effectively deal with customer concerns as they occur and, where possible, can either resolve the matter or provide an adequate explanation.

Similarly to the data provided in the 2020/21 report, it is widely accepted that NCC continues to perform well compared to similar authorities in 2021/22. Authorities in the Northeast hold the lowest amount of total upheld complaints.

NCC was compliant with all Ombudsman recommendations, evident by the 7% increase in offering satisfactory remedies that NCC increasingly recognises the importance of being open and accountable.

This year the Ombudsman has highlighted the continued view that complaint functions have been under-resourced in recent years, a trend only exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic. The Ombudsman urges organisations to prioritise complaints, particularly regarding capacity and visibility. Adequately resourced complaint functions that are well-connected and valued by service areas, management teams and elected members can provide valuable insight into an organisation's performance, detecting early warning signs of problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery. NCC continues to deliver a framework developed to improve complaint handling within the Authority, including various ways to utilise complaints as a positive learning tool, increase resources and the procurement of a bespoke case management system.

14. Implications

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

Background papers:

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2021/22

Report sign-off:

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

	Name
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Service Director Finance & Interim S151 Officer	
Relevant Executive Director	Maureen Taylor

Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth

Author and Contact Details

Julie Dennitts-Seal, Corporate Complaints Manager
07870 365966

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

Great Northumberland Forest
Woodhorn Charitable Trust

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

11 January 2023

Tree and Woodland Strategy

To review and refresh the Strategy. Members also requested an update on the impact Ash Dieback was having on Ash Trees in the county and the implication for public and highway safety.

Storm Arwen Review – Adult Care

To receive an update on the implementation of the review’s recommendations on Adult Care.

8 February 2023

Northumberland Infrastructure Funding Statement

To consider the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement in respect of Section 106 Agreements.

Retained Firefighters

To consider issues around the recruitment and retention of retained firefighters.

8 March 2023

Library Service Strategy 2021-26

To update the Committee on the implementation of the Strategy.

Utility Companies on the Highway

To receive an update on the Council’s implementation of the Northumberland Street Works Permit Scheme.

5 April 2023

Food Recycling Pilot

To receive an interim report on progress with the pilot scheme.

Housing (TBC)

Housing White Paper – it is anticipated that this will become the Housing regulatory Bill in the Spring of 2023, and this is to inform members of the implication for the housing landlord function.

26 April 2023	

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

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1.	1 June 2022	Development of the Potland Burn Biodiversity Net Gain 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.	No further action required as this time.
2. Page 41	29 June 2022	Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2022/25	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.	The Committee be consulted prior to the setting of the EVCP Tariff.
3.	29 June 2022	Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Proposed Food Waste Recycling Pilot Schemes	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.	The Committee to receive an update on the trial before the end of the year.
4.	31 August 2022	Fleet Replacement Update	RESOLVED that the work undertaken to deliver a challenging fleet replacement programme during 2021/22, be noted.	The Committee will continue to receive this as an annual update.
5.	31 August 2022	Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2022/23	RESOLVED that:	Cabinet considered the OSC's comments when it determined the

			<p>a. Cabinet be advised that the Communities & Place OSC endorses the recommendation in the report.</p> <p>b. The Cabinet be recommended to request that the Government makes the displaying of food hygiene ratings at food business premises mandatory.</p>	report on 21 September 2022.
6.	5 October 2022	Endorsement of the Northumberland Destination Management Plan 2022-2032	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Communities & Place OSC supported the recommendation contained in the report.	Cabinet considered the OSC's comments when it determined the report on 11 October 2022.
7.	5 October 2022	Storm Arwen, Community Resilience Update	<p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(a) The report be received.</p> <p>(b) The Communities and Place OSC continues to support the concept of community resilience within Northumberland.</p>	The Committee will consider the Storm Arwen recommendations in respect of Adult Care at the January meeting.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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