



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Karon Hadfield

Email:

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Tel direct: 0345 600 6400

Date: Tuesday, 5 December 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, 12 DECEMBER 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

Cabinet meetings are streamed live on the Council's Youtube channel, Northumberland TV at

[NorthumberlandTV - YouTube](#)



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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
- 8)

Minutes of the meeting of the meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday 7 November 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

a. Which directly relates to Disclosable Pecuniary Interest ('DPI') as set out in Appendix B, Table 1 of the Code of Conduct, to disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote and not to remain in room. Where members have a DPI or if the matter concerns an executive function and is being considered by a Cabinet Member with a DPI they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with the matter.

b. Which directly relates to the financial interest or well being of a Other Registrable Interest as set out in Appendix B, Table 2 of the Code of Conduct to disclose the interest and only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain the room.

c. Which directly relates to their financial interest or well-being (and is not DPI) or the financial well being of a relative or close associate, to declare the interest and members may only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak. Otherwise, the member must not take part in discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.

d. Which affects the financial well-being of the member, a relative or close associate or a body included under the Other Registrable Interests column in Table 2, to disclose the interest and apply the test set out at paragraph 9 of Appendix B before deciding whether they may remain in the meeting.

e. Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registerable Interest or Non Registerable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the

Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

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

4. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 9 - 36)

Budget 2024-25 – Draft Engagement Document

This report sets out the draft Budget Engagement document for 2024-25 (attached as Appendix 1).

5. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 37 - 50)

Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2028

This report provides an update on the development of the 2024-25 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period 2024 to 2028.

6. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 51 - 60)

Setting of the Council Tax Base

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the tax base calculation for 2024-25 for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax. The tax base must be set by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2024.

7. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 61 - 74)

Risk Management Report Update

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the latest position of the County Council's corporate risks following review by Executive Management Team and Cabinet portfolio holders, and to provide an update in relation to the Council's risk management arrangements.

8. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 75 - 126)

Financial Performance - Position at the end of September 2023

The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current and forecast financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2023-24.

9. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 127 - 140)
- Q2 Corporate Performance Report**
- 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 2, 2023/24 (Q2).
10. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 141 - 148)
- 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.
11. **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER OR CARING FOR ADULTS** (Pages 149 - 164)
- Adaptations for Disabled People**
- To report on additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding received from Government, and to ask the Cabinet to consider the case for revisions to the Council's discretionary grants policy.
12. **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE** (Pages 165 - 186)
- Outcomes of the Tender for New School Buildings for Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools**
- To update Cabinet on the outcomes of the tender process for the construction of new school buildings for Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School and seek the delegated approval to award the construction contract.
- An outline capital allocation for investment in Education has already been made within the Council's medium term capital programme of £37,097,847. The Final Business Case seeks to confirm the capital required for the construction and management of the proposed scheme, being £50,124,185.
13. **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE** (Pages 187 - 208)
- Education, SEND and Skills Report 2022-23**
- The Annual Report 2022-23 highlights actions and progress against the key priorities for Education, SEND and Skills 22-24.
14. **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PROMOTING HEALTHY LIVES** (Pages 209 -

Northumberland Leisure and Wellbeing Procurement and Provision

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet following the conclusion of the Leisure and Wellbeing Service procurement process. The Report also seeks permission to implement arrangements to ensure continuity of provision for the six community facilities excluded from the core contract from 1 April 2024.

- 15. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITIES** (Pages 333 - 338)

Merger of North and South Northumberland Coroner Areas

This report seeks Cabinet approval to the proposed merger of the North and South Northumberland Coroner areas and the Business Case for the merger, detailed in the confidential appendix elsewhere on this agenda.

- 16. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITIES** (Pages 339 - 362)

PFI Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) Responsibilities

This report provides the detail of this provision and seeks Cabinet approval for the removal of the loose furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) element of the current North East Fire & Rescue Authority (NEFRA) Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. This proposal has potential to achieve a total efficiency of £1,375,750, from its proposed effective date of 1st April 2022 to the expiration of the contract in 2035/36.

- 17. URGENT BUSINESS**

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

PART II

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

- 18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:

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

public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

<p>Agenda Item 19 AND</p>	<p>Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person / organisation, and could adversely affect commercial revenue.</p>
<p>20 AND</p>	<p>Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure would prejudice the ability for Northumberland County Council to obtain a competitive price through the re-tendering of the design and build contract .</p>
<p>21 AND</p>	<p>Paragraphs 1 and 3 – Information relating to an individual (1) and Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (3). The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect confidence in the Authority’s ability to maintain the personal data of individuals.</p>

- 19. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 363 - 430)
3
Risk Management Report Update

To consider a confidential appendix in relation to item 7 on this agenda.

- 20. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE** (Pages 431 - 450)
3
Outcomes of the Tender for New School Buildings for Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools

To consider a confidential appendix in relation to item 12 on this agenda.

- 21. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITIES** (Pages 451 -

1, 3

474)

Merger of North and South Northumberland Coroner Areas

To consider a confidential appendix in relation to item 15 on this agenda.

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)

Agenda Item 2

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

Horncastle, C.
Jones, V.
Pattison, W.
Ploszaj, W.

Riddle, J.
Stewart, G.
Wearmouth, R.

OTHER MEMBERS

Hill, G.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bradley, N.

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

Neilson, S.

Executive Director for Place and
Regeneration

O'Neill, G. (remote)

Executive Director for Public Health
(DPH), Inequalities & Stronger
Communities

Paterson, Dr H.
Willis, J. (remote)

Chief Executive
Executive Director for Resources &
Transformation (S151)

Two members of the public were present.

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Renner Thompson and Watson.

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 10 October 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

40. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

North East Devolution

The report asked members to consider and determine if consent should be given to the making of an Order that would abolish the North East and North of Tyne Combined Authorities, whilst at the same time establishing a new North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Appendix A).

The Leader introduced the report. This was an important next step in the process and would bring great benefits. The Authority would lead on the environment, coastal matters and rural matters which was a big role to play. He looked forward to working together with the other Authorities for the benefit of all residents in the region.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the content of the report be noted;
- (b) Cabinet agree in principle that the Council should consent to the making of the order;
- (c) the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to issue the Council's formal consent to the Secretary of State when requested;
- (d) the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the terms of the side agreement regarding the support arrangements associated with these proposals; and
- (e) the Chief Executive be authorised to take all other steps necessary to implement these proposals

41. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Setting the Scope and Targets for the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26

Cabinet was asked to agree the scope and targets to be addressed in detail in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 and to ensure alignment with the Council's Environment Policy Statement (Appendix B).

The Leader introduced the report, detailing the key points. He stressed that this was not about dictating what people should do but encouraging them to think about how they could contribute.

Councillor Wearmouth commented this was an ambitious programme to tackle climate change. One of the most important reasons to do this was to create indigenous energy and to look after the climate around us to prevent it

from being subject to external factors such as the war in Ukraine and the impact of the pandemic. It was important to live in a sustainable way and the report showed that the Authority was taking these things seriously.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet agree that the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 is a key element of the Council's wider Environmental Policy Statement, which commits the Council to strengthen the work being undertaken to maintain, protect and enhance the environment through a broad range of policies and activities, including active travel, nature recovery, planning, procurement, public health/disease control and general environmental services provision;
- (b) Cabinet agree that the Climate Change Action Plan will include a focus on greenhouse gas reduction and climate change resilience through nature in collaboration with the Council's strategies for wider ecology and biodiversity issues;
- (c) Cabinet agree to restate the Carbon Neutral target for the county by 2030 and clarify that it refers to carbon dioxide only;
- (d) Cabinet agree a new target to work with Government and other key stakeholders 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;
- (e) Cabinet agree that the local and regional adaptation response to the risks and impacts of a changing climate be included in the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26;
- (f) Cabinet agree a new target to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, a strategy for which will be developed as part of the new Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26;
- (g) Cabinet agree that the scope of the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 continues to only include direct, territorial emissions (i.e. those produced in Northumberland) as its focus for projects but that it should do more to raise awareness amongst stakeholders of scope 3 (indirect) emissions (i.e. those produced outside of Northumberland) and how they can be reduced; and
- (h) Cabinet agree the core structure of the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 including a commitment to set out a strategy for planning in relation to the climate change targets.

42. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Strengthened Biodiversity Duty and Reporting Obligations

The report set out the Council's new obligations to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to report on such actions, and proposed a 'first

consideration' of such actions as required under S.40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended (Appendix C).

The Leader presented the report.

Councillor Wearmouth commented that this set the policy for the Council but also presented a real area of opportunity. There were lots of positives for the environment from this. It allowed the creation of new areas of habitat and also represented a significant financial opportunity for the County in areas of work where the Council had already taken a pioneering role, which had put the Authority in a strong early position.

RESOLVED that Cabinet accept the document attached to the report as a record of the Council's first consideration of actions the Council can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with S.40 (1C) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended, which will then be used by Officers to develop an implementation plan.

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

Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme

The report sought approval for the local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024-25 to continue to provide support at a maximum level of 92% of council tax liability (Appendix D).

Councillor Wearmouth presented the report. The Leader commented that additional funding had been available in the last budget for those who needed extra support, and this would again be part of next year's budget considerations.

RESOLVED that County Council be recommended to approve the Council Tax Support Scheme attached as Appendix 1 to be adopted as the Council's local scheme for 2024-25.

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

Corporate Feedback Performance 2022/2023

The Annual Report reviewed the operation of the complaints process over twelve months (01.04.2022 to 31.03.2023), including statistical data, and provided the local authority with how it keeps itself informed about the effectiveness of its current arrangements for handling customer complaints. The same statutory reporting framework does not govern the Corporate Complaint process as Adults and Children's Complaints; however, it is deemed best practice to provide an analysis of Corporate Complaints received from customers (Appendix E).

Councillor Wearmouth presented the report. Whilst the report highlighted complaints, he stressed this had to be placed in context against the millions

of interactions with the public on an annual basis, and very few complaints got to the Ombudsman. This reflected well on the Council's staff.

The Leader agreed and commended the Authority for its transparency in how it dealt with these issues, which seemed to be rare.

RESOLVED that the findings of the report on complaint handling within the authority be noted.

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

Corporate Performance Quarter 1 2023-24

The report provided a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 1, 2023/24 (Q1) (Appendix F).

The report was presented by Councillor Wearmouth, who highlighted the key points.

Councillor Pattison expressed support for the apprenticeship programme, particularly for graduates, and hoped to see more of that coming through.

Councillor Horncastle referred to the green indicators on items such as street cleanliness, dog fouling, green flag park status which were to be welcomed. It was good that the Administration had pledged to continue improvements to these areas. Staff were out in all weathers making sure that service standards were maintained and he asked the Executive Directors to take back Cabinet's thanks to the front line staff.

RESOLVED that progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in the report be noted.

46. 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 (Appendix G).

46.1 Kylee House CCTV Upgrade

RESOLVED that:

(a) Cabinet approve the receipt of the capital grant of £0.221 million from the Department for Education (DfE); and

(b) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include the funding and spend.

46.2 Replacement of Boating Pontoon in Wansbeck Riverside Park

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the proposed spend on the Boating Pontoon and amend the Capital Programme in 2023-24. Note that the project will be wholly grant funded under an agreement with Cambois Rowing Club.

46.3 Highways Laboratory Expansion

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet approve the expenditure of the £0.615 million which is already included in the MTFP under Highways Laboratory Expansion project; and
- (b) Cabinet note that a portion of the allocation will be slipped into financial year 2024-25. This is currently anticipated to be 50% but will be dependent on the date of approval.

46.4 North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet note the agreement for the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) to release BSIP capital funding to assist scheme promoters with development of the programme;
- (b) Cabinet approve the BSIP capital funding to develop the “Bus Priority Infrastructure – Tranche 1” programme; and
- (c) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include £0.121 million funding from Transport North East (TNE) to enable development of the BSIP Tranche 1 programme.

46.5 Parks Enhancement Capital Programme

(1) Cleasewell Hill Park

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Approve capital expenditure of up to £0.240 million for the refurbishment scheme at Cleasewell Hill Park;
- (b) Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.200 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme and £0.040 million contribution from Choppington Parish Council which has been agreed in principle subject to formal approval; and
- (c) Note that if funding of £0.040 million from Choppington Parish Council is not received works will be scaled back and expenditure will be limited to £0.200 million.

(2) Gallagher Park

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet approve capital expenditure totalling £0.019 million for car park repairs, overflow provision and fencing at Gallagher Park; and

(b) Cabinet approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.010 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme and £0.009 million from Cllr Robinson, Cllr Taylor, and Cllr Wilciezk's Members' Local Improvement Scheme funds.

(3) Plessey Woods – Bouldering Park

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet approve capital expenditure totalling £0.159 million for Plessey Woods Bouldering Park; and

(b) Cabinet approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.088 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme, £0.067 million from Section 106 contributions and £0.005 million from Cllr Robinson's Members' Local Improvement Scheme funds.

46.6 Strategic Regeneration Investment

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet accept grant funding to establish the Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme as follows, noting that the establishment of the programme and projects below was previously agreed by Cabinet in February 2023:

- Accept grant funding of £4.810 million including £2.000 million capital and £2.810 million revenue for the Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS).
- Approve the addition of the £2.000 million capital funding to the Capital Programme in line with the three-year funding profile further in the report.
- Accept grant funding of £3.510 million including £1.543 million capital and £1.967 million revenue for the Rural Asset Multiplier Programme (RAMP).
- Approve the addition of the £1.543 million capital funding to the Capital Programme in line with the three-year funding profile further in the report.

(b) Cabinet approve the below projects and the reallocation of capital funds of £0.600 million in 2023-24 from the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2). The Strategic Regeneration Projects budget will reallocate £0.600 million to the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) project in 2024-25. Note that the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) does not require the funds in 2023-24 due to slippage in the project delivery.

- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.500 million in 2023-24 for Hexham HSHAZ Public Realm Scheme.

- Approve the creation of a new capital project in 2023-24 for the Berwick Gateway and approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.050 million in 2023-24 for the Berwick Gateway.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.010 million in 2023-24 for the detailed design of the Royal Border Bridge Floodlighting Scheme.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.020 million in 2023-24 to finalise the successful Rural Business Growth Service project.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.020 million in 2023-24 for the detailed design of the Alnwick Cobbles Streetscaping scheme.

46.7 Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet approve the proposed spend of £2.550 million for the Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot and note the funding of £2.550 million from the national Nature for Climate (NfC) fund; and

(b) Cabinet approve the inclusion of an additional £2.550 million (2023-24 £1.500 million and 2024-25 £1.050 million) in the capital programme.

47. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTHY LIVES

Delegate Authority to Award Leisure Contract

The report sought permission to delegate authority to enable the contract award of the Northumberland Community Leisure and Well-being Service to the preferred bidder, following final evaluation by the panel (Appendix H).

RESOLVED that Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities in consultation with the Leader, also Portfolio Holder for Environment and Local Services, the Deputy Leader, also Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives, the Director of Law and Corporate Governance and the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources to award and enter into a contract for the Northumberland Community and Wellbeing Service with the preferred bidder.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

12th December 2023

Budget 2024-25 – Draft Engagement Document

Report of Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader of Council

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

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are aligned to the three priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26: Achieving Value for Money; Tackling Inequalities and Driving Economic Growth.

2. Purpose of report

This report sets out the draft Budget Engagement document for 2024-25 (Appendix 1).

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- Agree the Draft Budget Engagement Document as the basis for consultation with residents, business and partners on the 2024-25 Budget proposals.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The report was added to the Forward Plan on 17th November 2023.

5. Background

Engagement and consultation are an important part of planning and delivering services that meet people's needs. The Council has a statutory duty to consult on its budget proposals with businesses in Northumberland. In addition, the Council consults with residents and stakeholder groups on its budget proposals. We use this to inform the annual budget setting process.

The Council will undertake budget consultation from December 2023 to January 2024 to allow for full discussion and debate with: all political groups and their Leaders, local area councils; parish and town councils; and, with staff and the unions. This will include an on-line question and answer session with the Leader of the Council.

- 5.1 We plan to use this Budget Engagement document (draft attached at Appendix 1) to inform residents and stakeholders and help them to participate fully in Budget engagement. Alongside this, there will be a summary questionnaire for stakeholder to complete.

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

- 6.1 Whilst the Council has the option not to engage residents and stakeholders during the Budget setting process, this would not be considered good practice and runs counter to transparency. We therefore do not consider this a viable option.

7. Implications

Policy	Budget Engagement helps to inform the Council’s Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan
Finance and value for money	Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, engagement helps to inform the Council’s Budget which will be detailed in a separate report to Cabinet.
Legal	Whilst there are no legal implications arising directly from this report, engagement helps to inform the Council’s Budget which will be detailed in a separate report to Cabinet.
Procurement	There are no specific Procurement implications within this report.
Human resources	There are no specific HR implications within this report.
Property	There are no specific Property implications within this report.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	There are no specific Equalities implications within this report, although this helps to inform the Council’s Budget which will be detailed in the separate report to Cabinet. No EIA is required for this report as no change of services is proposed.
Risk assessment	There are no specific risk implications within this report.
Crime and disorder	There are no specific crime implications within this report.
Customer considerations	There are no specific customer implications within this report.

Carbon reduction	There are no specific carbon reduction implications within this report.
Health and wellbeing	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications within this report.
Wards	All (All Wards);

8. Background papers

N/A

9. Links to other key reports already published

Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-28

10. Author and Contact Details

Jan Willis, Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)
Email: jan.willis@northumberland.gov.uk

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CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OSC

REPORT TO CABINET

12 DECEMBER 2023

OSC - Budget Consultation 2024-25

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council presented the report to the Committee on 27 November 2023. Phil Hunter, Director of Strategy and Communications was also in attendance to assist with any queries from members.

He reported that the document circulated with the agenda was a draft of an engagement paper that would be available for those who wish to engage with the budget on a deeper level. The document would sit alongside a shorter questionnaire. The Authority would encourage participation with the consultation through different avenues including social media.

There would also be consultations on the budget through Local Area Committee meetings in January 2024, all scrutiny member meeting and a live Q&A session with the Leader and residents/businesses online. Members had also attended policy conferences on the budget in July and September 2023. It was also highlighted that the Authority would meet with a number of representative groups including the FSB and chambers of commerce to consult with businesses.

The Leader assisted by Phil Hunter responded to the Committee's comments as follows:

- An assurance was given that the questionnaire could seek residents' views on whether they felt they were getting value for money.
- There were concerns that small businesses not affiliated with an association could be missed from the consultation. The Leader highlighted that a new service had been introduced in the Council to enhance the provisions to small businesses.
- There would be some minor modifications to the questions from previous surveys.
- It was acknowledged that paper copies of the surveys could be put in community hubs and libraries for the residents that are not computer literate.

The Committee resolved to note the report and that Cabinet be advised of the comments as set out above.

COUNCILLOR DAVID BAWN

CHAIRMAN

Budget 2024-25: Engagement Document (DRAFT)



Contents

Introduction

Page xx

Background to the Council's finances

Page xx

Options for achieving a balanced budget

Page xx

Service proposals

Page xx

1. Introduction

Each year the Council must set a balanced budget, which sets out funding for its services as well as its plans for investing. The budget must also take account of new cost-pressures as well as making sure all its services are as efficient as possible. The Council's budget setting process is happening now.

Have your say on the Council's budget proposals

It is important that we consider your views on the budget because the Council exists to serve you and your communities. From Tuesday December 12th, 2023 until the 26th January 2024 you can give your views in an online questionnaire.

This document sets out key budget proposals – its purpose is to inform Members, residents and partners, and help them engage with the Council's budget-setting.

As part of the consultation the Council is also planning an online event in the New Year where residents can ask the Leader of the Council questions on services and the budget. Look out for details of this on the Council's Web Home Page.

This consultation runs for six weeks until 26th January 2024 with the Budget due to go before Full Council in February 2024. Once you have read this document you can have your say in the budget survey via the following link:

[WEBLINK TO BE ADDED]

How we use your data

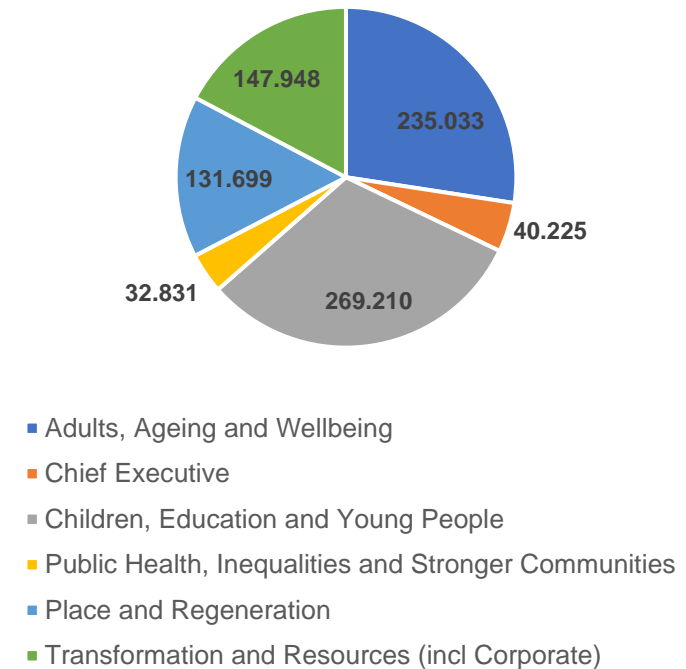
Northumberland County Council is the data controller of the information collected by us. The information collected will enable us to obtain feedback and valuable insights on the 2024-25 budget planning process. We will not provide your personal information to any external organisation or individual unless it is lawful to do so. For example, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the prevention and/or detection of crime, where sharing is covered by a data sharing agreement or Service Level Agreement (SLA), or where you have provided explicit consent to do so. Personal data will be held securely, then destroyed in line with retention schedules. The Council's retention schedules, and Privacy Notice can be found on the website - www.northumberland.gov.uk

2. Background to the Council's finances

In February 2023, Northumberland County Council agreed a balanced budget for the financial year 2023-24. The budget took account of the financial settlement from Government as well as the wider financial context, including significant price increases in the supplies we use to deliver services to residents.

Like most councils, our current budget sets out a range of efficiency measures and savings targets which are being delivered, even as we prepare the budget for next year. These measures ensure our services are value-for-money. However, in achieving this we will work hard to ensure residents and businesses do not experience cuts to their day-to-day services. As part of the budget setting process for 2023-24, the Council's Interim Executive Director of Finance was satisfied that the Council set a viable budget and confirmed that the Council had the required financial strength within its reserves to cope with any anticipated financial challenge.

Baseline Gross Budget 2023-24 (£m)



The Corporate Plan and the Council's Budget

Our vision and priorities

“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 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: value for money; tackling inequalities; and driving economic growth.

Our Corporate vision and priorities underpin the Council's budget and shape how we deliver all of our services and functions.

The Council's revenue budget

Councils have four main sources of revenue, namely:

- Council Tax;
- Government grants;
- Business Rates; and
- Fees and charges for services.

Unlike Government, our ability to raise other forms of taxes or income is very limited and we cannot borrow money to finance day-to-day spending on Council services. We use our 'revenue budget' to meet the cost of day-to-day spending such as salaries, supplies and services.

Some of the funding we receive is 'ringfenced' to fund certain service or one-off projects such as for Public Health initiatives. This means that when the money is given, there are conditions attached stating how it can be spent. We can only use it for that purpose. It's for this reason that funding from some grants cannot be re-allocated to other service areas (e.g. from major road improvement schemes to libraries). The running costs of schools is included within the Council's revenue budget, but this funding is protected and therefore cannot be taken for savings.

Our approach to budget setting

Councils are required by law to deliver a balanced budget and so cannot spend more than is available. In previous budget consultations and budget monitoring reports we have mentioned growing demand for services such as social care for vulnerable children and adults and inflation as 'budget pressures'. These trends continue. The Council has a track record for managing its finances well and is high-performing in key services such as Children's and Adults' Services as well as School Improvement.

Our financial strategy is based on the following outcomes from our Corporate Plan priorities:

(i) Best customer experience

- Continuing the improvement in our customer contact.

- Encouraging more residents to use digital to contact & transact with us whilst maintaining other 'channels' of customer contact available.
- (ii) Making the best spending decisions**
- Making 'every penny count' – using our purchasing power and ensuring an efficient 'back office'.
 - Making long-term, sustainable funding decisions and maintaining a prudent level of reserves.
 - Ensuring a sustainable tax-base, and maximising use of external funding streams.
 - Spending local.
 - Achieving efficiencies and better ways of doing things from our service reviews, using benchmarking to ensure value for money in services.
 - Maximising income and covering costs where it is fair and sensible to do so.
- (iii) Working better, more efficiently**
- Ensuring our 'back office' is as efficient and effective as possible.
 - Making the best possible use of our estate – making sure our land and buildings are fit for purpose and are run efficiently.
- (iv) Making a difference with digital**
- Making sure the Council's IT systems are joined up and fit for purpose to provide the best services to residents.

- Encouraging more use of digital services and access for our residents.

(v) Empowered and resilient communities

- Continuing to support households in need of help and helping communities to do more through for example our Communities Together Team and support to voluntary and community groups.

(vi) Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well

- Ensuring our statutory services to children and families continue to be top performing, investing in prevention to manage demand in the medium to long-term.
- Continuing to invest in facilities that young people and families value most e.g. new and refurbished school buildings and leisure facilities.
- Supporting School Improvement – maintaining the very positive levels of primary and secondary school performance.

(vii) All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability

- Continuing to prioritise our statutory services to the adults who need our help most and helping them to live independently and have choice and control over their lives.
- Investing in our communities to build resilience and capacity.

(viii) Residents have the building blocks of a good life

Budget Engagement 2024-25

- Continuing to support households through Northumberland Communities Together.
- Continuing to help people into jobs including playing our own part as an employer e.g. through our commitment to apprenticeships and our graduate recruitment scheme.

(ix) Thriving places and culture

- Protecting frontline, local services which keep neighbourhoods clean, safe and pleasant places to live and do business.
- Investing in regeneration in towns.
- Improving our walking and cycling paths.

(x) A diverse and resilient economy

- Agreeing an ambitious Capital Programme to create the conditions for economic growth.
- Continuing our commitment to supporting local economies in town centres.
- Investing in our rural economy through the 'Borderlands Plan'.
- Ensuring we continue to maximise the benefit for Northumberland businesses and residents from the new Combined Authority.

(xi) Skilled and aspirational people

- Supporting adult skills and learning – in partnership with the Combined Authority and other providers.

(xii) A connected county

- Continuing to invest in maintaining and improving our roads.
- Driving ahead with work on the Northumberland line.
- Supporting roll out of Superfast Broadband across the County.

(xiii) Protecting and enhancing our environment

- Continuing investment in parks and green spaces.
- Protecting the local services residents and businesses value.
- Continuing our commitment to addressing Climate Change.

Budget pressures

Like many councils, Northumberland faces, ongoing financial pressures, in particular:

- Rapidly increasing cost in all of our supplies and services which we need to absorb in order to continue delivering day-to-day services. Increasing demands on Children's and Education budgets.
- Increasing demand for care and support to vulnerable adults and older people.

Alongside dealing with these specific pressures, the expectations of our residents and businesses have not diminished. In fact, we are responding to changing demands as some residents opt for new ways of interacting with the Council and more personalised services, whilst others prefer traditional forms of contact.

Capital budget pressures

For every £1 million the Council borrows, the cost to the revenue budget is currently approximately £0.088 million if the borrowing is over 20 to 30 years. The Council is facing rapid increases in interest rates and that means we have to review our Capital Programme as the cost of borrowing is significantly higher than originally anticipated. This may involve some capital projects being deferred or reduced in scope or 'value engineered' to reduce costs. However, overall, the Council remains committed to an ambitious programme of investing for the future in infrastructure, facilities and equipment.

In response to these pressures, all services have been asked to consider all savings that could be made.

3. Options for achieving a balanced budget

Options that could contribute towards balancing the budget are outlined below. Given the range of services we deliver alongside legal requirements there is no single solution. Instead, a blended approach to these options needs to be considered.

1. **Making the case to Government for sustainable funding for local services** – our ability to deliver high-quality local services within a balanced budget depends largely on grant funding from Government. We continue to make the case to Government, alongside other councils, for sustainable funding for local services. We focus our case to Government on funding growth and pressures in Adults and Children’s Services as these are services to the most vulnerable people in our communities, but we are also making the case for day-to-day services that are important for everyone such as roads for example.
2. **Using the County Council’s reserves** – the Council has been prudent in setting aside reserves from previous years which we have used to ‘invest to save’, manage budget shortfalls in-year as well as responding to unforeseen events and trends such as the recent inflationary pressures on supplies and services. However, continuing to use reserves to bridge the budget gap is not a sustainable option because the use of reserves does not address underlying budget pressures. If we continue to use reserves to meet budget pressures, we will quickly exhaust our reserves. This will result in two things: firstly we will not have reserves with which to respond to unforeseen events;

and, secondly, unless changes are made, the budget pressures in services will persist, threatening the Council’s overall budget position.

3. **Using of grants** – the Council receives specific, external grants for services and investment. Most of these grants come from Government and are usually ‘ringfenced’ which means the Council is required to spend them on certain services in specific ways. However, there is often some, limited flexibility in grant conditions and where these flexibilities exist, we will think about smarter ways of using grants to secure the best services and outcomes for residents.
4. **Generating income** - The Council can raise commercial income to fund services and help with costs, e.g. through renting property. When we sell assets such as land and buildings, we can only use the receipts for one-off capital projects and not for funding day-to-day services. There are limits to how much income we can make, not least ensuring we cover costs, so we are not putting pressure on core budgets and services. The Council is not generally allowed to make a profit from traded services.

We also have the option to cover the costs of some services by asking the people who use them to pay fees and charges. Whilst this only impacts residents who are using and benefiting from the services, this is not a choice we make lightly – we know many residents’ household budgets have also been squeezed by rising costs and we want to avoid wherever possible adding to those pressures. We already charge for some services though the vast majority of our services are free at the point of use.

5. **Management of vacancies** – the Council has over 5,000 staff so, at any given time there will always be vacant posts across our services as people move on to other jobs inside and outside the organisation or reach retirement. Whenever there are vacant posts in any service, we encourage managers to consider the options. Could they delete the vacant post as a budget saving with no adverse impact on services to residents? Might they delay filling the vacant posts as part of budget management? Are there opportunities to discuss shared cover with other services? In some cases, there will be a pressing need to fill a vacancy to deliver critical care services and managers are supported to do that.
6. **Changes to services** – Our residents, businesses and partners value the services we provide. But they also expect us to think about how we might modernise these services keeping up with changes in society and technology as well as changing demands and expectations from customers. They also, rightly expect we will always strive to ensure our services are as efficient and cost-effective as they can be. We do all of that through a range of approaches including:
 - (i) **Our new ‘BEST’ ways of working** – now and moving forward into the coming months and years the Council is re-thinking how we deliver services, where there are potential overlaps and duplication and how we harness exciting new technologies to provide residents with what they want and at better value for money. Our budget proposals set out a number of BEST reviews.
 - (ii) **Completing existing service reviews** – prior to the launch of our ‘BEST’ ways of working, we already had a number of service reviews underway. As part of the budget proposals for 2024-25 we will complete and implement these reviews.
 - (iii) **Ensuring we get best value from our contracts** – where the Council contracts with businesses and external organisations, residents expect us to continue to review our contracts, ensuring we are buying the products and services at the best possible prices.
 - (iv) **Making Straightforward efficiencies** – where there are simple and straightforward efficiencies, we can make which don’t require in-depth reviews or contract negotiations, we will get on with taking these – that is just common-sense.
 - (v) **Managing demand** – this may involve thinking of ways to safely reduce demand for some services, or ‘smoothing’ peaks and troughs in demand so that pressures on services and budgets are more predictable during the year and we avoid budget overspends wherever possible. Managing demand is important for higher-cost services such as care to adults and children. But this is not straightforward as these are services which help some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Managing demand can involve providing support in different ways – for example helping some families earlier so they don’t need more intensive and high-cost support further down the line.

Budget Engagement 2024-25

- (vi) **Reductions to services** – the Council has worked hard in recent years to avoid service reductions and will continue to do so through these budget proposals. Generally, the Council will only propose reductions in services as a last resort. In these budget proposals, only £13k of service reductions are proposed - a tiny proportion of the Council's overall spend on services.

4. Service proposals

Place and Regeneration

What we deliver for residents and businesses:

Our roads and highways are critical to the lives of our residents, businesses and visitors. They ensure people can get to work or education easily and safely as well as able to access all the amenities and attractions Northumberland has to offer. Our Street Cleansing service ensure safe and clean neighbourhoods. Our vibrant towns and attractions across the county require well-maintained car parks and effective management of parking to keep our roads moving and ensure fair access for everyone. Our paths and cycleways support and encourage people to live healthily and do their bit for the environment. And let's not forget about public conveniences. In a county as large as ours, with fantastic beaches and open spaces we all value a network of well-maintained public toilets.

Access to good-quality and affordable housing options are basic 'building blocks' for the lives of all residents. Equally, residents and visitors want to enjoy well-maintained country parks and open spaces which give them access to nature and opportunities for healthy living. They also want all our open spaces to be attractive and well-maintained. Our residents and businesses expect their bins to be collected reliably and efficiently but, they also want opportunities to recycle and reduce waste too.

One of the Council's three corporate priorities is to drive growth and jobs because having vibrant and growing businesses and well-paid, good quality jobs for our residents is the best way of tackling inequalities in Northumberland.

The Council, working with Government, the Combined Authority, partners and businesses has a vital role to play in: creating the conditions for businesses to flourish; attracting new investors to the County; building the infrastructure needed to support a modern economy; and ensuring our residents have the skills businesses need now and in the future. We do all of this through:

1. Supporting business start-up and growth;
2. Regenerating communities;
3. Investing in towns and villages; and,
4. Investing in jobs and skills development.

Current Revenue Service budget

The Council spends some £131.7 million delivering these services.

Budget pressures

- Significant inflationary increases are being experienced in relation to capital contracts as it becomes more expensive to build or repair everything from roads to buildings.
- These services are particularly impacted by rising energy costs and prices for supplies and services.
- Like all services, Place and Regeneration budgets are impacted by pay inflation.

Investing in the future

In the coming year we propose continuing to invest in the future of the County through our 'capital programme', including in:

- Powburn Depot Recycling Facility;
- Regenerating towns, including Cramlington;
- Parks Enhancement / Green Spaces Programme
- Roads

What we are proposing to do differently

In these services, we propose to contribute to a balanced budget through the following measures:

- Generating new and additional income of £0.210 million
- Delivering efficiencies of £0.729 million
- Delivering contract savings of £0.010 million
- Delivering savings from BEST value for money reviews of £0.642 million

In summary these proposals will contribute £1.591 million towards the Council's balanced budget from a total budget for these services of £131.7 million.

What will these changes mean for people?

These proposals are substantially about generating additional income, delivering efficiencies, securing the best value for

money in our contracts and doing things better and more efficiently through BEST reviews.

Proposals for proportionate increases to charges for some services will not result in any reduction in levels of service to customers. In fact, these charges will help us to maintain current levels of service at a time of rising costs. These services are optional – not all residents choose to use them, and alternatives are available to residents who do not wish to pay increased charges.

What we are not proposing

In putting together these proposals we have considered a wide range of options but have ruled out the following:

- Introducing new car parking charges. In places where there is currently a free parking offer – such as our main town centres – we will maintain that offer.
- Introducing charges for public conveniences. These facilities encourage our residents to enjoy all of Northumberland and so will remain free to use.

