



Northumberland

County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Karon Hadfield

Email:

Democraticservices@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 0345 600 6400

Date: Monday 2 October 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **CABINET** to be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL** on **TUESDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2023** at **10.00 AM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr Helen Paterson
Chief Executive

To Cabinet members as follows:-

V Jones, G Renner-Thompson, J Riddle, G Sanderson (Chair), J Watson, R Wearmouth (Vice-Chair), C Horncastle, W Pattison, W Ploszaj and G Stewart



Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive
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AGENDA

PART I

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES

(Pages 1
- 6)

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday 12 September 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. DISCLOSURES 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 Registrable Interest or Non Registrable 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. REPORT OF THE LEADER

(Pages 7
- 30)

Environmental Policy Statement

To propose the adoption of an overarching Environmental Policy Statement by Northumberland County Council to demonstrate the high priority being given by the Council to environmental matters, such as Climate Change, Nature Recovery & Biodiversity, Heat and Renewable Energy, Sustainable Waste Management, Travel and Transport, Water Quality, Parks & Green Spaces and Safeguarding Public Health. The Environmental Policy Statement covers the 4-year period from 2023/24 to 2026/27, after which time it will be reviewed and updated. It will clearly identify and communicate how the diverse range of environmental policy and service delivery activities undertaken by the Council are all part of its commitment to maintain, protect and enhance the environment. It is intended that the Environmental Policy Statement will then be used to help support improved public awareness, engagement and active participation on these important environmental matters (Appendix A).

5. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

(Pages
31 - 36)

Building our Data Capability - Data Academy Pilot

The purpose of this report is to outline the need to develop our data skills and capabilities and seek approval for the proposed establishment of a 'Data Academy' and associated use of unallocated Apprenticeship Levy to fund (Appendix B).

6. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

(Pages
37 - 42)

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

The report summarises proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group (Appendix C).

7. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

(Pages
43 - 64)

Corporate Performance – Quarter 4 2022/23 Outturn

This report provides a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of

Quarter 4, 2022/23 (Q4) (Appendix D).

8. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITIES

(Pages
65 - 128)

Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24

The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet, for its consideration the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2023/24 (Appendix E).

9. URGENT BUSINESS

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

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

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

Name:		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)

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Agenda Item 2

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 12 September 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Sanderson
(Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

CABINET MEMBERS

Horncastle, C.	Riddle, J.
Jones, V.	Stewart, G.
Pattison, W.	Watson, J.
Ploszaj, W.	Wearmouth, R.
Renner Thompson, G.	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bradley, N.	Head of School Organisation Executive Director for Adults, Aging & Wellbeing
Gerrard, S. Hadfield, K.	Director of Law and Governance Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P.	Director of Strategy and Communications
Kingham, A.	Executive Director for Children, Young People and Education
McMillan, S.	Head of Economic Growth and Inward Investment
O'Neill, G	Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities
Paterson, Dr H. Willis, J. (remote)	Chief Executive Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings of Cabinet, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair:-

- (a) Tuesday 11 July 2023
- (b) Tuesday 20 July 2023.

27. REPORT OF THE LEADER

BEST: Delivery Partner Delegated Decision

The report sought delegated authority for the Council's Executive Director of Transformation and Resources to enter into a contract for the BEST Delivery Partner in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The report was presented by the Leader. He advised that members would be kept informed of progress.

RESOLVED that the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, to enter into a contract for the BEST Delivery Partner.

28. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Financial Performance 2023-24 – Position at the end of June 2023

The report informed the Cabinet of the current financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2023-24 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report was presented by Councillor Wearmouth who drew members' attention to the points which needed to be noted, as well as the recommendations to be agreed.

The S151 Officer advised members that there was a change needed to recommendation one to reflect that this was a decision for Cabinet to make following the recent review of the Constitution, and that a recommendation to Council was not needed.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet :

- Approve the use of £1.855 million from contingency to partly fund the shortfall in the expected cost of pay awards for 2023-24.
- Approve the re-profiling to the Capital Programme of £15.902 million from 2023-24 to 2024-25 to reflect estimated expenditure levels in the current financial year.
- Approve the transfer of £1.556 million from the Public Health main grant reserve to provide additional services to reduce poverty and health inequalities.

(b) Cabinet note:

- the projected overspend on services of £4.115 million and the assumptions outlined in the report.

- the projected net overspend of £4.471 million after accounting for outstanding inflationary pressures and the utilisation of the Exceptional Inflation Reserve and contingency. The financial monitoring process is a continuous process, and it is not unusual to predict an overspend in the first formal monitoring report as pressures in the system are recognised and realised. Services are now taking appropriate action to bring the budget back into balance and corporately work is underway to ascertain if rising interest rates will ensure a favourable return to the Council and improve the position further. An updated position for the 6 months to September 2023 will be presented to Cabinet on 12 December 2023.
- the supplementary estimates at Appendix A and the required changes to the budgets.
- the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix B.
- the use of the contingency shown at Appendix L.
- the use of reserves shown at Appendix M.
- the virements requested by services shown at Appendix O.

29. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Loan to Whittingham, Callaly and Alnham Parish Council

The report provided details of a potential loan facility to Whittingham, Callaly and Alnham Parish Council (WCAPC) of £4,435 towards the capital reserve (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve a loan facility of £4,435 to WCAPC subject to the following:

- WCAPC agreeing to the proposed terms and conditions; and
- NCC's Legal Team completing a legal agreement with WCAPC in advance of any loan drawdown by WCAPC, containing the terms and conditions set out within the report.

30. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

The report summarised proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

30.1 Family Hub grant

Members welcomed this funding from the Government, which had had a huge impact on families in all areas of the County. The Leader suggested that members be kept updated on progress.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Approve the receipt of the capital element of the Family Hub grant of £0.063 million in 2023-24 and £0.059 million in 2024-25 and update the capital programme; and
- b) Grant delegated authority for the Executive Director of Children, Education and Young people to enter into contracts for the appropriate items of capital expenditure as and when they are identified up to the approved total budget limited.

30.2 Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management schemes

Members welcomed the proposals.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the updated expenditure of £0.118 million and the amendment of the budget allocations within the Capital Programme for Otterburn Surface Water Flood Alleviation Scheme and Red Row Surface Water Flood Alleviation Scheme.

30.3 Lilidorei Play Village – Additional funding from Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUCH)

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the inclusion of the £0.500 million funding already received from DLUCH and update the Capital Programme.

30.4 Levelling Up Funds – Hexham to Corbridge and Bedlington East to West

The Leader welcomed this initiative which would support the Administration's emerging Environment Policy. Councillor Riddle commented that the funding from the Government was testament to the Administration's commitment to investment in cycling and walking.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Accept the funds from the Levelling up Fund Tranche 2 of £14.712 million;
- b) Approve funds in line with the costs outlined in the table set out in paragraph 9.5; and
- c) Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £2.000 million from the existing allocation for Local Cycling and Walking Programme.

30.5 Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Garden, Bedlington Cemetery

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Approve capital expenditure totalling £0.043 million for improvements to the West Bedlington Cemetery Garden of Remembrance; and
- b) Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.027 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Capital Programme and £0.017 million from Cllr Malcolm Robinson’s Members’ Local Improvement Scheme Funds.

30.6 Telecare Digital Switch

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the allocation of £0.547 million from the Adult Social Care Capital Grant in the Capital Programme to implement the capital project.

31. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CARING FOR ADULTS

Additional Market Sustainability and Improvement Grant

This report presented outline proposals for the use of additional grant funding announced by the Government on 28 July 2023, and requested delegated authority to resolve details to ensure that the grant can be spent effectively (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

The report was presented by Councillor Pattison and she drew members’ attention to the key points of the report.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet endorse the overall approach to the use of the additional Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) set out in paragraphs 6.28 to 6.30 of the report; and
- (b) the Executive Director for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing be authorised to agree detailed allocations of expenditure within that overall approach, and to manage the overall resources available from the MSIF and the Adult Social Care Discharge fund flexibly to as to maximise the benefits for people with care and support needs, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Caring for Adults, and the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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Northumberland County Council

CABINET

DATE: 10TH OCTOBER 2023

Northumberland County Council - Environmental Policy Statement

Report of: Councillor Sanderson, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Change.

Lead Officer: Simon Neilson, Executive Director of Place and Regeneration

1. Purpose of Report

To propose the adoption of an overarching Environmental Policy Statement by Northumberland County Council to demonstrate the high priority being given by the Council to environmental matters, such as Climate Change, Nature Recovery & Biodiversity, Heat and Renewable Energy, Sustainable Waste Management, Travel and Transport, Water Quality, Parks & Green Spaces and Safeguarding Public Health. The Environmental Policy Statement covers the 4-year period from 2023/24 to 2026/27, after which time it will be reviewed and updated. It will clearly identify and communicate how the diverse range of environmental policy and service delivery activities undertaken by the Council are all part of its commitment to maintain, protect and enhance the environment. It is intended that the Environmental Policy Statement will then be used to help support improved public awareness, engagement and active participation on these important environmental matters.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

A) Maintain its commitment to tackling climate change and to the development of a new Climate Change Action Plan which will set out the actions, work programme and targets that will be progressed over the period 2024 to 2026.

B) Adopt the Environmental Policy Statement and continuously strive to meet the on-going commitments contained within the statement (see **Appendix A**) and the actions and targets (see **Appendix B**) to this report.

C) Widely communicate and publicise the Environment Policy Statement to help raise public awareness, engagement and active participation on environmental matters across the county.

D) Note the 'Potential Areas of Additional Environmental Activity' outlined in section 5.4 of this report. It is intended that these additional areas of activity will be subject to further development and, where appropriate, any associated budget implications will be considered as part of this year's MTFP budget setting process.

3. Link to Corporate Plan

Maintaining, protecting and enhancing the high-quality environment of the county is essential to support the delivery of the Council's three key corporate priorities, as set out below:

- **Driving Economic Growth** – A high quality environment is a key factor in supporting sustainable economic growth and attracting investment into the county. Green jobs, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture and forestry are all key sectors of the county's growing economy.
- **Achieving Value For Money** – The Council is committed to lead by example and continuously improve the environmental sustainability and value for money of its buildings, services, activities, and practices including its commissioning and procurement processes.
- **Tackling Inequalities** – The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan seeks to ensure a just transition to a low-carbon economy. Passing on a healthy, clean and sustainable environment to future generations is essential if we are to ensure that Northumberland remains a 'Land of Great Opportunities' for all.

4. Key Issues

The Council recognises it has a key role to play in tackling environmental issues and that this work is critical to the successful achievement of its corporate objectives and that businesses, residents and other stakeholders all have an active role to play. However, it is considered that there is a need to strengthen the work being undertaken by the Council on the environment and to improve how the Council communicates and presents the work it is undertaking on environmental issues to increase the level of public awareness, engagement and active participation.

The adoption of an overarching Environment Policy Statement by the Council will help to strengthen and more clearly communicate the Council's commitment to maintain, protect and enhance the environment.

The Environmental Policy Statement will need to be widely publicised to help raise awareness, engagement and active participation on environmental matters.

5. Background

The council is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment for the benefit of everyone, whether this is dealing with littering and fly tipping, to creating more green spaces and woodlands, to tackling major societal issues such as climate change and the loss of biodiversity; the Council is working hard to ensure the county's stunning natural and built resources are protected and enhanced in the future. With plans to refresh and update the Council's Climate Change Action Plan to build on the successful work undertaken since it declared a climate emergency back in 2019, as well as details of our work to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of species and habitats in the county both due to be reported to Cabinet in November 2023, it is clear that the council remains dedicated to its role in protecting and enhancing the local environment.

However, whilst a great deal of successful work to tackle environmental issues has been undertaken, there is still a lot to be done to create a future environment that works for everyone across the county. The Council wants to strengthen the work being undertaken on the environment and wants as many individuals, organisations and communities as possible to play their part, however big or small. To achieve these aims it is necessary to improve public awareness, engagement and the level of active participation on environmental matters.

5.1 Environmental Policy Statement

This report proposes the adoption of an overarching Environment Policy Statement by the Council to help strengthen the Council's work on the environment and to support communications activity to improve public awareness, engagement and participation levels. The statement sets out a series of key commitments that the Council will make in respect of its duties and responsibilities for the environment which are grouped under themed headings. It also highlights some of the key actions and targets it will deliver over the next 4 years in support of these commitments.

The proposed Environmental Policy Statement and commitments is attached as **Appendix A** to this report with some of the key actions and targets highlighted in **Appendix B**.

5.2 Financial Commitment to Environmental Issues

The Council has already allocated over £62.825m of capital investment in its MTFP 2023/24 to 2026/27 towards the delivery of a wide range of projects and programmes that act to protect and enhance the environment and/or contribute to climate change targets (see table 1 below). This significant level of investment demonstrates the priority being given by the Council to maintain, protect and enhance the environment and improve local environmental services. The Council intends to consider additional

capital funding allocations to support environmental projects and programmes as part of its MTFP budget setting process.

Project Title	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding
Blyth to Bebside Cycle Corridor	£6,699,600	£4,578,720	£2,120,880
Great Northumberland Forest	£1,119,737	£1,119,737	-
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure	£6,326,244	£3,462,244	£2,864,000
Housing Revenue Account – Energy Efficiency	£1,000,000	-	£1,000,000
Parks Enhancement and QEII Commemoration Programme	£520,175	-	£520,175
County Hall Solar PV	£98,939	-	£98,939
County Hall Solar Car Port	£2,700,000	£1,189,568	£1,510,432
Climate Change Capital Fund	£2,000,000	-	£2,000,000
Electric Vehicle Charger Installation	£400,000	£200,000	£200,000
Newcastle Northumberland Railway Line	£37,473,239	£14,599,000	£22,874,239
Public Toilets Improvement Programme	£1,109,057	-	£1,109,057
Lynemouth Bay Remediation	£3,379,000	£500,000	£2,829,000
Total	£62,825,991	£25,649,269	£37,126,722

5.3 Key Areas of Environmental Activity

To support awareness raising and engagement activity the following section of this report highlights the key areas of activity already being progressed on the environment by the Council over the next two years that have a high public profile and potential for broader engagement activity and/or active participation.

5.3.1 Engagement and partnership activity

Northumberland Environment and Climate Fund

The first round of the fund was oversubscribed following its launch in May 2022, with over 40 applications being received and the full £50,000 worth of funding was awarded to 25 successful applicants. These projects support the council's Climate Change Action Plan and demonstrate longevity as well as a commitment to engaging with the wider community. It is intended to launch an expanded scheme in October this year that will include other environmental priorities and the fund will be increased by 10% to enable more schemes to be supported.

Free tree scheme

Offers every household the opportunity to obtain and plant a tree as part of the Council's commitment to tackling climate change, with the scheme now entering its 4th year of operation. A further 15,000 trees are due to be given out to residents, schools and community groups in October and December this year for planting in gardens, school grounds and other green spaces

Love Northumberland Awards

'LOVE Northumberland – caring for our county' is a campaign that aims to promote the work of the council and its partners in preserving and improving the environment in the county, celebrating community spirit and promoting county pride. It's aimed at getting everyone in Northumberland involved in keeping the county clean and green. Northumberland is known for its breathtaking scenery and wide open spaces but it also has a reputation for its environmental quality.

The aims of the campaign are to:

- promote the work of the council and its partners in keeping Northumberland beautiful for residents and tourists
- encourage more people to report environmental problems and get involved in work to protect our public spaces
- raise awareness of environmental issues
- promote our key messages on the environment to help us meet targets
- create a sense of joint ownership around LOVE Northumberland issues

The campaign is in its 12th year and plans for the next annual awards event in summer 2024 to celebrate all that is great about community environmental work in the county are already being developed and will be widely publicised.

Love Parks Week

Each year the Council participates in the national initiative led by Keep Britain Tidy, which celebrates parks, green spaces, and the dedicated volunteers and workers that look after them all year round. The Council will continue to use this initiative to promote parks as vibrant, living spaces that bring communities together and provide opportunities to connect with nature in the heart of our towns and neighbourhoods – to ensure that these spaces remain cherished, accessible places for all to enjoy.