Questions to consider:

Budget Engagement 2024-25

1. Is it fair to ask residents and visitors to the County to pay modest increases in charges for services that are optional and where there are alternatives?
2. Are residents and businesses happy for the Council to get on with making sensible, cost and contract efficiencies where these don't result in noticeable reductions in service standards?
3. Are there any reductions in these services that you would be prepared to accept?
4. Do you have other potential savings, efficiencies or ideas for income generation?

Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities

What we deliver for people:

The Council is passionate about tackling the inequalities that exist between our most and least affluent areas. That is why one of our three core priorities is to tackle inequalities, backed by our Inequalities Plan and a commitment to work in new and more effective ways with partners to address this important issue. Building on the experience of the Equality Impact Assessment process we are working towards an Integrated Impact Assessment approach where we consider the impact of our decisions not only on our Public Sector Equality Duty, but on our key commitments to reduce inequalities and our impact on the environment. The work to tackle social and economic inequalities is bolstered by providing direct services to support public health improvement for people who need more intensive support, including for example, support to stop smoking or dealing with drugs and alcohol issues.

We also work through the Council's 'Communities Together' team to build community resilience, helping local people to get more involved in their neighbourhoods and take more decisions locally. This includes the Council working with voluntary and community sector groups (VCS) and funding them to provide services too and we will look for opportunities to work in new and different ways with the VCS going forward.

In previous years, the Council has supported some of the lowest income households with a local Council Tax Support scheme. Given the cost-of-living pressures on households we propose to continue this scheme in 2024-25.

Equally important to all our residents are the arts and culture services we provide directly or help fund such as local theatres and festivals for all to enjoy. And don't forget, the Council continues to maintain a network of libraries across the County as well as investing in high-quality leisure centres – at a time when, sadly, neighbouring councils are having to close down key facilities. We know investing in facilities, arts and culture are the lifeblood of our towns and villages and are also good for the visitor economy.

Current Revenue Service budget

The Council spends some £32.8 million delivering these services.

Budget pressures

- These services are impacted by rising energy costs and prices for supplies and services.
- Like all services, these budgets are impacted by pay inflation.

Investing in the future

In the coming year we propose continuing to invest in the future of the county through our 'capital programme', including in:

- A mobile Library Service vehicle.

Budget Engagement 2024-25

What we are proposing to do differently

In these services, we propose to contribute to a balanced budget through the following measures:

- Delivering contract savings of £0.200 million
- Delivering savings from BEST value for money reviews of £0.500 million
- In summary these proposals will contribute £0.700 million towards the Council's balanced budget from a total budget for these services of £32.8 million. No service reductions in these services are proposed.

What will these changes mean for customers?

These proposals are not service reductions and should help us to deliver services which our residents want now and in the future.

What we are not proposing

In putting together these proposals we have considered a wide range of options but have ruled out the following:

- Stepping back from our commitment to high-quality leisure facilities and provision.
- Cutting back in our Library provision in the ways some other councils have had to do in recent years.

Questions to consider:

1. Are residents and businesses happy for the Council to get on with making sensible, cost and contract efficiencies where these don't result in noticeable reductions in service standards?
2. Are there any reductions in these services that you would be prepared to accept?
3. Do you have other potential savings, efficiencies or ideas for income generation?
4. Do you agree with the proposal to continue the local council tax support scheme in 2024-25?

Children, Young People and Education

What we deliver for families:

We ensure the County's children and young people go to school in good-quality facilities and most importantly our Teachers and Head Teachers are supported to maintain and improve education opportunities and attainment for our young people. We also support young people and adults to develop the skills they need to fulfil their employment aspirations. Alongside education and skills, we provide support to families who need our help most, providing advice and guidance for parents and young people to make the best choices in their lives through our Family Hubs and other provision. In some cases, where families cannot cope and when young people are at risk, the Council has to 'step in' and look after some children, acting as a 'corporate parent'.

Current Revenue Service budget

The Council spends some £269.2 million on these services (including schools funding).

Budget pressures

- New children's homes that are being built / acquired to keep Northumberland children in the county which will in turn reduce the cost of out of county placements.
- Additional funding required for short break services for disabled children.
- The increased pressure resulting from a mandatory inflationary increase of 12.50% introduced by the

Department for Education for foster care and special guardianship allowances.

- A significant increase in funding is required for external residential placements as the needs of the children are complex and the placements costly.

Investing in the future

In the coming year we propose continuing to invest in the future of the County through our 'capital programme', including in:

- Our programme of school investment.
- Housing for disabled children.

What we are proposing to do differently

In these services, we propose to contribute to a balanced budget through the following measures:

- Delivering contract savings of £0.1 million
- Making best use of grants of £0.887 million
- Safely managing demand for services of £0.606 million
- Delivering savings from BEST value for money reviews of £0.136 million
- Making straightforward and sensible efficiencies of £0.100 million
- Delivering service reviews of £0.156 million
- Effectively managing staff vacancies of £0.099 million

Budget Engagement 2024-25

- In summary these proposals will contribute £2.084 million towards the Council's balanced budget from a total budget for these services of £269.2 million. No service reductions in these services are proposed.

What will these changes mean for families and young people?

- Our proposals will save money to help sustain services. There should be no adverse impact in service provision and indeed these proposals will deliver benefits to young people and families.
- Using grants to sustain services is simply a smarter use of Government funding with no reductions for existing services. Completing service reviews will deliver more effective services.
- Managing staff vacancies are a sensible way of saving staff budgets which empower managers to make the right decisions.
- Delivering contract savings should not impact adversely on service standards and are a way of ensuring best value for money in the Council's 'supply chain'.

- Re-thinking our commitment to investment in rebuilding and refurbishing our schools. The Council will progress its programme of investing school facilities for our young people.

Questions to consider:

1. Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for services to children and young people? If yes, what are these?
2. Are you happy for the Council to get on with making sensible, cost efficiencies where these don't result in noticeable reductions in service standards?
3. Are there any reductions in services for children and young people that you would be prepared to accept?
4. Do you have other potential savings, efficiencies or ideas for income generation?

What we are not proposing

In putting together these proposals we have considered a wide range of options but have ruled out the following:

Budget 2024-25: Engagement

Adults

What we deliver for adults:

We provide help, care and support for adults who need our help most, including services for older people, disabled adults or adults with long-term illness. We do this through direct care and support as well as commissioning care and support services to meet the needs of our residents. We also support independent living, helping older people to live happily in their homes and communities for as long as possible. And we provide grant support for the voluntary and community sector for their work with adults who need care and support.

Current Revenue Service budget

The Council spends some £235 million on these services.

Budget pressures

- The Real Living Wage has been included for Social Care contract budgets across the Medium-Term-Financial-Plan period.
- These services are impacted by rising energy costs and prices for supplies and services.
- Like all services, these budgets are impacted by pay inflation.

What we are proposing to do differently

In these services, we propose to contribute to a balanced budget through the following measures:

- Making best use of grants of £0.09 million
- Safely managing demand for services of £3 million
- Delivering savings from BEST value for money reviews of £0.057 million
- Making straightforward and sensible efficiencies of £0.277 million
- Generating new and additional income of £0.206 million
- In summary these proposals will contribute £3.63 million towards the Council's balanced budget from a total budget for these services of £235 million. No service reductions in these services are proposed.

What will these changes mean for people?

- Our proposals will identify ways people's needs can be better managed, increasing their independence, providing more personalised and less formal care as well as reducing costs. They will lead to better integrated responses to individual needs.
- These proposals will also reduce delays in assessing or reviewing what charges people will be asked to pay as well as making smarter use of grants and managing vacant posts which are no longer needed because of changes in the way services are provided.

What we are not proposing

Budget Engagement 2024-25

In putting together these proposals we have considered a wide range of options but have ruled out the following:

- Reducing services for vulnerable adults who need our help.
- Making steep increases in charges.

Questions to consider:

1. Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for services to adults? If yes, what are these?
2. Are you happy for the Council to get on with making sensible, cost efficiencies where these don't result in noticeable reductions in service standards?
3. Are there any reductions in services for adults that you would be prepared to accept?
4. Do you have other potential savings, efficiencies or ideas for income generation?

Enabling services

What we deliver for people and businesses

Like all councils, we require a range of professional and technical services which support and enable our frontline teams to deliver efficient and effective day-to-day services. These enabling services include for example human resources, finance, legal services, audit and risk. These types of services are often known as the 'back office' and will naturally be less visible to residents, though these play a vital role in enabling 'frontline' teams to do their jobs.

Investing in the future

In the coming year we propose continuing to invest in the future of the county through our 'capital programme', including in:

- The Council's Network Infrastructure Modernisation.
- Fire & Rescue Service Fire Control Upgrade / Replacement.

What we are proposing to do differently

In these services, we propose to contribute to a balanced budget through the following measures:

- Delivering savings from BEST value for money reviews of £2.296 million
- Making straightforward and sensible efficiencies of £0.085 million

- Generating new and additional income of £0.101 million
- Delivering contract savings of £0.295 million
- Effectively managing staff vacancies of £0.077 million
- In summary these proposals will contribute £2.854 million towards the Council's balanced budget. No service reductions in these services are proposed.

What will these changes mean for people?

These proposals will not impact adversely on our residents and the Council's enabling services will continue to provide support to frontline teams.

Questions to consider:

1. Do you have concerns on any of the budget proposals outlined for these services? If yes, what are these?
2. Do you have other potential savings, efficiencies or ideas for income generation?

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2028

Report of Councillor: Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources

Responsible Officer: Jan Willis, Executive Director for Transformation & Resources (S151)

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are aligned to the three priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26: Achieving Value for Money; Tackling Inequalities and Driving Economic Growth.

2. Purpose of report

This report provides an update on the development of the 2024-25 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period 2024 to 2028.

3. Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- 3.1 Review and note the revisions to the assumptions (and the risks) within the 2024-25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- 3.2 Note that further work is required to refine and finalise the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- 3.3 Note that the revenue implications of the Capital Programme are still to be updated.
- 3.4 Note that there are still budget balancing measures required to be identified over the term of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and that it is intended that budget balancing measures for the two years 2024-25 and 2025-26 are agreed at the full Council meeting on 21 February 2024.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The report first appeared in the forward plan on 13 November 2023. The report is presented to inform and update Members of progress with the Budget 2024-25 and

MTFP 2024-2028. It has not been possible to provide this update earlier as there were too many unknowns. At this point in time no decision is required.

5. Background

- 5.1 Local government is operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty brought about by ongoing significant budget pressures (including social care, special educational needs, and disability services), as well as other unfunded pressures arising from demographic and significant pay and price inflation as well as rising interest rates. The financial outlook for the Council will continue to be extremely challenging for the foreseeable future.
- 5.2 There continues to be significant uncertainty in terms of the financial settlement for local government and how the available funding will be distributed between local authorities through the funding formula.
- 5.3 On 19 December 2022 the Government announced a one-year settlement as part of its provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The settlement did however provide some certainty around some of the funding streams for 2024-25 (up to the end of the Spending Review period).
- 5.4 The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement also confirmed that the outcome of the Fair Funding Review and review of the Business Rates Retention system would be postponed by at least a further two years; resulting in implementation in 2025-26 at the earliest. In practice, it is likely that decisions on both will be postponed until after the next General Election the timing of which remains uncertain.
- 5.5 This level of uncertainty has made financial planning extremely difficult and requires the Council to be flexible and adaptable as it considers setting the 2024-25 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Robust financial planning arrangements within the Council will ensure that the Council is well placed to react effectively to any outcome. However, planning with this level of uncertainty is not conducive to effective long-term decision making.
- 5.6 To ensure the MTFP can be developed effectively, and savings targets delivered in time to produce a balanced budget, it is important that a robust plan and timetable is agreed and followed.
- 5.7 The current MTFP forecast, agreed by Council on 22 February 2023, covered the four-year period 2023-24 to 2026-27. It is recommended at this stage that the MTFP covers the four-year period 2024-25 to 2027-28 but with a focus on the detailed package of efficiencies for the next two years 2024-25 and 2025-26 in order that they can be progressed, and delivery of those efficiencies optimised. The budget and MTFP will be presented to full Council on 21 February 2024. Planning across the medium term in this way ensures that decisions can be made in the knowledge of the likely financial position of the Council and provides a basis for effective decision making whilst taking account of the best estimates of income and expenditure.
- 5.8 Details of the local government financial settlement are expected to be announced by Government in late December 2023. It is once again hoped that the settlement will cover more than one financial year, but at this stage that detail is not known. Work will continue on the MTFP to incorporate the outcome of the financial settlement, and this will be presented to full Council on 21 February 2024.
- 5.9 In line with previous practice the MTFP model has been reviewed and updated using a variety of assumptions for inflationary increases relating to Revenue Support Grant,

New Homes Bonus, Services Grant as well as different assumptions for the tax base and pay and price inflation. The estimated savings requirement based on these assumptions will be as follows over the life of the MTFP:

2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
10.859	18.543	19.908	14.920	64.230

- 5.10 The assumptions will continue to be reviewed as the MTFP is updated, and early identification and planning for savings required in the later years of the MTFP will be critical.
- 5.11 Savings proposals have been and will continue to be developed using the following principles:
- a) Setting a balanced budget over the life of the MTFP whilst maintaining modest and sustainable increases in Council Tax.
 - b) Investing to save; recognising that one-off resources can be used to generate future savings that will pay back the investment.
 - c) Ensuring that service and financial planning is fully aligned with the Corporate Plan.
 - d) Continuously reviewing services in order to keep reductions to front line services to a minimum.
 - e) Maintaining the Council's strong financial position so that it has sufficient reserves and balances to address any future risks and unforeseen events without jeopardising key services and delivery of outcomes.
 - f) Maintaining a commercial focus and maximising income generation while at the same time managing risk.
 - g) Ensuring the Council can demonstrate value for money in the delivery of its priorities.

5.12 **Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28**

The Medium-Term Financial Plan was presented to Council on 22 February 2023 when the budget was set for 2023-24. The report set out a number of assumptions and identified a gap of £54.071 million from 2023-24 to 2026-27.

The MTFP is currently being updated to cover the period 2024-25 to 2027-28. At this point in time and using the mid-case scenario and the assumptions detailed below, savings of £10.859 million will be required to balance the budget for 2024-25 and a further savings requirement of £18.543 million for 2025-26 and £34.828 million covering the period 2026-27 to 2027-28 has also been identified.

The plan will continue to be updated to reflect changing circumstances and a revised MTFP will be presented to the Cabinet for approval as the budget process develops.

5.13 **Review of the Medium-Term Financial Plan**

The financial outlook for the Council continues to be extremely challenging. The national finances are in a highly uncertain position due to the aftermath of Covid-19, the impact of the UK exit from the European Union, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and the resulting spike in energy prices, significant inflation, higher interest rates, volatile financial markets and the cost-of-living crisis. Although the latest headline rate of inflation has come down to 4.6%, the significant increases seen in recent years

are now to a large extent baked in, and inflationary pressures are expected to add around £40 million to the Council's cost base over the next 2 years.

The draft MTFP can currently be summarised as follows:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
FUNDING:				
Government Grants	(169.496)	(163.428)	(164.866)	(167.297)
Council Tax	(242.824)	(257.680)	(263.673)	(269.627)
Collection Fund Surplus	(7.271)	-	-	-
Use of Reserves	(19.448)	(11.638)	(0.100)	1.025
TOTAL FUNDING	(439.039)	(432.746)	(428.639)	(435.899)
EXPENDITURE:				
Baseline Budget	385.576	417.431	423.971	428.760
Inflation	21.862	19.283	15.570	15.390
Proposed Growth & Pressures	26.993	4.414	3.006	0.669
Revenue Cost of Capital	15.467	10.161	6.000	6.000
Budget Gap	(10.859)	(18.543)	(19.908)	(14.920)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(439.039)	(432.746)	(428.639)	(435.899)

The assumptions for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Budgets and MTFP are currently as follows:

- a) Revenue Support Grant (RSG) - that the Council will receive a government settlement including an appropriate inflationary increase over the period of the MTFP (CPI at the end of September was 6.70% and this is the increase that has been assumed for 2024-25). An inflationary increase of 2.00% has been assumed for the remaining three years of the MTFP.
- b) Rural Services Delivery Grant – a cash flat allocation of £2.456 million has been assumed for each year of the MTFP.
- c) New Homes Bonus (NHB) – The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2022 announced that there would be a new allocation for 2023-24 only and that the future of the NHB scheme would be announced in time for the 2024-25 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. It is forecast that £0.961 million will be received in both 2024-25 and 2025-26.
- d) Improved Better Care Funding – it has been assumed that there will be no increase or decrease in the Better Care Fund.
- e) Adult Social Care Grants - that additional funding (Social Care Grant) received for Adults and Children's Social Care in 2023-24 will become recurrent but there will be no increase, and, that the cost of adult social care reforms (Fair Cost of Care and charging reform) will be fully funded by the Government.
- f) Services Grant – a cash flat allocation of £2.787 million has been assumed for each year of the MTFP.

- g) Council Tax - the Government confirmed that the council tax referendum limit would be 3.00% for 2024-25 in the Local Government Finance Settlement. It is possible however that due to the current position of the Government's finances that the council tax referendum limit will be increased beyond 2.00%. for 2025-26. Therefore, a council tax increase of 2.99% has been assumed for 2024-25 and 2025-26 and it is assumed that the council tax referendum limit will revert to 2.00% from 2026-27 and the council tax increase has been assumed as 1.99% for the remaining two years of the MTFP.

The Council Tax Policy will be updated so that the council tax premium for empty homes commences after 1 year rather than 2 years.

The figures also assume that the legislation regarding 2nd homes premium is passed and is implemented with effect from 1 April 2025.

- h) Adult Social Care Precept - that an increase to the Adult Social Care Precept of 2.00% will be applicable for 2024-25 only.

- i) Council Tax and Business Rate Tax Base Increases - Regular reviews are carried out in relation to tax base forecasts. The tax base is impacted by new builds, the incidence of uptake of discounts and exemptions, with a further major variable being the impact of the local council tax support scheme. At this stage a slight increase in the tax base is forecast in each year as a result of growth from new developments over the lifetime of the MTFP period. The forecast for the tax base for 2024-25 will be closely monitored in the coming weeks in what is a very volatile area.

With regard to the council tax base the Council has assumed that losses on collection will continue to be 1.00%.

- j) Pay Inflation - The Real Living Wage (RLW) has been included for social care contract budgets across the MTFP period. An annual pay inflation allowance of 4.00% has also been included for pay costs across the MTFP. The final determination of these pay inflation factors will impact on the MTFP assumptions.

When the 2023-24 budget was set, inflation for all pay increases was included at 4.00%.

Pay negotiations for firefighters has concluded for years 2022-23 and 2023-24 and the increases were 7.00 and 5.00% respectively.

The agreed pay increase for staff on local government terms and conditions is now estimated to be between 9.50% for those on spinal column point (SCP) 1 and 3.88% for those on SCP 43 (and above) in the current financial year (2023-24) which equates to the employer's current offer of £1,925 for each grade (plus employer's oncosts). All staff on SCPs above SCP 43 will not receive the flat rate increase of £1,925 but will instead receive an increase equating to 3.88% of their basic salary. The overall average increase based on this offer equates to 5.26% for the Council.

All of the costs (actual and estimated) over and above 4.00% have been added as a recurrent pressure to the 2023-24 budget and MTFP.

- k) Non-Pay Inflation - Whilst they may have abated recently, significant increases in utility charges continue to be experienced nationally and this is applicable to local government and the Council too. Increases over and above "normal" inflationary increases will be funded from reserves for the first year of this MTFP. The MTFP assumes that inflationary increases for utilities return to "normal"

levels after this time. However, this will need to be kept under review as there is currently no clarity about what will happen with energy costs in the medium term.

Inflation is included within the 2024-25 budget relating to a number of other items. Some of the more significant revenue budget increases are as follows:

Budget	Inflationary Increase
	%
Electricity (above 2023-24 base)	48.00
External Audit Fee	6.70
Gas (above 2023-24 base)	98.00
Insurance	11.00

Significant inflationary increases are also being experienced in relation to capital contracts which will have an impact on the affordability of the capital programme.

Inflationary increases have also been applied to some income budgets. A full list of all fees and charges will be included in the full budget report in February 2024.

- I) Recurrent Pressures – recurrent pressures have been identified across the MTFP and can be categorised as follows:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Budget realignment	0.195	0.031	0.001	0.001
Children's Services pressures	3.419	0.415	-	-
Corporate pressures	0.527	-	-	-
Digital contracts	0.282	0.382	-	-
Fire & Rescue Service – overtime pressure	0.400	-	-	-
Home to School Transport (Not SEND)	0.400	-	-	-
Legislative Changes	0.676	0.202	0.389	-
Loss of grant/income pressures	0.759	0.030	0.030	0.030
Other	0.031	-	-	-
Pay inflation over and above the budgeted amount	3.209	-	-	-
Total Recurrent Pressures	9.898	1.060	0.420	0.031

The Children's Services figures relate to:

- i) the new children's homes that are being built/acquired in order to keep Northumberland children in the county which will in turn reduce the cost of out of county placements. The pressure spans two years of the MTFP but there will be savings in the cost of out of county placements to offset these costs.
- ii) additional funding required for short break services for disabled children following a review that concluded that Northumberland's offer was inconsistent and limited and didn't provide enough variety of support for families.
- iii) the increased pressure resulting from a mandatory inflationary increase of 12.50% introduced by the Department for Education for foster care and special guardianship allowances. The Council had anticipated an increase of 5.00%.
- iv) an increase needed to the provision of overnight respite care. The service has been operating at a reduced capacity since the pandemic.
- v) a significant increase in funding is required for external residential placements as the needs of the children are complex and the placements costly. There is a shortage of supply and demand is high for placements.

The Corporate pressures figures relate to budget alignment required for bank charges, external audit fees and the apprenticeship levy as well as the cost of benefits which are not funded.

- m) Growth including demographic growth for adult social care and the increase in pupil numbers for the home to school transport service (SEND) has been included in the MTFP.
- n) Non-recurrent Pressures – a number of non-recurrent pressures have been identified (some were identified in the previous year) and it is proposed that they are all funded from reserves or grant.
- o) Efficiencies – there are sufficient efficiencies identified to enable the budget for 2024-25 to be balanced but there is still a shortfall for 2025-26 and as mentioned previously it is the intention to request that efficiencies for the next two years are approved by Council in February.

Executive Directors were asked to assess the deliverability of agreed savings for both the current year (2023-24) and the two financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26. The assessment was carried out using the following principles:

- i) Original permanent planned savings for 2023-24 will be achieved or an alternative must be delivered in-year and on an on-going basis in 2024-25.
- ii) Savings originally identified and verified as deliverable for 2024-25 will be achieved.

Work is ongoing to develop delivery plans for those savings that have not yet been realised, and Executive Directors have been asked to identify alternative proposals where necessary and possible. It is recognised that the delivery of savings in the current year has been extremely challenging.

In order to ensure delivery of a balanced budget for 2024-25 and 2025-26, work has commenced on identification and development of savings proposals. The recommended framework and MTFP principles surrounding the development of these plans is shown in paragraph 5.11.

The budget planning process is a continuing and iterative process, and further additional savings will be required over the life of the MTFP. Work is also progressing in relation to the revenue cost of the capital programme.

To date efficiencies have been identified as follows:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
BEST savings	3.631	7.584	4.905	0.640	16.760
Contract savings	0.465	0.305	-	-	0.770
Efficiency	1.331	0.417	0.250	0.050	2.048
Income generation	0.517	0.762	0.172	-	1.451
Manage demand	3.606	5.410	-	-	9.016
Management of vacancies	0.176	-	-	-	0.176
Service review	0.156	-	-	-	0.156
Use of grant	0.977	0.472	-	-	1.449
Total Efficiencies	10.859	14.950	5.327	0.690	31.826
Savings Gap	10.859	18.543	19.908	14.920	64.230
Balance to identify	-	3.593	14.581	14.230	32.404

The Executive Directors continue to work on the balance and identify proposals which will ensure that a balanced set of proposals will be presented to Cabinet in February 2024 covering the two years 2024-25 and 2025-26.

There are a number of factors which will influence the position:

- i) The reprofiling of the capital programme which will impact on both the capital and revenue position.
- ii) The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement which is due to be received in December 2023.
- iii) The outcome of the leisure provider procurement exercise.
- iv) Grant notifications from the Government.
- v) Confirmation that the legislation has been passed in relation to an increase in planning fees.

5.14 Capital

Members are advised that in light of the financial difficulty the Council is facing and the rapid increase in interest rates that the Capital Programme is also being reviewed as the cost of borrowing is significantly higher than originally anticipated. When the 2023-24 budget was agreed the average rate assumed for borrowing was 4.58% and at 14 November 2023 the average rate for borrowing using the same terms was 5.57%. For every £1.000 million that the Council borrows the impact on the revenue budget is approximately £0.088 million if the borrowing is over 20 to 30 years. There is still significant uncertainty surrounding interest rates. However, it is clear that there will be an impact on the affordability of the capital programme and some capital

projects may need to be deferred or reduced in scope or value engineered in order to reduce costs. It may also be the case that there are some projects which are no longer affordable and will only be able to proceed if additional external funding can be secured. The revenue assumptions above do not include any changes to the revenue cost of capital from the assumptions made in the 2023-27 MTFP. This work will be done following the review of the Capital Programme. It is intended that a Capital Programme will be presented to Council in February 2024 which is affordable in the context of not only the capital budget but the revenue budget too.

- 5.15 At this stage any of the assumptions made could be subject to change as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review, and the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which is expected towards the end of December 2023.
- 5.16 The Section 151 Officer considers that there are too many unknowns to present a comprehensive and detailed budget package to Members for approval at the present time and work continues to formulate an affordable Capital Programme, identify savings proposals and refine costs and pressures to enable a balanced budget to be presented.
- 5.17 It is the intention to present the schedule of efficiency savings to Members for discussion in 2024.
- 5.18 It is proposed currently that the budget will be presented to Members as follows:

27 November 2023	Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee
12 December 2023	Cabinet
29 January 2024	Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee (All Members will be invited)
13 February 2024	Cabinet
21 February 2024	Full Council

5.19 **Budget Consultation**

The Council recognises that consultation is an important part of planning and delivering services that meet people's needs.

The Council has a statutory duty to consult with businesses in Northumberland.

The purpose of the general budget consultation with residents and stakeholder groups is to communicate the budget challenge; ascertain an understanding of people's views on the way we plan to meet this challenge; and determine whether views differ for different groups. This will be used to help guide and inform the annual budget setting process. Where proposals will potentially have greater impact on the public or on groups protected by equality law, services will carry out their own consultation on the detailed proposals and work closely with our most vulnerable residents to help them understand what changes to services may mean for them.

The Council will undertake Budget consultation from December 2023 to January 2024 to allow for full discussion and debate with all political groups and their Leaders, local area councils; parish and town councils; and, with staff and the unions.

There will also be an on-line question and answer session with the Leader of the Council, Glen Sanderson.

Service areas will consult on their budget proposals directly with individual services users, partners, and key stakeholders.

Feedback on budget consultation will be online.

Consultation will be promoted primarily through local and social media channels, linking through the Council's budget website.

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

- 6.1 This report provides an update for Members and outlines the assumptions included in the draft budget to date. The detail of the budget has yet to be finalised and there is further work to be concluded in relation to the Council's Capital Programme.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding that the Government will announce the Local Government Finance Settlement at the end of December 2023 which may result in the need to revisit the figures currently included in the budget.
- 6.3 The report is therefore for Member's information and to note.

7. Implications

Policy	This is the third year of this Administration's Medium-Term Financial Plan; and it fully supports the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26.
Finance and value for money	The financial implications of the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Budgets and the Medium-Term Financial Plan are still being assessed. The Section 151 Officer is confident that the budget will achieve balance, but it is evident that the position will continue to be challenging.
Legal	The provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 set out what the Council has to base its budget calculations upon and require the Council to set a balanced budget with regard to the advice of its Chief Finance Officer. The Act also states that the Council has got to set its budget before 11 March in the financial year preceding the one in respect of which the budget is set. The responsibilities of Cabinet, as set out in the Constitution, include taking all necessary steps to prepare the authority's budget, and those plans and strategies which constitute the authority's policy framework. It will undertake this work in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
Procurement	There are no specific Procurement implications within this report.
Human resources	The size of the financial challenge will have an impact on staffing levels across the Council. The Council will continue to try and mitigate this impact by the management of vacancies and voluntary redundancy wherever possible.
Property	The individual proposals will carefully consider the impact with regard to property requirements.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	<p>No - not required at this point in time.</p> <p>All individual budget savings proposals for 2024-25 and 2025-26 are being, or will be, screened for potential equality implications, and where potential equality impacts are identified, specific impact assessments are being, or will be, carried out unless the final decision on whether to proceed with the saving will be taken after the budget round. In those cases, impact assessments will be carried out by the relevant Executive Director before final decisions are taken and could potentially lead to decisions that some savings should not be made in their currently proposed form but should be achieved in other ways. An overall assessment of the equality impacts of the budget proposals is in preparation; this will be updated as work on the budget proceeds, including taking account of the outcome of consultations on elements of the savings proposals. A final version will be presented to the Council alongside the final budget proposals in February 2024.</p> <p>At this stage, the amounts indicated for financial years 2026-27 and 2027-28 are simply initial savings targets that are expected to be required, based on current information and assumptions. As proposals are developed to achieve the overall savings for these years, they will be screened for potential equality considerations and, where potential impacts are identified, specific impact assessments will be carried out before final decisions are taken.</p>

Risk assessment	The risks associated with the budget proposals will continue to be reviewed by the Executive Directors up to and including implementation of the detailed proposals. Any efficiency proposals that are considered to represent a risk will be subject to a separate comprehensive risk appraisal process. The risk appraisal process is the responsibility of the relevant Executive Director and will continue up to the County Council and beyond as individual budget reduction measures are implemented
Crime and disorder	There are no specific Crime & Disorder implications within this report.
Customer considerations	The individual proposals will carefully consider the impact upon both customers and residents of Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	The Council continues to develop proposals concerning the management of energy which are supported by the budget. Executive Directors will advise members of the carbon reduction implications in relation to their own areas of the budget and their budget proposals.
Health and wellbeing	The Council's budget is founded on the principle of promoting inclusivity.
Wards	All wards.

8. Background papers

Not applicable.

9. Links to other key reports already published

[Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023-27 - County Council 22 February 2023](#)

10. Author and Contact Details

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CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OSC

REPORT TO CABINET

12 DECEMBER 2023

OSC - Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2028

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council presented the report to the Committee on 27 November 2023. Jan Willis, Executive Director of Transformation and Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Alison Elsdon, Director of Finance and Procurement (Deputy S151 Officer) were also in attendance to assist with any queries from members.

He reported that this was not the final version of the budget proposals as Government funding was yet to be confirmed.

The BEST programme continued to ensure the Authority was working to a high level and highlighted where efficiencies could be made. However, he hoped that there would not be a need for any compulsory redundancies unless they were absolutely essential.

The following comments were made in response to members' questions:-

- It was confirmed that Town & Parish Councils were going to be contacted regarding enhanced local services, however it had not been confirmed when this would take place.
- The report was scheduled to return to the Corporate Services & Economic Growth OSC meeting on 29th January 2024 when members of all the overview and scrutiny committees would be invited to attend and comment. The Government settlement should have been confirmed by this date meaning the figures would be more accurate.
- All members would have the opportunity to give their priorities on the budget through a questionnaire.
- It was acknowledged that the figures in the report currently were assumptions until the funding was confirmed. The funding would be received on several dates throughout December and January but there should be clarity on the funding received by the end of January 2024.
- Work on the Capital programme was ongoing. It was acknowledged that the Authority had a large Capital Programme. Continuous additions to the programme could lead to revenue pressures and there was a concern that the programme may not be sustainable long term and therefore conversations would be had to discuss how much can be continued. However, an

assurance was made that if the figures stacked up on projects the Council would deliver them.

- An assurance was given that the recruitment and retention concerns as well as staffing efficiencies would be covered by the BEST report due to come to committee on 29th January 2024.

The Committee resolved to note the report and that Cabinet be advised of the comments as set out above.

COUNCILLOR DAVID BAWN

CHAIRMAN



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024-25

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

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

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

Setting the council tax base is the first stage in the setting of council tax. It is used to measure the taxable capacity for use when setting the amount to be raised from council tax.

2. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the tax base calculation for 2024-25 for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax. The tax base must be set by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2024.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the council tax base for 2024-25 as detailed within Appendix A equating to 112,185.46 Band D equivalent dwellings. This is an increase of 2,033.16 Band D equivalents from 2023-24.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

02 November 2023

5. Background

5.1 Regulations made under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 as amended) require the Council to calculate a council tax base for each financial year.

5.2 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 30 November 2012, and applies to the financial years

beginning 1 April 2013 onwards, contain the rules which require the Council to calculate the Council Tax Base.

- 5.3 Section 84 of the Local Government Act 2003 allows the calculation or determination to be delegated to a committee or an officer of the Council.
- 5.4 Following approval at County Council on 4 November 2015, Cabinet has delegated authority to approve the tax base.
- 5.5 The Council Tax Base is a measure of the Council's taxable capacity for the setting of its council tax, and legislation sets out the formula for the calculation and the requirement that the tax base is formally approved.
- 5.6 The Council Tax Base is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in Northumberland. To calculate the tax base the number of dwellings in each council tax band is adjusted to take account of any discounts, exemptions or premiums. The resulting figure for each band is then multiplied by its proportion relative to Band D (from 6/9 for Band A to 18/9 for Band H) and the total across all eight bands is calculated.
- 5.7 There were 160,105 dwellings in Northumberland (as at 11 September 2023) and they are included in one of eight council tax valuation bands from Band A to Band H.
- 5.8 For calculating the council tax base, dwelling numbers are recalculated into a common base of Band D equivalents.
- 5.9 The main changes from 2023-24 are:
 - a) There were 1,547 more dwellings in the County shown in the Valuation List on 11 September 2023
 - b) There were 963 more dwellings subject to a 25% reduction on the grounds of single person discount on 2 October 2023
 - c) There were 213 fewer equivalent number of dwellings entitled to council tax support on 2 October 2023
 - d) A new empty homes premium will come into effect on 1 April 2024 whereby vacant properties will be charged a 100% after 12 months. Based on data as at 2 October 2023 this will affect 771 properties.
- 5.10 Section 1 of Appendix A shows the number of domestic dwellings in the County which the Valuation Office Agency has allocated to each of the eight valuation bands. It then shows adjustments in respect of demolished dwellings or dwellings to be removed from the Valuation List. It also shows the number of dwellings entitled to disabled band relief. Disabled band relief is granted where a dwelling meets qualifying criteria in relation to facilities provided for a disabled resident. These dwellings are treated as being in the valuation band one lower than the actual valuation band of the dwelling.
- 5.11 Section 2 of Appendix A shows an analysis of the dwellings (as at 2 October 2023) between those liable to the full council tax charge and those subject to a discount, exemption, council tax support or premium.
- 5.12 Section 3 of Appendix A converts the dwellings into full unit equivalents having regard to the eligibility for discounts, exemptions, council tax support and premiums summarised in Section 2.

- 5.13 Section 4 of Appendix A shows the ratio of the tax liability of a dwelling in that band to one in the average valuation band, i.e. Band D.
- 5.14 Section 5 of Appendix A converts the full unit equivalents set out in Section 3 into 'Band D equivalents' by multiplying them by the ratios set out in Section 4.
- 5.15 Section 6 of Appendix A shows the number of Band D equivalent dwellings where a contribution in lieu of council tax is received for Ministry of Defence dwellings.
- 5.16 Section 7 of Appendix A shows the Gross Tax Base before an allowance for non-collection is applied.
- 5.17 Section 8 of Appendix A shows the adjustment for non-collection percentage.
- 5.18 Section 9 of Appendix A shows the Council Tax Base figure for 2024-25 in Band D equivalents.

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

Approve the council tax base figure for 2024-25 as the first stage of setting the council tax for 2024-25.

7. Implications

Policy	There are two policies that impact on the tax base calculation: The Council Tax Discounts Policy approved by County Council on 22 February 2023; and the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25 which is subject to approval by County Council on 17 January 2024.
Finance and value for money	The Council Tax Base is used to measure the taxable capacity for use when setting the amount to be raised from Council Tax.
Legal	Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 prescribes the formula for calculating the tax base, Section 84 of the Local Government Act 2003 allows the calculation or determination to be delegated to a committee or an officer of the Council.
Procurement	There are no procurement implications as a result of this report.
Human resources	There are no HR implications as a result of this report.
Property	There are no property implications as a result of this report.
Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment	No - no equalities issues identified No issues identified

required and attached?	
Risk assessment	There is a risk that the council tax base could be set at a level that results in a shortfall of income when council tax levels are set. An allowance for non-collection will minimise that risk and the budget will be subject to risk appraisal before final recommendation is made to County Council.
Crime and disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications as a result of this report.
Customer considerations	There are no customer consideration implications as a result of this report.
Carbon reduction	There are no carbon reduction implications as a result of this report.
Health and wellbeing	There are no health and wellbeing implication as a result of this report.
Wards	The council tax base covers all wards in Northumberland.

8. **Background papers**

The Local Government Finance Act 1992
Local Government Act 2003 – Section 84
Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012
Council Tax Discounts Policy approved by County Council on xx February 2023
Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024-25 subject to approval by County Council on 17 January 2024
Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

9. **Links to other key reports already published**

Not applicable

10. **Author and Contact Details**

Gillian Caisley,
Email: gillian.caisley@northumberland.gov.uk

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024-25

REF	DETAILS	COUNCIL TAX VALUATION BAND									
		A-Disabled	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
1	Number of Dwellings in Valuation List	0	70657	25989	21218	17919	11868	7395	4490	569	160,105
	Less Dwellings known to be Demolished or Removed but still shown in the List	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Adjustment for Disabled Band Reductions	0	172	112	123	115	97	73	72	48	812
		172	112	123	115	97	73	72	48	0	812
	Adjusted Number of Dwellings	172	70,597	26,000	21,210	17,901	11,844	7,394	4,466	521	160,105
2	ANALYSIS OF DWELLINGS ABOVE										
	(A) Dwellings liable to full charge	85.5	20,232.8	14,213.7	13,415.1	13,126.1	9,234.0	5,883.0	3,681.8	436.6	80,308.6
	(B) Dwellings subject to 25% discount due to single adult household	36	34397	9191	6382	4099	2202	1279	634	56	58,276
	(C) Dwellings subject to 25% discount due to disregards	5	476	258	190	150	92	45	32	0	1248
	(D) Dwellings subject to 50% discount due to disregards and job-related	8	138	71	72	62	29	39	66	12	497
	(E) Dwellings exempt from Council Tax	0	1557	475	327	189	135	65	32	12	2,792
	(F) Uninhabitable Dwellings	0	81	24	29	13	18	10	3	2	180
	(G) Council Tax Support calculated as an Equivalent no of Dwellings	37.48	13715.23	1767.29	794.87	261.94	133.96	73.05	17.19	2.39	16,803
	Number of Dwellings for Tax Base Purposes	172	70,597	26,000	21,210	17,901	11,844	7,394	4,466	521	160,105
	(H) Dwellings subject to Empty Homes Premium - 100%	0	345	57	40	27	26	12	6	5	518
	(I) Dwellings subject to Empty Homes Premium - 200%	0	112	10	19	4	2	4	1	1	153
	(J) Dwellings subject to Empty Homes Premium - 300%	0	60	15	6	3	2	0	0	1	87
(K) Dwellings subject to Empty Homes Premium after 1 year - 100%	0	464	107	78	45	30	22	17	8	771	
3	EQUIVALENT NUMBER OF DWELLINGS AFTER DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS FOR PURPOSE OF TAX BASE										
	Item (A) x 100%	85.52	20,232.77	14,213.71	13,415.13	13,126.06	9,234.04	5,882.95	3,681.81	436.61	80,308.60
	Item (B) x 75%	27.00	25,797.75	6,893.25	4,786.50	3,074.25	1,651.50	959.25	475.50	42.00	43,707.00
	Item (C) x75%	3.75	357.00	193.50	142.50	112.50	69.00	33.75	24.00	0.00	936.00
	Item (D) x 50%	4.00	69.00	35.50	36.00	31.00	14.50	19.50	33.00	6.00	248.50
	Item (H) x 100%	0.00	345.00	57.00	40.00	27.00	26.00	12.00	6.00	5.00	518.00
	Item (I) x 200%	0.00	224.00	20.00	38.00	8.00	4.00	8.00	2.00	2.00	306.00
	Item (J) x 300%	0.00	180.00	45.00	18.00	9.00	6.00	0.00	0.00	3.00	261.00
	Item (K) x 100%	0.00	464.00	107.00	78.00	45.00	30.00	22.00	17.00	8.00	771.00
	TOTAL EQUIVALENT DWELLINGS	120.27	47,669.52	21,564.96	18,554.13	16,432.81	11,035.04	6,937.45	4,239.31	502.61	127,056.10
4	RATIO TO BAND D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	N/A
5	TOTAL BAND D EQUIVALENTS	66.82	31779.68	16772.75	16492.56	16432.81	13487.27	10020.76	7065.52	1005.22	113123.38
6	Number of Band D equivalents of contributions in lieu (MoD Dwellings)										188.2
7	GROSS TAX BASE										113,311.58
8	Adjustment for non-collection - 1.0%										1,126.12
9	TOTAL NET TAX BASE FOR 2024-25 IN BAND D EQUIVALENTS										112,185.46

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Parish	2024-25 Taxbase in Band D equivalents	2023-24 Taxbase in Band D equivalents	Variance in Band D equivalents	% Variance
North				
Acklington	296.24	272.15	24.09	8.85
Adderstone with Lucker	129.44	125.61	3.83	3.05
Akeld (no parish council)	40.54	35.20	5.34	15.17
Alnmouth	293.44	288.54	4.90	1.70
Alnwick	3,059.61	3,005.54	54.07	1.80
Alwinton	41.23	40.37	0.86	2.13
Amble	1,880.45	1,784.02	96.43	5.41
Ancroft	294.30	290.93	3.37	1.16
Bamburgh	303.18	298.25	4.93	1.65
Beadnell	498.42	486.36	12.06	2.48
Belford with Middleton	634.67	610.33	24.34	3.99
Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council	3,492.08	3,471.69	20.39	0.59
Bewick (no parish council)	34.57	33.37	1.20	3.60
Biddlestone & Netherton	117.99	115.68	2.31	2.00
Bowsden	83.90	80.55	3.35	4.16
Branxton	51.54	48.59	2.95	6.07
Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst - Brinkburn	96.45	95.32	1.13	1.19
Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst - Hesleyhurst	12.77	12.77	0.00	0.00
Carham	142.57	134.29	8.28	6.17
Cheviotside (no parish council)	67.78	65.86	1.92	2.92
Cornhill	148.64	140.60	8.04	5.72
Craster	151.48	153.59	-2.11	-1.37
Cresswell	106.55	104.28	2.27	2.18
Denwick	113.43	113.60	-0.17	-0.15
Doddington	82.46	79.34	3.12	3.93
Duddo	86.19	84.91	1.28	1.51
Earle (no parish council)	28.32	28.38	-0.06	-0.21
East Chevington	821.67	815.50	6.17	0.76
Edlingham	91.83	88.43	3.40	3.84
Eglingham	194.36	187.49	6.87	3.66
Ellingham	156.85	156.95	-0.10	-0.06
Elsdon	94.55	94.77	-0.22	-0.23
Embleton	446.29	428.85	17.44	4.07
Ewart (no parish council)	40.13	40.04	0.09	0.22
Felton	448.64	442.30	6.34	1.43
Ford	184.44	190.17	-5.73	-3.01
Glanton	120.72	105.54	15.18	14.38
Harbottle	133.47	131.98	1.49	1.13
Hartburn	112.43	111.21	1.22	1.10
Hauxley	106.66	101.37	5.29	5.22
Hebron	212.57	612.13	-399.56	-65.27
Hedgeley	187.77	184.72	3.05	1.65
Hepple	77.35	76.95	0.40	0.52
Hepscott	686.80	793.60	-106.80	-13.46
Hollinghill & Rothley - Hollinghill	29.73	29.98	-0.25	-0.83
Hollinghill & Rothley - Rothley	69.71	67.62	2.09	3.09
Holy Island	112.46	115.17	-2.71	-2.35
Horncliffe	190.10	182.82	7.28	3.98
Ingram	80.06	78.45	1.61	2.05
Kilham (no parish council)	63.05	62.65	0.40	0.64
Kirknewton	61.11	58.77	2.34	3.98
Kyloe	155.28	152.37	2.91	1.91
Lesbury	508.65	510.57	-1.92	-0.38
Longframlington	624.15	584.68	39.47	6.75
Longhirst	240.57	238.43	2.14	0.90
Longhorsley	388.86	392.75	-3.89	-0.99
Longhoughton	636.79	619.60	17.19	2.77
Lowick	240.99	236.38	4.61	1.95
Meldon	134.06	132.70	1.36	1.02

Milfield	94.36	88.60	5.76	6.50
Mitford	265.52	260.64	4.88	1.87
Morpeth Town Council	6,067.38	5,399.50	667.88	12.37
Netherwitton	136.59	131.92	4.67	3.54
Newton by the Sea	124.69	124.62	0.07	0.06
Newton on the Moor/Swarland	537.10	531.38	5.72	1.08
Norham	232.06	230.62	1.44	0.62
North Sunderland	855.83	842.61	13.22	1.57
Nunnykirk	66.59	68.25	-1.66	-2.43
Ord	603.55	591.86	11.69	1.98
Pegswood	995.06	952.15	42.91	4.51
Rennington	196.46	192.58	3.88	2.01
Rothbury	999.31	996.94	2.37	0.24
Shilbottle	525.41	521.40	4.01	0.77
Shoreswood	42.25	41.04	1.21	2.95
Snitter	46.28	42.29	3.99	9.43
Stannington	1,054.30	1,044.60	9.70	0.93
Thirston	295.89	298.67	-2.78	-0.93
Thropton	247.71	240.85	6.86	2.85
Tillside	319.92	301.80	18.12	6.00
Togston	114.29	115.21	-0.92	-0.80
Tritlington & West Chevington	150.39	145.32	5.07	3.49
Ulgham	172.01	169.24	2.77	1.64
Wallington	152.59	152.45	0.14	0.09
Warkworth	939.31	915.65	23.66	2.58
Whittingham, Callaly & Alnham	310.25	304.02	6.23	2.05
Whitton & Tosson	65.64	65.29	0.35	0.54
Widdrington Station and Stobswood	838.88	814.79	24.09	2.96
Widdrington Village	72.44	71.75	0.69	0.96
Wooler	783.20	763.42	19.78	2.59
	37,245.60	36,444.52	801.08	2.20
South East				
Ashington	7,994.79	7,825.55	169.24	2.16
Blyth Town Council	10,696.66	10,460.92	235.74	2.25
Choppington	2,608.90	2,588.57	20.33	0.79
Cramlington Town Council	9,162.03	8,970.38	191.65	2.14
East Bedlington	2,101.74	2,068.07	33.67	1.63
Ellington & Linton	981.10	949.18	31.92	3.36
Lynemouth	383.23	364.70	18.53	5.08
Newbiggin by the Sea	1,485.02	1,466.16	18.86	1.29
Seaton Valley	4,842.62	4,797.27	45.35	0.95
West Bedlington	3,355.26	3,295.57	59.69	1.81
	43,611.35	42,786.37	824.98	1.93
West				
Acomb	517.03	515.44	1.59	0.31
Allendale	864.84	852.09	12.75	1.50
Bardon Mill	186.90	187.36	-0.46	-0.25
Bavington	48.60	45.32	3.28	7.24
Bellingham	439.34	441.05	-1.71	-0.39
Belsay	257.19	254.13	3.06	1.20
Birtley	82.40	83.31	-0.91	-1.09
Blanchland	60.83	55.73	5.10	9.15
Broomhaugh & Riding	481.07	472.63	8.44	1.79
Bywell	198.59	193.33	5.26	2.72
Capheaton	80.69	75.61	5.08	6.72
Chollerton	328.39	330.95	-2.56	-0.77
Coanwood	87.52	87.23	0.29	0.33
Corbridge	1,901.83	1,803.80	98.03	5.43
Corsenside	203.45	205.82	-2.37	-1.15
Falstone	86.77	86.29	0.48	0.56
Featherstone	58.54	56.90	1.64	2.88
Greenhead	131.81	129.04	2.77	2.15
Haltwhistle Town Council	1,120.79	1,123.82	-3.03	-0.27
Hartleyburn	47.42	48.00	-0.58	-1.21
Haydon	820.53	832.05	-11.52	-1.38
Healey	77.09	78.34	-1.25	-1.60
Heddon On The Wall	659.24	657.35	1.89	0.29

Hedley	118.44	116.53	1.91	1.64
Henshaw	265.41	260.56	4.85	1.86
Hexham Town Council	4,469.76	4,446.12	23.64	0.53
Hexhamshire & District	325.60	325.01	0.59	0.18
Horsley	181.09	179.41	1.68	0.94
Humshaugh	343.94	342.95	0.99	0.29
Kielder	68.09	67.33	0.76	1.13
Kirkwhelpington	157.62	155.78	1.84	1.18
Knaresdale with Kirkhaugh	133.27	131.19	2.08	1.59
Matfen	273.50	273.82	-0.32	-0.12
Melkridge	90.26	87.94	2.32	2.64
Newbrough	211.19	210.67	0.52	0.25
Otterburn	232.48	228.90	3.58	1.56
Ovingham	397.97	391.38	6.59	1.68
Ovington	203.32	203.83	-0.51	-0.25
Plenmeller with Whitfield	85.76	83.20	2.56	3.08
Ponteland Town Council	6,207.88	6,074.39	133.49	2.20
Prudhoe Town Council	3,508.62	3,473.13	35.49	1.02
Rochester	111.29	110.38	0.91	0.82
Sandhoe	207.15	206.31	0.84	0.41
Shotley Low Quarter	265.92	263.93	1.99	0.75
Simonburn	65.53	62.97	2.56	4.07
Slaley	356.18	351.15	5.03	1.43
Stamfordham	418.30	394.10	24.20	6.14
Stocksfield	1,323.65	1,325.62	-1.97	-0.15
Tarset with Greystead	136.44	135.28	1.16	0.86
Thirlwall	170.27	167.90	2.37	1.41
Wall	210.27	211.89	-1.62	-0.76
Warden	261.33	258.67	2.66	1.03
Wark	273.71	269.49	4.22	1.57
West Allen	121.27	121.04	0.23	0.19
Whalton	278.15	257.39	20.76	8.07
Whittington	235.43	239.11	-3.68	-1.54
Wylam	878.56	878.45	0.11	0.01
	<u>31,328.51</u>	<u>30,921.41</u>	407.10	1.32
	<u>112,185.46</u>	<u>110,152.30</u>	2,033.16	1.85

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Corporate Risk Management

Report of Councillor(s) Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources

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

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

Effective risk management is central to the achievement of all priorities included in the Council's Corporate Plan. In particular, it supports the "Achieving Value for Money" priority of the Corporate Plan 2023-26.

2. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the latest position of the County Council's corporate risks following review by Executive Management Team and Cabinet portfolio holders, and to provide an update in relation to the Council's risk management arrangements.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that:

- Cabinet agrees the contents of the report in accordance with its responsibility for ensuring effective risk management throughout the organisation;
- Cabinet notes, if agreed, this report will be presented to the next meeting of Audit Committee as a source of assurance in its role of monitoring the effective development and operation of risk management and risk-related issues across the County Council and as part of its ongoing evaluation of the framework of governance, risk management and control within Northumberland County Council's accounting group boundary.

4. **Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

10 November 2023

5. **Background**

- 5.1 It is a statutory responsibility for local authorities to ensure that a sound system of internal control is in place, which includes effective arrangements for the management of risk (Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015). Risk management is adopted by mature businesses and organisations in order to identify, evaluate and control unplanned events that could impact upon the successful delivery of aims, objectives and priorities. The County Council complies with this requirement and has a risk management process which was developed in accordance with best practice and consulted upon with Audit Committee. It is designed to ensure that risks to the County Council's business are properly identified, managed, and monitored by appropriate senior officers within the County Council. A review of the Risk Management Framework is currently underway to ensure this continues to support the County Council in achieving its objectives. Cabinet will be updated and consulted as this review progresses.
- 5.2 As part of the County Council's corporate governance arrangements, there is an established approach to corporate risk management with an equivalent approach being cascaded through all levels of the risk management hierarchy. The risk management hierarchy identifies, monitors, and manages risk at three key levels; Corporate, Service Strategic and Service Operational. Following the senior management restructure during 2023, work is ongoing to align Service Strategic risk registers to the new structure and ensure these risks are consistently subject to review in accordance with the timescales established by the Risk Management Framework.
- 5.3 Our risk methodology and approach includes an established risk matrix and scorecard to measure risks, and templates for recording risks. The risk management team provides support to service areas throughout the County Council in using this risk methodology. The approach to risk management is intended to deliver a consistent and effective approach to risk management throughout all aspects of the County Council's business.
- 5.4 Corporate risks are agreed against the 'exceptionality test', i.e., risks which could have a major impact on the achievement of Corporate Plan objectives and priorities and significant to have an effect on the whole organisation. These risks are 'owned' and managed by a nominated officer from Executive Management Team and the designated Cabinet Member with relevant portfolio responsibility. Corporate risks are currently presented to Executive Management Team twice yearly for discussion, challenge, and agreement, and agreed with Cabinet portfolio holders.
- 5.5 The corporate risk register was most recently agreed with members in July 2022, with updates undertaken during November 2022 and February 2023. Following the senior management restructure, a fundamental review of our corporate risks has been undertaken, with the following 12 risks agreed by Executive Management Team and designated Cabinet Members to be managed at a corporate level and are presented to Cabinet for agreement:

Risk Title	Current Risk Score	Target Risk Score
1 Financial Sustainability	D2	D3
2 OD/Workforce	C3	D3
3 Civil Contingency & Business Continuity	C3	D3
4 Corporate Compliance	D2	E3
5 High-profile Capital Projects	D2	D2
6 Response to Climate Change	C2	C3
7 Wholly-owned Companies	D2	D3
8 Cyber Security	B2	C3
9 Adult Service Domiciliary Care National Shortage	A2	B3
10 BEST	C3	D3
11 Strategic Community Safety	A2	E3
12 Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023	B2	D3

5.6 A summary of each corporate risk, and information relating to changes in the corporate risks as a result of the reviews throughout 2023 are included at **Appendix A**. The detailed risk register is attached as a confidential (part 2) exempt appendix at **Appendix B**, detailing how each of the risks are being managed and mitigated.

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

6.1 The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet agrees the Risk Management Update report.

Option 2

Cabinet does not agree the Risk Management Update report.

Option 1 is the recommended option. Cabinet should receive and agree this report in accordance with its responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management arrangements.

7. Implications

Policy	Effective risk management supports the effective implementation of all policy decisions.
Finance and value for money	Effective risk management will help ensure that the County Council is better able to manage its resources and deliver value for money.
Legal	The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 place a responsibility upon all local authorities to ensure that they have a sound system of internal control which includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.

Procurement	There are no specific procurement implications within this report.
Human resources	There are no specific human resources implications within this report.
Property	There are no specific property implications within this report.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified Equality Impact Assessment not required.
Risk assessment	Embedding risk management will reduce the level of risks that may prevent the achievement of the County Council's objectives.
Crime and disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
Customer considerations	There are no specific customer consideration implications within this report.
Carbon reduction	There are no specific carbon reduction implications within this report.
Health and wellbeing	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications within this report.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, April 2015.

9. Links to other key reports already published

None.

10. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland
County Council

Corporate Risk Management Update

November 2023

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate risks are agreed against the 'exceptionality test', i.e., risks which could have a major impact on the Corporate Plan objectives and priorities and significant to have an effect on the whole organisation. These risks are 'owned' and managed by a nominated officer from Executive Management Team and the designated Cabinet Member with relevant portfolio responsibility, who are responsible for ensuring that the risk is being managed effectively. Corporate risks are presented to Executive Management Team twice yearly for discussion, challenge, and agreement, and agreed with Cabinet portfolio holders.
- 1.2 The corporate risk register was most recently agreed with members in July 2022, and at that time, 16 risks were agreed to be managed at corporate level.
- 1.3 Corporate risks were reviewed and updated during November 2022 and February 2023. Following the senior management restructure, the opportunity has been taken by Executive Management Team to fundamentally review those risks being managed as corporate risks. There are now 12 risks which have been agreed by Executive Management Team and designated Cabinet Members to be managed at a corporate level and are presented to Cabinet for agreement. These are summarised at Section 7 of this report, which includes the risk title and description, risk owners, and current and target risk scores. Section 8 of the report details the Risk Matrix and Scorecard which provides guidance on scoring the likelihood and impact of risks.

2. New Corporate Risks Identified

- 2.1 Consultation with Executive Directors has identified four new risks for inclusion in the corporate risk register. These risks are:
- **Adult Services Domiciliary Care National Shortage:** There is a risk that there is increasing difficulty in providing sufficient domiciliary care services to those people assessed as needing it, and the sustainability of domiciliary care providers countywide due to workforce shortages, which is being experienced nationwide.
 - **BEST:** There is a risk that BEST does not deliver on its objectives of embedding new ways of working, to make the Council more modern, efficient and fit for purpose, to deliver best outcomes for residents and support the ongoing financial sustainability of the Council.
 - **Strategic Community Safety:** There is a risk that the Council may fail to comply with its statutory duties and responsibilities managed and undertaken within Strategic Community Safety and the Safer Northumberland Partnership (SNP) in relation to The Crime and Disorder Act (1998), Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004), Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014), The Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015) and the soon to be enacted Martyn's Law, Terrorism (Protection of premises) draft bill.
 - **Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023:** This risk is being developed with the relevant Executive Directors and management.

3. Changes to Corporate Risk Score

- 3.1 Following review, there are three risks where a change in score has been agreed, a summary of these and the rationale for the changes is provided below:

- **Financial Sustainability** (formerly Financial Assumptions): There is a risk to the medium-term financial sustainability of the Council due to a lack of funding, which threatens the ability of the Council to provide a full range of services, including statutory requirements and Corporate Plan priorities.

There is uncertainty regarding future funding streams, in addition to uncertainty due to the economic climate and the likelihood of further changes during the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2027. Due to this level of uncertainty, ongoing budget constraints and overall funding reductions combined with rising demand for services and increased costs, the Council may not be able to continue delivering the full range of services in the way it has traditionally delivered them.

However, the Council is not in imminent danger of financial failure and strategies are in place for the duration of the MTFP to ensure the Council is capable of balancing its budget. In addition, BEST is looking at how we deliver best value across a range of themes and has already achieved £1.63m in savings. For these reasons, the risk has reduced from B2(Red) to D2(Amber).

- **Corporate Compliance:** There is a risk that the County Council could fail to comply with statutory and regulatory requirements, and other matters of good governance such as the need for additional transparency, accountability and links between outcomes and the corporate plan, leading to damage, prosecution, impact on the safety of residents and staff and resulting loss of reputation.

There is a regime of performance monitoring across all services. Key Performance Indicators are managed centrally by the Performance Team and discussed by Service Directors, Executive Directors and Members on a quarterly basis. Enhancements have been identified that align with existing recommendations for improvements, and these have now been implemented and the overall risk has been reduced. The Data & Business Intelligence Strategy is yet to be implemented, but a refresh of the Corporate Plan has been concluded, and service plans have been completed. The risk score has therefore reduced from C2(Red) to D2(Amber).

- **Response to Climate Change:** There is a risk that the Authority may not be successful in achieving its targets in responding to climate change and particularly in respect of reducing the carbon footprint of the County Council to carbon neutral by 2030, its pledge of working with national government to achieve carbon neutrality for the county of Northumberland by 2030 and to achieving net-zero (all greenhouse gases) for the county of Northumberland by 2040.

A change to the methodology by which the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero calculates Local Authority level emissions means that the County's emissions are higher than previously thought making the task of reaching carbon neutrality and net zero more difficult. In addition, recent central government policy announcements shifting the deadline for key decarbonisation policies (e.g. ban of sale of internal combustion engine cars, ban on new oil boilers) beyond the original 2030 target date increases the likelihood of the risk occurring. The risk score has therefore increased from D2(Amber) to C2(Red).

4. **Corporate Risk Scores Unchanged**

4.1 There were no changes to the risk score of five risks. These are summarised below, along with any notable changes:

- **Civil Contingency & Business Continuity:** There is a risk that a civil emergency, major incident or business interruption could lead to failure to support the community in an emergency and/or loss of critical functions, buildings, ICT and staff.

Additional controls have been identified in relation to Multi-agency Gold Incident Command (MAGIC) training for all strategic rota personnel and Tactical Emergency Command training for all tactical rota personnel.

- **Wholly-owned Companies** (formerly Advance Northumberland): There is a risk that the operations of the Council's wholly-owned companies do not properly align with the Council's priorities, and that governance and financial issues impact on the effective running of the companies.

This risk was formerly the Advance Northumberland corporate risk but has been amended to be more generic to cover the risk to the Council associated with wholly-owned subsidiaries. Whilst this currently only relates to the Advance Northumberland group of companies the risk will incorporate any further wholly-owned companies that may be established by the Council in future.

- **Cyber Security:** There is a risk that a Cyber Attack against the Council's information systems and data may have an adverse impact on service delivery.

Funding has been secured to procure a number of systems and support packages to increase the Council's resilience and response to cyber-attacks.

- **High-Profile Capital Projects** (formerly Multiple and Concurrent High-profile Large-scale Capital Projects): There is a risk that the Council does not maximise the external funding secured through Government and regional agencies to deliver large-scale capital regeneration and infrastructure projects, i.e. NEP3, Northumberland Line and Energising Blyth.

This risk has been amended to incorporate the Council's key regeneration and infrastructure projects as detailed above.

- **OD / Workforce:** There is a risk that the Council may not attract, recruit, train and retain an appropriate workforce and equip the workforce with the right skills to deliver required outcomes effectively.

There are no significant changes to this risk.

5. **Corporate Risks De-escalated for Management at Service Strategic Level**

5.1 Four risks have been de-escalated to be managed at a service strategic level. These risks are detailed below.

- **Engagement of Communities:** There is a risk that, following implementation of new policies and approaches aimed at involving communities, people perceive they are not listened to and become disengaged from the Council.

Given the publication of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26 and engagement activities currently being implemented, it is considered that this risk is no longer a corporate risk but, instead, should continue to be monitored at Service Strategic level.

- **Information Governance:** There is a risk that confidential and sensitive data may be lost or disclosed.

It is acknowledged that this is a corporate responsibility. However, it is considered that this risk is no longer a corporate risk but, instead, should continue to be monitored and managed at a Service Strategic level across all services of the Council.

- **Contract Management:** There is a risk that unless designated contract managers engage with the robust systems and procedures in place, there is a possibility that contractors fail to deliver value for money or meet the needs of service users.

Through the BEST in Class Commissioning Workstream, including the introduction of a new Commissioning and Contract Management Framework, it is considered that this is no longer a corporate risk but this should continue to be monitored and managed at Service Strategic level.

- **Ukraine Crisis:** There is a risk that the Russia / Ukraine conflict may have a significant impact on a number of Council services e.g. Housing including Asylum Seeker & Refugee Service and statutory Homelessness Service, Education and Social Care places and Capital Programme (timber & steel supply chain).

There is now a better understanding of the costs and impact to the authority and those impacts are now being dealt with as 'business-as-usual' by the relevant services. It is considered that this risk is no longer a corporate risk but, instead, should continue to be monitored and managed at a Service Strategic level.

6. **Corporate Risks to be Closed**

6.1 As a result of the review, four risks have been closed. These risks are detailed below:

- **Northumberland Enterprise Holdings Limited:** There is a risk that, if robust corporate governance is not in place, Northumberland Enterprise Holdings Ltd (NEHL) could fail to perform in the best interests of Northumberland.

This company is now registered as a dormant company on Companies House and is no longer considered a corporate risk and can be closed. New risks will be developed at Service Strategic level to continue to monitor NEHL from a Companies House and HMRC compliance perspective.

- **Regeneration:** There is a risk that Northumberland County Council may not secure sufficient opportunities to recover from COVID-19 and develop the economy, in particular those presented through the North of Tyne Combined Authority, Borderlands, the Local Enterprise Partnership and other national funding streams including the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 and the national levelling up fund.

It was initially considered that post COVID-19 there may have been limited opportunities to develop the economy. However, we are currently unlocking and attracting large amounts of external funding to deliver our agenda and the new Devolution Deal, therefore it is considered that this is no longer a risk and can be closed. However, regeneration risks are continually assessed and managed at service strategic level and risk registers exist for individual projects.

- **Exceptional Governance Matters:** There is a risk that, if the recommendations of the Caller Review are not progressed in a thorough and timely manner then the Council will not be able to demonstrate meeting its responsibilities in relation to best value duty and there will be a significant loss to the Council's reputation.

The Council has been implementing the recommendations through its improvement plan, including the new Constitution and Corporate Plan. These documents are a source of assurance in relation to the Corporate Compliance corporate risk which covers matters of good governance such as transparency, accountability and links between outcomes and the corporate plan. It is therefore considered that Exceptional Governance Matters is no longer a corporate risk and can be closed.

- **Inequalities:** There is a risk that, as we recover from the Covid pandemic, inequalities will continue to widen within and between some communities / community groups due to e.g. loss of work, reduced wages and loss of education. This has been further exacerbated by the cost-of-living pressures.

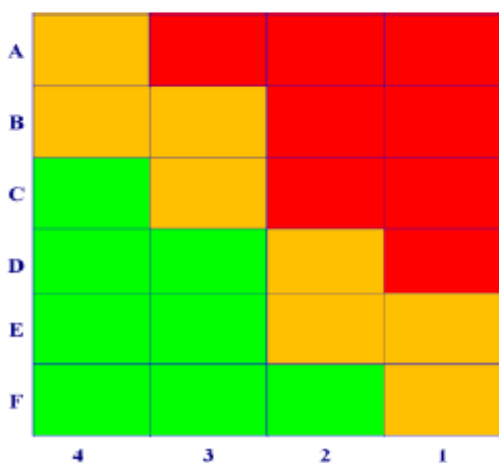
Tackling inequalities is an issue that the Council has now identified as a corporate priority in the Corporate Plan. With the measures identified in the Corporate Plan and the fact that tackling inequalities is considered within the other corporate risks, it is considered that this is not a risk in its own right and should therefore be closed.

Risk Title	Risk Owner	Member Owner	Risk Description	Current Risk Score	Target Risk Score
1 Financial Sustainability	Executive Director of Transformation & Resources	Cllr. Wearmouth	There is a risk to the medium-term financial sustainability of the Council due to a lack of funding, which threatens the ability of the Council to provide a full range of services, including statutory requirements and Corporate Plan priorities.	D2	D3
2 OD/Workforce	Director of Workforce & OD	Cllr. Wearmouth	There is a risk that the Council may not attract, recruit, train and retain an appropriate workforce and equip the workforce with the right skills to deliver required outcomes effectively.	C3	D3
3 Civil Contingency & Business Continuity	Chief Fire Officer	Cllr. Stewart	There is a risk that a civil emergency, major incident or business interruption could lead to failure to support the community in an emergency and/or loss of critical functions, buildings, ICT and staff.	C3	D3
4 Corporate Compliance	Director of Law & Corporate Governance	Cllr. Sanderson	There is a risk that the County Council could fail to comply with statutory and regulatory requirements, and other matters of good governance such as the need for additional transparency, accountability and links between outcomes and the corporate plan, leading to damage, prosecution, impact on the safety of residents and staff and resulting loss of reputation.	D2	E3
5 High-profile Capital Projects	Executive Director of Place & Regeneration	Cllr. Ploszaj	There is a risk that the Council does not maximise the external funding secured through Government and regional agencies to deliver large-scale capital regeneration and infrastructure projects, i.e. NEP3, Northumberland Line and Energising Blyth.	D2	D2
6 Response to Climate Change	Executive Director of Place & Regeneration	Cllr. Sanderson	There is a risk that the Authority may not be successful in achieving its targets in responding to climate change and particularly in respect of reducing the carbon footprint of the County Council to carbon neutral by 2030, its pledge of working with national government to achieve carbon neutrality for the county of Northumberland by 2030 and to achieving net-zero (all greenhouse gases) for the county of Northumberland by 2040.	C2	C3

Risk Title	Risk Owner	Member Owner	Risk Description	Current Risk Score	Target Risk Score
7 Wholly-owned Companies	Executive Director of Transformation & Resources	Cllr Sanderson	There is a risk that the operations of the Council's wholly-owned companies do not properly align with the Council's priorities, and that governance and financial issues impact on the effective running of the companies.	D2	D3
8 Cyber Security	Executive Director of Transformation & Resources	Cllr. Wearmouth	There is a risk that a cyber-attack against the Council's information systems and data may have an adverse impact on service delivery.	B2	C3
9 Adult Service Domiciliary Care National Shortage	Executive Director of Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing	Cllr. Pattison	There is a risk that there is increasing difficulty in providing sufficient domiciliary care services to those people assessed as needing it, and the sustainability of domiciliary care providers countywide due to workforce shortages, which is being experienced nationwide.	A2	B3
10 BEST	Executive Director of Transformation & Resources	Cllr. Wearmouth	There is a risk that BEST does not deliver on its objectives of embedding new ways of working to make the Council more modern, efficient and fit for purpose, and to support the ongoing financial sustainability of the Council.	C3	D3
11 Strategic Community Safety	Executive Director of Public Health, Communities & Inequalities	Cllr. Stewart	There is a risk that the Council may fail to comply with its statutory duties and responsibilities managed and undertaken within Strategic Community Safety and the Safer Northumberland Partnership (SNP) in relation to The Crime and Disorder Act (1998), Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004), Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014), The Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015) and the soon to be enacted Martyn's Law, Terrorism (Protection of premises) draft bill.	A2	E3
12 Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023	Executive Director of Place & Regeneration	Cllr. Horncastle	There is a risk that the Council may fail to comply with its statutory duties and responsibilities under the Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023, including in relation to proactively monitoring and complying with enhanced consumer standards and the delivery of Awaab's Law.	B2	D3

Risk Matrix and Scorecard

LIKELIHOOD		PROBABILITY	INDICATOR		
A	Very High / Certain	85% to 100%	Regular occurrence. Circumstances frequently encountered		
B	Highly Likely	60% to 85%	Highly likely to happen at some point in the next 1 – 3 years.		
C	Medium / Likely	30% to 60%	Likely to happen at some point in the next 1 – 3 years. Circumstances occasionally encountered		
D	Low / Possible	15% to 30%	Only likely to happen once every 3 or more years.		
E	Very Low / Rare	5% to 15%	Has happened rarely		
F	Negligible / Almost Impossible	0% to 5%	Has never happened.		
IMPACTS					
		4	3	2	1
		Minor	Moderate	Significant	Major
Financial Impact		£100k - £500k Budget exceeded by less than 10%	£500k - £1m Budget exceeded by 10% - 50%	£1m - £10m Budget exceeded by 50% - 100%	>£10m Budget exceeded by over 100%
Service Provision		Minor service delay; short term disruption to minor service	Major element of service not provided for 1 day, minor element not provided for 1 week.	Major element of service not provided for 1 week, longer term disruption to minor element.	Longer term disruption to major service element.
Project		Minor delay - days	A few milestones missed	A major milestone missed	Project does not achieve objectives and misses majority of milestones
Legislative / Contractual		Failure to meet minor terms of contract	Breach of minor contract; failure to meet significant contract terms	Breach of significant contract; element of legislative requirement not achieved.	Statutory requirement not achieved.
Health & Safety		Sticking plaster / first aider; sickness < 3 days	Broken bones / illness; sickness > 3 days	Extensive serious / permanent injury; sickness > 4 weeks	Loss of life / large scale major illness
Governance		Some elements of governance framework ineffective	Some elements of governance framework criticised by external body	Criticism of all governance arrangements by external body	Ineffective governance arrangements
Morale		Mild impact on morale	Some hostile relationship and minor non-cooperation	Industrial action	Mass staff leaving / unable to attract staff
Reputation		Short term adverse public opinion; minor letters; no media attention.	Adverse local media	Persistent adverse local media coverage; adverse national publicity	Remembered for years!
Government relations		Minor local service issues	Poor Assessment(s)	Service taken over temporarily	Service taken over permanently



Corporate risks considered high priority normally to be managed down in the medium term - reviewed every 6 months.