Love It Like It's Yours – Visitor Management Campaign

This is an annual campaign led by NCC with a broad range of partner organisations as part of the Northumberland Destination Management Plan. The campaign runs each summer and aims to promote a warm welcome to visitors to the county whilst also encouraging responsible behaviours that respect local communities and safeguard wildlife and the environment. The Council will continue to work with partners to ensure that we create an environment in Northumberland for tourism and the visitor economy to develop and flourish sustainably, maximising benefits and combating negative impacts, for the benefit of local communities, businesses, visitors and the natural environment.

Climate Change Website

The Council has developed a new NCC 'stand alone' climate change website specifically covering all things climate change. This is due to be launched imminently, which will be the platform for information on activities, information, how to get involved, schemes that are running etc. The URL for the web site is **netzero.northumberland.gov.uk** and will be widely publicised and promoted.

Parish and Town Council Climate Change Toolkit

This is a Toolkit to support Town and Parish Councils (T&PCs) to develop and implement a climate change action plan for their local area. The Council will continue to promote, encourage and support T&PCs in this work.

Community Climate Champions

Provides community groups with the knowledge, training and toolkits necessary to champion climate and environmental activities within their communities. It also provides a network across the county for those involved to share ideas, support each other and make connections. It also provides a two-way conversation with the Council, which is invaluable to both the Climate Team and the groups involved. The Council will look to grow and develop the network of community climate champions across the county.

Verge maintenance

The Council is seeking to improve the biodiversity of verges working with local wildlife groups, Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) and Town and Parish Councils to identify those sections of verge that have high ecological value and where effective alternative maintenance regimes can be considered, without compromising road safety or adversely affecting the efficiency and carbon footprint of the verge cutting service. It is therefore intended that more verges will be managed in this way, where it is both safe and efficient to do so.

Waste Education & Awareness Raising

To support improved recycling activity, we intend to build on the existing engagement and awareness raising activities outlined below:

- Advice & guidance to schools, attendance at community events to promote waste minimisation, reduce, reuse, and recycling activities.
- Provision of information and advice on recycling services through bin stickers, leaflets, NCC web-page, social media, press releases etc.
- Public tours at West Sleekburn Materials Recycling Facility to showcase the scale and complexity of the recycling activity in the county and promote active participation.
- Participation in national campaigns – Love Food Hate Waste; Compost Week to encourage residents to get involved and do their bit for the environment.

Northumberland Schools Sustainability Network (NSSN)

This is a regional branch of the UKSSN. The first branch to be facilitated and organised by a council in the UK. It brings together teachers who have an interest in climate and environmental education to share ideas and support each other. We are looking to grow the network next year to host an online meeting once every half term around related topics. We will also look to establish and grow the student-led side of the network.

Northumberland Climate Change and Sustainability Schools Resource Pack

NCC has been working with the Ministry of Eco Education to create a Northumberland focused resource pack for teachers to support teaching issues relating to climate change and sustainability with a keen focus on how this affects our local area, our communities, and our environment. The Council will officially launch

the resource pack in September 2023 and has had input from stakeholders across Northumberland working within the environmental sector.

Youth Voice event

This event will bring together secondary school students for a day in the Cabinet Chambers in October 2023, to capture the youth voice on climate and environment. This event is part of the wider commitment of the climate team to capture the voices of our communities and inform the next climate action plan.

Transport behavioural change activity

The following areas of activity are undertaken by the Council on transport behavioral change and community activity:

- NCC continue to support and fund school travel plan engagement via Modeshift STARS across Northumberland schools. In July this year Stannington First school reached the National finals of the Modeshift STARS awards, gaining recognition from the Bikeability Trust.
- We continue to fund ride leader training in a number of Northumberland schools, allowing staff and pupils to use cycles to support curriculum activities, and active journeys to and from school, both inside and outside of curriculum time.
- Our cycle libraries continue to allow schools and community groups free access and extended loan periods of cycles. For Autumn 2023 NCC will launch cycle libraries accessible for residents seeking further educational and employment opportunities, again for extended loan periods.
- In Autumn 2023 NCC will launch a 2nd cargo cycle project in Berwick, allowing community groups, schools and businesses access to a cargo cycle to transport goods and equipment sustainably within the town.
- This year Northumberland County Council will fund up to 100 free cycle training places for adults including complete beginner sessions, group rides and E-Bike cycling experiences.
- The Big Northumberland Gear Change campaign will continue to promote more walking and cycling across Northumberland.
- The emerging visitor travel strategy for the Northumberland Coast AONB aims to achieve modal shift away from private car use by visitors to the coast. The AONB team are investigating capital funding to implement the strategy.

Events and Shows

The climate team has been attending events held across the County that have environmental or climate change focuses. Over 2022, the team attended 37 engagement events including the County Show, Q&A events, local shows and much more. In 2023, the team has attended 18 events so far, and it is intended that continued participation will remain an important part of our awareness-raising activity.

Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership

The Council hosts the AONB Staff Team of five staff who are responsible for the preparation, review and implementation of the Council's statutory AONB

Management Plan. Current activities being undertaken by the AONB Partnership include:

- Prepare, review and implement the statutory AONB Management Plan
- Provide advice to planning, highways, neighbourhoods and other service areas to ensure NCCs statutory duty to conserve and enhance is met
- Run the Coast Care Volunteering Initiative which engages 140 volunteers (see section 5.3.2 below).
- Coastlands project bid submitted for a £4.5m scheme in the south of the AONB
- Run the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme which will see £650,000 worth of projects delivered on farms before March 2025.
- Deliver other projects and workstreams that contribute to Defra priorities and deliver the AONB Management Plan

North Pennines AONB Partnership

Northumberland, Durham and Cumbria all support the North Pennines AONB Partnership. Steered by its Management Plan, The Partnership leads an array of large-scale projects across the North Pennines to conserve and enhance the natural and historic landscape including peatland restoration, a range of geographically based schemes including the Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership and the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant scheme.

Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast Marine Nature Partnership

The Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast Marine Nature Partnership is a partnership of almost thirty authorities with a shared responsibility for managing the eleven inshore designated nature conservation sites between Fast Castle Head and the River Tyne. Northumberland County Council has hosted the Partnership's Project Officer since its inception in 1999 and contributes £9500 annually to the Partnership's budget. As well as providing technical support to member organisations, the Project Officer also runs 'citizen science' projects for local people to participate in, such as monitoring Eider duck populations and carrying out surveys of marine life.

5.3.2 Volunteering Opportunities

Coast Care

Coast Care is a volunteering initiative in the Northumberland Coast AONB. Over 140 volunteers are registered with the Council (as the AONB host body) and carry out litter picking, habitat management, wildlife surveying and practical conservation/access tasks in and around the AONB. Coast Care volunteers support the Council's '*Space for Shorebirds*' scheme and provide path rangers for the England/Northumberland Coast Path/St. Cuthbert's Way and Parish Path Rangers in four parishes. Coast Care undertakes work on Council owned land with support from NCC's Neighbourhood Service staff. Coast Care is not funded through the core grant.

Community litter picking champions

The Council will continue to support the development of litter picking groups across the County to undertake community litter picking activity within our towns, villages,

parks and green spaces. Details of how to organise or get involved in community litter picks are posted on NCC's web page at <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Street.aspx> and NCC's Neighbourhood Service staff can provide advice and equipment to support this activity.

'Friends Groups'

Primarily involved in parks and green spaces, with active participation in grounds maintenance activity within the parks, events programmes and improvement schemes. We will continue to support existing and encourage the development of new 'Friends Groups' to get more involved in the care of their local parks and green spaces.

Tree planting

Tree planting within parks improvement projects will include where possible involvement of school/community groups etc. Re-stocking activity following Storm Arwen will also be used to facilitate community involvement where possible.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Maintenance

Most volunteering activities currently involve vegetation clearance along PRoW. Broadening the scope to cover more construction tasks such as path/stile maintenance would require additional training and supervision resources/capacity.

Tree wardens

NCC is a Tree Council coordinator for the Tree Warden scheme in Northumberland. Volunteers look out for the trees across Northumberland. We are looking for ways to revitalise the scheme to increase its traction and promote volunteer opportunities, such as linking-in with the tree planting opportunities mentioned above.

5.3.3 Projects/Programmes

Climate Action Plan

The current Climate Action Plan covers the period 2021/2023 and work is currently being undertaken to produce a new action plan which should be ready to launch in Jan/Feb 2024. The launch of the new Climate Action Plan offers a significant public engagement and positive PR opportunity for NCC to showcase some of the work undertaken to date and to raise awareness of the projects/programmes being progressed going forward.

Enhanced Biodiversity Duty

Since 2006 all public bodies have had a legal duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. However, this duty has been considerably strengthened under the Environment Act 2021, such that all public bodies now have a duty to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity, with a framework of planning and reporting that must be followed. A Cabinet Report on this subject is being presented in November 2023 concerning the Council's first consideration of action that it can take, which must be completed by the end of 2023, with its first action plan being prepared thereafter.

Review of Grounds Maintenance

The Council is committed to maintaining a high-quality local environment. A review of the Council's current grounds maintenance regimes is currently being planned especially around amenity grass cutting, so that consideration can be given to moving away from a blanket standard of 10-13 cuts per year to a range of different maintenance regimes tailored to be suitable for different areas of grassland to help improve biodiversity and nature recovery. There is a need to widely engage local communities/stakeholders on what these new maintenance regimes should be and which regime should be applied within each local area. This review is likely to commence in 2023/24 and span into 2024/25.

Parks Enhancement Programme and QEII Commemoration Schemes

A major multi-year programme of improvements to parks and country parks is currently being delivered with funding already secured in the Council's MTFP and p-proposals to increase the capital funding available to undertake additional improvements at parks and green spaces will be considered as part of the Council's budget setting process. Many of the current schemes include active involvement from local stakeholders (Friends Groups etc) in scheme development and delivery, with several also including the provision of infrastructure to support school environmental education visits.

Public Conveniences Improvement Programme

The Council is undertaking a multi-year investment programme to improve the standard and quality of its network of public conveniences across the county in recognition of the significant role that public toilets have in safeguarding public health and enabling people to access the local environment and our towns and villages.

Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan

A new PRoW Improvement Plan is being developed, scheduled for completion later in 2023/24. There will be a wide engagement opportunity during the consultation process and the publication of the plan will include communication activity to highlight the extensive PRoW network in the county and our beautiful countryside and natural assets.

Heating

- Work is progressing on the development of District Heat Networks across 8 main towns with approval now given to commence the procurement process to secure technical/legal support to assist in pulling together the procurement of a Heat Provider for the county.
- The 'Warmer Homes' programme is on-going, will provide funding to support a range of energy efficiency/retrofit activity for low-income, low-efficiency private and rented domestic properties. Measures include insulation, solar panels and heat pumps to reduce energy bills and carbon emissions from domestic heating. Two grant funded programmes are being delivered under the Warmer Homes banner covering both on-gas and off-gas properties. In total we hope to have provided measures to some 800 properties across the county by April 2025.
- Since 1st April 2023 the Energy Team have signed ECO4 Flex declarations for 51 Northumberland households. Six more applications have been received

but are still awaiting processing. The measures installed depend on the property but have included air source heat pumps, gas boilers, heating controls, high heat retention electric storage heaters, solar PV, internal wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, flat roof insulation, room in roof insulation, loft insulation and floor insulation. To date these applications have come from nine different TrustMark registered ECO installers but there are a number of other installers who have been in touch recently requesting the application forms and preparing to send Flex referrals through. The council published a new joint Statement of Intent with Newcastle and North Tyneside on 1st September 2023. This means that we can now accept flex applications for the Great British Insulation Scheme as well as ECO4.

Transport

- EV Charge Points – We intend to continue the roll-out of EV Charging Installations and will be submitting funding bids to the Government to support this. Any roll-out will involve opportunities for local members and T&PCs to propose new locations.
- Work is currently progressing on the delivery of Levelling-Up Funded active travel schemes for new pedestrian/cycle routes between Bedlington, Bedlington Station and East Sleekburn and Hexham to Corbridge, Active Travel Fund schemes for Ashington and Blyth and a Transforming Cities Funded scheme for Ponteland to Callerton.
- Local Cycling & Walking Investment Plans (LCWIP) - comprehensive work to identify LCWIP priority routes has been undertaken and is due to be reported through Cabinet imminently and work is progressing to develop proposals, so we have a pipeline of schemes to submit to various funding opportunities.

Energy

- There is on-going collaboration with communities developing renewable energy generation proposals (e.g. Humshaugh/Norham/Holy Island).
- Following the successful delivery of the County Hall solar car port and proof of concept, work is being progressed to investigate the viability of business cases for solar car ports on other Council owned public car parks.

Waste

- A pilot scheme for kerbside glass recycling is being undertaken to help inform the development of a countywide kerbside glass recycling service, the timing for roll-out being subject to Government funding announcements (anticipated to be 2025/26).
- Work to progress the expansion of the range of materials that can be included in household recycling bins to include plastic pots, tubs & trays and tetrapak cartons is being undertaken, the timing for roll-out being subject to Government funding announcements (anticipated to be 2025/26)).
- A pilot scheme for food waste recycling is being undertaken to inform the development of a countywide service, the timing for roll-out plans being subject to Government funding announcements (roll-out anticipated to be April 2026).

- Community reuse/recycling schemes are in place at several locations across the county primarily targeting furniture/bikes.

Sequestration – increase the removal of carbon from the atmosphere through nature-based solutions.

- Great Northumberland Forest (GNF) - is a plan to plant millions of trees across the county, increasing tree cover for the benefit of all. Now into the 2nd year of the programme, as well as facilitating and enabling landowners / managers to access national grants, the programme has secured additional funding to support tree planting at any scale and support Storm Arwen restoration. The GNF is supported by the Northumberland Woodland Creation Partnership which is made up of Northumberland CC, Forestry Commission, Forestry England, Northumberland National Park, Natural England, Environment Agency, Northumbria Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, NFU, CLA, Northumberland Community Action, MoD, DEFRA and CONFOR. Partners have been delivering woodland creation across the county and are keen to do more of various types and sizes – appropriate to the setting (right tree, right place). The GNF team are keen to explore further opportunities around agroforestry, integrating more trees in the farmed landscape where they can provide multiple benefits to the farming business as well as the wider community. The team are also keen to explore additional tree planting opportunities on the council's estate.
- Local Authority Treescape Fund – Fund administered by the Forestry Commission which local authorities can apply for. NCC have been successful in the first two rounds of funding. NCC is looking to build up a number of projects which can seek funding in 2024. The focus of this programme is to increase tree cover in and around communities with both “whips” and “standards” being funded. This is a great opportunity for further engagement – the GNF team have worked on targeted areas where tree cover per head is low. Team capacity has been a limiting factor as in most locations there are further constraints which need consideration, particularly infrastructure, utilities, and future proofing planting locations.
- Peatland Restoration Plans – The Council is part of the Northumberland Peat Partnership which is working to improve the condition of the peat resource across the county. Opportunities are focused primarily on the uplands. Work to date has focused on mapping the current condition of key peatland sites under the Peat Discovery grants. Applications are now being made to multiple fund pots for restoration, including the Countryside Stewardship funds, Peat Recovery grants and peatland code. Funding for the partnership and the team under the Northumbria Wildlife Trust has been provided by the various partners with additional capital coming from Natural England and the Nature for Climate Fund (DEFRA) but more needs to be secured to deliver further works.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are statutory spatial plans to identify priorities for nature recovery introduced under the Environment Act 2021, and all public bodies

have a duty to have regard to them. There will be 48 LNRS across England and the Council is acting as the Responsible Body for the North of Tyne LNRS on behalf of the North of Tyne Combined Authority. Work is starting on the LNRS shortly, following the recent appointment of Responsible Bodies by the SoS and it is anticipated that the first iteration will be completed in about 18 months time.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Mandatory biodiversity net gain is being introduced in November 2023 through an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act, requiring developers to achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity value through the development process. Because it will often be impossible to achieve this on-site, developers will need to find other landowners willing to undertake habitat creation. The Council is making land available at Potland Burn former surface mine so that developers can pay us to create and manage suitable habitats, and we will also review other Council landholdings to identify areas where habitat creation and management could be undertaken, supported by a suitable income stream. This will ensure that the Council's growth agenda is not adversely impacted by developers being unable to secure net gain solutions, as well as funding the Council to undertake work that will assist with nature recovery and carbon sequestration.