Service risks:
Red risks are to be managed down as a matter of urgency – reviewed every 3 months.
Amber risks are to be managed down in the medium term and monitored – reviewed every 6 months.
Green risks considered low priority but are also monitored – reviewed every 12 months.

Project risks are to be managed down and reviewed in line with specific project timescales.

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Northumberland
County Council

CABINET

12 December 2023

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

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

Executive Director: Jan Willis, Executive Director of Transformation & Resources

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current and forecast financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2023-24.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to:

- Approve the re-profiling to the Capital Programme of £55.961 million from 2023-24 to 2024-25 to reflect estimated expenditure levels in the current financial year.

2.2 Members are requested to note:

- the projected overspend on services of £0.593 million and the assumptions outlined in this report.
- the projected net overspend of £0.949 million after accounting for outstanding inflationary pressures and the utilisation of the Exceptional Inflation Reserve and contingency.
- 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 N.
- the details of capital project reprofiling shown at Appendix O.

3. Link to Corporate Plan

- 3.1 The Council's budget is aligned to the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2023-26 with significant investment in each of the priorities; achieving value for money, tackling inequalities and driving economic growth as well as specific funding set aside to deliver Best Value through the BEST work.

4. Key issues

4.1 Overall Position

- 4.1.1 The report provides information and analysis on the Council's financial performance and use of resources to the end of September 2023. The Council set its budget for 2023-24 on 22 February 2023 and this report focuses on the financial performance to the end of September 2023 and the projected year end position at that point in time.

5. Projected Revenue Outturn 2023-24

- 5.1 The Council's projected revenue outturn position, within each service area is shown in summary at Section 6 of the report (figures in brackets denote an underspend); and in detail within Appendices C - K of the report.
- 5.2 The Council's overall annual revenue expenditure is managed across a number of areas:
- a. The General Fund with a net budget of £401.910 million, providing revenue funding for the majority of the Council's services.
 - b. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £158.215 million in 2023-24, which is ring-fenced for schools funding, overseen by the Schools' Forum, and managed within the Children, Young People and Education Directorate.
 - c. Public Health, a ring-fenced grant of £17.932 million in 2023-24, must be spent to support the delivery of the Public Health Outcomes Framework and is managed within Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities.
 - d. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) with a gross expenditure budget of £42.625 million in 2023-24, is ring-fenced, and reported separately from the General Fund, and is managed within the Place and Regeneration Directorate. The HRA forecast is detailed in Appendix L.

6. General Fund

6.1 The following table provides a summary of how each Directorate is performing against the General Fund revenue budget for the 2023-24 financial year.

Service	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing	130.223	130.290	0.067
Chief Executive	34.854	35.581	0.727
Children, Young People & Education	86.215	89.970	3.755
Place and Regeneration	80.156	81.820	1.664
Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities	13.627	13.144	(0.483)
Transformation & Resources	29.321	28.282	(1.039)
Total Services	374.396	379.087	4.691
Corporate Expenditure and Income	27.028	22.930	(4.098)
Total Net Expenditure	401.424	402.017	0.593
Budget funded by:			
Council Tax	(231.720)	(231.720)	-
Retained Business Rates (including grants)	(92.863)	(92.863)	-
Revenue Support Grant	(12.430)	(12.430)	-
Other Corporate Grants	(47.014)	(47.014)	-
Earmarked Reserves	(17.397)	(17.397)	-
Total Funding of Services	(401.424)	(401.424)	-
Net Total	-	0.593	0.593

6.2 Inflationary Pressures

- 6.2.1 During the preparation of the 2023-24 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) a significant sum of money was earmarked to deal with “routine inflation” and what the Council referred to as “hyper-inflation”. It was anticipated that the hyper-inflation would continue for two years and money was set aside in reserves to fund these additional costs.
- 6.2.2 The forecast position shown in section 6.1 includes most inflationary increases, however the actual cost of pay inflation has not been included where pay awards have not yet been agreed. The expected cost of pay awards for 2023-24 is anticipated to be significantly more than the 4.0% set aside in the 2023-24 budget. Based on the current pay offer, the shortfall in funding is expected to be £3.228 million. The £1.017 million set aside in the Exceptional Inflation Reserve at the end of 2022-23 and the use of £1.855 million which is the balance in the contingency will be utilised to offset this, leaving a net shortfall of £0.356 million.
- 6.2.3 The net forecast position, after accounting for outstanding inflationary pressures and the utilisation of the Exceptional Inflation Reserve and contingency, is shown below:

	£m
Overspend on services as per Section 6.1	0.593
Pay award funding shortfall (estimate)	3.228
Transfer from Exceptional Inflation Reserve	(1.017)
Use of contingency	(1.855)
Net overspend	0.949

6.3 Key Movements

6.3.1 The key movements from the June position previously reported to Cabinet are summarised below:

	£m
June position (after pay inflation and the use of reserves and contingency)	4.471
Increase in investment interest	(2.477)
Reduction in borrowing costs	(1.802)
Reduction in energy costs	(0.823)
Increase in cost of external residential and supported accommodation placements for children	1.956
Other changes	(0.376)
September position (after pay inflation and the use of reserves and contingency)	0.949

7. Other General Fund Items

- 7.1 Appendix A is a schedule of all supplementary estimates, including new grants and amendments to existing grants (capital and revenue) which the Council has been awarded during July to September 2023.
- 7.2 The Council at its meeting in February 2023 agreed to implement a range of savings and efficiencies totalling £17.045 million in 2023-24. A recent review of the delivery of those savings has been conducted and the results are illustrated at Appendix B.
- 7.3 Appendix L is a schedule of all items which have been released from contingency during the period July to September 2023.
- 7.4 Appendix M is a schedule of the movement in the Council's Reserves.
- 7.5 Appendix O is a schedule of virements during July to September 2023.

8. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

8.1 The Capital Programme for 2023-24 totalling £222.949 million was agreed by full Council on 22 February 2023.

8.2 The Capital Programme has changed during the year as the phasing of schemes was reviewed at the end of the previous financial year with £72.638 million re-profiled from 2022-23 to 2023-24 and £15.902 million, approved by Cabinet on 12 September 2023, reprofiled from 2023-24 to 2024-25. In addition, further approvals totalling £44.776 million have been agreed by Cabinet for additional schemes.

8.3 The following table sets out the position as at the end of September:

Directorate	Original Budget	Approved Adjustments	Revised Budget	Expenditure to date	Forecast Expenditure	Net Variance	Over / (Under) spend	Reprofiling
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing	4.427	0.953	5.380	0.884	3.429	(1.951)	-	(1.951)
Chief Executive	2.016	0.500	2.516	0.994	2.516	-	-	-
Children, Young People & Education	32.622	7.145	39.767	5.522	26.778	(12.989)	(0.018)	(12.971)
Place and Regeneration	166.270	84.388	250.658	63.069	211.399	(39.259)	(0.972)	(38.287)
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities	0.800	1.385	2.185	1.548	2.085	(0.100)	0.200	(0.300)
Transformation and Resources	16.814	7.141	23.955	5.941	21.503	(2.452)	-	(2.452)
Total Programme	222.949	101.512	324.461	77.958	267.710	(56.751)	(0.790)	(55.961)
Financed by:								
Capital Receipts	5.589	-	5.589					
External Grants	96.863	61.512	158.375					
GF Borrowing	106.236	35.563	141.799					
GF Revenue Contributions (RCCO)	0.250	5.757	6.007					
HRA Contributions (MRR & RCCO)	14.011	(1.320)	12.691					
Total Financing	222.949	101.512	324.461					

- 8.4 Year-to-date capital expenditure is £77.958 million with forecast expenditure of £267.409 million. The major areas of capital investment during the year to date are as follows:
- i. £43.164 million invested in transport schemes including infrastructure, traffic management, integrated transport schemes and the reintroduction of the Northumberland Line.
 - ii. £3.037 million invested in fleet replacement.
 - iii. £8.009 million invested in the Council's housing stock.
- 8.5 There is a net forecast variance of £56.751 million across the 2023-24 Capital Programme comprising of £55.961 million net reprofiling from 2023-24 to 2024-25 and £0.790 million underspend. A summary of the significant variances can be found at Appendix K with an explanation of those greater than £0.250 million and a full list of reprofiling can be found at Appendix O.
- 8.6 It is recommended that Cabinet approves estimated net reprofiling of £55.961 million from 2023-24 to 2024-25.

9. Capital Receipts

- 9.1 The level of capital receipts available to support the 2023-24 Capital Programme was estimated to be £5.589 million (£1.700 million General Fund and £3.889 million HRA). The following table shows the current position:

Asset Disposals	General Fund £m	HRA £m
Completed and available for use in year	0.252	1.108
On the market	-	-
Terms Agreed	1.459	-
Contracts exchanged	0.093	-

- 9.2 The closing balance on the Capital Receipts Reserve at 31 March 2023 was £8.330 million (£0.093 million General Fund and £8.237 million HRA).

10. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

10.1 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023-24 was agreed by full Council on 23 February 2023.

10.2 The following table summarises the Council's quarterly borrowing activity for July to September 2023:

	Previous Quarter	Movement - Sept 23	Current
Outstanding principal - at quarter end (£m)	744.876	(22.523)	722.353
Weighted average interest rate - year to date (%)	3.147	(0.041)	3.106
Quarter end external borrowing as % of Operational Boundary (Borrowing)	77.262	(2.336)	74.926

10.3 Whilst the Council has an overall cap on borrowing through an Authorised Limit, the Operational Boundary is where the Council would expect its borrowing to be. At the end of September 2023, the Council's external borrowing represented 74.93% of its Operational Boundary, which was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023-24. The Operational Boundary is only a guide and may be breached or undershot without significant concern, with borrowing driven by economic and market considerations as well as interest rates.

The table below demonstrates that in the quarter to 30 September 2023 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit and operational Boundary.

	Authorised Limit for External Debt £m	Operational Boundary for External Debt £m	Actual 30 Sep 2023 £m
External Borrowing	1,156.913	964.094	722.353

10.4 The following table provides an analysis by type of the quarterly borrowing activity for July to September 2023:

Lender Category	Repayment Type	Opening Balance £m	Repaid – Jul - Sept 2023 £m	New Borrowing Jul - Sept 2023 £m	Closing Balance £m
PWLB	EIP	3.501	-	-	3.501
PWLB	Annuity	0.540	(0.019)	-	0.521

Lender Category	Repayment Type	Opening Balance	Repaid – Jul - Sept 2023	New Borrowing Jul - Sept 2023	Closing Balance
		£m	£m	£m	£m
Salix	EIP	0.031	(0.004)	-	0.027
PWLB	Maturity	445.204	(0.500)	-	444.704
Other Local Authorities	Maturity	50.000	-	-	50.000
Other/Market	Maturity	245.600	(22.000)	-	223.600
Total		744.876	(22.523)	-	722.353

10.5 Measuring the maturity structure of borrowing ensures a reasonable spread of maturing debt as a safety mechanism to ensure significant amounts of debt do not mature at a time when interest rates for refinancing the debt may be high. The following table demonstrates the maturity structure of the Council's borrowing at 30 September 2023, against the prescribed limits:

Maturity Structure	Upper Limit for 2023-24	Actual 30 Sept 2023
Under 12 months	25%	7%
1 year - 2 years	40%	1%
2 years within 5 years	60%	3%
5 years within 10 years	80%	7%
10 years and above	100%	82%

10.6 The following table summarises the Council's quarterly investment activity for July to September 2023:

	Previous Quarter	Movement - Jul - Sept 2023	Current
Outstanding principal - at month end (£m)	154.550	(36.400)	118.150
Weighted average interest rate - year to date (%)	4.444	0.309	4.753

10.7 The following table provides an analysis by type of the investment activity for the quarter July to September 2023:

Category	Opening Balance	Repaid – Jul - Sept 2023	New Investment Jul - Sept 2023	Closing Balance
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Term Deposit Banks	25.000	(15.000)	5.000	15.000
Term Deposit Building Societies	10.000	(10.000)	10.000	10.000
Term Deposit Other Local Authorities	35.000	(35.000)	37.000	37.000
Money Market Funds	74.550	(209.500)	191.100	56.150
Debt Management Office (DMO)	-	(45.000)	45.000	-
Notice Accounts	10.000	(10.000)	-	-
Total	154.550	(324.500)	288.100	118.150

10.8 The movement in the Money Market Funds represents daily deposits and withdrawals to manage cashflow.

10.9 Limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end. The table below summarises performance against the prescribed limits for the year to 30 September 2023:

	Limit 2023-2024 £m	Actual Highest £m	Actual 30 Sept 2023 £m
Principal sums invested > 364 days	120.000	-	-

11. Transformation Fund Reserve (BEST)

11.1 The Council at its budget meeting on 23 February 2022 agreed to invest £3.000 million per annum for three years in a strategic change programme, now known as BEST.

11.2 To date a number of commitments have already been made against that fund as follows:

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Investment	3.000	3.000	3.000	-	9.000
Commitments to 30 September 2023	0.738	2.382	2.224	1.276	6.620
Balance Available	2.262	0.618	0.776	(1.276)	2.380

11.3 Projects have already been approved by the Be3st Working Board, including for example, Fix My Street, Living Leader and the Labman management system. In addition to this, it will be necessary to recruit to a number of fixed term roles in order that the project can progress, and the service improvements can be delivered quickly. The roles will be required for a maximum of three years and approval has been given for the estimated cost of £2.567 million.

11.4 It will also be necessary to involve a number of staff across the Council in the BEST workstreams. However, their roles within the workstreams will require a full-time commitment so it is recommended that the Transformation Fund is also used to fund the backfill for those staff involved in the work on a temporary basis. Approval has been given for the estimated cost of this, which is £0.661 million over the next three years.

11.4 It is likely that the profiling of the commitments will extend into 2025-26. The expenditure and commitments to 30 September are as follows:

	2023-24 Approved requests	2023-24 Expendi ture to 30 Sept	2023-24 Commit ments Oct to Mar	2023-24 Forecast Expendit ure	2023-24 Forecast Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Opening Balance	3.000				
Total as at 30 September	2.382	0.491	1.312	1.803	(0.579)
Balance Remaining at 30 September	0.618				1.197

Implications

Policy	The report provides information and analysis on the Council's financial performance against budget as set in the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023-27 which supports the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26.
Finance and value for money	The report is of a financial nature and the detail is contained within the body of the report.
Legal	There are no immediate legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
Procurement	There are no specific procurement implications within this report.
Human Resources	There are no specific human resources implications within this report.
Property	There are no specific property implications within this report.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached)	There are no specific equalities implications within this report.
Risk Assessment	The risks associated with the budget were considered in February 2023 and were considered to be acceptable.
Crime & Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
Customer Consideration	There are no specific customer consideration implications within this report.
Carbon reduction	There are no specific carbon reduction implications within this report.
Health & Wellbeing	The Council's budget is founded on the principle of promoting inclusivity.
Wards	All wards.

Background papers

Cabinet 14 February 2023 and Council 22 February 2023: Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023-27

Report sign off

	Name
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Stephen Gerrard
Section S151 Officer/Executive Director	Jan Willis
Chief Executive	Helen Paterson
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Richard Wearmouth

Author and Contact Details

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Directorate:	Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing
Grant Awarding Body:	Department of Health & Social Care
Name of Grant:	Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund – Workforce Fund
Purpose:	To enable local authorities to make tangible improvements to Adult Social Care, in particular to increase social care workforce capacity and retention, reduce social care waiting times and increase fee rates paid to social care providers.
Value:	£2,313,875
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Non-recurrent

Directorate:	Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing
Grant Awarding Body:	North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Name of Grant:	S256 funding for JELS Cramlington Store
Purpose:	To fund the rent and associated lease costs of the Joint Equipment Loan Store
Value:	£93,020
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Recurrent

Directorate:	Children, Young People and Education
Grant Awarding Body:	Department for Education
Name of Grant:	Dedicated Schools Grant
Purpose:	The grant is paid in support of the local authority's school budget. The grant allocation was updated in July 2023 to reflect school academy conversions since April 2023 and updated early years block funding.
Value:	£1,940,750 reduction in grant
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Recurrent

Directorate:	Children, Young People and Education
Grant Awarding Body:	Department for Education
Name of Grant:	Early Years Supplementary grant
Purpose:	The funding is provided so local authorities can increase the amount of funding they pass on to early years providers for the delivery of funded early years entitlements up to March 2024.
Value:	£1,020,508
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Non-recurrent, will be merged into the Dedicated Schools Grant in future years

Directorate:	Children, Young People and Education
Grant Awarding Body:	Department for Education
Name of Grant:	Extension of the role of Virtual School Heads to children with a social worker
Purpose:	To support local authorities to help them extend the role of the Virtual School Head to promote the educational outcomes of the cohort of children with a social worker.
Value:	£119,189 per annum
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Confirmed for 2023-24 and 2024-25

Directorate:	Children, Young People and Education
Grant Awarding Body:	Department for Education
Name of Grant:	Teachers Pay additional Grant
Purpose:	Funding provided to support maintained schools to meet the cost of the 2023-24 Teachers pay award.
Value:	£1,233,750 for September 2023– March 2024
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Grant allocations to be confirmed for 2024-25. Grant will then merge into Dedicated Schools Grant from 2025-26 onwards.

Directorate:	Place and Regeneration
Grant Awarding Body:	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Name of Grant:	Energising Blyth – Deep Dive
Purpose:	To level up the town by upgrading poor quality housing, tackling health inequalities, improving access to local jobs and cutting crime.
Value:	£20,710,000 Capital £19,630,000 2023-24 £4,159,000; 2024-25 £6,771,000; 2025-26 £8,700,000 Revenue £1,080,000 2023-24 £363,333; 2024-25 £540,000; 2025-26 £176,667
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Non-Recurrent

Directorate:	Place and Regeneration
Grant Awarding Body:	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Rural Growth) and North of Tyne Investment Fund
Name of Grant:	Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)
Purpose:	To provide a comprehensive business and enterprise support service to small businesses (those employing less than 50 employees and with a turnover of less than £10.000 million).
Value:	£2,810,802 2023-24 £848,258; 2024-25 £1,043,312; 2025-26 £919,232
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Non-Recurrent

Directorate:	Place and Regeneration
Grant Awarding Body:	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Rural Growth) and North of Tyne Investment Fund
Name of Grant:	Rural Asset Multiplier Programme (RAMP)
Purpose:	To progressively develop a place-based approach to ensure that investment and impact are focused rather than dispersed through the

	integrated delivery of multiple elements of the Stewardship and Rural Growth Plan within specific localities.
Value:	£1,966,926 2023-24 £322,498; 2024-25 £858,543; 2025-26 £785,885
Recurrent/Non-recurrent:	Non-Recurrent

Performance against the 2023-24 savings targets is shown in the table below. The savings have been RAG rated based on the ability to meet the savings target within the year.

Directorate	Red	Amber	Green	Total
	£m	£m	£m	
Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing	-	-	4.679	4.679
Chief Executive	-	0.180	0.271	0.451
Children, Young People & Education	0.301	0.063	0.388	0.752
Place and Regeneration	0.442	-	3.270	3.712
Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities	0.169	-	0.825	0.994
Transformation & Resources	0.069	-	1.990	2.059
Corporate	-	-	4.398	4.398
Total	0.981	0.243	15.821	17.045

Key

Red – saving not expected to be delivered in year

Amber – saving at risk of non-delivery in year

Green – saving delivered or expected to be delivered in year

Children, Young People & Education

£0.285 million under-achievement in relation to the reduction in the cost of external residential placements. The saving was linked to the capital development of a new NCC children’s home that was originally due to open in May 2023. Delays to the capital works have led to an expected opening date of Spring 2024 and intake to the additional 4 beds will be staggered over the opening months. The running costs of the home from May 2023 had also been budgeted for and will underspend by £0.648 million based upon the revised opening date.

Place and Regeneration

£0.382 million under-achievement of Planning Fee income. The budget was increased by £0.782 million as part of the 2021-22 and 2023-24 budget setting process in anticipation of an increase to the national planning fee structure. The changes to the planning application fee system have been considered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and draft regulations reflecting the fee increase have been laid before Parliament, albeit later than expected. The proposed fee increase is now subsequently progressing, but an indicative timeframe of April 2024 means that this saving will not be achieved in this financial year.

Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities

A £0.045 million staff savings within Customer Services has not been realised as the move to the PlaceCube platform has been delayed. The migration, supported by the BEST

workforce began on 25 September however the anticipated customer channel shift will not be realised until 2024-25.

A £0.124 million saving expected from the Tourist Information Centres (TICs) has not been achieved due to the TICs at Craster, Seahouses and the Morpeth Chantry continuing to operate on a business-as-usual basis, which is expected to continue until January 2024 at the earliest for the former two. A growth bid has been submitted to reinstate the Morpeth Chantry budget recurrently from 2024-25 which this will be considered as part of the budget.

Transformation & Resources

A £0.069 million saving within Revenues and Benefits for the anticipated 20% reduction in postage costs has not yet been delivered as originally intended, however this has been achieved within the service through other non recurrent compensating savings. It is expected that this saving will be achieved in the future as a campaign is underway to promote an increase in online billing and to look at ways to make these bills more accessible to customers online. The Accounts Receivable Team is also looking at an initiative that involves sending out more invoices electronically which would reduce the outgoing post.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Assessment & Safeguarding	22.238	20.837	20.815	(0.022)
Integrated Commissioning	84.011	98.026	99.128	1.102
Business Support	4.315	2.929	2.811	(0.118)
In-House Provider Services	6.128	7.397	6.705	(0.692)
Executive Director	0.698	1.034	0.831	(0.203)
Total Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing	117.390	130.223	130.290	0.067

NOTES - Predicted Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast position for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing are outlined below:

- a. Assessment & Safeguarding is forecast to underspend by £0.022 million. This is due to the following:
 - i. Staffing-related budgets are forecast to underspend by £0.091 million as a result of vacant posts;
 - ii. Non-staffing related budgets are forecast to underspend by £0.247 million; and,
 - iii. The delay in the redesign of the Telecare service will result in £0.316 million of the 2021-22 approved saving not being achieved again this financial year. It is anticipated that this will be made in full in 2024-25.
- b. Integrated Commissioning is forecast to overspend by £1.102 million. This is due to the following:
 - i. There continues to be an upward trend in the growth in demand for services to support vulnerable people with complex care needs. The service is currently reviewing all care packages in order to manage resources and meet the £3.000 million saving target within this area.
- c. In-House Provider Services is forecast to underspend by £0.692 million. This is due to the following:
 - i. Staffing-related budgets are forecast to underspend by £0.190 million because of vacant posts;
 - ii. Transport related expenditure including client transport costs are forecast to underspend by £0.193 million; and,
 - iii. Income from North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board for clients who have been assessed as being eligible for Continuous Health Care (CHC) or S117 funding under the Mental Health Act is anticipated to be £0.219 million more than budget.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a

number of minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Chief Executive

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Chief Executive	0.344	0.399	0.367	(0.032)
Fire and Public Protection	22.119	22.801	23.557	0.756
Strategy and Communications	1.104	1.189	1.187	(0.002)
Law and Corporate Governance	6.309	6.018	6.318	0.300
Workforce	4.168	4.447	4.152	(0.295)
Total Chief Executive	34.044	34.854	35.581	0.727

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast position for Chief Executive are outlined below:

- a. Fire and Public Protection is forecast to overspend by £0.988 million due to:
 - i. There is a forecast underspend of £0.191 as a result of vacant posts, offset by forecast overtime costs of £0.445 million;
 - ii. There is a forecast overspend on data lines of £0.302 million due to a number of contractual and inflationary increases which have been identified as a budget pressure within the 2024-25 budget setting process; and,
 - iii. Within Building Control there is a forecast overspend of £0.225 million as a result of additional non recurrent costs associated with the demolition of a dangerous building, and an underachievement of Building Regulation Fees.
- b. Law and Corporate Governance is forecast to overspend by £0.300 million due to:
 - i. Legal Services are forecasting a £0.173 million overspend relating to staff regrades, plus the cost of the temporary Director of Law and Corporate Governance of £0.067 million prior to the Senior Management restructure, offset by vacancies of £0.111 million; and,
 - ii. External legal fees are forecast to overspend by £0.136 million due to increase in fees and an increase in complex childcare cases.
- c. Workforce is forecast to underspend by £0.295 million due to:
 - i. Human Resources, Learning & Organisational Development, Corporate Union and Postgraduates are forecast to underspend of £0.232 million due to vacant posts; and,
 - ii. Apprenticeships are forecast to underspend £0.147 million. There will be no further appointments to apprenticeship posts before the end of the year.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a number of minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Children, Young People and Education

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Children, Young People and Families	50.226	52.686	55.942	3.256
Education, SEND & Skills	34.980	33.529	34.028	0.499
Total Children, Young People and Education	85.206	86.215	89.970	3.755
Dedicated Schools Grant	(1.532)	160.649	161.199	0.550

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast position for Children, Young People and Education are outlined below:

- a. Children, Young People and Families is forecast to overspend by £3.256 million due to:
 - i. The Commissioned Placements and Support Services budgets is forecast to overspend by £3.768 million:
 - There is a £4.407 million overspend on external residential care placements. There are currently 45 residential placements, 3 independent supported living arrangements and a further emergency placement. This position is exacerbated by an increase in the average cost of placements due to market conditions, and in some cases the increasingly complex needs of the young people which is a national problem faced across many local authorities; and,
 - A saving of £0.285 million was proposed for 2023-24 which will not be achieved. This was linked to the opening of 4 new beds within residential children's homes. However, delays to the capital programme will result in a delay in opening the new home until at least Spring 2024;
 - ii. The Residential and Family Placement budget is forecast to underspend by £0.722 million:
 - There is an expected overspend of £0.518 million on foster care allowances (both in-house and independent agencies) adoption allowances and special guardianship allowances (SGO). Whilst there has been some growth in the number of SGO allowances, the pressure has largely arisen due to a mandatory inflation increase of 12.43% on the allowances that was announced after the Council set its budget for 2023-24, and exceeded the estimated inflation by 7%;
 - The new children's home was originally due to open in May 2023, but this is now expected to be Spring 2024 with the recruitment process underway. This will result in an underspend of £0.648 million on the running costs of the home which offsets the saving that will not be achieved on external placements;

- Kyloe House is expected to run at an underspend of £0.854 million. This assumes the unit will maintain occupancy levels of 12 beds throughout the year and follows an increase in the bed price for the 2023-24 financial year, and,
 - The Family Placement Service is expected to overspend by £0.275 million across client transport and other placement costs which are ad-hoc costs for Looked After Children.
- iii. The Early Help, Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS) and Disabled Children's Service is forecast to underspend by £0.573 million due to:
- There is a forecast overspend of £0.379 million on supported accommodation. There is currently a shortage of suitable placements across the county which has led to an increase in short-term emergency provision for young people aged 16+. From 28 October 2023 all providers are required to apply for Ofsted registration which could exacerbate the problem further; and,
 - There is additional grant of £0.835 million related to Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children grant and Turnaround grant funding which will be used to meet existing expenditure across the service
- iv. The Safeguarding service is forecast to overspend by £0.313 million due to:
- There is an expected overspend of £0.465 million across the service on client transport. This results from a combination of increased demand for the service and the current high inflationary environment.
- b. Education, SEND & Skills is forecast to overspend by £0.499 million due to:
- i. There is an overspend of £0.856 million on the cost of SEN transport for the 431 routes currently transporting 1,712 pupils and escorts. This is forecast to rise over the year up to 1,758 pupils. Current estimates are less than expected at Northumberland special schools and higher at both mainstream schools and independent education provision. This has generated an increase in the forecast overspend as the average cost of routes to mainstream and independent provision is higher than to special schools due to economies of scale possible.
 - ii. Mainstream transport is forecast to underspend by £0.183 million. This is due to a slight decrease in average contract costs and a bank holiday at Easter falling in this financial year.
- c. The Dedicated Schools Grant is forecast to overspend by £0.550 million which will be met by a transfer from the DSG reserve, this is due to:
- i. The forecast overspend on SEN top-ups is £1.005 million based on expected growth of 16% for the 2023-24 academic year across both mainstream and special schools in the authority.
 - ii. This is offset by an underspend of £0.213 million across staffing on vacancies across SEN support services.
 - iii. There is also an underspend of £0.280 million on the budget set aside to fund additional SEN places across mainstream schools and special schools. There was a contingency set aside for places required above those that were commissioned at the beginning of the year and it is not expected that this will be fully required. Place funding will be confirmed once the October 2023 census data is verified.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of several minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Place and Regeneration

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Economic Development and Growth	5.653	5.295	5.325	0.030
Environment and Transport	71.455	73.121	73.641	0.520
Housing and Planning	5.435	1.740	2.854	1.114
Total Place and Regeneration	82.543	80.156	81.820	1.664

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reason for the forecast position for the Place and Regeneration Directorate is outlined below:

- a. Environment and Transport is forecast to overspend by £0.520 million due to:
 - i. Highways and Transport are forecast to underspend by £0.637 million mainly due to an overachievement of income of £0.400 million from parking charges and penalty charge notices and £0.300 million overachievement of income on street works, Section 74 overrun charges and fixed penalty notices;
 - ii. Neighbourhood Services is forecast to overspend mainly due to an anticipated shortfall in income of £0.370 million from Blyth Crematorium due to the impact of a new private crematorium opening; and,
 - iii. The Waste PFI Contract is forecast to overspend by £0.715 million. As of 1 January 2023, the Environment Agency has banned the disposal of upholstered furniture containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) from recycling or landfill. The additional cost to handle this separately from other bulky waste is estimated at £0.311 million but work is being undertaken to explore how this can be mitigated. Final Annual Unitary Charge (AUC) inflation rates were higher than the estimates used in budget setting, causing the budget to be exceeded by £0.103 million, and increased waste volumes in quarter one has resulted in forecast additional costs through the AUC of £0.245 million.
- b. Housing and Planning is forecast to overspend by £1.114 million mainly due to:
 - i. £0.882 million underachievement of planning fee income. The income budget was increased by £0.782 million as part of the 2021-22 and 2023-24 budget setting process in anticipation of an increase to the national planning fee structure. The changes to the planning application fee system have been considered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and draft Regulations reflecting the fee increase have been laid before Parliament, albeit later than expected. The proposed fee increase is now subsequently progressing, but an indicative timeframe of April 2024 means that this saving

will not be achieved in this financial year.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a number of minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Public Health	0.064	0.021	0.021	-
Stronger Communities	23.138	13.606	13.123	(0.483)
Total Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities	23.202	13.627	13.144	(0.483)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reason for the forecast position for Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities is outlined below:

- a. Public Health is forecast to break even:
 - i. The terms of the main grant allow unspent allocations to be carried over into the next financial year. Public Health carried forward a reserve of £5.540 million to financial year 2023-24. It is anticipated that £0.904 million of the reserve will be utilised in year to provide additional services to reduce poverty and health inequalities.
 - ii. The budget also includes an unallocated saving of £0.250 million which will be achieved by utilising the Public Health grant to fund activity currently funded by other Council services.
- b. Stronger Communities is forecast to underspend by £0.483 million as:
 - i. Within Customer Services there is a forecast underspend of £0.275 million. This is mainly due to £0.262 million underspend on staffing vacancies, most of which are planned to be filled within the year.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a number of minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Transformation and Resources

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Audit and Risk Management	0.838	0.853	0.764	(0.089)
Digital & IT	10.375	11.484	11.454	(0.030)
Executive Director of Transformation and Resources	46.422	2.759	2.828	0.069
Finance and Procurement	5.139	5.924	5.379	(0.545)
Strategic Change & Service Improvement	4.620	8.301	7.857	(0.444)
Total Finance	67.394	29.321	28.282	(1.039)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reason for the forecast position for Transformation and Resources is outlined below:

Digital and IT is forecast to underspend by £0.030 million due to:

- i. Part year staffing vacancies totalling £0.221 million across the service which are expected to be filled during 2023-24;
- ii. £0.083 million non-recurrent overspend on computer software; and,
- iii. £0.108 million forecast overspend on non-staffing due to increased consultancy fees expected to bridge a temporary skills gap within the service.

Finance and Procurement is forecast to underspend by £0.545 million due to:

- a. Transactional Services is forecast to underspend by £0.257 million:
 - i. A forecast underspend of £0.222 million relating to Revenue and Benefits is due to staff vacancies of £0.221 million, most of which are expected to be filled within the year. There is also an additional £0.118 million grant funding that has been received for New Burdens.
 - ii. Within Cost of Benefits there is a forecast net overspend in relation to Rent Allowance and Rent Rebate payments and claimed subsidy of £0.299 million. This forecast is due to the payments made in relation to the increased application of Supported Exempt Accommodation schemes which attract only 60% subsidy from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
 - iii. Forecast additional income of £0.140 million from Oxygen Finance Fiscal following a review of duplicate supplier payments.

- iv. An underspend of £0.134 million is forecast within Cashiers and Income Management mainly due to saving in renegotiating contracts.