Space for Shorebirds

Space for Shorebirds is the Council's coastal mitigation service, which is vital to ensure that the Council's development aspirations can be reconciled with its obligations to conserve nationally and internationally important coastal bird populations and dune grasslands. Space for Shorebirds employs three Wildlife Rangers and is 100% developer-funded. Independent project evaluation has shown strong support for Space for Shorebirds among local communities on the coast and it is held up nationally as an example of good practice.

Assessment of NCC owned woodland estate

Work is underway to assess the condition, function and potential future management of the NCC woodland estate with the aim of increasing the range of ecosystem services they provide including carbon sequestration, public access, enhancing biodiversity and improving air quality. Once this work has been completed it will indicate which woodlands can seek funding from the Forestry Commission to support their future management. We will also take forward opportunities to get local communities involved with woodland management as part of this programme.

Public Health – Adoption of a 'One Health' Approach

One Health is an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes. The One Health approach recognises that the health of people, domestic and wild animals, plants and the wider environment (and ecosystems) are all closely linked and inter-dependent. This approach is critical to addressing health threats in the animal-human-environment interface, such as tackling Avian Flu and the transmission to humans. The areas of work in which a One Health approach is particularly relevant include:

- food safety
- control of zoonotic diseases

- laboratory services
- neglected tropical diseases
- environmental health
- antimicrobial resistance.

All these areas cover complex issues that require close collaboration across sectors, stakeholders and countries. The Council has a key role to play in this area given its specific responsibilities relating to Public Health, Animal Health, Emergency Community Assistance and Civil Contingencies.

5.4 Potential Areas of Additional Environmental Activity

Waste Recycling

The Council intends to enhance its recycling collection services over the period of the MTFP 2024-2027, with the provision of new kerbside collection services for glass and food waste and to increase the range of materials that can be recycled via the existing household recycling bins. The roll-out of these enhanced recycling services, which is dependent upon confirmation of Government 'New Burdens' funding, will deliver a step-change in recycling performance in the county and will include a comprehensive public awareness and communications campaign to support the implementation of the new services.

Green Flag Parks

The Council has already increased the number of parks that hold the prestigious 'Green Flag Award' from just 9 in 2019 to 12 in 2023. This international award from environmental charity, Tidy Britain Group, recognises Northumberland's parks as being some of the very best in the country and is a sign to the public that the space boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. As part of its on-going investment programme to improve and enhance its parks, country parks and green spaces the Council will expand the number of 'Green Flag' parks in the County over the next 4 years.

Designated Bathing Waters

Northumberland has 13 beaches that are designated bathing waters under the 'The Bathing Water Regulations 2013' and as such are subject to regular water quality tests. The bathing beaches are as follows: Amble Links, Bamburgh Castle, Beadnell, Blyth South Beach, Druridge Bay North, Druridge Bay South, Low Newton, Newbiggin North, Newbiggin South, Seahouses North, Seaton Sluice, Spittal, Warkworth. The water quality at these beaches is classified annually based on a rolling average of the monitoring results over a 4 year period, the latest published results are for 2022 and show 11 out of 13 beaches in Northumberland being rated as 'Excellent' the highest classification available, with Beadnell and Newbiggin South both being classified as 'Good'. The Council will work with key stakeholders to improve water quality, so that all its designated bathing waters are consistently being classed as 'Excellent' within the next 4 years.

Highway Verge Maintenance – Conservation Verges

Cutting highway verges is necessary to ensure road safety as well as being part of our highway asset's maintenance needs (stopping encroachment onto/over the carriageway and damage to drainage systems). Whilst we have to prioritise road safety, we recognise the need to adjust our arrangements where safe to do so in order to support habitats and nature recovery and this is an on-going process. The Council will continue to engage in dialogue with town and parish councils as well as other stakeholders to identify areas where alternative verge maintenance arrangements could be considered, particularly for those verges that have been identified as having a high ecological value.

Environmental Education and Awareness

The Council already undertakes work a wide range of activities in schools and supports school visits to learn about nature and to support/develop STEAM education programmes. Going forward we will work more closely with other organisations like Northumberland National Park & Northumbria Wildlife Trust as part of our approach to improving young people's awareness and engagement on environmental matters.

Additional Highway Verge Litter Picking

Most complaints are received early in the spring relating to litter accumulations along highway verges, most notably along the main arterial roads in the county (A1, A19, A189, A1068). For litter picking on the A19 and A1 the Council must secure the agreement of National Highways for the works, as they require lane closures to safeguard the staff involved and can cause significant disruption to the travelling public. For the A189 due to safety issues litter picking is co-ordinated with other highway maintenance activities and undertaken overnight under full road closures with diversions in place. Due to the significant traffic management costs involved in roadside verge litter picking it is undertaken twice per year on the A189/A19 around April/May and August/September. Most of the other main arterial routes, including the A1 are only litter picked once per year in the spring, with some localised reactive litter picking to deal with any highly visible accumulations where required.

The Council is currently developing options to increase roadside litter picking along key routes and/or the creation of a 'litter picking squad' with Traffic Management capacity, that could undertake a rolling programme of litter picking activity, which it intends to consider as part of the MTFP budget setting process.

Flytipping Action Plan

The Council is committed to reducing flytipping incidents through an on-going programme of education and awareness raising activity along with improving the effectiveness of its enforcement activity to hold perpetrators to account for their actions. As part of this programme capital investment is being made to create new communal bin compounds in the Hirst area of Ashington to help improve the arrangements for household waste storage and collection to reduce littering and flytipping and improve the overall quality of the local environment. Funding has also been secured for additional covert CCTV cameras that can be deployed at flytipping hot-spots to assist in identifying and taking enforcement action against offenders. The Council will refresh its flytipping action plan and set challenging targets to reduce the number of flytipping incidents in the county.

Implications

Policy	<p>The proposed Environmental Policy Statement aims to improve the way in which the Council's existing wide range of environmental policy and service activities are communicated and presented to the public to highlight how they are all aligned to maintain, protect or enhance the environment of the county and are essential to support the successful the delivery of the Council's key corporate objectives.</p>
Finance and value for money	<p>This paper does not include any direct financial implications. Proposals for financial investment associated with any of the environmental policy or service activities mentioned in the report will be made directly by the relevant service area as part of their response to the MTFP planning round.</p>
Legal	<p>The commitments made in the Environmental Policy Statement reflect policies and service actions that are already in place or are being progressed by the relevant service areas through the appropriate decision-making processes within the Council.</p>
Procurement	<p>There are no additional direct procurement implications arising from the adoption of the Environmental Policy Statement. However, it should be noted that consideration of our approach to sustainability in procurement is intended to be included in the Council's new climate change action plan 2024-26.</p>
Human Resources	<p>None at this stage.</p>
Property	<p>Improving the sustainability and energy efficiency of Council buildings and making best use of our property assets to support the delivery of Council policy and corporate objectives, including environmental activities such as tree planting, renewable energy generation and improved biodiversity, will require collaboration between property services and the relevant lead service area.</p>
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Whilst this paper does not directly impact issues of equality, the resulting strategic plans and any changes to service delivery arrangements developed to strengthen the Council's work on environmental issues will consider equality throughout and will be subject to EIAs, as appropriate.</p>
Risk Assessment	<p>The Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019 and in July 2023 also declared an Ecological Emergency, as these environmental issues are recognised as key risks to the county's economy and the safety, health and well being of our communities.</p>

Crime Disorder &	The Council recognises the importance of maintaining a high quality local environment and will continue to use its powers to ensure that those responsible for environmental offences, such as littering, dog fouling, fly-tipping etc are held to account for their actions.
Customer Consideration	The Environmental Policy Statement aims to improve the way in which environmental policy and service delivery activity being undertaken by the Council is communicated and presented to the public, to help raise awareness and encourage more active participation in environmental matters.
Carbon reduction	Tackling climate change is one of the Council's key strategic areas of environmental activity and the work being undertaken to develop a new Climate Action Plan 2024-26 is referenced in this report.
Health and Wellbeing	It is recognised that the delivery of environmental policies and service activity also secure important health and well-being benefits, such as reduced fuel poverty, a high-quality local environment, active travel opportunities and improved access to green spaces and the natural world. The policy statement also includes commitments in relation to adopting a 'One-Health' approach that recognises the need for cross-sector collaboration to address the public health threats in the animal-human interface which are arising from a rapidly changing environment.
Wards	All.

Background papers:

1. Corporate Plan

(<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s14485/03.1%20CORPORATE%20PLAN%202023.pdf>)

2. Climate Action Plan

([Climate-change-action-plan-2021-23.pdf](#) (northumberland.gov.uk))

Report sign off.

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

	Full Name of Officer
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Director of Law and Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer	Neil Masson obo Stephen Gerrard
Executive Director of Resources and Transformation (S151 Officer)	Jan Willis
Executive Director of Place and Regeneration	Simon Neilson
Chief Executive	Helen Paterson
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Appendix A

Northumberland County Council's Environmental Policy Statement

Northumberland County Council recognises that maintaining, protecting and enhancing the high-quality environment of the county is essential to support the delivery of its three key corporate priorities of Achieving Value for Money, Tackling Inequality and Driving Economic Growth and that the Council, along with businesses, residents and other stakeholders all have an active role to play. It is our collective aim to ensure we pass on a healthy, clean and sustainable environment to future generations so that Northumberland remains a 'Land of Great Opportunities'.

Our Commitments

In recognition of its environmental responsibilities and duties the County Council makes the following commitments.

Green Governance

- We will make sure that environmental and climate change impacts are identified and fully considered within our decision-making processes, policies, strategies, projects and working practices.
- We will establish clear environmental Key Performance Indicators and targets so that we can regularly monitor and report on our environmental performance and endeavour to seek continuous improvement.

Lead by Example

- We will strive to continuously improve the environmental sustainability of our buildings, services, activities, and practices including our commissioning and procurement processes.
- We will ensure compliance with all environmental consents, regulatory requirements and accreditations.

Tackling Climate Change

- We will maintain our commitment to tackle climate change to achieve our aim of being a Carbon Neutral county by 2030 in relation to Carbon Dioxide emissions. In support of this we will set a new target to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, and agree a new Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 to clearly set out the work that will be undertaken to meet our climate change targets.
- We will also agree a new target to work with Government to achieve net-zero for all greenhouse gases for the county of Northumberland by 2040, a strategy for which will be developed as part of the new Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26.
- We will work with industry bodies, landowners, farmers, and our communities to help in facilitating an economically balanced transition to climate friendly agricultural practices and sustainable food production in our rural county.

Nature Recovery & Biodiversity

- We will take a lead role on work to protect and enhance the natural environment and support improved biodiversity across the county.
- We will review our own land management and grounds maintenance practices to identify opportunities to support nature recovery and biodiversity whilst maintaining an attractive and safe environment.
- We will use the biodiversity planning and reporting requirements introduced through the Environment Act 2021 to develop and drive forward our response to the ecological emergency.

Parks and Green Spaces

- We will ensure our parks and green spaces are well managed and maintained so that they continue to act as vibrant, living spaces that bring communities together and provide opportunities to connect with nature in the heart of our towns and neighbourhoods, so that these spaces remain cherished, accessible places for all to enjoy.

Safeguarding Public Health

- We will adopt a 'One Health' approach and ensure that we communicate and work together across multiple sectors when developing strategies, policies and programmes to address health threats in the animal-human-environment interface which are arising from a changing environment, so that we collectively achieve better public health outcomes.

Waste Management

- We will review and enhance our waste services and support residents and businesses to reduce waste and increase recycling and will work with others to deliver a more circular economy, so that we can better protect our natural resources through the efficient and ongoing reuse of materials.
- We will take effective enforcement action as part of a wider programme of activity to reduce offences such as littering and flytipping, to help safeguard and protect the quality of the local environment.

Heat and Renewable Energy

- We will progress the provision of District Heating schemes in 8 of our main towns to provide access to sustainable, low cost heat for businesses and homes.
- We will continue to support homes to access funding support to make them more energy efficient and to help address fuel poverty.
- We will continue to progress, support and facilitate the decarbonisation of energy and to increase renewable energy generation capacity.

Water Quality

- We will work with others to improve water quality in our rivers and at our beaches to help protect and enhance the natural environment.

Built Environment

- We will use our planning powers and influence to enable well-designed, thriving and truly sustainable towns, places and developments.
- We will listen to communities to prioritise action to tackle harm and blight caused by unauthorised or poorly managed sites and buildings.

Transport and Travel

- We will deliver a step change in sustainable travel across the county, by growing passenger transport and active travel to reduce transport related carbon emissions and improve air quality in our towns and villages. This will include major capital and revenue investment in projects such as the reopening of the Northumberland Railway Line to passenger services, new active travel routes, improvements to bus services, expansion of our network of electric vehicle charging points as well as supporting behaviour change activities.
- We will green our own fleet and seek to reduce the transport impacts of our services and activities through adoption of new ways of working.

Community Engagement

- We will raise awareness and engage with our staff, members, communities, and businesses, providing advice and support to enable and empower local action to maintain, protect and improve our environment and support the delivery of the county's climate change targets.
- We will continue to support and encourage environmental volunteering activity, such as the Coast Care volunteering initiative in the Northumberland Coast AONB, where volunteers can carry out litter picking, habitat management, wildlife surveying and practical conservation/access tasks in and around the AONB.

Appendix B

Key Actions & Targets

Northumberland County Council delivers a broad and diverse range of environmental services from waste recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing to improving public transport, EV-chargers, cycling and walking infrastructure and tackling climate change and loss of biodiversity. The performance of these environmental services is routinely monitored through Key Performance Indicators and Targets as part of normal service management arrangements.

To meet its commitment to 'Green Governance' the Council will ensure it maintains clear environmental Key Performance Indicators and targets to regularly monitor and report on key areas of environmental activity through our Corporate Performance Management arrangements and will endeavour to seek continuous improvement.

Some of the Council's key environmental actions and targets over the next 4 year period from 2023/24 to 2026/27 are highlighted below.

Northumberland County Council will:

- Maintain and improve standards of service delivery and value for money for its key environmental services through its 'BEST' service transformation process.
- Maintain our commitment to tackling climate change and agree and implement a new Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2026.
- Half the Council's carbon footprint by 2025 and make the county carbon neutral by 2030 in relation to carbon dioxide emissions.
- Develop and implement an action plan to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Introduce a new Environment and Climate Change Fund to support community projects that improve the environment and/or help tackle climate change.
- Improve access to high quality parks, country parks and green spaces through the delivery of our Parks Improvement Capital Programme, including the development of new nature trails.
- Increase the number of parks and green spaces in the county that have secured the prestigious 'Green Flag' accreditation from 12 to 14 by the end of 2026/27.
- Increase our household waste recycling rate from 32% to 45% by the end of 2026/27, subject to receipt of Government new burdens funding.
- Reduce the number of flytipping incidents by 5% by the end of 2026/27 (compared to the 2022/23 baseline).
- Continue to support 'Litter Picking Champions' and the development of litter picking groups across the County to undertake community litter picking activity within our towns, villages, parks and green spaces.
- Increase the Council's frequency of litter picking activity along our major roads to improve the cleanliness and visual appearance of these key transport corridors.
- Increase our active travel infrastructure through a programme of provision of new dual use pedestrian and cycle paths along key corridors identified in our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.