Strategic Change & Service Improvement is forecast to underspend by £0.444 million due to:

- i. A forecast underspend across Property running costs of £0.353 million as a result of utility costs now expecting to be lower than originally anticipated due to usage.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a number of minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Corporate Expenditure and Income

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Corporate Items	(7.944)	32.079	32.260	0.181
Treasury Management	(26.442)	(23.243)	(25.720)	(2.477)
Capital Financing	93.046	18.192	16.390	(1.802)
Corporate Funding	(470.047)	(401.910)	(401.910)	-
Total Other Corporate Expenditure & Income	(411.387)	(374.882)	(378.980)	(4.098)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reason for the forecast position for Corporate Expenditure and Income is outlined below:

- a. Treasury Management is forecast to underspend by £2.477 million due to:
 - i. The Council's budgeted investment income return for 2023-24 was originally £2.800 million. Due to the significant increase in interest rates in the first half of the year, and the higher than anticipated level of balances available for investment, returns to date have already achieved the budgeted level. It is estimated that investment interest received by year end will be £5.265 million, resulting in a forecast over-achievement of investment income of around £2.477 million.
- b. Corporate Financing is forecast to underspend by £1.802 million due to:
 - i. Total external borrowing has decreased by £23.025 million, from £745.378 million at the start of the year to £722.353 million at 30 September 2023. This is due to maturing existing loans. However, taking into account future loan maturities and new borrowing, a net additional borrowing of approximately £110.000 million is forecast in the final quarter of the financial year. Overall borrowing is projected to total around £831.825 million by 31 March 2024 which is around £32.001 million lower than anticipated. Although savings resulting from the reduced levels of borrowing will be partly offset by the higher than expected interest rates payable on those new loans taken out within the year, it is expected to generate an overall underspend of around £1.802 million.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a number of minor variations within each area.

Forecast Revenue Outturn - Detailed budget summary by Service

Service: Housing Revenue Account

Summary by Service	2022-23 Outturn	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
Service	£m	£m	£m	£m
Housing Management	6.312	6.927	6.575	(0.352)
Housing Special	0.891	1.015	1.109	0.094
Repairs and Maintenance	9.540	9.148	9.663	0.515
Housing Capital Works	0.494	0.631	0.623	(0.008)
Other HRA Services	13.663	14.882	14.666	(0.216)
HRA Income	(30.175)	(32.916)	(32.664)	0.252
Total HRA Expenditure & Income	0.725	(0.313)	(0.028)	0.285

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast variance for the Housing Revenue Account are as follows:

- a. Housing Management is forecast to underspend by £0.352 million mainly due to part year vacancies.
- b. Repairs and Maintenance is forecast to overspend by £0.515 million. The main reasons are:
 - i. £1.117 million is due to the use of external contractors on more specialised areas of work including surveyors' inspections, provision of expert reports and completion of remedial works in relation to damp and disrepair. The Repair and Maintenance team are looking to create a team dedicated to Housing Disrepair to identify and address issues more quickly to avoid the potential for claims. The team will proactively discourage any potential claims. The team will be funded through posts already within the structure; and
 - ii. There is a forecast underspend of £0.525 million on salaries due to part year vacancies.
- c. Other HRA Services is forecast to underspend by £0.216 million. The main reasons are:
 - i. Interest payable on HRA borrowing has increased by £0.338 million. This is due to the internal borrowing rates payable to the general fund, which are based on the 30-year PWLB rates. They are forecast to increase from 4.5% to 5.5% following a rise in the Bank of England base rate;
 - ii. Interest received on balances is forecast to increase by £0.721 million. This is due to an increase in the 3-year Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) rate which is forecast to average at 4.4% for the current year. The budget was set at an interest rate of 3.0%; and,
 - iii. Depreciation has increased by £0.182 million following an upward revaluation of Council dwellings by the Council's external valuers.

- d. HRA Income is forecast to underachieve by £0.252 million mainly due to dwelling rent income. Voids are currently running at 3.72% rather than the budgeted figure of 3.0%.

Note - The difference between the figures shown in the table and the explanations above consist of a number of minor variations within each area.

Key Capital Movements by Service

Service: Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing – Forecast variance (£1.951) million		
Summary by Project	Under/ Overspend	Reprofiling
	£m	£m
Adult Social Care Capital Fund	-	(0.231)
Disabled Facilities Grant	-	(1.500)
Person Centred Care Information System (SWIFT)	-	-
Sea Lodge Wet Room	-	-
Telecare Digital Switch	-	-
Tynedale House Fire Doors	-	(0.220)
Total	-	(1.951)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast variance for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing are outlined below:

- a. Based on the forecast level of referrals, £1.500 million from the Disabled Facilities Grant can be reprofiled to financial year 2024-25.

Service: Chief Executive – forecast variance £ Nil

Summary by Project	Under/ Overspend	Reprofiling
Project	£m	£m
Fire and Rescue - Berwick Fire Station	-	-
Fire and Rescue - Equipment	-	-
Fire and Rescue - Fleet	-	-
Fire and Rescue - Fire Control and Communication Equipment	-	-
Total	-	-

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

There are no significant variances to report.

Service: Children, Young People and Education – Forecast variance (£12.989) million		
Summary by Project	Under/ Overspend	Reprofiling
	£m	£m
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	0.184	-
Northumberland Skills	(0.106)	-
School Led (DFC and EECA)	(0.096)	(0.025)
School Redevelopments	-	(10.443)
Schools Condition Improvement Programme (SCIP)	-	(0.103)
SEN Capacity Growth	-	(2.400)
Total	(0.018)	(12.971)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reason for the forecast variance for Children's Services are outlined below:

- a. School Redevelopments – Coquet and Seaton Valley redevelopments require a change in funding profile over the life of the Medium-Term Financial Plan to meet requirements and full scope of the projects. Additional Capital Bids are currently being considered to meet the rising inflationary costs of these projects.
- b. SEN Capacity Growth - SEN Capacity Growth will be expanded in the School Redevelopment projects at Seaton Valley, Berwick and Coquet. Therefore, there is a delay around satellite projects expanding SEN Capacity Growth.

Service: Place and Regeneration – forecast variance (£39.259) million		
Summary by Project	Under/ Overspend	Reprofiling
Project	£m	£m
A1068 Shilbottle Road Junction Improvements	-	(1.090)
Affordable Homes Programme	-	(4.955)
Ashington Town Centre Renewal and Strategic Sites Programme	-	(0.800)
Bedlington Town Centre Redevelopment Phase 1 and 2	-	(1.174)
Berwick Maltings	-	(1.000)
Blyth Relief Road	-	(2.783)
Choppington Mineral Rights	(0.300)	-
Climate Change Capital Fund	-	(0.959)
Community Housing Fund	-	(0.041)
County Hall Refurbishment	-	(0.515)
Department for Transport Challenge Fund – Steel Structures	-	(0.026)
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive – Energy Central Campus Training Kit	-	(1.450)
Energising Blyth Programme	-	(9.008)
Fleet Replacement Programme	-	(0.519)
Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) - Beadnell	-	(0.697)
FCERM – Bingfield	0.017	-
FCERM – Branton Surface Water	-	(0.020)
FCERM – Hepscoth Flood Alleviation Scheme	-	(0.178)
FCERM – Kirkwell Cottages	-	(0.041)
FCERM – Loansdean	-	(0.045)
FCERM – Meggies Burn	-	(0.006)
FCERM – Ovingham Surface Water	-	(0.053)
FCERM – Red Row	-	(0.052)
FCERM – Wark	(0.047)	-
FCERM – Wylam	-	(0.130)

Great Northumberland Forest	-	(0.233)
Great Northumberland Forest – Storm Arwen	-	(0.250)
Hexham – The Shambles	-	(0.250)
Highway Maintenance and Pothole Repair Fund	-	(0.503)
Highways Laboratory Expansion	-	(0.300)
Hirst Area Containerisation of Waste	(0.050)	-
Leisure Buildings – Essential Remedials	(0.200)	-
Loan to NELEP – Ashwood Business Park	-	(1.335)
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure	-	(3.500)
Local Transport Plan	-	(2.596)
Members Local Improvement Schemes	-	(0.234)
Portland Park – Grant to Advance Northumberland	-	(3.000)
Prudhoe Waterworld Improvements	-	(0.160)
Rural Business Growth Scheme	(0.896)	-
Salt Barns	-	(0.384)
Solar Photovoltaic/Ground Source Heat Pumps	0.019	-
Union Chain Bridge	0.504	-
Yourlink Refurbishment	(0.019)	-
Total	(0.972)	(38.287)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast variance for Place and Regeneration are outlined below:

- a. A1068 Shilbottle Road Junction Improvements reprofiling is due to traffic modelling currently being procured/undertaken to satisfy National Highways requirements with a design to be completed following the National Highways response to the modelling. The scheme has been delayed due to workload and resourcing issues, with construction expected to commence in February/March and continue into 2024-25.
- b. Affordable Homes Programme - several schemes have commenced but due to increased prices in construction, there have been delays in some projects while revised models have been updated and approved. For other schemes, work is in progress with demolition being finalised and groundwork preparation beginning to be ready for project commencement in 2024-25.
- c. Ashington Town Centre Renewal and Strategic Sites Programme with detailed design of the scheme continuing with construction works expected to commence in Summer 2024.

- d. Bedlington Town Centre Redevelopment Phase 1 and 2 based on the current cashflow statement supplied by Advance Northumberland. There have been delays in the project due to the collapse of the main contractor, with a new contractor now appointed to complete the scheme.
- e. Berwick Maltings due to delays in the programme as more time is being expended on design work than envisaged as the cost estimate for the scheme is currently significantly higher than the previous estimate on which the budget allocation is based. The design team is therefore looking at options for reducing the cost to narrow the budget gap and there have also been delays resulting from archaeological exploration on the site.
- f. Blyth Relief Road. The outline business case has been submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) with clarifications/queries being resolved with them. The scheme is currently progressing at risk using Council funds until the DfT approve the outline business case. Recent guidance published by the DfT (Network North) has indicated a change in government contributions from a maximum contribution of 85% to 100% of costs identified in the Outline Business Case.
- g. Choppington Mineral Rights The mineral rights for the whole development were purchased in 2019-20 so no more are required to be purchased for future requirements.
- h. Climate Change Capital Fund - The unallocated balance in 2023-24 is being reprofiled to be used on sustainability, solar and ground source heat pump projects currently being devised for delivery in 2024-25.
- i. County Hall Refurbishment - refurbishment of the dog leg is currently on hold and the front of house, basement and rear-entrance stairwell works are to be completed in 2024-25.
- j. Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive – Energy Central Campus Training Kit. This will be defrayed in 2024-25 for equipment the facility requires once construction has been completed.
- k. Energising Blyth Programme with work commencing on the construction of the Energy Central Campus and the Culture Centre and Market Place improvements. Business cases on other elements of the programme are being prepared and finalised for approval.
- l. Fleet Replacement Programme being reviewed. Due to the challenging market conditions continuing it is currently expected that reprofiling will be required. However, this may change as manufacturers amend expected delivery dates.
- m. FCERM – Beadnell. The business case is in the process of being finalised with design expected to commence in the current financial year and construction to commence in 2024-25 subject to planning consents and a successful business case.
- n. Great Northumberland Forest – Storm Arwen. Further funding panels were convened in October and November due to increased demand with further grants to be awarded to cover the planting season between October and March.
- o. Hexham – The Shambles. This work is now expected to be undertaken between April and November 2024.
- p. Highways Maintenance and Pothole Repair Fund due to works potentially clashing with utility works and other schemes that are scheduled to be undertaken.
- q. Highways Laboratory Expansion. Approval to commence the scheme is currently awaited with construction expected to commence in February 2024.
- r. Loan to NELEP – Ashwood Business Park. An updated cost report has been received from the Project Team to reflect revised expenditure and the on-going timeline for delivery of the project.
- s. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure with design on the schemes for Blyth Town Centre to

South Beach and Ashington to North Seaton progressing with an expectation that the majority of construction works will take place in 2024-25.

- t. Local Transport Plan due to works potentially clashing with utility works and other schemes being undertaken and due to delays in obtaining third party permissions.
- u. Portland Park – Grant to Advance Northumberland due to being linked to the regeneration of Ashington Town Centre and is expected to be defrayed in 2024-25 in line with the main construction works.
- v. Rural Business Growth Scheme has underspent due to the level of applications received. There were fewer applications received than originally envisaged due to the requirement of recipients having to find match funding from their own resources and a reluctance for this due to the current economic conditions some businesses operate in. The scheme has now concluded with the final claims submitted to the funders.
- w. Salt Barns - discussions are continuing around the potential site in Morpeth with the expenditure likely to be incurred in 2024-25 if successful.
- x. Union Chain Bridge scheme is currently £0.504 million overspent in 2023-24. Discussions are ongoing with the contractor to achieve a settlement on the final account position to avoid an adjudication process. A final reconciliation will then be needed following the outcome of this process to identify any shortfall in funding to be shared between the Council and Scottish Borders Council.

Service: Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities – forecast variance (£0.100) million

Summary by Project	Under/ Overspend	Reprofiling
Project	£m	£m
Northumberland Playzones	-	(0.300)
Provision of Leisure Facilities within Morpeth	0.200	-
Total	0.200	(0.300)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast variance for Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities are outlined below:

- a. The Northumberland Playzones are unlikely to commence this financial year until confirmation of the outcome of the Football Foundation grant funding bid is known, and when ground conditions improve for this type of construction work; costs are therefore likely to slip into 2024-25.
- b. The forecast £0.200 million overspend is due to additional car parking drainage works which will be funded from the Essential Leisure Remedial Works budget.

Service: Transformation and Resources – forecast variance (£2.452) million		
Summary by Project	Under/ Overspend	Reprofiling
Project	£m	£m
Broadband Phase 2 Gainshare Extension	-	(0.656)
Community Broadband	-	(1.663)
Craster Mast	-	(0.050)
Hardware Infrastructure	(0.002)	-
IT Backup and Recovery	(0.100)	-
Local Full Fibre Network	-	(0.083)
Server Infrastructure	0.102	-
Total	-	(2.452)

NOTES - Year End Variances of £0.250 million or more

The main reasons for the forecast variance for Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities are outlined below:

- a. Broadband Phase 2 Gainshare Extension. Only £0.070 million anticipated expenditure for 2023-24 which is less than originally anticipated due to the Top Up Scheme to support Building Digital UK (BDUK) Rural Gigabit being placed on hold in 2023-24. Gainshare funds were expected to support this scheme in 2023-24 however, due to the delay this funding is now expected to be spent in 2024-25. £3.763 million additional gainshare is due from BT in year. A further payment of £1.735 million will be made to BDUK Ltd with the remaining funds reprofiled into 2024-25.
- b. Community Broadband. 2023-24 expenditure is estimated at £0.279 million due to BDUK putting their voucher scheme to support rural gigabit on hold during 2023-24, only recently making vouchers available to some suppliers. Due to this the remaining funding is to be reprofiled into 2024-25 as spend has not been as high as originally anticipated in 2023-24.

Items approved from the Council's Contingency

The following items have been approved from the Council's contingency during June to September 2023.

Recurrent Funding	2023-24	2024-25
	£	£
E-licencing computer software returned to contingency	(100,000)	-
Release of Firefighters pay award agreed from 1 July 2023	405,300	-
Pay award adjustment	32,180	-
Total amount drawn from Contingency recurrently	337,480	-

Non-Recurrent Funding	2023-24	2024-25
	£	£
2 Graduates from the National Local Government Development Programme	27,220	-
Cyber Security	97,130	-
Coronation Events	70,000	-
Information Services Recruitment Campaign	14,770	-
CapitaONE Education Management System	20,030	-
Northumberland Wide Area Network	553,400	-
Total amount drawn from Contingency non-recurrently	782,550	-

Movement in the Council's Reserves

	Opening Balance at 1 April 2023*	Movement in Reserve	Commitments	Forecast Closing Balance at 31 March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Reserves/Balances				
General Fund	(50.955)	-	-	(50.955)
Total General Reserve	(50.955)	-	-	(50.955)
Ring-Fenced Reserves/Balances				
Housing Revenue Account	(29.147)	-	0.973	(28.174)
Major Repairs (HRA)	(9.855)	-	0.132	(9.723)
HRA Capital Investment	(1.740)	-	0.177	(1.563)
Total Earmarked HRA Reserves	(40.742)	-	1.282	(39.460)
Specific Reserves/Balances				
Capital Grants Unapplied	(63.478)	-	-	(63.478)
Capital Receipts	(0.093)	-	-	(0.093)
Capital Receipts - HRA	(8.237)	-	0.395	(7.842)
Total Specific Reserves/Balances	(71.808)	-	0.395	(71.413)

	Opening Balance at 1 April 2023*	Movement in Reserve	Commitments	Forecast Closing Balance at 31 March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Earmarked Reserves				
ADC Section 106	(0.002)	-	0.002	-
Balances held by Schools	(8.941)	8.341	(5.519)	(6.119)
Borderlands Energy Masterplan	(0.808)	-	0.808	-
Business Recovery Reserve	(2.322)	-	-	(2.322)
Collection Fund Smoothing	(1.944)	-	1.944	-
Community Led Housing	(0.605)	-	0.071	(0.534)
Contain Outbreak Management	(0.260)	0.260	-	-
Council Commissioned Services	(7.520)	-	7.352	(0.168)
Council Transformation Fund	(17.144)	-	3.051	(14.093)
Council Tax Hardship & Discount Scheme	(6.588)	-	5.324	(1.264)
Dedicated Schools Grant	(4.501)	2.434	0.619	(1.448)
Economy & Regeneration Investments	(0.050)	-	0.050	-
Empty Dwelling Management Order	(0.077)	-	(0.017)	(0.094)
Estates Rationalisation	(6.257)	0.135	1.763	(4.359)
Exceptional Inflationary Pressures	(1.017)	-	1.017	-
FPF Admin Grant	(0.033)	-	-	(0.033)
FRS HMICFRS Improvement	(0.026)	-	0.018	(0.008)
Firefighters' Immediate Detriment	(0.200)	-	-	(0.200)
Food Waste	(0.058)	0.058	-	-
Haltwhistle Repairs Reserve	(0.036)	-	(0.010)	(0.046)
Highways Commuted Maintenance Funds	(1.127)	0.054	-	(1.073)
Highways Maintenance Investments	(0.225)	-	0.225	-
Home for Ukraine	(4.586)	-	4.586	-

	Opening Balance at 1 April 2023*	Movement in Reserve	Commitments	Forecast Closing Balance at 31 March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Insurance	(7.822)	-	0.500	(7.322)
Legal Challenge	(1.071)	-	0.182	(0.889)
NCC Economic Regeneration	(0.138)	-	0.138	-
Open Spaces Maintenance Agreements	(0.094)	0.011	-	(0.083)
Parks and Green Spaces	(0.250)	-	0.250	-
Planning Delivery	(1.078)	-	0.040	(1.038)
Problematic Empty Properties	(0.047)	-	0.016	(0.031)
Recruitment & Retention	(0.439)	-	-	(0.439)
Regeneration Additional Capacity Reserve	(0.405)	-	-	(0.405)
Regeneration Development Reserve	(2.952)	0.073	1.529	(1.350)
Repair and Maintenance	(0.250)	-	-	(0.250)
Replacement of Defective Street Lanterns	(2.930)	-	-	(2.930)
Restructuring Reserve	(0.838)	0.014	0.101	(0.723)
Revenue Grants	(20.353)	6.561	1.844	(11.948)
School Libraries	(0.007)	-	-	(0.007)
Sealodge	(0.010)	-	(0.015)	(0.025)
Section 106	(14.697)	0.001	(0.050)	(14.746)
Severe Weather	(7.500)	-	5.493	(2.007)
Social Fund	(0.493)	-	0.180	(0.313)
Sports Development	(0.297)	-	0.010	(0.287)
Storm Arwen	(0.193)	-	0.193	-
Strategic Management Reserve	(49.708)		11.396	(38.312)
Transformation of the Revenues & Benefits Service	(0.215)	-	0.060	(0.155)
Violence Reduction	(0.039)	-	0.039	-

	Opening Balance at 1 April 2023*	Movement in Reserve	Commitments	Forecast Closing Balance at 31 March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Winter Services	(2.000)	-	-	(2.000)
Women's Safety in Public Places	(0.022)	-	0.022	-
Total Earmarked Reserves	(178.175)	17.942	43.212	(117.021)
Total Usable Reserves	(341.680)	17.942	44.889	(278.849)

	Opening Balance at 1 April 2023*	Movement in Provision	Commitments	Forecast Closing Balance at 31 March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Provisions				
Redundancy	(0.545)	0.031	0.514	-
NNDR Appeals	(5.212)	-	(1.750)	(6.962)
Estates Rationalisation Project	(0.577)	-	0.450	(0.127)
Compensation Claims	(0.080)		0.042	(0.038)
Contractor Claims	(0.330)	-	0.330	-
Total Provisions	(6.744)	0.031	(0.414)	(7.127)
Total Reserves & Provisions	(348.424)	17.973	44.475	(285.976)

*Provisional un-audited opening balance figure

Virements July to September 2023

Directorate	Reason for Virement	Virement from	Virement to	£
Children, Young People and Families	The budget for the running costs of several Family Hub buildings have now transferred to Integrated services.	Early Help	Integrated Services	148,220

Scheme	2023-24 Original budget	2023-24 Approved adjustments	2023-24 Requested reprofiling	2023-24 Comments	2023-24 Revised budget	2024-25 Revised budget	2025-26 Revised budget	2026-27 Revised budget
	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing								
Adult Social Care Capital Fund	-	331,185	(231,185)	One extra care housing project at Lyndon Walk will complete this financial year. The balance of the 2023-24 budget is to be reprofiled to financial year 2024-25 when it is anticipated the extra care housing programme will accelerate.	100,000	231,185	-	-
Disabled Facilities Grant	4,058,073	(58,073)	(1,500,000)	Based on the forecast level of referrals, £1.500 million from the Disabled Facilities Grant can be reprofiled to financial year 2024-25.	2,500,000	4,578,012	2,000,000	2,000,000
Person Centred Care Information System (SWIFT)	-	100,600	-		100,600	402,400	-	-
Sealodge Wet-room, Creswell	-	30,870	-		30,870	-	-	-
Telecare Digital Switch	-	547,000	-		547,000	-	-	-
Tynedale House Fire Doors	368,550	1,452	(220,002)	Structural issues on site have delayed the project. It is anticipated that the tender process will commence December with work starting before the end of the 2023-24 and completing next financial year.	150,000	720,002	-	-
	4,426,623	953,034	(1,951,187)		3,428,470	5,931,599	2,000,000	2,000,000
Chief Executive								
FRS Berwick Fire Station Health & Safety Works	500,000	-	-		500,000	-	-	-
FRS Fire Control and Communications Equipment	-	59,531	-		59,531	-	-	-
FRS Fleet Requirement	1,387,629	444,378	-		1,832,007	836,000	1,007,000	1,001,500
FRS Officer Support Vehicles (Blue Light Scheme)	56,392	-	-		56,392	-	-	-
FRS Risk Critical Equipment	72,080	(3,843)	-		68,237	335,700	121,500	328,438
	2,016,101	500,066	-		2,516,167	1,171,700	1,128,500	1,329,938
Children, Young People & Education								
Basic Need - Other	-	561,312	-		561,312	721,654	-	-
Berwick Partnership Schools	250,000	-	-		250,000	8,171,368	26,328,632	5,146,203
Children's Homes Provision (3 no. 4-Bed)	1,434,773	170,272	-		1,605,045	-	-	-
Choppington Primary Artificial Pitch	205,000	-	-		205,000	-	-	-
Cleasewell Hill SEND Capacity	-	248,335	-		248,335	-	-	-
Coquet Partnership Redevelopment	9,132,931	728,847	(2,547,562)	There have been delays to the project due to revised scope, availability of contractors and high material costs. Works are currently being undertaken, additional asbestos surveys have created a three month delay, therefore a reprofiling is necessary to allow works to continue in 2024-25.	7,314,216	22,092,034	8,644,320	-
Corbridge Middle School - 3G Pitch	492,666	(2,065)	-		490,601	-	-	-
Devolved Formula Capital	829,780	(14,267)	-		815,513	591,570	591,570	591,570
Family Hub Grant	-	63,000	-		63,000	59,000	-	-
Gilbert Ward Academy	-	1,057,675	-		1,057,675	-	-	-
KEVI New Build Sports Block	-	-	-		-	2,551,000	2,079,000	-
Kyloe House	189,735	598,974	-		788,709	-	-	-
Mobile Classroom Replacement Programme	524,071	759,909	-		1,283,980	675,721	-	-
Morpeth First School	-	56,664	-		56,664	-	-	-
New Hartley First School (Classroom)	-	50,000	-		50,000	-	-	-
Port of Blyth- Welding and Fabrication Skills Centre	-	529,798	-		529,798	-	-	-
RDA relocation from Tranwell (Pegasus Centre)	-	203,273	-		203,273	-	-	-
School Condition Programme (SCIP) - Remedials / General Programme	2,928,930	964,985	(102,800)	As part of the two EECA projects above, NCC have agreed to subsidise the projects with available SCIP grant. This amounts to best use of funds and value for money for all involved. As these projects will be undertaken next financial year, the grant funding needs reprofiling	3,791,115	2,955,600	2,750,000	2,750,000
School Led - Energy Efficiency Capital Allocation	-	1,260,460	(25,200)	As part of the Energy Efficiency Capital Allocation programme, Slaley First School and Stead Lane Primary have identified a significant project to improve their heating system, reduce energy usage and save revenue funding. Due to the nature of the project, it will be done over two phases when pupils are not in School.	1,235,260	50,400	-	-
Seaton Valley Federation of Schools	13,849,515	(92,835)	(7,895,433)	There have been delays to the project due to revised scope, availability of contractors and high material costs. The total final contract sum is late and therefore commercial evaluation of the proposals and costs have not been confirmed, this has created an overall delay in the project and thus reprofiling is necessary to allow the bulk of the project to be undertaken in 2024-25.	5,861,247	28,150,348	1,250,857	-
Special Educational Need (SEN) Capacity Growth	2,400,000	-	(2,400,000)	SEN Capacity Growth will be expanded in the School Redevelopment projects at Seaton Valley, Berwick and Coquet. Therefore, there is a delay around satellite projects expanding SEN Capacity Growth.	-	8,500,000	7,442,000	-
West of County Schools Restructure	384,878	-	-		384,878	-	-	-
	32,622,279	7,144,337	(12,970,995)		26,795,621	74,518,695	49,086,379	8,487,773
Place and Regeneration								

Scheme	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24 Comments	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Original budget	Approved adjustments	Requested reprofiling		Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget
	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
A1068 Shilbottle Junction Improvements	950,000	540,518	(1,090,518)	Due to traffic modelling currently being procured/undertaken to satisfy National Highways requirements with a design to be completed following the National Highways response to the modelling. The scheme has been delayed due to workload and resourcing issues with construction expected to commence in February/March and continue into 2024-25.	400,000	1,090,518	-	-
Acquisition of Wansbeck Square Site	-	1,365,000	-		1,365,000	-	-	-
Affordable Homes	7,467,180	(2,065,440)	(3,730,370)	Several schemes having commenced but due to increased prices in construction, there have been delays in some projects while revised models have been updated and approved. For other schemes, work is in progress with demolition being finalised and groundwork preparation beginning to be ready for project commencement in 2024-25.	1,671,370	18,823,415	10,960,000	10,900,000
Affordable Homes - Riverbrook Gardens Development	-	1,008,000	(41,700)		966,300	41,700	-	-
Alnwick Playhouse - Replacement of Lighting Rig	-	100,000	-		100,000	-	-	-
Amble Bord Waalk	-	8,688	-		8,688	-	-	-
Amble HUSK Bungalows	-	-	-		-	1,333,000	-	-
Ashington High Street Investment Programme	841,894	100,954	-		942,848	807,915	-	-
Ashington North East Quarter Re-development Phase 2	2,435,802	(100,000)	-		2,335,802	100,000	-	-
Ashington Town Centre Renewal of Strategic Sites Programme	-	1,600,000	(800,000)	Detailed design of the scheme continuing with construction works expected to commence in Summer 2024.	800,000	800,000	-	-
Bedlington Town Centre Redevelopment Phase 1 & 2	590,578	2,354,805	(1,173,698)	Based on the current cashflow statement supplied by Advance Northumberland. There have been delays in the project due to the collapse of the main contractor Tolent with a new contractor now appointed to complete the scheme.	1,771,685	1,173,698	-	-
Berwick Culture and Creative Zone	-	100,000	-		100,000	-	-	-
Blyth Relief Road	1,498,000	3,334,584	(2,782,558)	The outline business case has been submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) with clarifications/queries being resolved with them. The scheme is currently progressing at risk using Council funds until the DfT approve the outline business case. Recent guidance published by the DfT (Network North) has indicated a change in government contributions from a maximum contribution of 85% to 100% of costs identified in the Outline Business Case.	2,050,026	19,655,558	24,918,000	-
Blyth Sports Centre Solar PV	-	78,050	-		78,050	-	-	-
Blyth to Bebside Cycle Corridor	192,532	159,146	-		351,678	3,262,329	3,244,739	-
Blyth Town Centre Northern Gateway (Phase 1)	-	306	-		306	-	-	-
Blyth Town Centre Northern Gateway (Phase 2)	97,211	65,430	-		162,641	1,534,285	1,681,925	-
Borderlands - Berwick Maltings	851,000	3,003,746	(1,000,000)	Due to delays in the programme as more time is being expended on design work than envisaged as the cost estimate for the scheme is currently significantly higher than the previous estimate on which the budget allocation is based. The design team is therefore looking at options for reducing the cost to narrow the budget gap and there have also been delays resulting from archaeological exploration on the site.	2,854,746	12,242,012	7,487,358	498,291
Borderlands - Carlisle Station	3,987,000	(487,000)	-		3,500,000	3,461,279	1,000,000	-
Borderlands - Carlisle University	-	8,135,059	-		8,135,059	14,304,687	23,682,615	-
Borderlands - Destination Tweed	-	250,000	-		250,000	750,000	-	-
Borderlands - Lillidorei	500,000	500,000	-		1,000,000	-	-	-
Choppington Mineral Rights	300,000	-	-		300,000	-	-	-
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Grants	691,000	(189,713)	-		501,287	691,000	691,000	691,000
Climate Change Capital Fund	-	2,296,870	(959,325)	The unallocated balance in 2023-24 is being reprofiled to be used on sustainability, solar and ground source heat pump projects currently being devised for delivery in 2024-25.	1,337,545	2,909,325	-	-
Community Housing Fund	643,451	(602,426)	(41,025)	No further expenditure is anticipated in 2023-24.	-	719,806	-	-
County Hall Refurbishment	600,000	133,203	(515,000)	The refurbishment of the dog leg is currently on hold and the front of house, basement and back stairwell works are to be completed in 2024-25	218,203	515,000	3,900,000	-
County Hall Solar Car Port	2,700,000	(643,056)	-		2,056,944	-	-	-
County Hall Solar PV	-	-	-		-	98,939	-	-
Cowley Road Depot Refurb & Car Park	2,000,000	(2,000,000)	-		-	2,000,000	-	-
CP - Car Parks General	320,000	17,043	-		337,043	467,470	467,460	-
Cramlington S106 Improvements	300,000	17,359	-		317,359	-	-	-
Cycle Stands (Emergency Active Travel Fund)	-	14,780	-		14,780	-	-	-
Depot Rationalisation	158,000	-	-		158,000	2,285,000	4,885,000	552,000
Electric Vehicle Charger Installation	400,000	566,939	-		966,939	-	-	-
Energising Blyth - Commissioners Quay Car Park	-	555,000	-		555,000	-	-	-
Energising Blyth - NEP1 & Battleship Wharf	-	27,626	-		27,626	-	-	-
Energising Blyth Acquisitions / Delivery Costs	3,375,000	(3,375,000)	-		-	3,037,757	7,384,969	-
Energising Blyth Culture Centre and Market Place	7,307,140	2,274,939	-		9,582,079	3,961,414	372,553	-
Energising Blyth Energy Central Campus Phase 1	6,002,085	5,909,886	-		11,911,971	1,486,212	163,184	-

Scheme	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24 Comments	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Original budget	Approved adjustments	Requested reprofiling		Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget
	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
Energising Blyth Future High Street Fund (FHSF)	1,723,580	(563,622)	(1,159,958)	Work commencing on the construction of the Energy Central Campus and the Culture Centre and Market Place improvements. Business cases on other elements of the programme are being prepared and finalised for approval.	-	4,662,345	-	-
Energising Blyth Gasholder Site	-	290,000	-		290,000	-	-	-
Energising Blyth Keel Row Shopping Centre	-	2,127,783	-		2,127,783	-	-	-
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive - Energy Central Campus Training Kit	-	1,450,000	(1,450,000)	This will be defrayed in 2024-25 for equipment the facility requires once construction has been completed.	-	1,450,000	-	-
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive Funding - Housing Renewal and Town Centre Living	-	2,674,000	-		2,674,000	6,626,000	8,700,000	-
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive Funding - Welcoming and Safe Blyth	-	35,000	-		35,000	145,000	-	-
Energising Blyth The Link	1,468,507	341,003	-		1,809,510	860,682	-	-
Energising Blyth Town Deal 2022-2026	5,879,240	3,287,817	(7,849,027)	Work commencing on the construction of the Energy Central Campus and the Culture Centre and Market Place improvements. Business cases on other elements of the programme are being prepared and finalised for approval.	1,318,030	9,076,993	3,739,214	-
England Coastal Path (Bamburgh to Scottish Borders)	-	81,443	-		81,443	-	-	-
FCERM - Beadnell	687,000	40,000	(697,000)	The business case is in the process of being finalised with design expected to commence in the current financial year and construction to commence in 2024-25 subject to planning consents and a successful business case.	30,000	1,331,000	503,000	-
FCERM - Bingfield A68 Surface Water	-	12,932	-		12,932	-	-	-
FCERM - Blenkinsopp Flood Alleviation Scheme	-	134,270	-		134,270	-	-	-
FCERM - Branton Surface Water	70,000	21,261	(20,261)	Currently developing the detailed design with construction commencing in 2023-24 subject to landowner agreement and affordability with a small element of the contingency being reprofiled into 2024-25.	71,000	20,261	-	-
FCERM - Chathill	-	110,976	-		110,976	-	-	-
FCERM - Cresswell Coastal Management	38,000	-	-		38,000	462,000	-	-
FCERM - Haydon Bridge	-	-	-		-	-	139,000	-
FCERM - Hepscott FAS	289,000	199,458	(177,692)	The detailed design is currently progressing with construction expected to commence during 2023-24 subject to planning permission, consents and affordability with a small element of contingency being reprofiled to 2024-25.	310,766	177,692	-	-
FCERM - Kirkwell Cottages	140,000	5,824	(41,440)	The detailed design is currently progressing with construction expected to commence during 2023-24 subject to planning permission, consents and affordability with a small element of contingency being reprofiled to 2024-25.	104,384	41,440	-	-
FCERM - Loansdean	45,000	-	(45,000)	The scheme is currently on hold due to ongoing discussions with the landowner and the affordability of the scheme.	-	45,000	-	-
FCERM - Lynemouth Bay Landfill Remediation Scheme	50,000	1,378,589	-		1,428,589	3,329,000	-	-
FCERM - Meggie's Burn	6,000	-	(6,000)	A study is being procured to identify the risk and issues which may lead to the production of an Environment Agency business case in 2024-25 and a detailed capital scheme thereafter.	-	39,000	11,000	-
FCERM - Next Generation Flood Resilience	-	2,219,000	-		2,219,000	1,212,000	1,049,000	1,125,000
FCERM - Otterburn	-	56,593	-		56,593	-	-	-
FCERM - Ovingham Surface Water	-	102,756	(52,756)	The scheme is currently on hold until the additional sources of finance that are required have been secured.	50,000	52,756	-	-
FCERM - Pilgrims Way SW	57,000	70,287	-		127,287	-	-	-
FCERM - Red Row	-	61,779	(51,779)	There have been delays in the implementation of the project due to a lack of funding which have now been overcome. The detailed design has commenced with construction commencing in 2024-25 subject to landowner agreement and affordability of the scheme.	10,000	51,779	-	-
FCERM - Seaton Delaval	65,000	105,379	-		170,379	-	-	-
FCERM - Spa Well Groundwater, Spittal	30,000	-	-		30,000	-	-	-
FCERM - Stocksfield & Riding Mill	-	-	-		-	74,000	-	-
FCERM - Wark	-	46,584	-		46,584	-	-	-
FCERM - Wylam SW	-	130,000	(130,000)	Further input is awaited from Northumbrian Water due to the project being a partnership scheme. It is expected the scheme will be delivered in 2027-28.	-	130,000	-	-
Felton - HUSK	-	682,750	(682,750)		-	682,750	-	-
Fleet Replacement Programme	5,021,977	1,496,615	(518,592)	Due to the challenging market conditions continuing it is currently expected that reprofiling will be required. However, this may change as manufacturers continually amend expected delivery dates.	6,000,000	8,430,592	5,757,000	6,988,000
Fly Tipping Intervention	-	33,025	-		33,025	-	-	-
Great Northumberland Forest	551,579	181,842	(233,421)	Due to the level of applicants to date and expected payments to be made in the current financial year. Further funding panels were convened in October and November to allow grants to be awarded for the planting season between October and March.	500,000	1,085,294	16,579	-
Great Northumberland Forest - Storm Arwen Recovery	-	750,000	(250,000)	Further funding panels were convened in October and November due to increased demand with further grants to be awarded to cover the planting season between October and March.	500,000	250,000	-	-