- Complete the work to reopen the Northumberland Line to rail passenger services.
- Implement improvements to bus services to increase levels of bus patronage.
- Improve the standards of service and the accessibility of our public toilets and directional signage by delivering our Public Toilets Capital Improvement Programme.
- Continue to work with Town and Parish Councils and other key partners to increase the number of 'conservation verges' that have a high ecological value.
- Work with other agencies and key stakeholders to ensure all our designated bathing waters are consistently classified as having 'excellent' water quality by the end of 2026/27.
- Complete the remediation of the historic pollution at Lynemouth Bay to safeguard the local environment.
- Increase our work in schools to improve knowledge, awareness and young people's active participation in tackling climate change and protecting the environment.

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

TUESDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2023

Building our Data Capability - Data Academy Pilot

Report of Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Responsible Officers: Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education, Jan Willis, Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

1.1 This report is relevant to the “Achieving Value for Money” priority within the NCC Corporate Plan by working better, and more efficiently.

2. Purpose of report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the need to develop our data skills and capabilities and seek approval for the proposed establishment of a ‘Data Academy’ and associated use of unallocated Apprenticeship Levy to fund.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

3.1 Approve the awarding of a pilot programme in data skill apprenticeships to the apprenticeship provider ‘Multiverse’ with a Government Levy spend of £0.6m (excluding VAT).

4. Key Issues

4.1 As set out in our corporate plan, we have committed to:

“Redesign the way our customers access our services to provide a coordinated, consistent and equitable offer of services that makes better use of the data we gather, delivers more pro-active services and makes the best use of digital services” and “Improve how we use data and performance monitoring to inform and plan our services, deliver improved outcomes and ensure continuous improvement.”

4.2 We recently conducted an organisation-wide skills survey to assess our data literacy and maturity. The 504 employee responses illustrated that we don't have the skills to fully use and benefit from the data we hold. The lack of fundamental and advanced skills in working with data means we may be missing opportunities to make better, evidence-based decisions.

Of the 504 respondents, 269 are in data critical roles, and of these 269 employees:

4.2.1 **144 (53.5 %)** stated they had no or only basic skills in working with data or technical professionals.

4.2.2 **118 (43.9 %)** stated they had no or only basic skills in visualising and presenting data.

4.2.3 **127 (47.2 %)** stated they had no or only basic skills in using data to help tell a story (e.g. designing presentations with a narrative using data or linking patterns in data to real-life events, Etc.).

OF THE 269 IDENTIFIED DATA CRITICAL ROLES: % OF RESPONDENTS (EMPLOYEES) IN A DATA CRITICAL ROLE

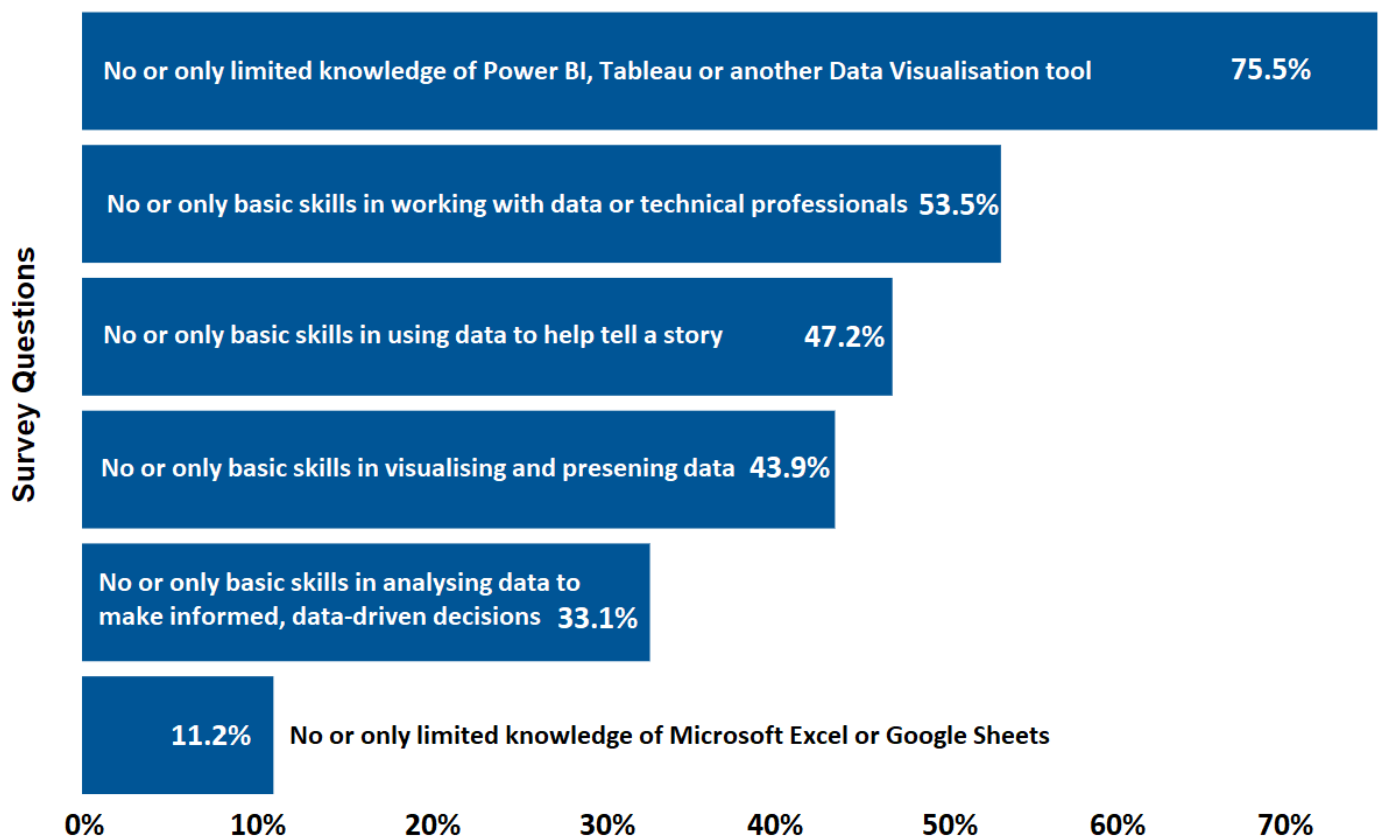


Figure 1. Shows some key indicators on responses relating to employees in 'data critical' roles (269 employees in data critical roles of 504 employee overall responses).

4.3 Data is essential to service delivery and decision making. By harnessing data, we gain insights into community needs, identify emerging trends, and track progress towards goals. Data-driven approaches enhance transparency, accountability, and engagement, as information is readily accessible to residents and stakeholders.

4.4 Through BEST we have developed a draft Data and BI Strategy that sets out 6 key actions. Action 5 is “**Upskilling all levels of staff across the Council in data use and analysis**”

4.5 Through this proposal, we want to ensure that officers have the skills to be able to use data and business intelligence to make evidence-based decisions.

4.6 Where are we now?

4.6.1 Inconsistent data literacy across the Council

4.6.2 Data quality gaps across the Council, impacting downstream data analysis and performance reporting

4.6.3 Council data skills are largely analysis and modelling rather than infrastructure and governance

4.7 Where do we want to be?

4.7.1 Basic data skills and self-service dashboards enable everyone to use data in their jobs.

4.7.2 Move away from repetitive, low-skilled data work

4.7.3 Upskill all staff to use data for better decision-making

4.7.4 professionals are skilled, strategic, able to influence decision making and flex to organisational need

4.7.5 Advanced data skills (data science, data engineering) are available to teams that need them

4.7.6 We resource and organise data skills fluidly, efficiently, across the council.

4.7.7 Time is allocated for continuous learning and improvement

5. Background

5.1 Understanding our needs

After an in-depth consultation with Multiverse which entailed a data maturity assessment completed by over 500 members of staff and over 40 interviews with senior stakeholders across all directorates, Multiverse reported their findings to the BEST Working Board on 5th May 2023. The recommended proposal following this work was a £3.07m three-year investment, funded by our Government Levy, into the training and development of 240 employees across the Council through data focused apprenticeships. This proposal would utilise a large proportion of our apprenticeship levy, making it unavailable to fulfil other service needs beyond data maturity. It is therefore recommended that we first conduct a pilot to understand the benefits of a ‘Data Academy’. Our ambition to provide best value for money will require this pilot to determine the true benefits (both financial and non-financial) to validate NCC’s future decision making when investing in data related skills.

5.2 Potential Benefits

5.2.1 Cost and time savings as a result of improved data literacy (& maturity) through understanding more about data and best practice.

5.2.2 Upskilling of workforce in data to make better decisions

5.2.3 Mature the council’s management, use and visualisation of data

5.2.4 Retaining talent through provision of career development

5.3 Proposed pilot

Through the proposed pilot, we will engage with Multiverse to deliver training to 50 employees on a level three programme through one cohort. We will use the pilot to

determine the viability of potentially establishing a larger scale 'Data Academy' in the future.

5.4 The table below shows an indicative timeline of the pilot.

Pilot Activity	Timeline
Select & Onboard Employees for Level 3 Data Literacy Course	OCTOBER 2023
Pilot Cohort Start	NOVEMBER 2023
Third Month Review of NCC Cohort	FEBRUARY 2024
Assessment of pilot outcomes and viability of 'Data Academy' ambition	MARCH 2024

5.5 The pilot will consist of one cohort of 50 employees from Northumberland County Council. The duration will be determined by a three-month review where the cohort will be partially through the thirteen-month long programme.

5.6 Candidate Selection

Candidates will be selected based upon those deemed suitable from the skills survey.

Candidates will also need to satisfy additional criteria, including:

5.6.1 Government eligibility criteria;

5.6.1.1 Currently NOT studying

5.6.1.2 UK Resident (3 years)

5.6.2 Management approval for commitment to 20% off the job training.

5.6.3 Maths and English GCSE (or equivalent) at grade 4/C (or equivalent) or above

5.7 Pilot Success Criteria

To help assess the success of the pilot, we will measure and assess the following:

5.7.1 Feedback from pilot cohort – has the training helped them perform their role better

5.7.2 Feedback from Management (of staff who are enrolled in cohort)

5.7.3 Cohort performance

5.7.4 Cohort attendance

5.8 Apprenticeship Levy

The apprenticeship levy is a UK government policy introduced in April 2017 that requires large employers with an annual payroll exceeding £3 million to invest in apprenticeship training. These employers are required to contribute a percentage of their payroll costs to a dedicated fund, which they can then use to fund apprenticeship programs within their organizations. The goal of the levy is to encourage businesses to create more apprenticeship opportunities and develop a skilled workforce, thereby boosting economic growth and addressing skills gaps in various industries.

5.9 Northumberland County Council contributes to the levy each year, in the past 12 months a contribution of £1,244,998.41 has been made (August 2022 to July 2023). Of this, amount £912,001.32 has been spent in the last 12 months.

5.10 Data and Business Intelligence (BI) Strategy

In February 2023 a 'Data and Business Intelligence' strategy was formulated via paid services to TPXIMPACT which produced a single document draft for the council's approach to data. This was created through a series of workshops, interviews, and other engagement activities across Northumberland County Council. The document highlights a number of organisational challenges and detailed insights that will positively impact Northumberland County Council (NCC). One of these insights detailed the requirement to focus on data upskilling across the council for those who use data in their day-to-day roles. This includes the opportunity to positively impact the council's overall data maturity and addressing insight raised through actioning the strategy.

5.11 Multiverse

Multiverse is an Ofsted 'outstanding' rated apprenticeship provider. They have extensive experience delivering data apprenticeships to other councils and have worked with Hackney Council, Waltham Forest Council, City of Westminster Council, Barnet Council, Haringey Council, Liverpool Council, Oldham Council, and Norfolk Council. In addition, Multiverse work with other government departments including Northumbria Healthcare Service (NHS) England, Ministry of Defence (MoD), Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and the Metropolitan Police.

5.12 Given the existing support and relationship with Multiverse and their accreditation, this will contribute to allowing us to progress the proposed pilot at pace and allow employees to access learning quicker.

6. Implications

Policy	
Finance and value for money	This proposal outlines the use of otherwise unused apprenticeship levy. the pilot programme alone estimated at £1.3m ROI from an initial £0.6m investment. The pilot specifically provides an opportunity to build on our existing data & digital capabilities that empower our employees to ultimately improve how we process and understand data and technology and seek out efficiencies. This is expected to have a positive impact on new and existing processes that link to services that our residents and businesses utilise whilst also investing in our staff and organisation transformation.
Legal	Master Service Agreement signature required (Legal Officers have reviewed and agreed this can be signed)
Procurement	Procurement have been consulted throughout the engagement with Multiverse. Direct award from Framework - YORKSHIRE PURCHASING ORGANISATION - YPO Apprenticeships and Associated Training - 1086 YPO has developed a new iteration of the successful long-standing apprenticeships and associated training framework

	<p>that has been running since 2018. This has been developed and improvements made to support the needs of the public sector when procuring apprenticeship standards, end point assessment and associated training in a variety of ways.</p> <p>Contracting authorities can carry out a direct award or further competition through the framework.</p> <p>Benefits of using this framework include:</p> <p>Access to an established marketplace Simplified procurement process and reduced costs Compliance Contract Stability Access to expertise and support from Framework provider</p> <p>Direct award is available as a compliant call off from this framework. It will allow us to build upon the work and relationship that has already developed with Multiverse. It will contribute to an expedited procurement process, allowing cohorts of employees to access learning quicker.</p>
Human Resources	The proposal would have a positive affect on staff, creating development opportunities
Property	n/a
Equalities	Impact Assessment Attached Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Risk Assessment	n/a
Crime & Disorder	Improved skills and capability in the use of data may allow us to better understand crime and disorder, helping us to make better decisions to tackle crime and disorder.
Customer Consideration	Improved skills and capability in the use of data may allow us to better understand our customers, helping us to design better services and make better decisions based on data
Carbon reduction	Improved skills and capability in the use of data may allow us to better understand how we can further impact change to help achieve our goal of net zero
Health and Wellbeing	Better use of data may help us to make better decisions and have a greater impact on the health and wellbeing of our residents and staff.
Wards	ALL

7. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 October 2023

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

Report of Councillor(s) Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Responsible Officer(s): Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The Council's Capital Programme is consistent with all of the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2023-2026, being 'Achieving Value for Money', 'Tackling Inequalities' and 'Driving Economic Growth'.

2. Purpose of report

This report summarises proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the Capital Strategy Group.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

3.2 Ponteland to Callerton Phase 2

- a) Approve the revised phase 2 approach and approve the additional funds of £0.518 million to deliver phase 2 and progress to scheme completion.
- b) Approve the inclusion of £0.518 million to the Capital Programme in 2023-24.

4. Background

4.1 This paper summarises reports considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group on the allocation of funding within the Medium-Term Financial Plan to specific projects. The amendments to the Programme were considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group (CSG) on 29 August 2023.

Summary of New Capital Proposals Considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group on 29 August 2023

5. Ponteland to Callerton Phase 2

- 5.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.518 million to adopt a phased approach to the Ponteland to Callerton Parkway capital project so that part of the project could be delivered whilst funding was sought and agreed to complete the entirety of the works. This spend is externally funded by Transport North East.