Scheme	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24 Comments	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Original budget	Approved adjustments	Requested reprofiling		Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget
	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
Hexham - the Shambles	-	300,000	(250,000)	This work is now expected to be undertaken between April and November 2024.	50,000	250,000	-	-
Hexham HAZ	1,452,347	1,256,502	-		2,708,849	-	-	-
Hexham Town Centre Redevelopment	-	-	-		-	2,500,000	-	-
Highway Maintenance and Pothole Repair Fund	-	3,872,000	(502,500)	Due to works potentially clashing with utility works and other schemes that are scheduled to be undertaken.	3,369,500	502,500	-	-
Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C roads and Footways	-	650,159	-		650,159	4,450,000	-	-
Highways Laboratory Expansion	445,000	170,000	(300,000)	Approval to commence the scheme is currently awaited with construction expected to commence in February 2024.	315,000	300,000	-	-
Hirs Area Containerisation of Waste	-	200,000	-		200,000	-	-	-
Homes England Grant Recovery (re RTB)	75,000	-	-		75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
HRA Energy Efficiency	500,000	-	(500,000)		-	1,000,000	-	-
HRA Miscellaneous / Other	75,000	-	-		75,000	75,000	80,000	80,000
Kielder Observatory	-	2,459	-		2,459	-	-	-
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial	613,207	318,262	-		931,469	1,000,000	-	-
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial - Concordia Air Handling Units	119,181	-	-		119,181	-	-	-
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial - Concordia Glass and Roof Replacement	567,612	72,388	-		640,000	-	-	-
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial - Prudhoe Waterworld Improvements	-	250,000	(160,000)	Design work will be completed in the current financial year with construction works expected to commence in April 2024.	90,000	1,410,000	-	-
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial - Prudhoe Waterworld Wet Change	-	-	-		-	160,000	-	-
Levelling up Fund for Rapid Electric Vehicle Chargers	-	-	-		-	156,000	-	-
Levelling Up Funds - Bedlington East to West	-	-	-		-	3,910,000	3,748,000	-
Levelling Up Funds - Hexham to Corbridge	-	-	-		-	4,590,000	4,225,000	-
Loan to NELEP - Ashwood	518,725	1,620,318	(1,335,069)	An updated cost report has been received from the Project Team to reflect revised expenditure and the on-going timeline for delivery of the project.	803,974	1,335,069	-	-
Loans to Third Parties (e.g. Advance Northumberland, Other Organisations)	6,895,206	5,735,954	-		12,631,160	6,000,000	6,000,000	-
Local Authority Housing Fund	-	2,190,455	-		2,190,455	-	-	-
Local Authority Treescape Fund	-	27,909	-		27,909	-	-	-
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure	3,962,244	978,040	(3,500,000)	Design on the schemes for Blyth Town Centre to South Beach and Ashington to North Seaton progressing with an expectation that the majority of construction works will take place in 2024-25.	1,440,284	3,864,000	-	-
Longframlington Affordable Housing Units	-	280,671	-		280,671	-	-	-
LTP - Local Transport Plan	23,563,000	4,377,793	(2,595,619)	Due to works potentially clashing with utility works and other schemes being undertaken and due to delays in obtaining third party permissions.	25,345,174	26,021,619	23,426,000	23,426,000
Major Repairs Reserve	10,829,000	(681,218)	-		10,147,782	8,832,000	9,057,000	9,203,000
Members Local Improvement Schemes	1,505,000	(371,584)	(233,500)	Based on estimated levels of expenditure incurred in previous financial years.	899,916	2,418,037	1,005,000	1,005,000
Morpeth Leisure Centre Solar PV	-	84,000	-		84,000	-	-	-
New DfT Challenge Fund Bid Support - Steel Structures	-	100,000	(26,000)	Some small elements of work are outstanding on some of the structures with the full programme of works expected to be completed in 2024-25.	74,000	26,000	-	-
New Hartley S106 Improvements	100,000	53,795	-		153,795	-	-	-
Newcastle Northumberland Rail Line	44,390,239	20,920,788	-		65,311,027	5,386,829	-	-
Parks - Parks Enhancement Programme	150,000	23,682	-		173,682	-	-	-
Parks - Parks Enhancement Programme - Improvements to Main gateway into Ridley Park, Blyth	-	26,000	-		26,000	-	-	-
Parks - Parks Enhancement Programme - Isabella Heap	-	103,967	-		103,967	-	-	-
Parks - Parks Enhancement Programme - Prudhoe Eastwood Park	-	126,196	-		126,196	-	-	-
Parks - QEII Commemoration Schemes	370,175	-	-		370,175	-	-	-
Parks - Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Garden, Bedlington Cemetary	-	43,459	-		43,459	-	-	-
Ponteland Broadway and Callerton Lane Section 106	-	75,217	-		75,217	-	-	-
Port of Berwick Grant	-	50,000	-		50,000	-	-	-
Portland Park - Grant to Advance Northumberland	3,000,000	-	(3,000,000)	Due to being linked to the regeneration of Ashington Town Centre and is expected to be defrayed in 2024-25 in line with the main construction works.	-	3,000,000	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Astley Park Depot	100,000	100,000	-		200,000	-	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Backlog M&E and Fabric	1,180,473	34,701	-		1,215,174	1,900,000	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Bearl Depot Drainage and New Build	301,561	19,121	-		320,682	-	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Cowley Road Depot Internal Refurbishment	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Powburn Depot Roof	119,636	(119,636)	-		-	119,636	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Public Toilet Refurbishment	325,000	107,994	-		432,994	676,063	-	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Woodhorn Heapstead	-	-	-		-	726,525	571,000	-
Property Stewardship Fund - Woodhorn Walker Fan Building	100,000	(100,000)	-		-	100,000	-	-
Public Sector Decarbonisation	-	366,169	-		366,169	-	-	-
Rural Business Growth	546,678	349,224	-		895,902	-	-	-

Scheme	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24 Comments	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Original budget	Approved adjustments	Requested reprofiling		Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget	Revised budget
	£	£	£		£	£	£	£
Salt Barns	1,223,275	126,873	(384,439)	Discussions are continuing around the potential site in Morpeth with the expenditure likely to be incurred in 2024-25 if successful.	965,709	384,439	-	-
Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund	-	1,540,485	-		1,540,485	-	-	-
Storm Arwen Recovery	100,000	68,221	-		168,221	-	-	-
Strategic Regeneration Projects	3,391,611	(2,626,582)	-		765,029	3,005,396	4,729,990	-
Sustainable Warmth Competition – Local Authority Delivery Phase 3(LAD3)	-	2,103,444	-		2,103,444	-	-	-
Todstead Landslip	6,316,000	2,540,760	-		8,856,760	-	-	-
Winter Maintenance Software	-	11,978	-		11,978	-	-	-
Winter Services Weather Stations	-	106,998	-		106,998	-	-	-
Yourlink Refurbishment	-	19,036	-		19,036	-	-	-
	173,164,926	90,124,638	(38,286,997)		225,002,567	221,962,016	163,670,586	54,543,291
Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities								
Berwick Swan Leisure Centre	800,000	659,052	-		1,459,052	-	-	-
Haltwhistle Football Project	-	46,486	-		46,486	-	-	-
Northumberland Playzones	-	300,000	(300,000)	The Northumberland Playzones are unlikely to commence this financial year until confirmation of the outcome of the Football Foundation grant funding bid is known, and when ground conditions improve for this type of construction work; costs are therefore likely to slip into 2024-25.	-	300,000	-	-
Provision of Leisure Facilities within Morpeth	-	379,617	-		379,617	-	-	-
	800,000	1,385,155	(300,000)		1,885,155	300,000	-	-
Transformation & Resources								
Air Conditioning	-	200,000	-		200,000	-	-	-
Broadband Phase 2 Gainshare Extension	-	726,325	(656,325)	Only £0.070 million anticipated expenditure for 2023-24 which is less than originally anticipated due to the Top Up Scheme to support BDUK Rural Gigabit being placed on hold in 2023-24. Gainshare funds were expected to support this scheme in 2023-24 however, due to the delay this funding is now expected to be spent in 2024-25. £3.763 million additional gainshare is due from BT in year. A further payment of £1.735 million will be made to BDUK Ltd with the remaining funds reprofiled into 2024-25. This is detailed in a CSG paper that has been submitted for October 2023 CSG.	70,000	656,325	-	-
Capita One/SAAS	-	49,920	-		49,920	-	-	-
Capital Contract Price Inflation	5,500,000	(4,034,214)	-		1,465,786	-	-	-
CISCO Infrastructure	400,000	143,179	-		543,179	100,000	100,000	-
Cloud Migration	200,000	(200,000)	-		-	-	-	-
Community Broadband	-	1,942,000	(1,662,820)	It is anticipated £0.083 million will transfer from LFFN to Community Broadband Scheme. 2023-24 expenditure is estimated at £0.279 million due to BDUK putting their voucher scheme to support rural gigabit on hold during 2023-24, only recently making vouchers available to some suppliers. Due to this the remaining funding is to be reprofiled into 2024-25 as spend has not been as high as originally anticipated in 2023-24.	279,180	1,662,820	-	-
Craster Mast	-	55,080	(50,080)	Funding was originally to match fund the cost of building a mobile mast in Craster to provide mobile coverage. Another company has now engaged to build the mast at their own cost therefore this funding is no longer needed and has been requested to be transferred to The Community Broadband project.	5,000	50,080	-	-
Desk Top Refresh - Phase 2	150,000	928,095	-		1,078,095	500,000	750,000	-
Hardware Infrastructure	-	4,236	-		4,236	-	-	-
IT Backup and Recovery	-	100,000	-		100,000	-	-	-
Library Kiosks	-	5,101	-		5,101	-	-	-
Local Full Fibre Network	-	99,795	(82,823)	It is anticipated the remaining budget will be transferred to the Community Broadband Scheme now that compliance with grant terms and conditions has been confirmed.	16,972	82,823	-	-
Northumberland WAN and Full Fibre	3,668,710	-	-		3,668,710	2,331,290	100,000	-
Office 365 Implementation	-	52,087	-		52,087	-	-	-
Repayment to Building Digital UK (BDUK)	-	989,000	-		989,000	-	-	-
Schools Broadband	-	326,230	-		326,230	-	-	-
Server Infrastructure	-	18,127	-		18,127	-	-	-
	9,918,710	1,404,961	(2,452,048)		8,871,623	5,383,338	950,000	-
	222,948,639	101,512,191	(55,961,227)		268,499,603	309,267,348	216,835,465	66,361,002

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Q2 Corporate Performance Report

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

Responsible Officer(s): Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

- 1.1 **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.
- 1.2 **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.
- 1.3 **Driving Economic Growth** – The Council's KPIs set out measures of economic growth.

2. Purpose of report

- 2.1 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 2, 2023/24 (Q2).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - a) Consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Wednesday 18th October. No key decision required.

5. Background

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 This report forms part of an updated approach to Corporate Plan performance reporting as follows:
- Regular directorate briefings with Cabinet Members;
 - Executive Management Team;
 - Strategic Leadership Team;
 - Cabinet (quarterly reports);
 - Scrutiny Chairs and Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and;
 - Quarter 4, outturn report to Full Council in the summer period.

Monitoring our Priorities

- 5.4 The following sections set out performance summaries for each of the three Corporate Plan priorities for 2023/24. These summaries highlight key points on performance, both positive and including where targets have been missed at the end of Quarter 2 for 2023/24.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 We have commenced work on developing a refreshed set of metrics which will report progress on each of the priorities, we want to be able to show progress towards achieving our outcomes in a holistic way, this will include rich data from Resident's survey, Staff survey and a range of KPI's. This work will involve members and officers to ensure we have fit for purpose measures and will produce a new performance reporting framework for 2024/25. This report presents the current KPI's.

Our Corporate Plan Vision:

5.7 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.

PRIORITY 1: Achieving Value for Money

5.8 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.

Outcomes:

- Residents receive the best customer experience
- We make the best spending decisions
- Working better, more effectively
- Making a difference with digital

Summary of Q2 23/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24
1	Complaints answered within timescale (%)	100	70.68	74.2	70.8	68.4	76.6
2	% calls answered	90	93.5	97.2	93.4	95.6	95.3
3	Average time to answer calls (seconds)	180	121	46	112	73	67
4	Local Suppliers (Number)	-	1,506	1,361	1,402	1,553	1,632
5	Value of Local Suppliers (£)	-	£79.7m	£72.7m	£92.3m	£122.6m	£101.6m
6	Suppliers trading with Council who are local (%)	-	44	40	38	39	42
7	Requisition Processed within 3 days (%)	80	99	97	97	98	97
8	% of the workforce who are apprentices (Annual)	2.3	-	-	4.1	-	-
9	Days lost to sickness (# per FTE / annum)	7.5	11.4	11.3	11.4	11.4	11.5
10	Mandatory Training completed (%)	85	88.2	88.2	91.5	90.3	90.8

11	Corporate Landlord Compliance (%)	98	100	100	100	100	95
12	Property statutory tests completed on time (%)	92	94.2	96.7	98.1	98.3	96.9 (Aug latest data)
13	Council Tax – arrears retrieved (£m)	-	2.5	3.4	4.3	1.0	2.2
14	% of Council Tax collected	0	55.1	82.0	97.3	28.6	55.1
15	% of National Non-Domestic Rates collected	0	53.5	77.3	94.9	28.8	55.3
16	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	95.4	95.4	95.63	95.7	95.7
17	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	79.8	79.1	79.1	78.6	78.3
18	Service Desk calls resolved within SLA (%)	96.5	95.4	95.7	96.6	93.4	94.6

Progress:

- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 In Q2 we delivered impressive performance with the ‘% of calls answered’, achieving an average of 95.3%. Even better, for ‘average time to answer calls’, the team achieved an average for the year of 67 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.
- 5.11 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. 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.

- 5.12 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.

We are pleased we met our targets on "Availability of Superfast broadband (%)" and 'Take up of Superfast broadband (%)'. Whilst the quarter total is decreasing, this is due to the introduction of "Ultrafast broadband", so future reports need to reflect a true picture of connectivity by presenting the right measures.

Focus on Improvement:

- 5.13 For 'complaints answered within timescale (%)', the Council missed its own demanding target of 100%, achieving 76.6%, whilst below target, we have improved on our Q2 performance in the last financial year which was 70.7%. 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 and the introduction of a new case management system in Q2 will allow for more detailed intelligence.
- 5.14 In 'days lost to sickness' we missed the target of 7.5 days per 'full time equivalent' (FTE). The target of 3.5% for 'Percentage days lost to sickness absence (%)' was also missed. To address this, services are scrutinising data and undertaking a focused approach to reducing absence.
- 5.15 For 'Corporate Landlord Compliance' – Performance dipped in Q2 owing to a delay that arose in completing a risk assessment (20 out of 21 assessment were completed. Please note the outstanding assessment was completed in October shortly after the quarter end.
- 5.16 We were within tolerance and improving on Q1 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

PRIORITY 2: Tackling Inequalities

- 5.17 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.

Outcomes:

- Empowered and resilient communities
- Children and Young people have the best start in life
- All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability
- Residents have the building blocks of a good life

Summary of Q2 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24
1	Number of referrals in to NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	3,349	3,044	3,182	2,363	2,276
2	Grant funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£659,453	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£421,962	£1,101,348
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	20,293	21,609	35,254	12,624	13,693
4	Number of Grants Awarded to Voluntary and Community organisations (#)	tbc	21	5	15	6	60
5	Total amount of funding provided to VCSE organisations (£)	tbc	£202,500	£65,600	£200,000	£100,100	£301,167
6	Pupils with good level of development at age 5 (%) Annual *	72	67.5	-	-	-	68.8
7	KS4 – average Attainment 8 score (%) Annual *	49	46.6	-	-	-	44.7
8	KS4 - average Progress 8 score (%) Annual *	-0.15	-0.23	-	-	-	-0.20
9	Pupils in good/ outstanding Primary schools (%)	89	87.9	88.3	94.2	94.0	95.0
10	Pupils in good/ outstanding Secondary schools (%)	75	68.9	79.2	84.0	83.7	83.9
11	16-17 yr-olds NEET or Not Known (%)	5.3	5.0	5.5	4.9	6.0	Q2 not reported
12	Women not smoking at time of delivery (%)	88	88.6	91.8 (Q3 latest data)	-	-	-
13	Breast feeding prevalence (%)	38	36.3	41.4	42.5	40.5 (Q1 latest data)	-
14	Height and weight recorded Year 6 (%) Annual	95	-	97.6	-	-	-
15	Reception age obesity (%) Annual	10	-	9.2	-	-	-

16	Year 6 obesity (%) Annual	21	-	21.8	-	-	-
17	Social Care related quality of life (score out of 24)	19.1	-	-	19.7	-	-
18	Care plans reviewed annually (%)	98.5	94.8	94.2	94.6	96.5	96.8
19	Effectiveness of Reablement/Rehabilitation (%)	88	91.0	92.1	90.8	90.6	93.4
20	Providers rated by CQC as outstanding or good (%)	84.3	83.6	84.8	88.2	86.7	89.5
21	Indicative personal budget (%)	95	92.1	92.1	94.1	91.6	92.2
22	Adults with learning disabilities living at home/with family (%)	83	84.7	84.9	86.1	86.3	86.8
23	Admissions to residential/nursing 18-64 (per 100k population)	12.5	10.3	8.7	14.2	12.5	12.0
24	Admissions to residential/nursing 65+ (per 100k population)	654.9	538.8	625.6	677.2	704.2	679.6
25	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	5	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.4
26	Successful treatments – alcohol (%)	32	24.4	26.6	28.7	29.98 (Q1 latest data)	-
27	Successful treatments - non-opiates (%)	21	28.6	27.3	29.1	26.8 (Q1 latest data)	-
28	Successful treatments – opiates (%)	3	2.7	3.5	3.5	3.1 (Q1 latest data)	-

Progress:

- 5.18 The impressive number of referrals made to Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) outperformed the target by almost 300 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£1.1m at end of Q2) 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 quarter the Council gave over £300k to VCSE groups. The Council is committed, through its Inequalities Plan, to continuing to build community resilience.
- 5.19 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 95% is 5% better than the national average and 7% more than the previous year. 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.

- 5.20 For 'pupils in good / outstanding secondary schools' - we have seen a much-improved picture over the past year. Northumberland's latest figure of 83.9% means that 21% more learners are in 'good' or better schools compared to 2017. Inspection outcomes are currently 2% above the national average and 4% better than Q2 in the previous year.
- 5.21 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.
- 5.22 We are proud of the strong performance in the measures for this outcome which are the result of hard work across teams in Childrens, 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 residents.

Focus on improvement:

- 5.23 '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.
- 5.24 There were 115 permanent care home admissions (65+) in Q2 which pushed this KPI into 'Amber' but is an improvement from Q1 where there were 165 admissions. High numbers of admissions were 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.
- 5.25 For 'Care plans reviewed annually (%)' – national guidance is that all care plans should be reviewed at least every twelve months. The outturn continues to improve and whilst marginally below target, performance is within tolerance and investigations are being carried out to assist in improvements in this metric.
- 5.26 For 'Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)' - The outturn is based on 38 out of 873 service users aged 18-64, with a learning disability known to adult social care in paid employment - often complex cases.
- 5.27 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.

PRIORITY 3: Driving Economic Growth

5.28 We want to see everyone can benefit from 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 our residents, whether they live in our countryside or within one of our busy towns.

Outcomes:

- Thriving places and culture
- A diverse and resilient economy
- Skilled and aspirational people
- A connected county

Summary of Q2 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24
1	Street cleanliness - Detritus (% of areas surveyed)	8	7.67	6.6	-	6.5	-
2	Street cleanliness - Dog Fouling (% of areas surveyed)	1	0.4	0	-	0	-
3	Street Cleanliness - Litter (% of areas surveyed)	5	1.2	1.7	-	2.4	-
4	Green Flag status parks (#)	11	-	-	-	12	-
5	Fly tips removed in 3d (%)	95	98	98	98	98.6	98.3
6	Net additional homes (#) Annual	614	-	-	1592	-	-
7	Net affordable homes provided (# pa) Annual	374	-	-	122	-	-
8	Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)	96	99.3	97.7	97.7	99.2	92.4
9	Time taken to answer the 999 call by Fire Control (%)	95	96	99	96.3	96.7	96.4
10	Accidental Dwelling Fires (#)	57	22	34	33	29	26
11	Deliberate Primary Fire (#)	66	49	24	22	38	33
12	Rogue Trader complaints and interventions (%)	95	100	100	100	100	100
13	Employment Rate (%)	75.7%	69.9	68.8	70.5	70.1	70.1

	Measure	Target	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24
14	Weekly Pay – Residents *(£ Annual)	£621.00	-	-	£601.80	-	-
15	Weekly Pay – Workers *(£ Annual)	£609.50	-	-	£573.30	-	-
16	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	95.4	95.4	95.63	95.7	95.7
17	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	79.8	79.1	79.1	78.6	78.3

Progress:

- 5.29 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.
- 5.30 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.
- 5.31 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.
- 5.32 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.
- 5.33 Currently, our quarterly performance reporting does not contain KPIs on skills and that is something we will put right in future Corporate Plan reporting. However, it is important to emphasise the organisation is nevertheless 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.”

Focus on improvement:

- 5.34 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.
- 5.35 The measure “Net affordable homes provided” records a delivery of 122 new affordable homes against a target of 374. The delay to delivery is an attribute of the

construction rate by private sector developers or “lag” and legal triggers. More than 1,400 affordable dwellings have currently been secured via Section 106 agreements that have not been completed. These are awaiting progress on construction sites, and the Council continually monitors progress. The geographic split of these secured, but not completed affordable homes is; South East 632, Central 419, North 263, West 79. These figure will constantly increase as new planning permissions are granted.

- 5.36 For ‘Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)’ - Inspections are identified in line with the risk-based inspection programme (RBIP), set by the service, targeting premises to identify and improve fire safety management and therefore a low expectation of reasonable standard premises has been set, the theory being that if all premises are at a reasonable standard then the RBIP is targeting the incorrect premises. Performance is being monitored.
- 5.37 We continue to invest in the regeneration across the county whilst building new infrastructure which will support economic growth.

PRIORITY: Climate Change

- 5.38 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.

Summary of Q2 2023/24 outturn:

	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

Progress:

- 5.39 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.
- 5.40 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).

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

- 6.1 As Cabinet is recommended to consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report, there are no other options to consider.

7. 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
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point N/A
Risk assessment	None at this stage.
Crime and disorder	N/A
Customer considerations	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 Wards);

8. Background papers

N/A

9. Links to other key reports already published

Corporate Plan 2023-26

Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2023

10. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland

County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

Report of Councillor(s) Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources

Responsible Officer(s): Jan Willis, 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 **Blyth Relief Road**

- a) Authorise the allocation of £0.561 million from the 2023-24 budget allocation for the Salt Barns project to the Blyth Relief Road project. Then subsequently reallocate £0.561 million from the Blyth Relief Road project to the Salt Barns project in 2024-25.
- b) Authorise the amendment of the Medium-Term Financial Plan spend profile for the Blyth Relief Road as set out in Table 2.

3.3 **Kyloe House New Recreation Area**

- a) Approve spend of £0.271 million for a recreation area and secure walls to the High Dependency Unit at Kyloe House. Note the spend is externally funded by the Department for Education (DfE).
- b) Authorise the amendment of the capital programme as outlined in the spend profile in Table 1.

3.4 **Kyloe House New Media System**

- a) Approve spend of £0.043 million for a new media system at Kyloe House. Note the spend is externally funded by the Department for Education (DfE).
- b) Authorise the amendment of the capital programme to include the proposed spend in 2023-24.

4. **Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

This report was added to the forward plan on 30 October 2023.

5. **Background**

- 5.1 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 30 October 2023.

Summary of New Capital Proposals Considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group on 30 October 2023

6. **Blyth Relief Road**

- 6.1 CSG was asked to consider amendments to the Capital Programme. Firstly, a reallocation of £0.561 million from the 2023-24 budget allocation for the Salt Barns project to the Blyth Relief Road which would then be reversed in 2024-25. Secondly an amendment to the capital programme as set out in table 2.

Background

- 6.2 The Blyth Relief Road project is a key council priority aimed at reducing congestion on key radial routes into Blyth, providing a safer and more reliable network for public transport and active travel trips and facilitating delivery of the Local Plan aspirations for the town.
- 6.3 The project continues to progress through the development stages and Consultants are now engaged to move the project forward towards a planning application submission in early 2024.

- 6.4 However, emerging scheme development costs do not align with the originally assumed profile and therefore funding needs to be reallocated to ensure that the project remains on track.
- 6.5 In April 2023, following a report approved through Capital Strategy Group, Cabinet:
- a) Approved a request to allocate an additional £0.431 million from the 2023-24 MTFP Capital Contract Price Inflation Budget to meet inflationary pressures for the Blyth Relief Road (BRR) Project.
 - b) Authorised an amendment to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to reflect a revised contribution from the Department for Transport's National Roads Fund of £39.783 million to the Blyth Relief Road project.
- 6.6 Based on that Cabinet approval, the current budget for Blyth Relief Road is shown in Table 1 below:

Financial Year		Gross £ million	DfT £ million	NCC £ million
2022-23	Actual	0.180	-	0.180
2023-24	Budget	4.832	3.343	1.489
2024-25	Budget	16.873	14.576	2.297
2025-26	Budget	24.918	21.864	3.054
Total		46.803	39.783	7.020

- 6.7 The above budget profile was based on several assumptions on the anticipated cost to progress the design as well as an assumption, based on discussions with the DfT, that funding could be released from the National Roads Fund (NRF) to support scheme development in financial year 2023-24.
- 6.8 The Council has welcomed the recent publication by the DfT of 'Network North: transforming British Transport' which was issued on 4th October 2023 which confirms the Government's commitment to support the delivery of the Blyth Relief Road, namely '*We will provide £460 million to ensure the delivery of 21 smaller road schemes, including the A582 South Ribble Distributor; Kendal Northern Access Route; Wigan East-West Route; Shipley Eastern Bypass; and the **Blyth Relief Road***'.
- 6.9 However, as things stand, the Outline Business Case (OBC) has yet to be formally approved by the DfT as the project team continues to respond to technical queries. Release of NRF funding is therefore unlikely until the OBC is signed off and on that basis, the DfT funding allocation should be reprofiled to the back end of the programme.
- 6.10 In addition, the total anticipated expenditure for year 2023-24 is now estimated at £2.050 million. This includes items in excess of previous budget estimates such as surveys (ecological, topographical and drainage) and additional ground investigation works. Additional costs can be covered from allocations within the risk pot.
- 6.11 On that basis, the total anticipated expenditure for year 2023-24 is £0.561 million short of the current budget allocation of £1.489 million. It is recommended that this budget shortfall is covered as follows:

- a) £0.561 million is transferred from the 2023-24 budget allocation for Salt Barns to the 2023-24 allocation for Blyth Relief Road. (Expenditure on Salt Barns project is expected to be delayed into the 2024-25 financial year as negotiations over site acquisition are on-going and once agreed completion of the legal documentation to execute the purchase is expected to take place early in 2024-25).
- b) £0.561 million budget is reallocated from the current 2024-25 Blyth Relief Road allocation to the Salt Barns project budget allocation in 2024-25.
- c) £0.500 million budget for Blyth Relief Road is reprofiled from 2025-26 into 2024-25.

6.12 This will result in a revised spend profile for Blyth Relief Road which is shown in Table 2 below:

Financial Year		Gross	DfT	NCC
		£ million	£ million	£ million
2022-23	Actual	0.180	-	0.180
2023-24	Budget	2.050	-	2.050
2024-25	Budget	8.866	6.630	2.236
2025-26	Budget	35.707	33.153	2.554
Total		46.803	39.783	7.020

6.13 The assumed capital cost for the project remains unchanged. However, the risk of NCC's up-front design and development costs being abortive has been significantly reduced given the commitments made by DfT to support the scheme and we now await formal confirmation from DfT that they have approved the Outline Business Case.

6.14 It is important to note that the successful delivery of this scheme will be dependent upon several key factors. A number of possible constraints exist, and these have been summarised below and are supported by a detailed risk register:

- a) Strategic issues, for example changes in Government transport policy and funding landscape could impact delivery of scheme.
- b) Change in appraisal guidance, or in gaining formal 'sign-off' from funding decision makers may delay delivery.
- c) Changes in the outturn costs of the scheme could impact on the value for money of the scheme.
- d) The majority of the environmental surveys have now been undertaken but new habitats or wildlife that need to be considered in the scheme development could still be identified in the remaining surveys.
- e) Public consultation outcomes.
- f) The scheme has only been developed to feasibility stage and detailed design could highlight further issues.
- g) Problems could be encountered when seeking the necessary approvals to construct the scheme.

- h) The preferred option requires the purchase of land and discussions with landowners are ongoing.
- i) A bridge over the railway is being constructed as part of the Northumberland Line scheme. However, this will need to be dualled as part of the Blyth Relief Road proposals. This will need to be undertaken to minimise disruption to the railway network.
- j) The preferred option would affect public utilities at several locations.

7. Kylee House New Recreation Area

7.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.271 million for a new recreation area at Kylee House. The capital spend is fully funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

Background

- 7.2 Kylee House is a Secure Children’s Home. Children live in one of two six bed living units. In some instances, it is necessary to separate a child from other children in the group. The existing room that is used for this purpose sits within the heart of the building and has no access to external areas. This project addresses the need to provide a suitable external space. Allowing a child, independently of other children, to go outside can help children to relax and staff to engage with them in an informal setting.
- 7.3 The current supportive / high dependency room at Kylee House has no direct access to an external recreation space. This has been criticized on OFSTED inspections of the building. This proposal will meet this requirement.
- 7.4 The total cost of the project is £0.271 million and Compass Developments (NE) Ltd have been granted a procurement exemption to undertake the project. Compass Developments (NE) Ltd are currently costing the design to ensure that the costs will not exceed the budget.
- 7.5 The profiling of the spend is shown in Table 1 below:

Financial Year	Gross £ million	DfE £ million	NCC £ million
2023-24	0.020	0.020	-
2024-25	0.251	0.251	-
Total	0.271	0.271	-

- 7.6 If the costs were to unexpectedly exceed the budget this would be funded by additional funds from DfE.
- 7.7 Planning permission for this project was granted on 16 May 2023.
- 7.8 The project will benefit both the children and staff at Kylee House. It allows for disruptive children to be separated from the main group thereby assisting in maintaining the stability of that group. The ability for that child to use an external space

should assist in management of disruptive children. When the yard is not being used by the High Dependency Unit it will be possible for children in Willow Unit to utilise the space thus maximising the use of the space.

8. Kyloe House New Media System

- 8.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.043 million for a new media system at Kyloe House. The capital spend is fully funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

Background

- 8.2 Kyloe House is a Secure Children's Home. Children live in one of two six bed living units. Each child has their own bedroom in which they can access television and radio.
- 8.3 The project addresses the lack of a phone system within the bedrooms. Currently children in each unit have to use a single unit phone. The existing phone is a traditional hard-wired phone and is located in an airlock on the unit. Use of the phone by young people therefore has to be risk assessed. This can cause behavioural issues in children who, following risk assessment, are unable to use it.
- 8.4 The lack of flexibility in terms of phone availability can also heighten tension within the child cohort. This is because the location of the phone causes privacy issues and impacts on a child's freedom to make calls to Child Care Organisations. The hard-wired hand-held phone poses a safety and security risk.
- 8.5 The project upgrades the media system which is outdated and coming to end of life. It has been difficult to find a system that allows an upgrade without having to modify the building. The upgrade can be achieved without the need for major alterations to the building fabric or bedrooms, making the project cost effective.
- 8.6 Physical equipment sometimes has to be taken to a bedroom to supplement the TV. Use of this has be risk assessed. The new system will minimise this requirement.
- 8.7 The impact on children will be to provide the means of making or taking a phone call from within their bedroom as opposed to having to use a shared facility. The system can be tailored to each child's individual needs. The system will allow children use of a phone when previously risk assessment would have precluded them from doing so. They will have greater and freer access to the phone system.
- 8.8 The installation of the new system will also give staff greater flexibility and ease of management in operating the phone system.
- 8.9 The new phone system will reduce the risk of self-harm and or harm to staff and other Children.
- 8.10 The system will provide an updated media system similar to that provided in other homes. Updating the system will reduce the potential for disruption to the system. A malfunctioning media system can lead to heightened tension and behaviour flashpoints in the home.
- 8.11 Installation of the system will eliminate the need for the use of physical equipment thereby reducing the risk to young people. Young people that previously, following risk assessment, would have restricted access to aspects of the media system will be able to have greater access to it.

- 8.12 The cost of the project is estimated at £0.043 million in 2023-24. The estimate is based on costs provided by a supplier of £0.020 million and £0.023 million for associated builders work. The project is subject to usual NCC Procurement Procedures.
- 8.13 The estimate of costs includes contingency so there is minimal risk of overspending. If the project did happen to overspend then this would be funded by additional DfE funding.

9. 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 either external funding or existing funding in the Capital Programme.
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
The 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);

10. Background papers

Not applicable

11. Links to other key reports already published.

Network North: transforming British Transport, Department for Transport, Oct 2023
 – see link [Network North](#)

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Adaptations for disabled people

Report of Councillor Wendy Pattison, Cabinet Member for Caring for Adults

Responsible Officer: Neil Bradley, Executive Director for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing

1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the following priorities in the Council Corporate Plan 2023/26:

- “Tackling Inequalities - All Adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability”; and
- “Tackling Inequalities - Residents have the building blocks of a good life”

2. **Purpose of report**

To report on additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding received from Government, and to ask the Cabinet to consider the case for revisions to the Council's discretionary grants policy.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 The Cabinet is recommended:

- a) To approve the revised version of the Council's discretionary housing grants policy attached as the Annex to this report, which adds to the existing policy two new elements:
 - a scheme under which non-means-tested grant of up to £6500 (a figure which may be revised to take account of changing costs) will be offered to fund the cost of urgently-needed adaptations for people with a rapidly-progressing health condition that is expected to result in their death;
 - the transfer to the adaptations budget of funding responsibility for ceiling track hoists, which are currently funded through the Council's equipment loan service, and an amendment to the discretionary grant policy to enable the full

cost of this adaptation to be covered by grant, so that people who need it will still not be required to contribute towards the cost, regardless of their financial means;

- b) To request the Executive Director for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing to prepare a future report on the options for further changes to the discretionary housing grants policy, at a point when the future level of costs chargeable against the capital grant from the Government for adaptations and other social care capital costs can more confidently be predicted;
- c) To confirm the inclusion of the additional Disabled Facilities Capital Grant funding of £290,484 in 2023/24 to the Council's capital plan, and to note that a small further addition to the national total of this Capital Grant is expected in 2024/25, though the allocation of 2024/25 funding between local authorities has not yet been confirmed.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Information about this report was published in the Forward Plan on 21 September 2023. It was initially scheduled for the November Cabinet meeting, but was then deferred to this meeting because of timetabling issues.

5. Background

- 5.1 The Council funds mandatory adaptations for disabled people under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Under that Act, the Council has a mandatory duty to provide grants to support adaptations to assist a disabled person (a "Disabled Facilities Grant" (DFG)), subject to a number of conditions. Among these:
 - a) Grant aid is subject to a means test, except when the disabled person is a child
 - b) The maximum grant payable under the mandatory scheme (set in regulations) is currently £30,000
 - c) The works must be necessary to achieve one of a list of purposes set out in the Act, or in regulations under the Act
 - d) The disabled person must ordinarily intend to live in the property as their only or main residence for the next five years
- 5.2 The Council also has the power to adopt a discretionary grants policy that is more generous than the mandatory requirements. The Council's current discretionary

policy was adopted in November 2020. It provides for discretionary additional grants in three circumstances:

- a) to support someone to move to alternative more suitable housing, in cases where adapting the person's existing home would not be the best way to meet the person's needs, or would be impractical or unreasonably expensive;
- b) to cover the extra cost of adaptations that a person needs which are more expensive than the nationally set limit on DFGs;
- c) to provide additional support in special circumstances where the means test for a DFG would otherwise make it difficult or impossible for someone to afford adaptations which they need.

The Disabled Facilities Capital Grant

- 5.3 The Council receives an annual grant from the Government, the Disabled Facilities Capital Grant, which is intended to fund both the Council's mandatory duty to pay DFGs and additional discretionary expenditure.
- 5.4 Since 2015, this grant has been part of the "Better Care Fund" (BCF) – the sum of money which local authorities and the local NHS are required to treat as a pooled budget, and agree how to spend. But it cannot in practice be pooled with other elements of the BCF, since it must be used to support capital expenditure. However local authorities are permitted to allocate part of the funding to support other social care capital schemes – and the current grant includes funding which was previously allocated as a separate adult social care capital grant.
- 5.5 The White Paper *People at the Heart of Care*, published in December 2021, announced an intention to increase the maximum mandatory DFG payable and to review the DFG means test, which it said "is complex and can be difficult to navigate", as well as the intention to publish new guidance on the use of DFGs. The new guidance was published in March 2022, but there has been no further news about the other White Paper proposals. However a March 2023 update to the White Paper, *Next steps to put People at the Heart of Care*, announced an additional allocation of DFG Capital Grant of £50m in the current financial year and £52m in 2024/25. Details of the allocation of this funding were confirmed in September 2023. *Next steps to put People at the Heart of Care* said about the additional funding that:

Local housing authorities already have flexibilities to use their DFG funding to fund supplementary services that are agile and help people stay independent, support hospital discharge and make minor adaptations. There are lots of examples of local authorities already doing this effectively - for example, through the commissioning and delivery of Home Improvement Agencies. We want to encourage local authorities to use this additional funding to provide more of these supplementary services, with the support of the recently updated guidance for local authorities to better assist their residents. This will better ensure safety, warmth and timely access to the right adaptations and small alterations.

- 5.6 Strictly speaking, the additional funding may not give the Council any greater financial room for new initiatives than it had in previous financial years, because of inflation increases in the costs of capital works. However the DFG capital grant for Northumberland has substantially exceeded the cost of mandatory DFG grants for a number of years, and since it now seems unlikely that the changes to the national

rules on DFG envisaged in 2021 will be introduced in the near future, this is an appropriate time to review the case for further changes to the Council's discretionary policy on grants for adaptations.

Current use of the Capital Grant

- 5.7 In recent years, expenditure on mandatory DFGs and discretionary grants under the Council's existing scheme has consistently been substantially lower than the amount of the Capital Grant. Other uses of the Capital Grant must be agreed with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), since grant conditions have since 2016 required the allocation of the funding to be determined as part of the pooled Better Care Fund. By agreement with the ICB and its predecessor Clinical Commissioning Group, the Council has continued to make use of some of the Capital Grant for other social care capital projects associated with accommodation, including works in Council-owned accommodation for people with a learning disability and, in the current year, the updating of the equipment used by Northumberland Telecare to meet requirements arising from the national switch to digital telephony.
- 5.8 Funding not required for adaptations grants or specific capital schemes has been held in reserve with the intention of using it to support housing developments offering accessible accommodation for older people in locations where there is good access to community facilities and services.
- 5.9 Of the total £3,619,426 Capital Grant which the Council will receive in the current financial year, an estimated £2.4m is likely to be spent on mandatory DFG payments, and £100K on discretionary grants. In the current year, £828K is committed to other social care capital expenditure. The total accumulated fund for supported housing developments built up from DFG Capital Grant payments stood at £8,228,461 at the start of the current financial year, and is projected to increase by about £290K during this financial year if current projections are accurate and there is no change of policy. £220K of the 2024/25 grant is currently committed to expenditure on another social care capital project; the total Capital Grant income to be received in that year is not yet known, but is likely to be slightly higher than in the current year.
- 5.10 While the accumulated fund is now a substantial sum compared to the current level of DFG expenditure, it is not large in the context of the Council's aspiration to stimulate the development of significant new accommodation schemes for older people. In the early years of the Council's existing extra care and supported accommodation strategy, it proved possible to negotiate the development of some schemes without the need to draw on this fund, for instance through Section 106 contributions agreed as conditions for planning approval of larger schemes. However this is unlikely always to be true in future. There will be a need for schemes in some locations where there is no associated larger development which can absorb the additional costs, and in some cases where financial viability is relatively marginal increased construction costs in the aftermath of Covid may make financial support necessary. A separate report to a Cabinet meeting in the near future will propose a refresh of the extra care and supported housing strategy to increase the pace of developments, which will add further to the case for maintaining a capacity to provide funding support when necessary.

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

- 6.1 Since it now seems unlikely that there will be any major changes to the nationally set means test for mandatory DFGs, it is open to the Council to revise its discretionary grant policy to make it more generous in any way that is affordable within the current level of Capital Grant. However this needs to be balanced against the case for maintaining a substantial capital fund available to support the Council's extra care and supported accommodation strategy, and other social care capital expenditure.
- 6.2 The paragraphs below explain two options which there is a case for adopting immediately, and which would have only a modest impact on the Council's ability to accumulate funding to support extra care and supported housing schemes. Any additional proposed changes to the Council's discretionary grants scheme would require further analysis to assess their likely costs and any potential administrative complications.

Additional support for people with a terminal illness

- 6.3 One situation in which the DFG means test can be distressing is where a person has a rapidly progressing condition likely to lead to their death within the next year or two, and to become increasingly disabling from month to month. People in that situation are already given the highest priority for an assessment by an occupational therapist, and can often have adaptations to their homes carried out within a few weeks, but the means test remains both unwelcome and potentially a source of delay.
- 6.4 A report published in 2019 by the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association, which represents the interests of people with a disease which in its commonest forms is a clear example of this situation, argued that local authorities should contribute up to £5000 towards urgent adaptations for people with MND without a means test. The Council did not take up this suggestion at the time, and officers' advice would be that it would be inequitable to link financial support specifically to a diagnosis, since people may find themselves in a similar situation with some other conditions. However that issue would not arise if the basis for paying a non-means-tested sum was an urgent need for adaptations because of a terminal condition of any kind rather than only MND.
- 6.5 The draft revised discretionary grant policy appended to this report incorporates a suggested additional ground for paying discretionary grant in this kind of situation. To minimise the need for additional professional assessments, it proposes that the threshold for payment of a non-means-tested contribution would be that the either the person has qualified for additional social security benefits under DWP's special rules for people who are terminally ill, or a professional entitled to assess whether the conditions for those special rules are met has confirmed that they would meet the conditions if they applied. (The second option is necessary because some people in this situation may already have been receiving all the benefits that the special rules would qualify them for, before becoming terminally ill. Since the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) approve almost all applications by appropriate health professionals for benefits under the special rules, confirmation from one of those professionals can reasonably be treated as equivalent. It can also reasonably be assumed that in any situation relevant to this option an appropriate health professional will already be involved.)

- 6.6 Guidance for clinicians on the special rules published by DWP describes the criteria as being that the patient:
- has a progressive disease, and
 - as a consequence of that disease, it would not be a surprise if their patient were to die within 12 months
- 6.7 Guidance about the Special Rules published by the MND Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners confirms that "a third of people with MND die within a year of diagnosis and more than half die within two years", so can be expected to qualify, though it indicates that there can be exceptions when people have less common forms of the condition which progress more slowly.
- 6.8 The sum of £5000 recommended by the MND Association was originally at 2019 prices, and construction costs have subsequently increased. The £5000 figure might also not have been sufficient even in 2019 to cover the full cost of a level-access shower, which is one of the adaptations most likely to be needed by someone with a terminal illness. The proposal is therefore to set the figure in the discretionary grant policy at £6500, with scope for revising this figure further to take account of future changes in costs. This would mean that the benefit of this scheme would remain at least equivalent to the MND Association's original proposal (though the Association themselves appear still to be campaigning only for the £5000 figure).
- 6.9 £6500 would ordinarily be sufficient to pay the full cost of at least one of the three kinds of adaptation most likely to be required by people with a serious progressive illness. The other two most relevant adaptations are a stairlift, or a ramp to enable the person to access their home in a wheelchair, and these are ordinarily less expensive than a level-access shower. If someone needs more than one of these adaptations, or if they also need other adaptations, it is possible that a means test might still apply.
- 6.10 It is not easy to estimate the precise cost of this option, but based on examination of recent cases classed as a priority on the grounds of terminal illness by the Council's occupational therapists it seems likely that there will be only a fairly small number of people in each year who meet the proposed conditions, and who are not already exempt from contributing towards the costs of DFG adaptations because they are receiving means-tested social security benefits. It is possible that there may be some additional situations where people who would currently not ask the Council to arrange adaptations might decide to do so because they have become aware that non-means tested grant is available, but we do not expect that to be a large number. Our best estimate is that the annual cost is likely to be less than £100,000, and could possibly be substantially less than that.

Ceiling track hoists

- 6.11 The second change which could be introduced quickly is a different kind. It would not directly benefit recipients of the discretionary grants, for whom the change would be neutral, but would help to address financial pressures on the Council's joint equipment loans store (JELS).
- 6.12 The change would have two elements, one administrative and one requiring a change to the discretionary grants policy. It affects ceiling track hoists – aids to movement for people with seriously limited mobility, which are fitted to the ceiling of

rooms in the person's home. Currently ceiling track hoists are arranged and funded as part of JELS. This is anomalous, since they are technically adaptations to the person's home. It would therefore be legitimate to treat them in the same way as other adaptations, and to fund them from the Capital Grant.

- 6.13 If this administrative change was introduced without a change to the discretionary grants policy, the effect would be that the DFG means test would apply. This would be unfortunate, since, unlike many other adaptations, a ceiling track hoist is extremely unlikely to add value to the person's property, and will usually be removed as soon as the person no longer has a use for it. The suggestion is therefore that the discretionary grants policy be amended to specify that grants will be made for ceiling track hoists with no contribution requirement.
- 6.14 In the 12 months to the end of September 2023, JELS expenditure on ceiling track hoists was £106,865. Additional annual costs charged against the Capital Grant could be expected to be on a similar scale.

Conclusion

- 6.15 For the reasons given above, the Cabinet is recommended to approve both of the options for revising the discretionary grants policy described above. While the cost of the first option cannot be precisely predicted, officers' advice is that it is safe to assume that the cost of these options can be accommodated within the Capital Grant without substantially constraining the Council's future options.
- 6.16 The Cabinet is not recommended to make any immediate decision as to whether there should be further changes to the discretionary grants policy. This is for two reasons:
 - a) There is currently some uncertainty about what the level of recurring costs of mandatory DFG can be expected to be in future years. One issue is recent high levels of cost inflation in the construction sector. Another is that there have been some staffing issues in the paediatric OT service which carries out assessments of adaptations for disabled children on the Council's behalf. These have now been resolved, but at the time of preparing this report there was a waiting list of 30 children with a waiting time of 33 weeks. Adaptations for disabled children have historically included some of the highest-cost schemes, so the impact of these assessments on the Capital Grant may be significant. There is also some continuing uncertainty about whether there may be a wider issue about referrals for adaptations not having been made because of Covid.
 - b) The Cabinet may also wish to have considered the updated extra care and supported accommodation strategy before making further decisions which would affect the funding available to support that strategy.

7. Implications

Policy	The proposals will support the policy objective of enabling people near the end of their lives to remain able to live at home and maximising their independence.
Finance and value for money	Additional costs of the proposed change to the Discretionary Grants Policy can be met from the Disabled Facilities Capital Grant

Legal	The legal basis for the discretionary grant policy is the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002
Procurement	No implications identified.
Human resources	No significant implications identified.
Property	No implications for Council property identified.
The Equality Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point Equality Act issues will be considered when assessing individual needs, where relevant.
Risk assessment	No risk assessment required.
Crime and disorder	No implications identified.
Customer considerations	The proposed policy would reduce the number of people asked near the end of their life to supply information about their finances before receiving support for essential adaptations to their homes.
Carbon reduction	No implications identified
Health and wellbeing	The proposal in this report is intended to provide additional support to people in the last stage of life.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

[People at the Heart of Care](#) (Department of Health and Social Care, December 2022) (updated March 2022)

[Disabled Facilities Grant \(DFG\) delivery: Guidance for local authorities in England](#) (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and Department of Health and Social Care, March 2022)

[Next steps to put People at the Heart of Care](#) (Department of Health and Social Care, 4 April 2023)

[2023-24 DFG Grant Determination Letter](#) (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 7 September 2023)

[Act to Adapt](#) (Motor Neurone Disease Association, 2019)

[The 'Special Rules': how the benefit system supports people nearing the end of life](#) (Department of Work and Pensions, Online guidance updated April 2023)

[Motor neurone disease: a guide for GPs and primary care teams](#) (MND Association and Royal College of General Practitioners, 2022)

9. Links to other key reports already published

[Discretionary Adaptations Policy](#) – Cabinet report 10 November 2020.

10. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland

County Council

Discretionary support to improve housing for disabled people

**[DRAFT revised policy for Cabinet consideration, 12 December 2023.
Changes from existing policy highlighted]**

1. What this policy covers

- 1.1 This policy describes the circumstances in which Northumberland County Council will provide grant support to help disabled people to live in accommodation which supports their independence and well-being. It is about additional support offered by the Council, over and above the national Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) scheme, which creates a basic entitlement to support with housing adaptations¹.
- 1.2 The Council may under this policy offer discretionary grant for the following purposes:
- a) to support someone to move to alternative more suitable housing, in cases where adapting the person's existing home would not be the best way to meet the person's needs, or would be impractical or unreasonably expensive (see section 3 below);
 - b) to cover the extra cost of adaptations that a person needs which are more expensive than the nationally set limit on DFGs (see section 4 below);
 - c) to provide additional support in special circumstances where the means test for a DFG would otherwise make it difficult or impossible for someone to afford adaptations which they need (see section 5 below);
 - d) to make a non-means-tested grant up to a standard amount in cases where a person urgently needs adaptations because of a rapidly-progressing terminal illness (see section 6 below);
 - e) to fund the installation of a ceiling track hoist (see section 7 below).
- 1.3 This policy sets out when discretionary grant for each of these purposes will be offered, and what conditions will be attached to it.

2. General conditions

- 2.1 All of the forms of support described in this policy **except for those described in sections 6 and 7** will be offered only if the Council has sufficient funding in its DFG budget. This budget also funds mandatory DFGs, and these, being a statutory duty

¹ This is a **[DRAFT OF A]** formal policy **[WHICH MAY BE]** adopted by the Council on **12 December 2023** under [Section 3 of The Regulatory Reform \(Housing Assistance\) \(England and Wales\) Order 2002](#). The mandatory DFG scheme is set out in the [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996](#).

of the Council, will be the first call on the budget. (However support with moving to more appropriate accommodation, will be given equal priority to mandatory DFGs, if the cost to the DFG budget is no greater than the cost of adaptations to a person's existing accommodation which the Council would otherwise be required to fund through a mandatory DFG.)

- 2.2 If it appears likely that overall demands on the budget will be greater than the available funding, but that there will be some funding available for discretionary grants, the Council will aim to ensure that available funding is directed towards people with the most urgent needs, rather than being determined by irrelevant factors such as the point in the financial year when an application is made.
- 2.3 To maximise the benefit that can be achieved with available funding, officers will in every case explore whether there are alternatives to grant support from the Council, such as financial support from charitable funding sources.
- 2.4 Discretionary grants will be paid only to ensure that a disabled person's accommodation meets the same needs that are set out in the legislation covering mandatory DFG, which in summary are:
 - a) Access to the person's accommodation, and within the accommodation to the living room, the person's bedroom, a toilet, a washbasin and a bath/shower
 - b) Enabling the person to prepare and cook food
 - c) Ensuring that there is a heating system suitable for the person's needs
 - d) Enabling the person to control power, heat and light
 - e) Enabling the person to care for anyone else in the household who needs their care
 - f) Enabling the person to access the garden.
- 2.5 The Council will not ordinarily agree to discretionary grant outside the mandatory DFG scheme in order to fund access to a garden, beyond any access that can be satisfactorily achieved by low-cost means such as supplying a simple standard ramp. However it will consider any exceptional individual circumstances which mean that more extensive access is necessary (for instance to avoid significant risks to the person's health).
- 2.6 All of the forms of support described in this policy are also subject to the requirement that:
 - a) the support must be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person;
 - b) if the grant will be paying for works to an existing property, these works must be reasonable and practicable to carry out, taking into account the age and condition of the property.

3. Support with moving to more appropriate housing

- 3.1 Subject to the conditions set out below and elsewhere in this policy, the Council will pay a grant to enable a disabled person to move to more appropriate housing, in a situation where
- a) **either** the level of grant support required is no greater than the estimated cost of adaptations to the person's existing accommodation which would qualify for mandatory DFG;
 - b) **or** it would not be reasonable and practicable to adapt the person's existing accommodation, and the level of grant support required to enable the person to move is reasonable and appropriate, and does not exceed the limit for mandatory DFG;
 - c) **or** there is clear evidence that any costs above those that would have been incurred in meeting the person's needs in their existing accommodation through mandatory DFG can be expected to be offset by equal or greater savings in social care budgets.
- 3.2 Grant aid will be subject to the same means test as for mandatory DFG, so some households may not be eligible for grant on financial grounds, or may have to contribute towards the cost. The means test will be applied on the basis of the household's finances before the move.
- 3.3 In deciding whether to offer grant support for a particular proposed move, and if so at what level, the Council will be guided by its assessment of what is necessary and appropriate. In making this assessment, the issues which the Council will consider, if relevant, will include:
- a) whether the accommodation which the person proposes to move into is likely to remain suitable for the person in future without further adaptation
 - b) whether moving to the proposed accommodation would be likely to make it easier or more difficult to arrange care and support services for the person which they are likely to need, either immediately or in future
 - c) whether the costs of the proposed accommodation require a higher level of grant support than other reasonable alternatives which would meet the person's assessed needs
 - d) any special circumstances which mean that the location or nature of any less costly alternative accommodation would have a significant detrimental effect on the person's well-being (for instance by making it more difficult for them to maintain key family relationships)
- 3.4 Where possible, the Council will aim to provide general guidance about what kind of accommodation, at what costs, would be likely to be approved for grant support, taking account of the issues in 3.2, in advance of any decision to bid for a specific property. Whether or not it has provided such general guidance, the Council cannot guarantee to be able to make a rapid decision on grant support in a situation where this would be necessary to secure a specific property, though it will endeavour to do so where reasonably possible.

- 3.5 Grant to assist with moving is in principle available to support people living in or moving to accommodation under any tenure. In the case of a person moving into rented accommodation, it is likely that any grant support will be to meet any one-off costs of moving, in circumstances where these would otherwise be an obstacle to the move, though grant support will be considered to meet any other one-off costs which will necessarily be incurred to enable the move, taking account of individual circumstances. Ongoing rent, service charges, or other recurring costs will not be eligible for grant support through this scheme.
- 3.6 If the new accommodation will be owner occupied, the Council will consider in each case whether to place a land charge on the property. This decision will be made on so far as possible the same basis as when considering whether to place a charge on an owner occupied property when approving mandatory DFG.
- 3.7 Adaptations to the accommodation which the person is intending to move into will be eligible for grant support as part of this scheme, whatever the tenure of this property will be, subject to the requirements that:
- a) the overall level of grant support required must meet the conditions in paragraph 3.1 of this policy;
 - b) the Council must be satisfied that there are no reasonable and appropriate alternative options which would require a lower overall level of grant support, or no grant support, such as moving into accommodation which is already suitable for the person's needs;
 - c) the Council must be satisfied that the person's intention to move is genuine, and that there are no significant reasons to think that the move may not proceed as planned;
 - d) the Council must be satisfied that the person will once they have moved into the new accommodation meet the same conditions that would be required for the payment of a mandatory DFG, including requirements about how long they will intend to remain there
- 3.8 Where a person's current accommodation is owner occupied (whether owned by the disabled person or by someone else in their household), and they are moving to another owner occupied property, the Council will usually assume that the financial effect of the move and the grant should be:
- a) in the case of a move which is specifically taking place as a means of meeting the accessibility needs of the disabled person, to leave the owner of the accommodation with the same total level of assets as before the move, taking account of housing equity and savings, and of any land registry charge placed on the new property by the Council;
 - b) in the case of a move which, in the reasonable view of the Council, would be likely in any case to have taken place for other reasons (such as a need for additional accommodation for other household members), to leave the owner of the accommodation with the same total level of assets as before, less the transaction costs of moving (such as stamp duty and removal expenses).

4. Support with works more expensive than the DFG limit

- 4.1 The Council will not routinely fund support in excess of the financial limit for mandatory DFG. However it will consider doing so in cases where a disabled person's independence, safety or health would otherwise be significantly at risk.
- 4.2 Before agreeing to pay any discretionary grant for this reason, the Council will review the proposed programme of works, to ensure that the cost is reasonably necessary to meet the needs of the disabled person.
- 4.3 The Council will not pay additional discretionary grant above the financial limit for mandatory DFG if it believes that the household applying for support could reasonably be expected to move to alternative accommodation, and that this would require a significantly lower level of financial support from the Council, either immediately or in the foreseeable future.
- 4.4 The Council will also not pay discretionary grant for this reason if it believes that the household applying for support could reasonably be expected to pay the additional cost. It will make this judgement based on the overall finances of the household, and may in some circumstances take account of assets not included in the DFG means test which are relevant to assessing the household's ability to pay for the works (for instance where an owner-occupier has substantial equity value in the property, and could reasonably be expected to take out a loan against this).
- 4.5 In the case of a family with a disabled child, the Council will ordinarily also apply to the discretionary element of the funding a test of affordability based on the principles of the means test for mandatory DFG to decide what the family can reasonably afford to contribute toward the excess costs of works above the limit below which mandatory DFG is available without a means test. However the Council will consider what is reasonable after taking account of all individual circumstances.
- 4.6 There are also some purposes for which the Council will **not** ordinarily approve funding either from mandatory DFG or from additional discretionary grant. In particular, this includes solutions which are significantly more expensive than is required to meet satisfactorily the disabled person's needs, but which are preferred by the applicant because:
- a) they would improve the quality of life of other members of the household;
 - b) they would be more aesthetically satisfying (unless the Council believes that this is necessary in order to secure planning permission);
 - c) they would increase, or better protect, the value of the property.
- 4.7 The Council may make discretionary support provided for this reason conditional on a land registry charge against the property which is higher than the limit on land registry charges under the mandatory DFG scheme and/or remains in place for a longer period or until the property is sold. The Council will consider the relevant circumstances of each individual case before making a decision about this.

5. Grants for people who cannot afford the means-tested contribution

- 5.1 In exceptional cases, the Council will consider additional discretionary grant support for people who cannot reasonably afford to pay the contribution which the national means test for mandatory DFG calculates for them.
- 5.2 There is no fixed list of circumstances where such support will be offered; examples might include indebtedness or uncertainty about future earnings (perhaps related to the consequences of the disability of a household member which makes adaptations necessary).
- 5.3 When it receives a request for such additional support, the Council will request all details of the household's finances which it believes to be necessary to establish whether they can reasonably afford to pay.

6. Non-means-tested grants for people who are terminally ill

- 6.1 The Council will make a non-means-tested grant of up to £6500 in any case which meets the criteria set out in this section of the policy.
- 6.2 The Council's statutory Director of Adult Social Services is authorised to revise this figure from time to time to take account of changes in the costs of relevant kinds of adaptation. The version of this policy published on the Council's website (www.northumberland.gov.uk) will be updated if the figure changes.
- 6.3 The criteria for the payment of this grant are:
- either** the applicant has been found eligible by the Department of Works and Pensions for benefits payable under the Special Rules for people with a terminal illness;
 - or** a clinician who would be able to complete an application under the Special Rules has confirmed in writing that they are satisfied that the grant applicant meets the criteria that would make them eligible under the Special Rules, whether or not they have actually made, or intend to make, an Special Rules application.
- 6.4 The total non-means-tested grant that can be paid in respect of any one person under this section of the policy is £6500. An applicant who has previously received grant on this basis totalling less than £6500 may make a further application, but will receive funding only up to the level which will bring the total support they have received up to £6500.

7. Grants for ceiling track hoists

- 7.1 In any case where an appropriate Council professional has assessed that a person needs a ceiling track hoist installed in their home **either** for one of the purposes which would qualify for mandatory DFG **or** to enable them to achieve outcomes which would make them eligible for support under any social services legislation, discretionary grant will be payable to cover the full cost of this installation.



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet
Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Outcome of the tender for the New School Buildings for Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools

Report of Councillor(s) Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People

Responsible Officer(s): Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

These proposals are most closely linked to the Council's priority for tackling inequalities (children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well), but it is also strongly linked with the priority for achieving value and making the best spending decisions.

2. Purpose of report

To update cabinet on the outcomes of the tender process for the construction of new school buildings for Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School and seek the delegated approval to award the construction contract.

An outline capital allocation for investment in Education has already been made within the Council's medium term capital programme of £37,145,020. The Final Business Case seeks to confirm the capital required for the construction and management of the proposed scheme, being £50,427,220.

3. Recommendations

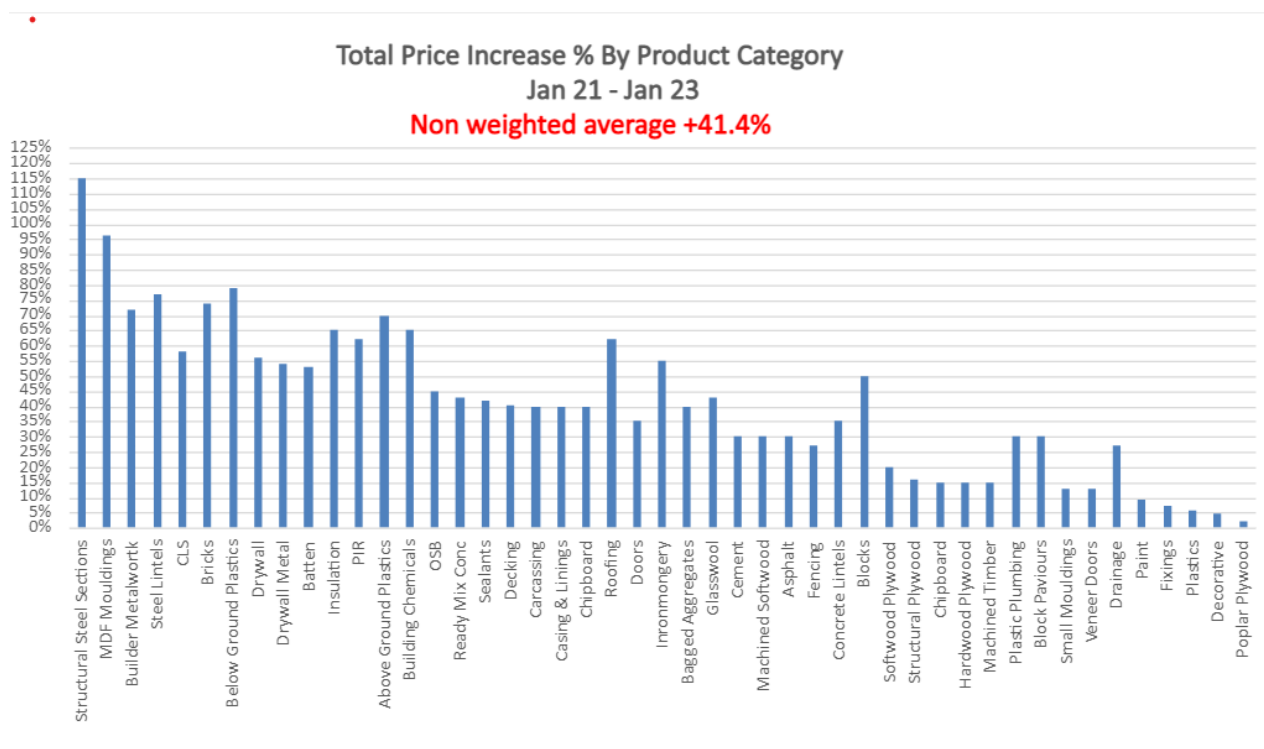
Cabinet is recommended to:

- 3.1 Note the outcomes of the tender process and agree to delegate the final award of contract to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
- 3.2 Agree to issue an early works instruction as an extension of the current preconstruction services agreement (PCSA) up to the value of £1.4m to prevent any increases in cost or delays in programme until the award of contract is complete in February 2024.
- 3.3 Note the revised allocation of £50,427,220 capital funding (an increase of £13,282,200, £10,282,200 NCC borrowing, which is subject to Full Council

approval) to amend the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-28 to deliver the scheme.

4. Key Issues

- 4.1 Current market conditions throughout the UK are dictating difficult competitive tendering as well as soaring prices. Contractors are preferring a two-stage tendering approach due to healthy order books and being more selective in the market, resulting in minimal responses to open tender exercises. This is also impacting on the rising costs with contractors and sub-contractors being more selective when bidding and pricing work.
- 4.2 Given the market conditions, a revised hybrid two-stage approach was agreed using the Crown Commercial services framework. The change to the traditional two-stage approach was for Northumberland County Council (NCC) to take two bidders through to the second stage but NCC would compensate the unsuccessful bidder for their bidding costs up to the value of £50k.
- 4.3 This approach was market tested; however, no bids were received and therefore a direct negotiation approach has been progressing with BAM construction.
- 4.4 The graph below demonstrates the increase in construction commodity prices. Whilst inflation is around 10%, the graph below shows that cost increases are significantly higher with an average of 41% increase in costs since January 2021.



- 4.5 Whilst above demonstrates the average cost increases, below is a list of the top seven areas that are impacting on the increased budget for delivery of the Astley project.

- Steelwork increase – increase to Astley cost plan of £500k.

- Curtain Walling price has doubled from £450/m² to £900/m² (100%) – increase to Astley cost plan of £1.1m.
- Brickwork 20% increase in brick prices largely due to energy increases – increase to Astley cost plan of £150k.
- Internal Partitions a cumulative rise of 42.3% when linked to increase in specification for fire, fire stopping etc. – increase to Astley cost plan of £700k.
- M&E increase of £202/m², increase to Astley cost plan of approx. £2m.
- Sprinklers have doubled in price, up £50/m² increase to Astley cost plan of approx. £500k.
- Groundworks is difficult to assess, but cost of materials involved has gone up on average between 12-20% increase to Astley cost plan of approx. £400k.

4.6 A full design review has also taken place and has achieved over £2m in savings against the previous design and costs.

4.7 The final design solution for the development of the new school buildings will require an increased budget of £13.282m. In the main, this is attributed to the unprecedented increase in construction costs as detailed above, inflation and increased cost due to redesign of drainage system as well as delays to the programme as a result in a change in policy from Northumbria Water.

4.8 Funding options

Total Funding breakdown (£50.427m) required to achieve full scope

Funding Source	Total
School Condition Allocation (SCIP) - Grant Funding	£12,000,000
NCC Borrowing	£38,427,220
TOTAL	£50,427,220

Note; OBC costs and fees spent in 2022-23 are included in the table above, this totals £1,579,820.

5. Outcomes of the tendering Process

- 5.1 Over the last seven months a full market test of the project has been undertaken together with a full design review in order to achieve value engineering/optimisations solutions in order to provide the most cost-effective solution.
- 5.2 Our Technical adviser team (AtkinsRéalis) have been reviewing the full cost breakdown from BAM Construction to ensure the costs are justified and it is a fair and reasonable representation of the market. To ensure value for money was obtained, BAM Construction were tasked to obtain multiple quotes for each work package, preferably at least 3. The outcome of this exercise is provided in detail within the commercially confidential “Tender Outcome Report”.
- 5.3 An Early Works Instruction is required to maintain programme, particularly around ensuring that the handover date is not compromised and also to ensure that the fixed price agreement is secured with no further inflationary or fixed price risks affecting the agreed final contract sum figure, contained within confidential “Tender Outcome Report”. It also enables early orders to be placed to secure the fabrication of the steel frame and to lock in the services of key supply chain partners.

- 5.4 The Early Works Instruction for the sum of £1,446,321.66 for works up to the end of February 2024 would be issued to BAM Construction to mobilise site set up, to commence bulk excavation and associated substructure works with the two main buildings.

6. Background

- 6.1 Unlike neighbouring authorities, Northumberland has never benefited from being part of any government-funded large-scale school building replacement programme. It has therefore predominantly been the responsibility of the Council to fund its own capital investment in the school estate. There has been some success in applying for external funding for three of our high schools through the Priority Schools Building Programme. However, even within these projects, the local authority still had to contribute approximately £5m. It should also be noted that despite the above, NCC still has over £80m of backlog maintenance issues in our maintained school estate.
- 6.2 There is no doubt that Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School buildings are in need of significant capital investment, due to the condition need of the building with £15.7m backlog maintenance repairs. The building is in the greatest need for replacement when compared to the rest of the local authority-maintained school estate; it also has a high level of asbestos making repairs and maintenance extremely difficult and even impossible in some areas without closing large areas of the school.
- 6.3 After undertaking a site option appraisal process on two potential sites for the development of the two schools, the preferred option was to bring all of the school and community facilities together on one site. This was to build new school buildings on the Avenue site.
- 6.4 Cabinet approved the preferred option and funding to deliver the scheme in April 2022. Since this time the tendering exercise has been completed as described in para 2 & 3 of the report.
- 6.5 Pupil place planning data for the Seaton Valley Partnership shows that reprovision of the current capacity for pupils at Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School will be adequate for current and future needs.
- 6.6 As well as improving the teaching and learning environment for current and future pupils in the schools, improvements to the on-site sporting and community facilities will benefit the wider Seaton Valley community.