Background

- 5.2 The Council has developed an infrastructure scheme to create a cycling and walking corridor between the town of Ponteland and Callerton Parkway. This will provide direct links into Newcastle International Airport and the Tyne & Wear Metro. The corridor will enhance sustainable travel options for residents, workers, learners and visitors, not just between Ponteland and Callerton Parkway, but providing further connectivity within the region.
- 5.3 The scheme is being delivered through the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) Tranche 2 programme of schemes outlined by Transport North East (TNE), with investment provided by the Department for Transport (DfT). The scheme will be delivered by the end of March 2024.
- 5.4 The scheme was originally pursued as a single-phase project, however with rising costs this has evolved and now takes a 2-phase approach. A phased approach was deemed the most appropriate way forward to ensure at least part of the project could be delivered, whilst funding was sought and agreed to complete the entirety of the works. The phasing solution and associated required funding was presented to the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) in July 2023. JTC approved the revised approach and request for additional funds. On this basis a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) has been prepared which will ensure the full scheme can be delivered.
- 5.5 Phase 1 comprises the section Callerton Lane, Ponteland to Rotary Way – which is currently being delivered on site, and the details can be found in the Ponteland to Callerton Full Business Case (March 2023). Phase 2 comprises the section from Rotary Way to Prestwick Road roundabout – which forms the basis of the Full Business Case (FBC) amendment.
- 5.6 The strategic objectives for the scheme are to:
- a) Improve connectivity – provide a high-quality, sustainable cycling and walking corridor between Ponteland and Callerton. It will enable a direct link to the Tyne & Wear Metro and tap into the facilities offered by the new Metro fleet, to enable onward journeys by foot or bicycle. It will facilitate better access to urban employment and educational opportunities by non-car modes of transport;
 - b) Improved modal choice – provide more sustainable transport options for residents and visitors and reduce the amount of short car journeys in and around Ponteland. Through the removal of some car journeys, this will also help reduce local congestion, improve roadside air quality, and contribute towards Net Zero carbon reduction targets;

- c) Improve health and wellbeing – provide the walking and cycling infrastructure that encourages active travel for commuting, leisure and other purposes, and contributes towards a healthier and more physically active local population; and
- d) Improve safety – for cyclists and pedestrians between Ponteland and Callerton through modern design standards of cycleway infrastructure. This will reduce the risk of accidents and injuries between cyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles on the highway.

5.7 The key milestones for the delivery are set out below:

- a) Phase 1 construction end 29 September 2023
- b) Phase 2 construction start 30 October 2023 (phase 2 early mobilisation may commence earlier if achievable)
- c) Phase 2 construction end 12 March 2024

5.8 The overall funding breakdown for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 is set out below with total scheme costs shown:

PONTELAND TO CALLERTON				
	Phase 1 £ million	NCC local contribution £ million	Phase 2 £ million	Total £ million
Initial costs	0.816	0.050	-	0.866
GFA TNE ask / agreement	0.816	0.050	0.518	1.384
Revised costs/spend	0.516	0.050	0.806	1.372

5.9 There is a difference of £0.012 million between the ask and the expected total spend.

5.10 Due to the timeframes for scheme completion, all of the funds will be spent within the financial year 2023-24.

5.11 All maintenance obligations and associated costs will fall under the purview of the Council and, as such, will be fulfilled as part of the maintenance regime operated by the council.

5.12 A quantified risk assessment is used to capture, monitor and manage risks for the overall scheme. Key risks for Phase 2 include potential remobilisation costs if construction doesn't align with Phase 1 completion and approval to spend additional funds. A 10% uplift of construction costs has also been added as a risk item.

6. Implications

Policy	The schemes identified in the report support all of the priorities within the Corporate Plan 2023-26.
Finance and value for money	The report outlines proposed project allocations and amendments to the approved Capital programme 2023-24 and 2024-25. The financial implications of these proposals are outlined in the main body of the report. The projects and the proposals identified in the report will be funded from external funding
Legal	Subject to any contractual implications arising from the receipt of grant funding, there are no direct legal implications. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council
Procurement	Procurement will follow the Council's standard procedures and financial rules. The Corporate Procurement team will be consulted as appropriate.
Human resources	Not applicable
Property	Not applicable
Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point EIA is not applicable to the subject of this report.
Risk assessment	The risks associated with the proposals are regarded as acceptable, but these risks will continue to be reviewed up to and during implementation of the proposals.
Crime and disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
Customer considerations	The proposals will carefully consider the impact upon both customers and residents of Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	Carbon Reduction measures have been considered within the proposals.
Health and wellbeing	The Council's Capital budget is founded on the principle of promotion inclusivity.
Wards	(All Wards);

7. Background papers

Not applicable

8. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable

9. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland County Council

COMMITTEE: CABINET

DATE: 10TH OCTOBER 2023

Corporate Performance – Quarter 4 2022/23 Outturn Report

Report of: Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Responsible Officer: Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive

1. Purpose of report

1.1 This report provides a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 4, 2022/23 (Q4).

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report.
- (ii) Agree to progress against the three Corporate Priorities at end of Quarter 4, 2022/23 being reported to Full Council at its November meeting.

Link to Corporate Plan

- **Achieving Value for Money** – The Council aims for continuous improvement and innovation in all its services to residents. This is underpinned by a clear understanding of the direction of travel for service performance.
- **Tackling Inequalities** – Everything the Council does across its services can make a positive impact on tackling inequalities therefore it is important to track performance and understand which key performance indicators (KPIs) relate to tackling inequalities outcomes.
- **Driving Economic Growth** – The Council's KPIs set out measures of economic growth.

3. Key issues

3.1. Performance reporting to Cabinet and other committees provides a valuable opportunity for Members to consider and comment on the performance of services across the Council, with a particular focus on progress against the three Corporate Plan priorities. This strengthens accountability between key decisions, allocation of resources, service outputs and the overall achievement of the three priorities of the Council.

4. Background

- 4.1. The Council adopted the Corporate Plan at its Annual General Meeting on 17th May 2023. The Plan establishes three priorities for the Council, underpinned by our approach to tackling Climate Change. The Annual Council Achievements Report (reported to Council in March 2023) sets out overall progress against the three priorities, alongside Annual Cabinet Member reports which provide an opportunity for Members to look further into the work of portfolios.
- 4.2. Following last year's Independent Governance Review report, the following actions are being taken to strengthen performance monitoring and reporting:
 - Performance measures are being aligned to the Council's three priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan; and,
 - A Planning, Performance and Accountability Framework is being developed to support the integration between areas including Corporate Performance, Appraisals, the Corporate Plan and financial reporting.
- 4.3. This is a 'transitional' outturn report. It takes the old way of reporting quarterly monitoring (based on the old service structure) and presents key measures of success through the 'lens' of the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities. During 2022/23, the Council reviewed and updated its Corporate Plan. The agreement of the Corporate Plan by Council in May this year coincided with the end of quarter 4 (Q4) of the Council's performance monitoring cycle. This provides an opportunity to refresh the Council's Performance Outturn report so that it is focused on measuring progress against our three Corporate Plan priorities. This report also helps us to focus discussion with Members on measures of progress for our Corporate Plan priorities.
- 4.4. We propose an updated approach to Corporate Plan performance reporting as follows:
 - Regular directorate briefings with Cabinet Members;
 - Executive Management Team;
 - Strategic Leadership Team;
 - Cabinet;
 - Scrutiny Chairs and Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and,
 - A quarter 4, outturn report to Full Council in the summer period.
 -

5. Delivering our Priorities

- 5.1. The following sections set out performance summaries for each of the three Corporate Plan priorities for 2022/23. These summaries highlight key points on performance, both positive and including where targets have been missed at the end of Quarter four for 2022/23.
- 5.2. It is important to remember that many of our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are influenced by a range of external factors. For example, economic measures are a function of global issues beyond the control of our Economy and Regeneration Service. Equally, Looked After Children rates are impacted by a range of complex and long-term societal factors. Recovery from Covid continues to be an issue in some areas of service performance.

5.3. For other targets, in-year shifts in social and economic factors can create spikes in demand for certain services which may not have been anticipated when targets were set at the start of the year. It is important that performance against targets is seen in this wider context.

6. Our Corporate Plan Vision:

6.1. *Northumberland: Land of Great Opportunities. With world-class facilities to stunning landscapes, spectacular castles, picturesque coastal and market towns, we believe there's no better place to live and work. Our economy boasts a growing, internationally-recognised offshore and renewable energy hub delivering clean and green growth. And, we have a strong manufacturing base, including in pharmaceuticals and life sciences. We are the largest and least densely populated local authority area in England. That makes for lots of communities with distinctive characteristics, heritage, functions and needs. We aim to build on all these strengths to ensure the county continues to be a land of great opportunities for current and future generations. To achieve this, Members and Council staff are focused on working together to deliver our three priorities:*

- (i) Achieving Value for Money;*
- (ii) Tackling Inequalities; and,*
- (iii) Driving Economic Growth.*

7. Value for Money Priority

7.1. We recognise we are funded by residents and businesses and are accountable to them for our spending decisions and the quality of services we deliver. We must ensure we are delivering Best Value through efficient, effective and accessible services that respond to and meet the needs and expectations of our residents. And, as one of the largest employers in the county, we can become a leading example for residents, communities and businesses on carbon neutral approaches.

Outcome (i):

7.2. **Residents receive the best customer experience** - doing the best for residents drives all of our work. We want residents to know that when they are dealing with us they can expect the best customer service every time and trust we are providing them with the best service possible.

Impacts:

7.3. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Improved resident satisfaction in Council Services;
- Residents choose to transact with us digitally;
- Residents feel delighted and empowered when using digital services;
- Residents receive consistent and timely responses from all our services;
- We look for opportunities to make a difference to customers and residents' lives at every interaction;
- Residents are able to access our services in the right way for them at the right time for their needs.

Progress:

7.4. We know residents value being able to contact the Council quickly and conveniently to pay bills, ask questions, access services and resolve issues. Our Customer Services are getting more responsive. Last year we delivered impressive performance with the ‘% of calls answered’, achieving an average of 92% for the year. Even better, for ‘average time to answer calls’, the Team achieved an average for the year of 136 seconds. This is a big improvement and includes a strong 4th quarter where the average was 74 seconds. The Team continues to focus on enabling as many enquiries as possible to be answered at first point of contact from the customer, using performance monitoring data to drive improvement.

Focus on improvement:

7.5. For ‘complaints answered within timescale (%)’, despite stronger second, third and fourth quarters, the Council missed its own demanding target of 100%. It should be noted that cases where an extension to the timescales has been authorised are not included. The Team is using complaint data to drive innovation and improvement.

Further development of measures

7.6. Whilst the Council continues to ensure residents can call us and interact face-to-face, we are increasingly encouraging customers to use digital channels as these are more effective and efficient. In future reporting under this outcome, we propose to develop measures which show the shift of residents to digital channels as well as the effectiveness of digital contacts.

7.7. We are also reviewing the complaint measures so these better represent shifts in how we engage and learn from what we are being told. In future, we will also use new Resident Survey data to measure perceptions, including: resident satisfaction with access to Council services; and, overall satisfaction with the Council.

Residents receive the best customer experience – summary of outturn 2022/23

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	EOY 22/23
1	Complaints answered within timescale (%)	100	72.9	63.3	70.68	74.2	70.8	69.3
2	% calls answered	90	84	86.2	93.5	97.2	93.4	92
3	Average time to answer calls (seconds)	180	215	292	121	46	74	136

Outcome (ii):

7.8. **We make the best spending decisions** - we are responsible for providing a vast array of different services to local communities, residents and businesses. To provide best value it's essential we maximise our spending power, make good decisions that create the best impact for our residents and better align our spend to the outcomes we want to achieve.

Impacts:

7.9. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- We use transparent, accurate, and accessible data to improve how we work together, putting the needs and aspirations of Northumberland at the heart of our decision-making;
- Individuals, communities, and Members are involved in designing and delivering services;
- Increased value from our spending decisions;
- Achieve savings through economies of scale, leveraging the Council's combined purchasing power; and,
- Performance is managed better.

Progress:

7.10. The Council's year-end financial position improved markedly from a forecast overspend of £4.784m in Q3 to an underspend of £5.833m for the 2022-23 financial year. This reflected swift and sensible budget management actions taken in-year across the Council.

7.11. Also, it benefits Northumberland's economy when the Council spends more of its money on locally supplied goods and services. That's why we are pleased the Procurement Team has seen improvement in the number of local suppliers (no annual targets were set for this measure). It's also important for small and medium business that orders and payments are processed efficiently when they supply the Council and, we are pleased to report the target for 'requisitions processed within three days' was achieved.

Focus on improvement:

7.12. Whilst our direction of travel on measures of working with local suppliers is broadly positive, we will work on developing targets for these and continue to grow the value of local suppliers within the relevant legal and procurement frameworks.

Further development of measures

7.13. In future, we will also use new Resident Survey data to measure perceptions including: whether residents agree the council provides value for money; and, residents views on whether they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

We make the best spending decisions – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Local Suppliers (Number)	-	5,599	1,564	1,506	1,361	1,402	5,833
2	Value of Local Suppliers (£)	-	£364.89m,	£80.7m	£79.7m	£72.7m	£92.3m	£325.3m
3	Suppliers trading with Council who are local (%)	-	41.5	42.1	44	40	38	41
4	Requisition Processed within 3 days (%)	80	99	98.5	99	97	97	98

Outcome (iii):

7.14. **Working better, more efficiently** - we are a large and complex organisation with over 5,000 staff working hard to achieve the best outcomes for residents. Our services currently have a significant operational footprint with over 300 properties used to deliver our services. To achieve Best Value, it's essential we have the right structures in place to enable both our people and other assets to have the greatest impact. For our staff, this means the best operating structures and models to enable effective delivery and provide good career development opportunities. It also means establishing a workplace culture focused on learning and continuous improvement. For our property assets it means making best use of our land and buildings by maximising their impact and running them efficiently to deliver our operational objectives.

Impacts:

7.15. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Staff are empowered and supported to do the best work they can for our residents and develop and grow in their careers with us;
- Streamlined administrative functions enable us to operate effectively;
- Land and buildings are used effectively to maximise impact in improving outcomes for our residents;
- Our land and buildings are well maintained and safe for our residents, service users and staff;

- Our estate is smaller, more sustainable, effectively managed, efficiently run and used creatively to maximise impact; and,
- Our estate is fit for purpose to deliver inclusive, quality services, achieve Council priorities and improve outcomes for residents.

Progress:

7.16. We are proud to be an organisation that invests in apprenticeships, giving people the opportunity to begin their careers with us and to learn and grow here. That’s why we are pleased to report we have significantly exceeded the % of the workforce who are apprentices as well as impressive levels of ‘mandatory training’ being completed by staff. This tells us our courses are fit for purpose as are the processes for encouraging and requiring uptake of training.

7.17. Our measures for property management also continue to perform well. We continue to complete all fire risk audits on target and critical statutory tests for property have been completed within the required timescales.

7.18. Our performance also shows we are also effective in collecting Council Tax which enables us to provide service to all our residents. For ‘% National Non-Domestic Rates collected’ we missed our collection target. Performance at the end of Q4 was lower than in 2021/22 due to the ongoing recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact on collection and enforcement.

Focus on improvement:

7.19. In ‘days lost to sickness’ we missed the target of 7.5 days per ‘full time equivalent’ (FTE). To address this, services are scrutinising data and undertaking a focused approach to reducing absence.

Further development of measures

7.20. In future, we are looking to develop more measures for this outcome including: the percentage of staff saying they are proud to work for NCC (Staff Survey); staff retention rates; and measures for how effectively we manage our property estate.

Working better, more efficiently – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 23/23 (EOY)
1	% of the workforce who are apprentices(Annual)	2.3	2.5	-	-	-	4.1
2	Days lost to sickness (# per FTE / annum)	7.5	10	10.9	11.4	11.3	11.4
3	Mandatory Training completed (%)	85	91.8	83	88.2	88.2	91.5
4	Corporate Landlord Compliance (%)	98	100	100	100	100	100

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 23/23 (EOY)
5	Property statutory tests completed on time (%)	92	97.3	94.2	94.2	96.7	98.1
6	Council Tax - arrears retrieved (£m)	4.3	5	2	2.5	3.4	4.3
7	% of Council Tax collected	96.6	97	28.2	55.1	82	97.3
8	% National Non-Domestic Rates collected	98.3	96	28	53.8	77.3	94.9

Outcome (iv):

7.21. **Making a difference with digital** - digital technology enables us to work better and has the power to delight residents when it works effectively. Currently, we have a range of systems and platforms across our services which are not fully joined up. To provide Best Value we want to make a difference with digital by enabling quicker access to better data and many more automated processes for our workforce, partners and residents. By strengthening skills, we can develop our own sustainable solutions and ensure our staff have tools and systems to make a difference in everything they do.

Impacts:

7.22. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Staff have reliable, secure IT hardware and software enabling them to deliver the best services to our customers;
- Residents choose to transact with us digitally (and they have digital access) because of the systems we create; and,
- With reduced system failures our services are more reliable.

Progress:

7.23. We are pleased we met our targets on “Availability of Superfast broadband (%)”, ‘Take up of Superfast broadband (%)’ and, were within tolerance with our performance on ‘Service Desk calls resolved within Service Level Agreement (%)’. This is positive as it shows we are giving our own staff the IT support they need to deliver great services and, at the same time, we are supporting the availability of broadband so our residents can access digital services and opportunities.

Further development of measures

7.24. In future, we are looking to use new measures for this outcome including: the shift in customers to digital contact (as an alternative to telephone and face-to-face); and, new Resident Survey data on the percentage of residents using Council services digitally.

Making a difference with digital – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	94.6	95.1	95.4	95.4	95.63	95.63
2	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	80.1	80.1	79.8	79.1	79.1	79.1
3	Service Desk calls resolved within SLA (%)	96.5	95.4	94.1	95.4	95.7	96.6	95.4

8. Tackling Inequalities

1.1. We want to ensure people have fair access to the building blocks of a good life such as a decent income, a good-quality job, safe, affordable and warm housing as well as good quality education and training opportunities. By tackling inequalities, we want to reduce the gap in experiences our residents have across health, education, employment and social outcomes.

Outcome (i):

8.1. **Empowered and resilient communities** - our residents are our greatest asset. They are more than customers or service users. Our communities are full of potential. Everybody has their gifts, skills and passions that can make their communities stronger. Whilst good quality services and institutions are important, they cannot alone bring about the change in our neighbourhoods, villages, high streets and towns that our residents deserve. Community development, based on the assets that are in neighbourhoods, will help us to value, discover, connect and mobilise communities. We call this Asset Based Community Development. This is about encouraging and supporting people to get actively involved in their communities, shaping and even leading local initiatives and looking after each other.

Impacts:

8.2. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Communities are more resilient, connected and act together to improve their area;
Residents will know what assets there are in their area and where to go if they need support; and,
- Shift in culture within the Council - we will have a workforce who are skilled and competent in applying an 'asset-based community development' approach in

their day-to-day practice and fully appreciate the four domains of inequalities in all they do (protected characteristics, geographical, socio economic and inclusion groups).

Progress:

8.3. The impressive number of referrals made to Communities Together, which outperformed the target by more than 9,000 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£4.8m at year-end) underlines the Council’s firm commitment to support community resilience through challenging times. Beyond direct support to households, the Council is also helping voluntary and community organisations to lead positive change in communities – last year the Council’s Communities Together Team awarded over £600k to VCSE groups.

Focus on improvement:

8.4. Building on the impressive performance from our Communities Together Team, the Council is committed, through its Inequalities Plan, to continuing to build community resilience.

Further development of measures

8.5. We propose to use new data from our Residents Survey to measure progress on this outcome, including: whether residents believe they can influence decisions affecting their local area; and, levels of resident satisfaction with their local area.

Empowered and resilient communities – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23 (EOY)
1	Number of referrals in to NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	2,258	3,349	3,044	3,182	11,833
2	Grant funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£1,800,521	£659,453	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£4,798,710
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	15,693	20,293	21,609	35,254	92,849
4	Number of Grants Awarded to Voluntary and Community organisations (#)	tbc	16	21	5	15	57
5	Total amount of funding provided to VCSE organisations (£)	tbc	£140,828	£202,500	£65,600	£200,000	£608,928

Outcome (ii):

- 8.6. **Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well** - inequalities in the early years can have lifelong impacts on the development of physical and emotional health, language and social skills. They affect readiness for school, education, training, skills, employment and healthy relationships. Not everyone has the same access to things which children and young people need to be healthy, thrive and feel safe. We will work with partners and families – including children, young people and their families - to develop the services used by everyone as well services for those that need more intensive support.
- 8.7. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:
- More of our children, young people and families will reach their potential regardless of their circumstances;
 - Northumberland will be a place where our young people feel a sense of belonging and are safe and connected;
 - Children and young people will have equity in access to affordable, healthy food to maximise the opportunity of having a healthy weight;
 - Children and young people with additional needs receive the right support at the right time;
 - Children and young people will have equity in access to an environment that encourages physical activity and active travel; and,
 - More of our children will have good mental health and wellbeing.

Progress:

- 8.8. We are delighted to see more children and young people attending good or outstanding primary schools. This continues the improving trend over the last 2 years. The figure of 94% is 4% better than the national average. The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes are the highest the county has seen.
- 8.9. For 'pupils in good / outstanding secondary schools' - we have seen a much-improved picture over the past year. Northumberland's latest figure of 84% means that 21% more learners are in 'good' or better schools compared to 2017. Inspection outcomes are currently 2% above the national average.
- 8.10. For '16-17-year-old NEETs or not known' - the figure of 4.9% is an improvement on the position in March 2022 of 5.5%. Broken down, there were 4.4% NEET and 0.5% Not Known. The combined figure of 4.9% is almost the same as the latest national average for March 2023 (4.8%).
- 8.11. We are also pleased to see a positive trend on measures of children's development, including: breast feeding prevalence; height and weight recorded Year-6 (%); reception age and year-6 obesity rates. These positive trends are testament to the hard work of our Public Health professionals working closely with partners and communities across the county.

Focus on improvement:

- 8.12. 'For Key Stage 4 Attainment' - we were pleased external examinations returned in 2022 for the first time since 2019. Teacher and centre assessed grades were used

during the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall roughly halfway between 2019 and 2021. This data needs to be understood within the context of a disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different students and schools. Pre-pandemic Attainment 8 scores in Northumberland were improving more quickly than nationally.

Further development of measures

8.13. We will continue to develop new and better ways to measure how we are progressing on tackling inequalities, including through new questions in our Residents Survey.

Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Pupils with good level of development at age 5 (%) Annual *	72	74.8	-	67.5	-	-	67.5
2	KS4 – average Attainment 8 score (%) Annual *	44.7	46.7	-	46.6	-	-	46.6
3	KS4 - average Progress 8 score (%) Annual *	-0.15	-0.03	-	-0.23	-	-	-0.23
4	Pupils in good/ outstanding Primary schools (%)	89	87.5	87.4	87.9	88.3	94.2	94.2
5	Pupils in good/ outstanding Secondary schools (%)	75	68.2	73.0	68.9	79.2	84.0	84.0
6	16-17 yr-olds NEET or Not Known (%)	5.3	5.5	4.9	5.0	5.5	4.9	4.9
7	Women not smoking at time of delivery (%)	88	88.4	88.2	88.6	91.8 (Q3 latest data)	-	-
8	Breast feeding prevalence (%)	38	41	38.1	36.3	41.4	42.5	42.5
9	Height and weight recorded Year 6 (%) Annual	95	-	-	-	97.6	-	97.6
10	Reception age obesity (%) Annual	10	13.9 (20/21 data as no 21/22 outturn)	-	-	9.2	-	9.2
11	Year 6 obesity (%) Annual	21	24.7	-	-	21.8	-	21.8

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
			(20/21 data as no 21/22 outturn)					

Outcome (iii):

- 8.14. **All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability** - everyone should have the opportunity to have a good life and play a part in creating strong communities. Residents in the county’s most deprived communities have an average life expectancy of 75 years compared to 87 years in the least deprived. Around 25% of our residents are aged over 65 years and projections show there is also likely to be a significant acceleration in the ageing of Northumberland's population profile. We must support people to live healthier lives and provide good quality, equitable services for those who need extra support to maintain health, wellbeing and independence.
- 8.15. The Council has a responsibility to ensure Northumberland is a good place to live for people who have a disability or long-term illness, including conditions associated with older age, and both physical and mental issues. Across our services, we look for ways to help people to remain independent and live in the way they want to, whatever their disability or condition. Nobody should have to depend on care and support services if better-designed community facilities would have made that unnecessary. When people do need care and support, it should be easy to access and arranged in a way which keeps them in control of their own lives.
- 8.16. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:
- The healthier choice will be the easiest choice;
 - More of our workforce will be maximising contacts with residents to improve wellbeing;
 - Residents stay healthier for longer;
 - Residents are well connected in the community;
 - Residents live independently for longer;
 - Our residents will be more active; and,
 - Residents have choice and control over the way their services are received.

Progress:

8.17. We are proud of the strong performance in the measures for this outcome which are the result of hard work across teams in Adults Services and Public Health, working closely with external providers and partners. These positive trends demonstrate our commitment to supporting healthier and more independent lives for our adults.

Focus on improvement:

8.18. There were 140 permanent care home admissions (65+) in Q4 which pushed this KPI into 'Amber'. This increase was anticipated due to the current pressures in the

domiciliary care market where Members will be aware there is increasing difficulty commissioning and providing domiciliary care countywide. This has led to a slightly higher than normal number of admissions to care homes than would have been expected.

- 8.19. For 'Successful treatments - alcohol (%)' – whilst the target was missed, performance is improving. The service works with some of our most disadvantaged residents and continues to experience very high demand for alcohol treatment. Public Health continues to work closely with the service to identify ways of improving performance while ensuring patient safety and addressing inequality.

Further development of measures

- 8.20. We will continue to develop new and better ways to measure how we are progressing on tackling inequalities, including through new questions in our Residents Survey.

All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Social Care related quality of life (score out of 24)	19.1	19.4	-	-	-	19.7
2	Care plans reviewed annually (%)	98.5	97.1	96.1	94.8	94.2	94.6
3	Effectiveness of Reablement/Rehabilitation (%)	88	84.6	88.7	91.0	92.1	90.8
4	Providers rated by CQC as outstanding or good (%)	84.3	86.3	84.9	83.6	84.8	88.2
5	Indicative personal budget (%)	95	96.1	91.8	92.1	92.1	94.1
6	Adults with learning disabilities living at home/with family (%)	83	86.1	84.8	84.7	84.9	86.1
7	Admissions to residential/nursing 18-64 (per 100k population)	12.5	10.9	11.4	10.3	8.7	14.2
8	Admissions to residential/nursing 65+ (per 100k population)	654.9	601.0	577.6	538.8	625.6	677.2
9	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	5	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.7
10	Successful treatments – alcohol (%)	32	29.9	26.3	24.4	26.6	28.7

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
11	Successful treatments - non-opiates (%)	21	30	27.8	28.6	27.3	29.1
12	Successful treatments – opiates (%)	3	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.5	3.5

Outcome (iv):

8.21. **Residents have the building blocks of a good life** - almost every aspect of our lives impacts on how well and how long we live. This includes our income, jobs, homes, access to education and public transport and whether we experience poverty or discrimination. To create a county where everyone can thrive, we need all of these building blocks in place.

8.22. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- The resident's voice (insights) will be heard;
- Residents are more financially secure; and,
- There are good employment opportunities.

Progress:

8.23. The measures of support to households set out in ‘Outcome 1’ are equally relevant to this outcome. Referrals made to Communities Together outperformed the target by more than 9,000 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£4.8m at year-end). These underline the Council's firm commitment to support community resilience through challenging times.

Further development of measures

8.24. We will continue to develop new and better ways to measure how we are progressing on tackling inequalities, including through new questions in our Residents Survey.

Residents have the building blocks of a good life – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23 (EOY)
1	Number of referrals in to NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	2,258	3,349	3,044	3,182	11,833
2	Grants funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£1,800,521	£659,453	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£4,798,710
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	15,693	20,293	21,609	35,254	92,849

9. Driving Economic Growth

9.1. We want to see everyone can benefit a strong and sustainable economy. There are significant opportunities for growth right across our diverse and rich county and harnessing these opportunities will support our communities to thrive. We want Northumberland to be a great place to live with opportunities for all of our residents, whether they live in our countryside or within one of our busy towns.

Outcome (i):

9.2. **Thriving places and culture** - Northumberland has vibrant and distinctive communities, villages and towns that are built upon a rich cultural heritage and an outstanding natural environment. Continuing to support the vibrancy of our county through investment will bring new cultural, leisure, environment and economic benefits to communities. We know that housing affordability is a challenge in many parts of our county and by continuing to invest in decent, affordable homes we will ensure there is a good mix of housing options to meet the broad needs of our residents. Our residents tell us how important their neighbourhoods are, and we want them to enjoy where they live, with clean, well maintained and safe neighbourhoods.

Impacts:

9.3. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- There are more affordable housing options across the county;
- Neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained;
- Regenerated town centres in Blyth and Ashington;
- Plans for Town Investment Plans across the county through the Borderlands Town Programme;
- Improved walking and cycle ways;
- Low carbon heating solutions are available for residents and businesses; and,
- Increased business investment and growth.

Progress:

9.4. We are pleased to report, performance across key measures show neighbourhoods are clean and tidy, where fly tipping issues are dealt with swiftly and more people have access to high-quality parks.

9.5. We are also proud of the role our excellent Fire and Rescue Service play in contributing to safe places and their key measures reflect a service which is making our neighbourhoods safe from harm, alongside our Public Protection teams.

Focus on improvement:

9.6. Whilst it was positive that we exceeded our target on net additional homes, we missed our target for 'net affordable homes' and this continues to be a key area of focus for improvement in the coming year.

Further development of measures

9.7. We propose to use new data from our Residents Survey to measure progress on this outcome, including how satisfied residents are with their local area.

Thriving places and culture – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Street cleanliness - Detritus (% of areas surveyed)	8	8.35	8.9	7.67	6.6	-	7.8
2	Street cleanliness - Dog Fouling (% of areas surveyed)	1	0.17	0	0.4	0	-	0.2
3	Street Cleanliness - Litter (% of areas surveyed)	5	1.57	3.3	1.2	1.7	-	1.96
4	Green Flag status parks (#)	11	11	-	-	-	-	11
5	Fly tips removed in 3d (%)	95	97.5	98.4	98	98	98	97.6
6	Net additional homes (#) Annual	614	1592	-	-	-	1592	1592
7	Net affordable homes provided (# pa) Annual	374	272	-	-	-	122	122
8	Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)	96	NEW KPI FOR 22/23	95.3	99.3	97.7	97.7	97.3
9	Time taken to answer the 999 call by Fire Control (%)	95	NEW KPI FOR 22/23	96.7	96	99	96.3	96.9
10	Accidental Dwelling Fires (#)	228	123	36	22	34	33	125
11	Deliberate Primary Fire (#)	228	121	33	49	24	22	128
12	Rogue Trader complaints and interventions (%)	95	97.5	100	100	100	100	100

Outcome (ii):

9.8. **A diverse and resilient economy** - we will create the right conditions for sustainable, inclusive economic growth. This will involve working hard to support existing businesses to invest and grow, whilst also seeking to attract major investment to create jobs and opportunities for our residents and communities. We are home to over 100,000 employees and over 11,000 active businesses and we want to harness the assets of that employment and business ‘base’. We know we have strengths in key sectors, with growth in the professional, scientific and, technical sectors and strong employment in manufacturing, retail, agricultural, tourism and health. We will build on these strengths and assets to drive growth and maximise the opportunities for our businesses and residents and support a more diverse and resilient economy across the county.

Impacts:

9.9. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- A vibrant and diverse economy;
- A range of job opportunities available to residents;
- A strong Combined Authority with a clear and ambitious plan for inclusive economic growth;
- A thriving and sustainable visitor economy; and,
- A strong and sustainable rural economy.

Progress:

9.10. Whilst there has been some improvement across key economic measures, these will continue to be shaped largely by challenging national and global economic trends over the past few years.

Focus on improvement:

9.11. We continue to invest in the regeneration across the county whilst building new infrastructure which will support economic growth.

Further development of measures

9.12. In future reports, we will introduce more economic measures which will give a better picture of the work of the Council in economic development and regeneration.

A diverse and vibrant economy – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 2021/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 2022/23 (EOY)
1	Employment Rate (%)	75.8%	72	70.9	69.9	68.8	70.5
2	Weekly Pay – Residents *(£ Annual)	£621.00	£568.60	-	-	-	£601.80
3	Weekly Pay – Workers *(£ Annual)	£609.50	£542.50	-	-	-	£573.30

Outcome (iii):

9.13. **Skilled and aspirational people** - the people of Northumberland are our number one asset. Our entrepreneurial, hard-working and friendly communities make the county what it is. We know higher level and new skills are required to drive the growth of key sectors. We also know that post-Covid, we have seen changes to the way people want to work, with higher numbers of people leaving the labour market, meaning workforce pressures for some businesses. Ensuring we have programmes in place to support people and businesses is key in maintaining business stability and growth and helping our residents realise their potential.

Impacts:

9.14. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- People have the skills to earn decent incomes;
- Young people are clear on the opportunities available to them; and,
- Businesses have the skilled and aspirational people they need to thrive and growth.

Progress:

9.15. In future reports, we plan to include numbers of residents entering employability and skills training. It is important to emphasise the organisation is well-sighted on and able to respond to data and intelligence on skills, including through our Annual Economic Performance Roundup. The last 'Roundup' (Autumn 2022) stated:

- "In 2021, 7.6% of the population in Northumberland (aged 16-64) had no qualifications. This is better than the North of Tyne CA (8.6%), North East LEP (8.7%) and the region (8.2%)."
- "The 'UK Commission for Employment and Skills Employer Skills Survey' provides comprehensive analysis of the skills businesses need and identifies areas of skill deficiency. The last survey reported that 12% of Northumberland's establishments had staff not fully proficient and 4% had a skills shortage vacancy. This was marginally better than the North of Tyne CA average (13% and 6%) and North East Local Enterprise Partnership (14% and 4%). The national average was 13% of establishments without fully proficient staff and 6% had a skills shortage vacancy."

Further development of measures

9.16. In future reports, we will introduce, where possible, more up-to-date skills data, including numbers of residents entering employability and skills training.

Outcome (iv):

9.17. **A connected county** - the connectivity of Northumberland is key to driving future job growth, reducing carbon emissions and tackling inequalities. This means having well-maintained roads, good transport routes and public transport, broadband and mobile coverage. Responding to growth and the needs of the population, changing patterns of work, as well as ensuring connectivity for businesses, requires upgrades to transport and digital infrastructure.

Impacts:

9.18. In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Northumberland's transport network is well maintained and connects people and business;
- Effective public transport is a viable and green option for residents;
- More residents and visitors use electric vehicles; and,
- Digital connectivity supports wellbeing and growth.

Progress:

9.19. We have met our targets on ‘Availability of Superfast broadband (%)’ and ‘Take up of Superfast broadband (%)’ which shows a positive direction of travel in terms of ensuring our county is digitally connected.

A connected county – summary of outturn 2022/23:

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	94.6	95.1	95.4	95.4	95.63	95.63
2	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	80.1	80.1	79.8	79.1	79.1	79.1

Further development of measures

9.20. In future reports, we will aim to introduce more measures of connectivity, particularly on public transport access and usage, which will give a better picture of the work of the Council on this outcome.

10. Climate Change

10.1. In achieving the three Corporate Priorities, we will ensure we pass a healthy, clean and sustainable environment to future generations. Each of our three Priorities has a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency. Climate Change threatens to disproportionately affect our poorest areas, and climate policies which are too burdensome for the poorest in society could have an unwelcome effect on inequality. Net Zero is the growth opportunity of the 21st Century. Northumberland can get a huge boost from the low carbon economy, and we are already creating the foundations as we work to become carbon neutral.

Progress:

10.2. For our ‘Free Tree Planting Scheme - of the 15,000 saplings set aside for the scheme, some 7,269 were collected by those who applied. Around 3,000 saplings were also given away to the public as spares. The remainder were to be used by Local Services for planting in public recreational areas.

10.3. For ‘Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual’ – some 295.812 tonnes of glass were collected in the second year of the glass collection recycling trial (November 2021 - October 2022).

	Measure	Target	21/22	22/23
1	Free Tree Planting Scheme (Number of Trees) Annual	15,000	13,578	10,269
2	Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual	250	296	-
3	NCC Carbon Dioxide Emission (tCO2) Biannual	31,272	10,399	15,741
4	NCC EV Fleet Replacement (# eligible vehicles) Annual	11	33	39

Implications

Policy	This report supports delivery of all three priorities of the Corporate Plan.
Finance and value for money	Value for money is a priority for the Council. This Report contains no direct financial implications. The ongoing delivery of the Corporate Plan involves individual actions that may have financial implications which would form separate reports as these arise.
Legal	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Corporate Plan may have legal implications, which would form separate reports as these arise.
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	None at this stage.

Crime Disorder &	N/A
Customer Consideration	N/A
Carbon reduction	Each of our three Priorities have an important a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency.
Health and Wellbeing	N/A
Wards	All

Enclosure

Background papers:

N/a

Linked documents

- Corporate Plan 2023-26
- Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2023

Report sign off.

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

	Full Name of Officer
Chief Executive	Dr Helen Paterson
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Stephen Gerrard
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	-
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth

Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 October 2023

Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24

Report of Councillor(s) Gordon Stewart, Portfolio Holder for Looking After our Communities

Responsible Officer(s): Chief Executive

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The food service strongly contributes towards the Council's corporate vision and objectives in all three key priority areas within the Corporate Plan 2023-2026 and the service plan details how this will be achieved. Additionally, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2023/24 sets out the principles that will be adopted when undertaking investigations and enforcement action in creating a 'level playing field' for businesses to trade and supporting businesses to prosper.

2. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet, for its consideration the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2023/24.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet receives and adopts the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2023/24

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Report appeared on the forward plan 31/08/23, with over the minimum 28 days before cabinet

5. Background

- 5.1 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.

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The framework agreements requires that the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan 2023/24 (attached) sets out the Council's 'Farm to Fork' approach to the safety & standards of the food chain and a review of service performance in 2022/23. It also requires that the plan:
- be approved at a relevant level with the Local Authority in order to ensure local transparency and accountability,
 - be produced in a specific format.
- 5.4 There are 3894 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 Service. The Plan shows the delivery structure and required staff resourcing.
- 5.5 The review of performance in 2022/23 found that the service completed the targets set out for the end of March 23 within the FSA recovery plan, meeting all key performance measures.
- 5.6 The percentage of food businesses in Northumberland with a food hygiene rating of satisfactory to very good (3 to 5 stars) is 98.6% which continues to compare favourably with both the national average of 96.9 % and regional average of 98.1%.
- 5.7 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 2022/23 a total of 125 infectious disease investigations were carried out and 142 complaints regarding food hygiene, 115 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.
- 5.8 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 2023/24 is to continue to support and progress the scheme. The service is re-introducing the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits. Along with a planned increase in its promotion and visibility. In line with this, to unlock the full potential of the scheme we are also working closely with other services and teams as part of the development of the county food strategy, where PIN will play an integral role. As part of this process, we will be part of the food strategy working group to provide input into the strategy

as its developed, along with regular meetings with the Rural Growth team to review progress. The long-term goal being to continue the development of PIN and take it even further.

6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- 6.1 Option 1 -To accept and adopt the Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24.
- 6.2 Option 2 - Not to accept and adopt the Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24. However, this would mean the council would not be fulfilling its requirements under the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement.

7. Implications

Policy	None
Finance and value for money	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.
Legal	None, statutory provision
Procurement	None
Human resources	None
Property	None
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified The proposal contained in this report does not present equality issues.
Risk assessment	Adopting the plan will assist in providing a framework to ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken.
Crime and disorder	The adoption of the proposed plan will assist in ensuring the enforcement of statutory regulations.
Customer considerations	The plan would be delivered in such a way as to ensure that a consistent and proportionate approach is taken in all circumstances.
Carbon reduction	None

Health and wellbeing	Will contribute to the protection and improvement of health through a safe food and drinks sector. Also contributing to a fair & safe trading environment.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2023/24

9. Links to other key reports already published

Not Applicable

10. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland

County Council

Public Protection Service

Public Health Protection Unit & Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit

Food and Feed Safety and Standards

SERVICE PLAN 2023-2024

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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 recent and proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice (CoP).

This plan has been developed to transition the service back into alignment with the Food Law CoP and the full inspection plan, from FSA recovery plan following the Covid Pandemic. This includes the 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 May 2023, the Council updated its Corporate Plan, which outlines the Council's priorities in the coming years through its Corporate Plan 2023-26. 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) ¹
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 Gordon Stewart.

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 Public Protection Service, managed by Darin Wilson the Head of 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 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 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 & Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit Public Protection Service West Hartford Fire Station West Hartford Business Park Cramlington Northumberland NE23 3JP</p> <p>Telephone number: (01670) 623870 e-mail: public.protection@northumberland.gov.uk</p>

The operational teams within the 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 3900 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.

The food premises (safety & standards) and feed (composition & hygiene) profile at 1 April 2023 was:-

Premises Type	Number
Primary Producers	43
Manufacturers and Packers	179
Importers / Exporters	7
Distributors/Transporters	77
Retailers	854
Restaurants and Caterers	2734
Total: Food Safety & Standards	3894
Feed Hygiene Premises	1745
Total: Feed & Food	5639

This includes 20 premises which require approval under specific 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).

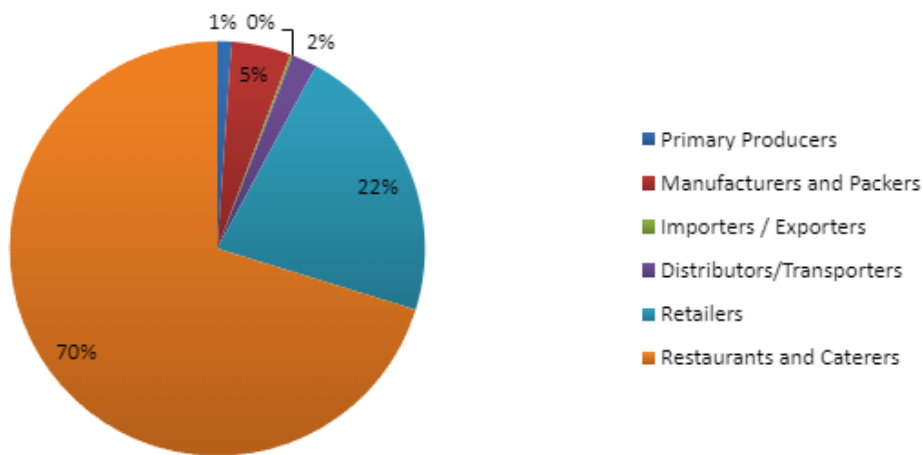
Within the food premises these activities require a specialist approach:

- 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.

Food Premises (Hygiene & Standards) in Northumberland 2023



3.4.1 Food Safety

The Commercial Team received 1177 service requests in 2022-23, an increase of just over 100 requests compared to 2021-22. This has returned to pre-pandemic levels. 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 257 complaints about food in 2022-23, for example, foreign objects, food causing illness, the hygiene of food premises or food handlers. This is a decrease compared to 2021-22.

3.4.2 Food Standards

Business enquiries for food standards advice remained stable in 2022-23, with the service responding to 89 requests. The service requests tend to be of a more complex nature as businesses were looking for advice on compliance with the Food Information Regulations.

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 2022-23.

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.

This year saw ongoing work in relation to the enforcement 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.

From March 2020 to March 2023 the scheme moved from its normal proactive inspections to a free service with a remote assessment and an increased prioritisation on promotional work. The aim being to continue to support our members during the pandemic and cost of living crisis, promoting amazing local product. As we move forward in 2023-24 we will be restarting the inspection aspects of the scheme, continue to promote Northumberland foods and bring in new members, with the outlook of improving / expanding the scheme to bring in more members and increase visibility.

3.4.3 Feed

2022/23 saw a return to 'business as usual' and inspections were carried out as they were pre-Covid.

The FSA Memorandum of Understanding with National Trading Standards (NTS) for the Feed Delivery Programme has been signed for a further 3-year period with effect from April 2023.

To support this arrangement, it has been agreed by the FSA that the funding for delivery of feed law official controls will be categorised as a business-critical activity. This means that whilst it will continue to be subject to review based on the FSA's overall annual budget, funding for this activity will be prioritised.

The inspections of businesses are carried out by the Trading Standards and Animal Health Team. The team is managed on a day-to-day basis by a Senior Trading Standards Officer who 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”.

4.1.1 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 2023 was:-

Category	Intervention Plan	Interventions required by risk category
A	Inspection at 6 monthly intervals	5
B	Inspection at 12 monthly intervals	68
C	Inspection at 18 monthly intervals	409
D	Alternate between official control and other interventions every 2 years.	1204
E	Alternative Enforcement Strategy every 36 months.	2048
Unrated	To be visited and risk rated.	71 (+ new businesses arising during the year)
Outside Programme		46*
Total		3851

* '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, 513 food registration forms received in 2022-23, 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 23 Northumberland had 71 unrated food premises. Of the outstanding 71 premises, 62 were received within the past 6 months. Of these premises 3 have been identified as likely to be 'high' risk based on usage type. Of the remaining 68 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

All cat 'E' premises due for intervention 2023-24 will receive an alternative enforcement strategy. 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 2023-2024 intervention programme

The proposed 2023-2024 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	5*	100% planned inspections
B	At least every 12 months	Inspection, partial inspection or audit or sampling	68	98% planned inspections**
C	At least every 18 months	Inspection, partial inspection or audit or sampling	245	95% planned inspections
D	At least every 24 months	Alternate between official control and other interventions every 2 years.	503	90% Official Interventions
E	At least every 36 months	Alternative Intervention Strategy	1351	90%
Unrated	Not known until inspection	Inspection	71***	90%
Total			2243***	

* Plus any in year Cat A 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 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 2023-24 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 2023 was:-

Category	Intervention Plan	Interventions required by risk category
A	Inspection at 12 monthly intervals	43
B	Inspection at 24 monthly intervals	952
C	Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES) every 5 years	2692
Unrated	To be visited and risk rated.	85 (+ new businesses arising during the year)
Outside Programme		122*
Total		3894

* '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 2023-2024 intervention programme

The proposed 2023-2024 programme of work is detailed below:-

Category	Minimum intervention rating	Intervention type	Number of premises due	Target
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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	628	90% planned inspections
C	At least every 5 years	Alternative Intervention Strategy	1619	90% planned inspections
Unrated	Not known until inspection	Inspection	85**	90% planned inspections
Total			2387**	

* 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

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)

4.1.2.4 New Food Standards Delivery Model

For 2023-24 the food standards agency is implementing a new food standards delivery model with local authorities undertaking a transition to the new model from quarter 3/4 of 2023-24.

The new food standards intervention rating scheme involves the calculation of a risk profile for each food business establishment that is based on its 'inherent risk profile' and a 'compliance assessment'.

The inherent risk profile gives an indication of the risks associated with a food establishment and the compliance assessment assesses the FBO's performance. Both the inherent risk profile and compliance assessment are made up of subcategories, which are individually scored to allow the accurate assessment of different risk elements, that will be assigned according to the information available.

These subcategories are:

- inherent risk profile:
 - scale of supply and distribution
 - ease of compliance
 - complexity of supply chain
 - responsibility for information
 - potential for product harm

- compliance assessment:
 - confidence in management (CIM)
 - current compliance level
 - management systems and procedures
 - allergen information

When applying the food standards intervention rating scheme, LAs will assign the risk factor score that is most relevant to the food business establishment. Where a food business falls into more than one scoring category for a scoring factor, they must be allocated the lowest score (higher risk), in line with the precautionary principle. It is recognised that competent officers will use their professional judgement to assign a score based on using the descriptors under each of the risk scores.

To determine the frequency at which official controls should be carried out, the average scores for the inherent risk profile and compliance risk assessment are plotted onto the decision matrix.

The decision matrix follows a graduated approach based on risk. The frequency of official control activities starts at one month (high intensity) and progresses to less intensive frequencies enabling LAs to target their resource on those establishments deemed to be highest risk.

This supports the objective of the model and recognises that LAs will be focusing their resource on those establishments where they need to take prompt action to safeguard public health and protect consumers.

The decision matrix does not specify the particular official control activity that should take place. Instead, this approach gives LAs the flexibility to use any of the methods and techniques of official controls specified in Article 14 of Retained (EU) Regulation 2017/625, either individually or in combination, providing they are effective and appropriate in the circumstances.

At this stage we do not know the specific impact the change in delivery model will have on the inspection plan and as such have based the 2023-24 plan on the current system. However we are expecting the change to require significant resource from within the service which will impact on our ability to deliver the plan as currently detailed.

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 2023 was:-

Category	Intervention Plan	Interventions required by risk category
A	Inspection at 12 monthly intervals	4
B	Inspection at 24 monthly intervals, except where Type 1 earned recognition applies	12
C	Inspection at 36 monthly intervals, except where Type 1 earned recognition applies	158
D	Inspection at 48 monthly intervals, except where Type 1 earned recognition applies	263
E*	Inspection at 60 monthly intervals, except where Type 1, Type 2 earned recognition or NTMS applies	850
Never Been Inspected		455
Total		1,742

*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 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 2023/2024 programme of work is detailed below:-

Category	Minimum intervention rating	Intervention type	Visits required by FSA
A	At least every 12 months	Inspection	2*
B	At least every 24 months	Inspection	5*
C	At least every 36 months	Inspection	11*
D	At least every 48 months	Any official control (except where NTMS applies)	9*
E	At least every 60 months	Any official control (except where NTMS applies)	6*
Unrated	Not known until inspection	Inspection	13*
Total			46

* 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 2023/2024 are;

- Priority 1: Verification of effective implementation and maintenance of feed safety management systems
 - a: Verification at all feed business types
 - b: Verification at co-producers and businesses supplying former foodstuffs
- Priority 2: Effective monitoring of feed on farms
 - a: Examination of former foodstuffs / co-products being used for feed on farms
 - b: Effective monitoring of pest control procedures
 - c: On-farm record keeping requirements and documented procedures
- Priority 3: Effective monitoring of storage arrangements at feed premises
- Priority 4: Verification of feed labelling

- Priority 5: Effective monitoring of consignments of feed originating from non-EU countries, at points of entry

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 2022/23 97% of national planned work was achieved. In the North East region, 97% of planned work was undertaken.

A regional budget of £90,983 has been granted to the North East Authorities in 2023/2024.

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 2023/2024 is made up of the following:

Northumberland Figures

Inland Feed	£11,259	38 Inspections
Primary Production	£1,928	8 Inspections
Port Work	£500	

Coordination Fee	£27,314	
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Northumberland Total	£41,001	
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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)	5.1	3.2	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
2019-20	120	149	97	0	-
2020-21	124	113	62	2	-
2021-22	152	131	69	0	-
2022-23	142	115	69	0	-
Resources required (FTE)	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

Home & Primary Authority	Food Safety	Food Standards	Feed	Technical support
Resources required (FTE)	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
2019-20	1065*	82	61	-
2020-21	1278*	77	30	-
2021-22	1069*	103	57	-
2022-23	1177*	89	48	-
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:-

Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Services

UK Health Security Agency
 Food Water & Environment Microbiology Laboratory
 Block 10, York Biotech Campus
 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
Resources required (FTE)	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 UKHSA, 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 UKHSA
- 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
2019-20	144	49	446	639
2020-21	71	11	357	439
2021-22	109	36	498	643
2022-23	125	83	438	646
Resources required (FTE)	0.2		0.1	

4.7 Food Safety Incidents

It is the policy of this Authority to:

- i) respond promptly to all Food Alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency; and

- ii) 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 inbox.

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 provide 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.

During 2022-23 the service provided 165 certificates. With the ongoing increase in exports we are not expecting this to reduce in 2023-24

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

Through COVID and the cost of living crisis 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 'Driving Economic Growth' vision set out in the 2023-26 corporate plan.

The aim moving into 2023/24 is to continue to support and progress the scheme. The service is re-introducing the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits. Along with a planned increase in its promotion and visibility. In line with this to unlock the full potential of the scheme are also working closely with other services and teams as part of the development of the county food strategy, where PIN will play an integral role. As part of this process, we will be part of the food strategy working group to provide input into the strategy as its developed, along with regular meetings with the Rural Growth team to review progress. The long-term goal being to continue the development of PIN and take it even further.

Summary of Resources required for Produced in Northumberland

Produced in Northumberland	Verification	Administration
Resources required (FTE)	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 2023-2024 is:-

Staffing costs (approx. including on costs)	£821,161
Travel	£ 12,760
Contractor & casual staffing costs	£ 32,330
<u>Sampling & Analysis</u>	<u>£ 9,360</u>
Total service cost	£875,611

5.2 Staffing

The total staff resource allocated to the delivery of the work detailed in this plan is estimated to be approximately 16.52 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
Feed	0.08	0.6	0.25	0.3	0.1
Feed total (FTE)	1.33				

Work area	Principal EHO (commercial team)	Senior Environmental Health Officer	Environmental Health Officer / EHTO	Port Health Officer	Technical Support Officer
Food Hygiene	0.6	1	5.6		1.33
Infectious Disease			0.2		0.1
Port Health			0.1	0.9	
Food sampling			0.05	0.1	0.1
Total	0.6	1	5.95	1	1.53
Food Safety total (FTE)	10.08				

Work area	Team Manager (Commercial Team, TS & AH Team)	Senior & Trading Standards Officer	Fair Trading Officer	Technical Support officer

Food Standards	0.5	2.61	1.0	1
Food Standards total (FTE)	5.11			

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 2022-23

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. 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.

7.1.1 Food Safety

7.1.1.1 Inspections in 2022-23 (Food Safety)

Type	Programmed	In Year changes	% Target	Actual	% Completed *
High Risk Category A	6 (12)	6	98%	12	100%
Category B	63	-	98%	63	100%
Category C non-compliant	2	-	95%	2	100%
Category C complainant	168	-	95%	168	100%
Category D non-compliant	2	-	90%	2	100%
Category D complainant	0	-	N/A	817	100%
Category E	0	-	N/A	213	100%
Unrated	173 (535)	362**	95%	464	99%*** (86.7%)

* % 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'23 within the FSA recovery plan. In addition the service was able to work towards moving back to the Food Law CoP delivery plan for 2023-24

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 2022-23. The number of new registrations peaked at 44 in May 2022.

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 2022-2023 food businesses were issued with the following enforcement activities.

Enforcement Action	Totals
Written warning*	1442*
Voluntary closure agreement	6
Improvement Notices	14

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

7.1.1.4 Complaints (food safety & standards)

142 complaints regarding food hygiene, 115 complaints about food premises were received and 54 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)

1177 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 158 microbiological food samples were taken in 2022-23. These were a mixture of local reactive and monitoring samples.

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. In the county as of April'23 the scheme is applied to 3220 food premises giving them a food hygiene star rating. 33175 food businesses out of the total achieved three, four or five star ratings (98.6%) 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	2760
4	Good	324
3	Generally satisfactory	91
2	Improvement required	17
1	Major improvement required	23
0	Urgent improvement required	5

As of 1 April 2023 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	98.6%
North East Region	98.1%
England	96.9%

7.1.1.8 Infectious Disease Investigation

646 notifications of infectious disease were received by UK Health Security Agency. Of these notifications 125 (19%) 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 83 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'	55	-	98%	55	100%
Cat 'B'	0	-	N/A	262	97%
Cat 'C'	0	-	N/A	98	100%
Unrated	123 (492)	369**	95%	484	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 2022-23 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 2022-2023 food businesses were issued with the following enforcement activities.

Enforcement Action	Totals
Written warnings*	1068*
Improvement Notices	3

* 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

89 requests for advice were received, 99% 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 2022-23 the authority completed its local sampling programme, with a total of 52 samples taken within Northumberland.

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.

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 2022-2023 (Feed Hygiene) - FSA Funded

Type	Programmed	Actual	% Completed
High Risk Category A	3	3	100%
Category B	3	3	100%
Category C	4	4	100%
Category D	11	12*	109%
Category E	4	11*	275%
Unrated	20	31*	155%

*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*	22*
Voluntary closure	0

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

7.1.3.3 Sampling

In 2022-2023 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.

In 2022-23 the service provided 165 certificates during this time. With the ongoing increase in exports we are not expecting this to reduce in 2023-24.

	Export Health certificates
2022-23	165

7.5 Produced in Northumberland

As detailed in the planning section in 2022-23 and during the whole COVID pandemic and through the cost of living crisis 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 'Driving Economic Growth' vision set out in the 2023-26 corporate plan.

Unfortunately, we were unable to further expand 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	25*

*Recent expressions of interest.

The aim moving into 2023/24 is to continue to support and progress the scheme. The service is re-introducing the full verification scheme annual checks with onsite audits. Along with a planned increase in its promotion and visibility. In line with this to unlock the full potential of the scheme we are also working closely with other services and teams as part of the development of the county food strategy, where PIN will play an integral role. As part of this process, we will be part of the food strategy working group to provide input into the strategy as its developed, along with regular meetings with the Rural Growth team to review progress. The long-term goal being to continue the development of PIN and take it even further.

Produced in Northumberland financial 2022-23

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 2022-23 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 develop full roll out in 23-24 it is expected that out cost to the service will move back to a net £41,000+ operation costs which will have to be met from existing budget.

7.6. Customer satisfaction survey results 2022-23

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

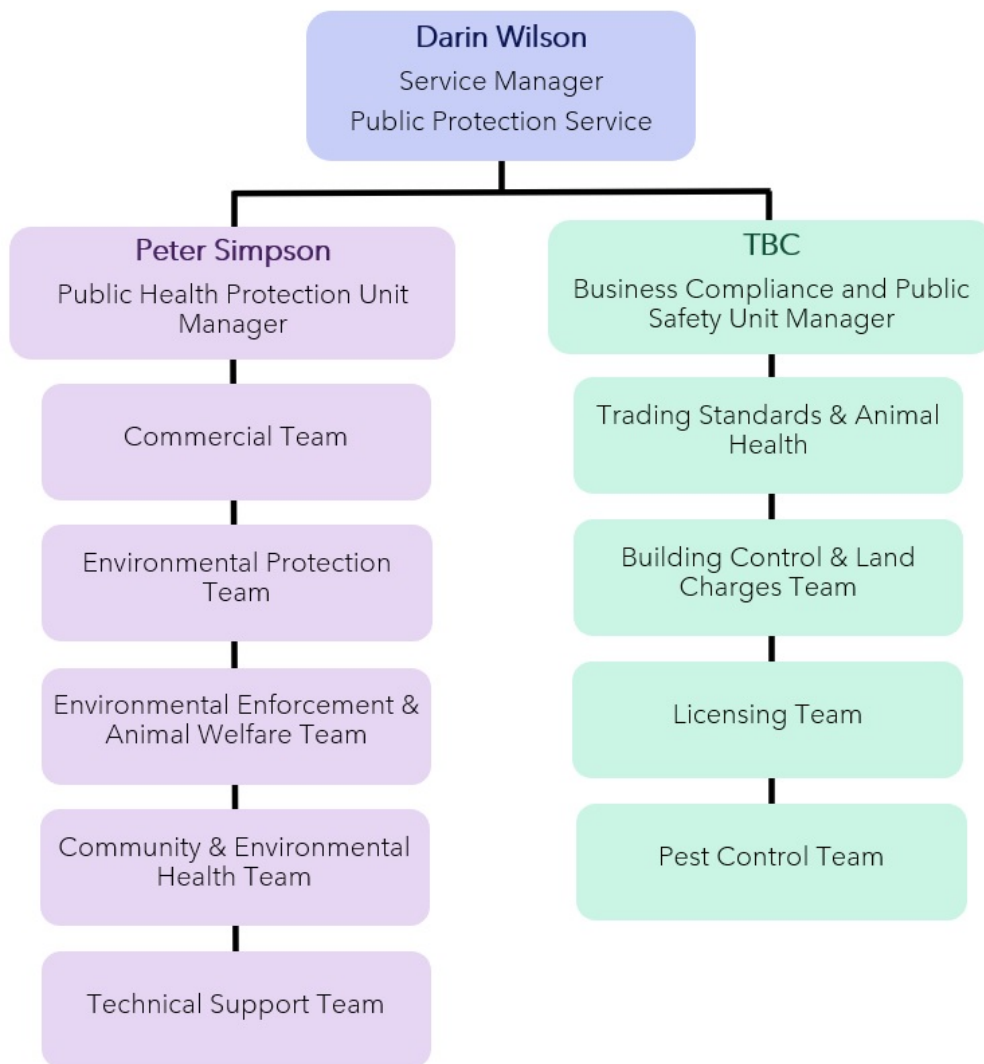
The checking, by examination and the consideration of objective evidence, whether specific requirements have been fulfilled

- 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

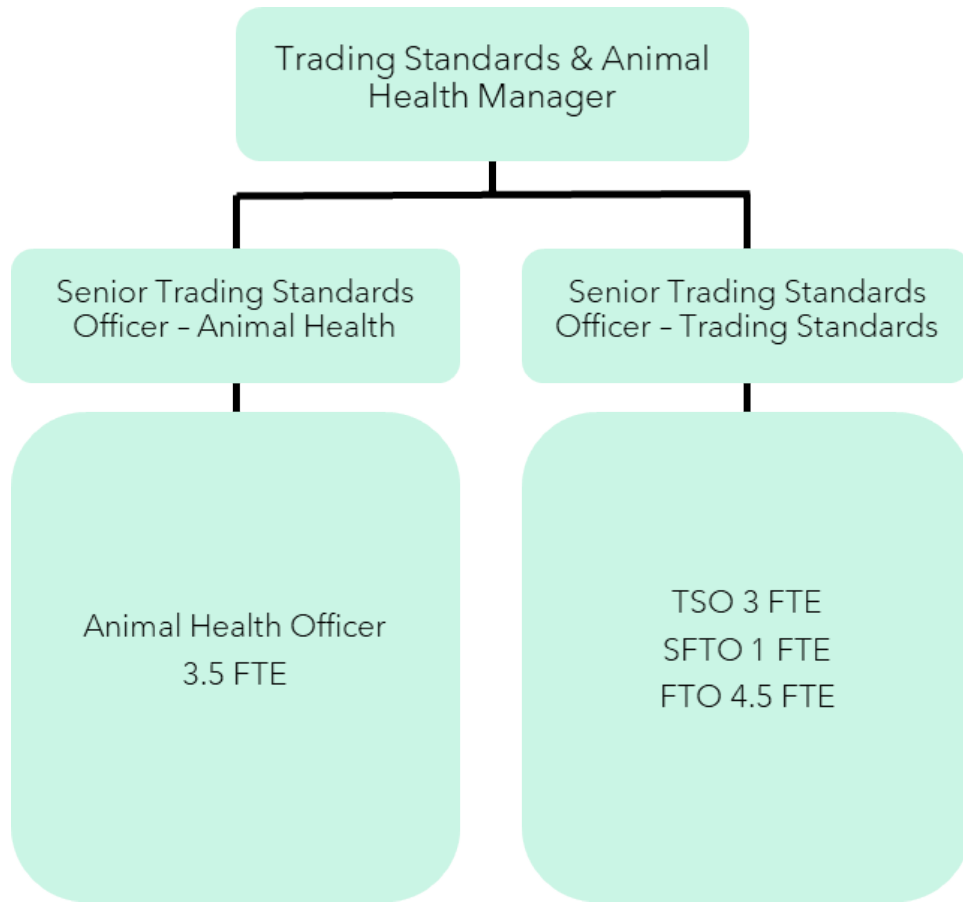
A. Public Protection Service - Public Protection Units.



B: Commercial Team Structure



C: Trading Standards & Animal Health Team Structure



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