Sport and Recreation

- 6.7 There would be a positive impact on sport and recreation, with the proposed improvements to sports facilities for the school and the wider community.

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

- 7.1 Note the allocation of £50,427,220m capital funding; subject to full Council approval on 21st February 2024 of the Council's medium term financial plan; to deliver the scheme to provide new school buildings for Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School. The scheme is planned to be completed by September 2025.

- 7.2 Note the outcomes of the tender process and agree to delegate the final award of contract to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council..
- 7.3 Agree to extent the current preconstruction services agreement (PCSA) up to the value of £1.4m to prevent any delays in programme and risk of cost increases until the award of contract is complete in February 2024.
- 7.4 Any other option would involve a reversal of the previous cabinet decision to proceed with the project and so the reason the above options are recommended are to ensure that the aims of the previous cabinet decision are achieved.

8. Implications

Policy	The consultation has been consistent with the Council’s policy to review changes to schools in accordance with local wishes and needs.
Finance and value for money	Refer to Appendix One – Outcomes of tender report.
Legal	The procurement process has been carried out in accordance with the Council’s finance and Procurement rules.
Procurement	Advice has been obtained from Procurement within Northumberland County Council and external legal advisors to understand its obligations regarding the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
Human resources	Staff employed at Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools will need to relocate to the new buildings on the Avenue site. It is not envisaged that this would have a detrimental impact on the staff involved in the change.
Property	The proposed investment will address all the complex backlog maintenance issues and risks to the council which are estimated to be in excess of £18m. The project will also enhance the current of sporting facilities which will also have a positive impact on the local community with facilities for sport and swimming being available outside of the school day.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	Yes - required and attached Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and is contained in Appendix 2 of the report.
Risk assessment	A full risk assessment has been carried for the project and is contained in the Appendix 3.
Crime and disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.

Customer considerations	The proposals set out in this report are based upon a desire to act in the best educational interests of current and future children and young people in Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	NCC's approach to Carbon Reduction is set out in its draft Northumberland Local Plan. The Project considerations of Carbon Reduction are outlined within Section 4.4 of the OBC.
Health and wellbeing	This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.
Wards	Holywell, Seghill with Seaton Delaval and Hartley.

9. Background papers

None applicable.

10. Links to other key reports already published

Cabinet Report – 26th April 2022 – The Outline Business Case for the replacement buildings for Astley and Whytrig.

11. Author and Contact Details

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DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

In carrying out the development of the OBC set out in this report, the Council has acted in compliance with Data Protection Act 1998 via the Council's Data Protection Policy.

Specifically:

- Data gathered during this consultation process has been dealt with fairly - e.g. the responses from members of the public have been anonymised, whilst those responding within a public role have been identified e.g. Chairs of Governors, Dioceses and so on.
- The data and information gathered during Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation has been used to assist in informing the recommendations set out in this report and will not be used for any other purpose, i.e. it will not be shared with another service area or any third party.
- The data and information gathered has been limited to that which would assist in informing the recommendations set out and those that will arise from this consultation.

The Council has set out how it deals with information received as part of consultation in the Council's Privacy Notice, at

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#privacynotices>.

APPENDIX 2

Equality Impact Assessment	
<p>Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will help the County Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties (Equality Act 2010). The duties which need to be considered when making decisions are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act • Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not • Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not <p>Failure to assess the equality impact may increase the risk of making an unfair decision which could potentially be discriminatory. It also prevents us from identifying opportunities to promote equality and therefore leaves the County Council open to potential legal challenge.</p> <p>Using this EIA template will help to ensure that a decision is made in a fair way, based on evidence. It provides a clear and structured method to assess the potential impact on protected groups.</p>	
Title of policy or proposal	New build project for Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School.
Briefly describe the aims of the policy change, decision or proposal, the likely outcomes and the rationale for it	To assess the impact of a new school build project, providing new school buildings for Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School – including new swimming pool/sports facilities and improved traffic management systems and footpaths.
<p>Consider the potential impact on any member of staff or member of the public with the following protected characteristics:</p> <p>Age, Disability, Gender identity/Gender reassignment, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation, Women who are pregnant or have recently had a baby.</p> <p>Also, for issues affecting staff, consider employees who are married or in a civil partnership.</p>	

<p>What information is already held or have you obtained through consultation or engagement activity? (For each protected characteristic: What do you know about our employees, service users or anyone else who potentially could be affected by the proposal? Who has been consulted? If you have gaps in your evidence or data you may need to carry out targeted engagement activity and/ or consider information from local or national research.)</p>	<p>A formal consultation process with the local and wider community was carried out. Meetings with school staff, governors, students and associated partners were held and views, opinions and suggestions gathered. This consultation furnished the design team with suggestions for development and improvements. Further meetings with council leaders and LA services were held to inform and guide the design process.</p> <p>We consider the effects of the project on all protected groups.</p>
<p>After considering the information, which protected groups may potentially be affected? (Delete those not likely to be affected)</p>	<p>Age Disability Gender identity/Gender reassignment Race Religion or belief Sex Sexual orientation Women who are pregnant or recently had a baby People who are married or in a civil partnership</p>

Using the information you have, give details of any potential positive and negative impacts on protected groups likely to be affected by the policy change, decision or proposal

(For each protected characteristic where there could be a potential impact, consider the following:

Could people from any protected groups be positively or negatively affected? Could anyone's

During construction phase:

The new schools are being built at a separate site which removes school staff and students from the proximity of the construction team. Public access to the construction site will be restricted as required by law.

Our main contractors BAM run an inclusion programme to support their staff to manage learning around diversity and inclusion. They also host inclusion networks (Ability, Proud, Gender Action) to share experience and support amongst their staff.

The project team comply with :
The Equality Act 2010

BS 8300-2:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. Buildings - code of practice

UK Government Statutory guidance - Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - Building regulation in England to ensure that people are able to access and use buildings and their facilities.

In operation:

New school buildings are built to comply with equality law (The Equality Act 20210) and UK government guidelines (Building Bulletin 103/104). This legislature ensures that the fundamentals of accessibility are followed and any new school buildings cater for the needs of protected groups.

Should the new school build proceed as recommended the existing (and new student applications) would have the opportunity to attend a new school within or close to their home communities. They would then remain on the role of the school as per the admissions policy of the school.

Parents are also able to exercise their parental preference for another school subject to places being available in the selected alternative schools.

Existing HR policies covering organisational change would apply to staff employed at the Schools. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met.

There is no reason to believe that any protected groups will be negatively affected by the building of these new schools.

Improvements to building design will have a positive affect for staff and students with a disability – who

currently use the existing buildings. This includes, but not exclusively: wider doorways to lifts, rooms and corridors allowing freer access for wheelchair users; greater number of accessible lifts; greater number of accessible toilets; better paths and walkways for accessibility to school grounds; improved accessibility to swimming pool.

<p>ability to take part in public life be affected? Could this policy change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards any protected group? Could any groups become more or less likely to be at risk of harassment or victimisation as a result of this policy change, decision or proposal? Are there opportunities to create positive impacts?) <i>(remember that the law permits disabled people to be treated equally or better than other groups this is to enable reasonable adjustments to be made).</i></p>	
<p>Give details of any Human Rights implications and actions that may be needed to safeguard Human Rights.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Give details of any actions that can be taken to promote equality or to lessen any potential adverse impact on protected groups.</p>	<p>During the design stage of this project the school and the wider design team liaised with staff and student representatives to consider the impact of design proposals. There is no evidence to suggest that there are any risks of disproportionately disadvantaging any pupils or members of staff in the new school.</p> <p>A transition plan will be put in place for children with an EHCP to help with the move to a new environment.</p>
<p>What plans are there to monitor and review the actual impact of the policy change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity?</p>	<p>A review should take place prior to the decant from the existing school to the new build. Ongoing monitoring will take place during the construction phase of the project.</p>
<p>When will follow up review be done?</p>	<p>If approved the project will be nearing the decant process in Spring 2025. A review will take place then</p>
<p>Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, mark one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:</p>	

	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
Explain how the judgement above was reached and summarise steps which will be taken to reduce any negative or to enhance any positive impacts on equality	N/A
Name(s) and job title(s) of person (people involved in) carrying out this assessment	Lyle Nicholson- Senior Capital Project Manager
Authorising director or head of service	Sue Aviston
Date authorised	
The completed equality impact assessment must be attached to the report that will be considered by the decision maker or decision makers to enable them to give due regard to the impact of the policy, decision or proposal on protected groups	
Please send a copy to keith.thompson@northumberland.gov.uk and irene.fisher@northumberland.gov.uk	

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<p>2. There is a risk thatin the current market some of the supply subcontractors fall into administration during the duration of the project</p> <p>Risk Owner: Sue Aviston</p>	Project objectives not met.	N/A	D	1	D1	Contract Management to monitor performance, preventative measures, exit strategies.	F&G	Monthly	Ongoing	E	4	E4
	Additional resource to rectify remedial works / complete contracts / contract works.					Regular meetings with contractors.	F&G	Monthly	Ongoing			
	Reduced reputation.					Oversight by Project Board.	Sue Aviston	Monthly	Ongoing			
	Political dissatisfaction.					Project Governance.	PLG meetings	Monthly	Ongoing			
	Dissatisfied stakeholders.					BAM has a defined supply chain which they have worked with regularly over a prolonged period of time.	F&G/BAM	monthly	ongoing			
	Dissatisfied parents.					BAM is a reputable company	F&G/BAM	Monthly	ongoing			
	Potential negative publicity.											
	Delay risk											
	Increase cost risk											

<p>4. There is a risk that a potential change of administration in Local Elections in May 2024 may result in a change in priorities and the proposed scheme being delayed/cancelled.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Sue Aviston</p>	Costs of delay	C3	C	2	C2						C	3	C3
	Delay and further deterioration of school buildings due to project review					Land negotiations to inform and firm up preferred option.	Kate Steel	Mar-22	Completed	Outline Business Case			
	Costs incurred would be recharged to revenue.					Cross party member briefings.	Sue Aviston	Termly	Ongoing	Members Steering Group Meetings			
	Reduced staff morale.					Liaison with local member.	Sue Aviston	Termly	Ongoing				
	Adverse publicity.					Outline Business Case.	Sue Aviston / Lyle Nicholson	Mar-22	Completed				
						Members steering group:							
							NCC		ongoing				
						ongoing support for school premises							

<p>5. There is a risk that all planning and sign-off approvals may not be in place in a timely manner leading to delays.</p>	Project delayed.	C3	C	2	C2	Bat survey.	F&G	2023	Complete
	Project objectives not met.					Badger survey.	F&G	2023	Complete
	Inability to meet statutory requirements set by consultees					Newts survey.	F&G	Oct-23	Complete
	Delay and further deterioration of school buildings with a Health and Safety risk					Project timeline.	F&G / BAM	12/11/2023	Ongoing
	Cost increase					Realign build / demolition programme.	F&G	2026	
	Adverse publicity.					Preliminary report.	Chris Lisle	2019	Complete
						Obtain licence from Natural England.	F&G / BAM		Complete
						Consultation with planning team	NCC		ongoing
Risk Owner: F&G	Project Board Meetings	Audrey Kingham / Sue Aviston	Monthly	Ongoing					

D	2	D2
---	---	----

<p>6. There is a risk thatFull Council do not approve increase in budget.</p>	Project cancelled	N/A	D	1	D1	Regular briefings and updates for cabinet, lead member, local elected members to ensure full support at Council decision	Sue Aviston	Monthly	ongoing	E	3	E3
	Project objectives not met.					Finance updates re: profiling of budgets in line with the Councils MTFP process	Sue Aviston	Monthly	completed			
	Additional resource to rectify remedial works in current school and new site complete contracts / contract works.					Increased grant funding to reduce pressures on NCC borrowing	NCC Finance	Monthly	ongoing			
	Political dissatisfaction.											
	Dissatisfied stakeholders.											
	Dissatisfied parents.											
	Criticism by external bodies											
	Potential negative publicity and reduced reputation.											
	Abortive costs in excess of £2m would revert to revenue pressure for the Council and are not capitalised. Impact upon NCC finances											
	Failure of building											
<p>Risk Owner: Sue Aviston</p>												

7. Risk of any statutory organisation unexpectedly amending / updating policies and the fundamental impact on the project. This could increase costs and potential delay	Project objectives not met.		D	1	D1	Statutory authority meetings	NCC		ongoing	C	3	C3	
	Increased costs					Contingency plans in project - reviewed through spend monitoring	F&G/BAM/NC C		ongoing				
	Additional resource to rectify remedial works in current school and new site / complete contracts / contract works.					Employing the correct design team with suitable experience to anticipate and respond to these issues	F&G		Complete				
	Reduced reputation.					Principal designer undertaking H&S responsibility and involved in whole project	F&G		Ongoing				
	Political dissatisfaction.												
	Dissatisfied stakeholders.												
	Criticism by external bodies												
	Potential negative publicity.												
Risk Owner: Sue Aviston													
8. There is a risk that the project programme will not be met due to circumstances beyond our control e.g. inclement weather, policy changes,	Delay in programme	N/A	B	4	B4	Regular progress meetings to monitor programme	Project Team		Ongoing	D	2	D2	
	Increased reliance on old buildings - Health and safety etc.						Monitoring of cash flow for early warning signs	Project Team					Ongoing
	Increased costs						Form of contract does not allow for cost of delay due to inclement weather.	Project Team					Ongoing
Risk Owner: BAM													

9. There is a risk that the project does not achieve NCC objectives	Reduced reputation.	N/A	E	2	E2	Manage communications	Project Team	As required	Ongoing	E	4	E4
	Political dissatisfaction.					Desclope process.	Project Team	12/11/2023	Ongoing			
	Dissatisfied stakeholders.					Working closely with school leaders to prepare for training and handover process.	Project team	Spring 2025	Ongoing			
	Dissatisfied parents.											
Risk Owner: Sue Aviston												
10. There is a risk that the decants may not be adequately planned or coordinated.	Delay in moving to new site	N/A	E	2	E2	NCC Project team will be involved in the management of the decant process	Project team	As required	Ongoing	E	3	E3
	Disruption to education during new school year					Decant over school holiday	Project team	As required	Ongoing			
	Damaged or lost property/items... cost of replacement					Continue to develop NCC decant protocol and associated docs.	Project team	Spring 2025	Ongoing			
						Work with BAM to establish decant protocol expectations	Project team	Spring 2025	Ongoing			
Risk Owner: Contractor												



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Education, SEND & Skills Annual Report 2022-23

Report of Councillor(s) Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People

Responsible Officer(s): Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

1.1 Tackling inequalities-

Help improve the quality of early years' settings, schools and other providers, so that all children and young people, no matter their circumstances or educational need, have access to education as close to their home communities as possible and achieve the best educational outcomes.

1.2 Economic growth-

- a) Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults. We will do this by producing clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like, developing a curriculum and facilities which both support the ambition of learners and link to the workforce requirements for Northumberland. This will ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations.
- b) Deliver skills and training for residents that meets their ambitions and supports the economy through greater links between learning pathways and opportunities in the economy, building on key relationships between education & industry.
- c) Through providing accessible programmes to engage residents and support them to move closer to training or work to tackle inequalities, improve individuals' life chances, and support the economy.

2. Purpose of report

The Annual Report 2022-23 highlights actions and progress against the key priorities for Education, SEND and Skills 22-24.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1) Agree that Members provide scrutiny and challenge to the service responses and developments detailed in the Education, SEND and Skills Annual Report for 22-23 as appropriate.

2) Agree that Members receive and review the annual report and recognise the performance given the continued challenges in bouncing back from the impact of the pandemic.

3) Consider the education achievements of our children, young people, and residents across Northumberland in 2022/23.

4) Consider the valuable support provided to all learners within:

- Early Years Settings and Schools
- Special Education Needs support and service
- Virtual School
- Learning and Skills Service
- School Organisation and Resources

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Report presented to cabinet annually. Entered onto forward plan 9 November 2023.

5. Background

5.1 The Annual Report 2022/2023 shares the successes and significant levels of resilience that our children and young people as well as our workforce have shown throughout the year. Our schools, skills and college have adapted learning environments to be able to support many of our children and young people's needs as we live and work within increasing levels of need and challenging budgets.

5.2 The impact of the pandemic on children and their families has proved to be more significant in the North East than other areas of the country and this is reflected in Northumberland. Adaptations have been necessary not just because many pupils have missed out on learning, but also because many have missed out socially, got out of the routine of coming to school or are struggling with their mental health, very simply, more of our young people are struggling in education.

5.3 We know that many children find a school environment challenging and the work in schools supported by Northumberland Education and Skills team is significant to support continuing the education journey. Whilst many children are enjoying their journey and progress very well, the extent of the work to close gaps is still a challenge, especially for disadvantaged pupils who continue to attain below their peers.

5.4 The growth in Special Educational Needs has been and continues to be significant. Schools and settings are meeting higher needs with higher frequency.

5.5 Working with our schools and partners to support the ambition, transition, and development of all of our children, young people and residents to their next stage of education, employment and life with all of the challenges that cross their paths is a privileged role that is embraced and celebrated by the whole workforce.

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

6.1 Members may take the opportunity to direct Education, SEND and Skills key priorities for 23-25.

7. Implications

Policy	The actions set out in this report support the vision and values of the Council's Corporate Plan. All Department for Education (DFE) / Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) policies and guidance are reviewed, interpreted and shared.
Finance and value for money	All budgets and decisions conform to expected DFE / ESFA funding requirements
Legal	Northumberland County Council has statutory responsibilities with schools and academies as well as colleges and post 16

	providers. The statutory responsibilities are clearly defined within policy and priorities for Education and Skills; within specific officer roles and also within the Board structures that engage with schools and academies and wider stakeholders to engage and to assure that all statutory duties are met. Formal reporting routines are embedded across the corporate calendar to ensure oversight and decision making is clear. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council.
Procurement	None
Human resources	None
Property	Schools have delegated responsibility for buildings
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified Not required
Risk assessment	All schools and staff have individual risk assessments. All sites are risk assessed. All Schools and Skills sites are HS risk assessed. Skills sites undertake reviews routinely as well as spot checks on premises to ensure routines and expectations are being followed.
Crime and disorder	The report has considered Section 1 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it
Customer considerations	Service plans and systems are approached from the pupil/family/customer perspective. All learner facing approaches include the learner/ customer journey to improve satisfaction.
Carbon reduction	The increase use of digital meeting spaces has reduced the travel and carbon footprint in 2022/23
Health and wellbeing	Staff well-being is of high importance. Systems such as Kooth and Qwell are in place to support pupils and staff as well as bespoke arrangements to meet the needs of particular circumstances
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Education, SEND and Skills Annual Report 2022-23

9. Links to other key reports already published

N/A

10. Author and Contact Details

David Street, Director of Education, SEND and Skills
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david.street@northumberland.gov.uk

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Northumberland County Council

Education, SEND & Skills
Annual Report for Northumberland
Academic Year 2022-23



Education, SEND and Skills Priorities

Northumberland Education has spent the academic year 2022-23 working productively towards the key priorities highlighted below.

1

Know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and report their performance to the council and the community.

2

Challenge and support improvement in the performance of our schools and settings so that all children and young people, including disadvantaged and SEND learners, achieve the best educational outcomes:

We will support across the Early Years sector to ensure all children are school ready and that the schools are ready for every child.

We will support all first, primary and middle schools to ensure their pupils have the skills and knowledge required to access the secondary curriculum.

We will support improved transition, progress and performance for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 to promote access for all learners to their first choice destination.

3

Improve the lived experience and outcomes for learners with SEND:

We will work in partnership with all stakeholders, including championing the voice of children, young people and their families, jointly working with Health and Social Care, to fully implement the Local Area 0-25 SEND Strategy.

We will lead on the development of a fully inclusive education system.

4

Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults:

We will develop a curriculum and facilities which both supports the ambition of learners and links to the workforce requirements for Northumberland.

We will build on key relationships between education and industry.

We will produce clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations.

5

Develop appropriate high quality educational provision that meets the needs of all children and young people as close to their home communities as possible:

We will strive to deliver the right number of places to meet all learner needs in the right place, at the right time.

6

Ensure the Education, SEND and Skills Service fulfils its statutory duties within the legislative framework (including the School Admissions Code, Exclusions, Attendance, Virtual School, School Organisational Regulations, Early Years Sufficiency and those relating to SEND):

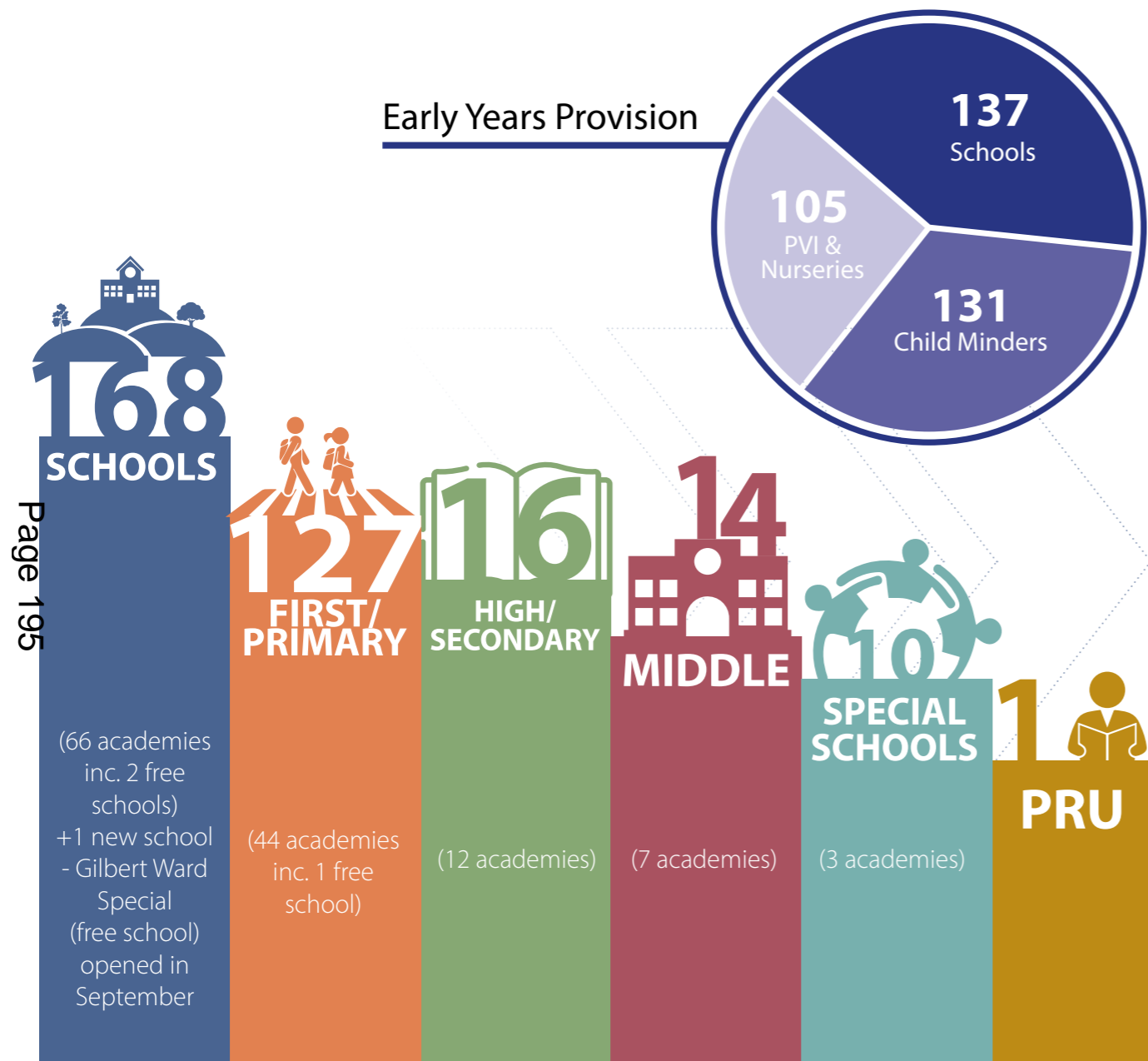
We will meet our own statutory duties.

We will further develop relationships with the Regional Director and Academy Trusts to ensure they adhere to their statutory duties whilst ensuring equality of access to education.

The Local Authority will work closely with children, young people, their families, schools, settings and all other partners to deliver on these priorities. They will be monitored and evaluated by the sector-led Education Strategy Partnership Board and the SEND Board.

➤ This report focuses on each priority, the actions taken, the impact to date and identifies appropriate next steps for further development.

Overview of Northumberland School Landscape



Page 195

“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success”

Henry Ford

Welcome

Key Priority 1

Know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and report their performance to the Council and the community.

Our Early Years settings, schools, alternative educators and post 16 providers have been focussed on the task of continual improvement to the benefit of all learners.

Collectively the academic outcomes continue to bounce back to our 2019 levels (the last year comparative exams took place) and **the number of schools judged good or better by Ofsted is now at an all-time high of 94% (August 23).**

Attendance outcomes are also strengthening, but they are yet to regain the levels from before the pandemic. School admissions remain strong with the vast majority of applicants gaining their first choice.

Challenges remain with meeting the needs of all learners with Special Educational Needs. Growth in this area includes both higher levels of need and greater numbers being presented across the sector. Schools and providers have responded magnificently, with needs being well met, parental satisfaction remaining high and Ofsted reports exclusively stating that SEND provision is at least good.

The ability to deliver specialist provision continues to grow in line with our Strategic SEND Capacity Plan.

Special School capacity has been extended across the county and supplemented by the development of Specialist Support Bases at a range of primary schools. Our Skills Service has doubled the size of their post 16 SEND courses. Further development in this area will continue to meet the needs of young people with SEND as close to their homes as possible.

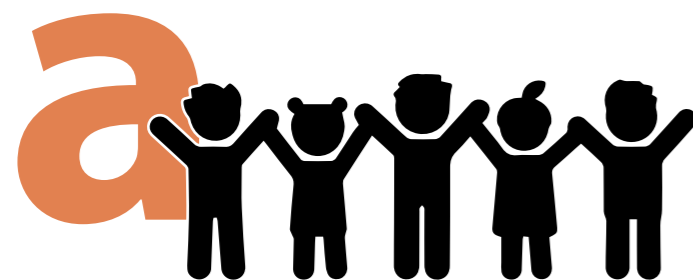
Disadvantaged learner outcomes remain an area for development. Although many disadvantaged pupils do reach their full potential there remains a gap in outcomes between them and their peers which, collectively, we must diminish.

The partnership between early years settings, maintained schools and academies continues to extend from an already strong base. The sector led Education Strategy Board continues to review all the key priorities and direct further developments.

All of these actions and those listed over the following pages demonstrate that Northumberland know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers and clearly report their performance to the Council and the community.

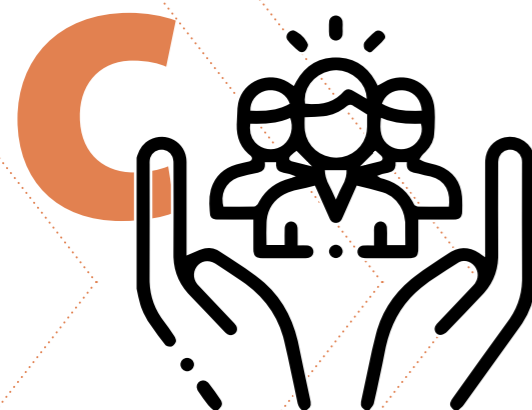
Key Priority > 2 <

Challenge and support improvement in the performance of our schools and settings so that all children and young people, including disadvantaged and SEND learners, achieve the best educational outcomes:



We will support across the early years sector to ensure all children are school ready and that the schools are ready for every child

We will support all first, primary and middle schools to ensure their pupils have the skills and knowledge required to access the secondary curriculum



We will support improved transition, progress and performance for Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 to promote access for all learners to their first-choice destination

Early Years Provision >

The quality of early years provision in Northumberland is excellent. **97% of early years providers were rated Good or Outstanding at Summer 2023.**

The take up of 2-year-old provision continues to be good. **82% of all eligible 2 year olds took up their statutory entitlement to early education** in the summer term 2023. There was a drop in take up compared with the autumn and spring terms (96% & 91% retrospectively) but still consistently better than the National Average of 74%.

The take up of funded entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds is exceptional with **104% of 3 and 4 year old's taking up their early education entitlements** compared with 94% nationally in the year 2022-2023. The over 100% take up reflects some families choosing to take up their early education entitlements in Northumberland who live in other local authorities.

Early Years settings value the support of the Early Years Team to maintain high quality early years provision with 81% of the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings subscribing to Local Authority services to access training and consultancy support.



The percentage of children with SEND in Northumberland achieving a Good Level of Development in Summer 2023 was **22.6%** compared to 19.9% nationally.



There were a number of closures of PVI provisions across Northumberland in 2022-23, which reflects the well reported challenges around sustainability, recruitment and retention following the COVID pandemic. However, **we were successfully able to find alternative provision for children affected by closures and support the opening of new provision. As such, we continue to have no gaps in sufficiency.**

Academic Outcomes

Early Years Foundation Stage:

Outcomes for children at the end of their EYFS are positive, with **68.8% achieving a Good Level of Development**, compared with 67.3% nationally in Summer 2023.

Key Stage 2:

57% of Northumberland pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths, an increase on 2022 but 2% below the national average. Reading was 0.1% above the national average at 72.7%, writing was 0.3% above the national average at 71.3% (9.2% decrease nationally) and Maths was 2.2% below the national average at 70.7%.

Key Stage 4:

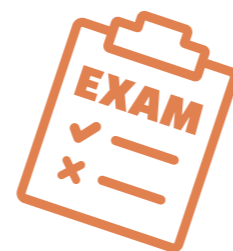
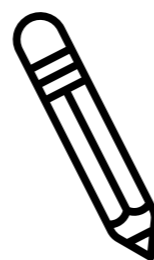
External examinations returned for the second time since 2019. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall back to 2019 levels, so a fall in the percentages in comparison to 2022 was expected. Data is provisional at this stage.

Progress 8:

The average Progress 8 score was -0.2, poorer than the national average of -0.03 but better than the North East average of -0.27.

Attainment 8:

Northumberland achieved 44.4, slightly below the national average of 46.2 but matching the North East average.



English and Maths:

4+ is deemed to be a standard pass and 5+ a strong pass

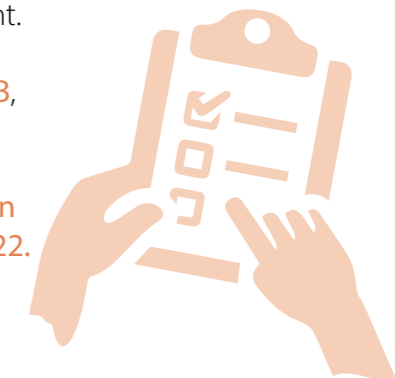
	Northumberland	North East	National
English & Maths 4+	63.1%	62.2%	65%
English & Maths 5+	42.8%	41.7%	45%

Key Stage 5:

External examinations returned for the second time since 2019. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall back to 2019 levels, so a fall in the percentages in comparison to 2022 was expected. No national comparisons are available at present.

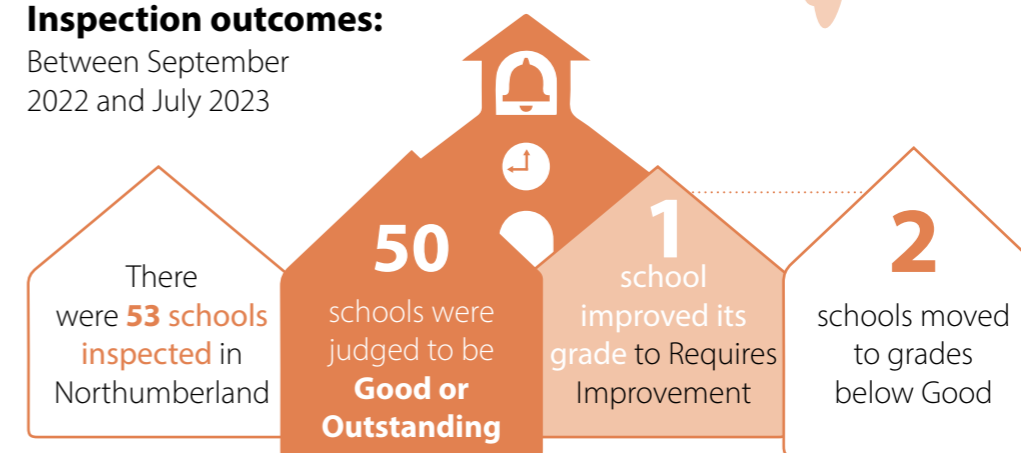
1152 pupils sat A levels, achieving an average grade of B, matching the performance of 2022.

494 pupils sat Applied General Qualifications, **achieving an average grade of a Distinction minus, slightly below 2022.**



Inspection outcomes:

Between September 2022 and July 2023



The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes were at the highest they had ever been in August 2023.

Key Figures >



Page 198



93.9%

of Northumberland schools are **Good or Outstanding**, 4.9% above the national average.

96.7%

of primary schools in Northumberland were **judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding or Good** by July, better than the national average of 90%.

86.7%

of secondary schools in Northumberland were judged by Ofsted to be **Outstanding or Good in summer 2023**, an improvement of 10% compared to summer 2022 and above the national average of 80%.

95%

of primary pupils were in **Good or Outstanding schools in summer 2023**, 7% more than the previous year

84%

of secondary pupils were in **Good or Outstanding schools in summer 2023**, 4% better than the previous year

82%

of our cared-for children and young people attend schools judged by Ofsted to be **Good or Outstanding**, significantly more than the 64% in the previous year, and more than the national average of 78%.



Key Priority > 3 <

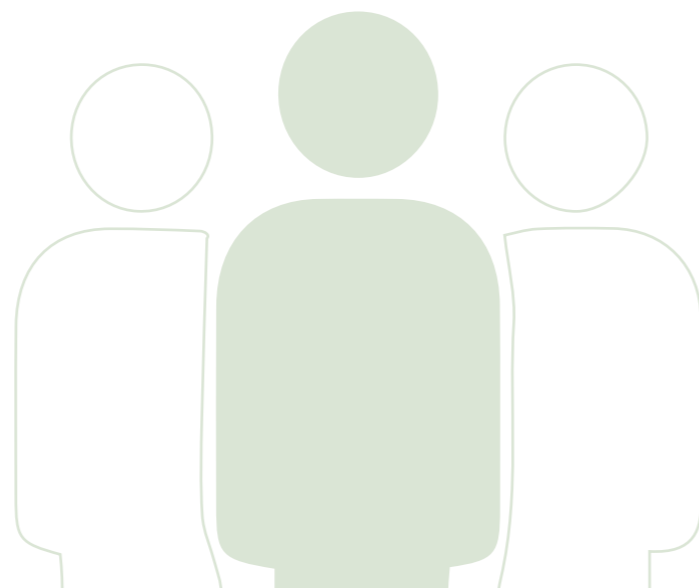
Improve the lived experience and outcomes for learners with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND):

A) We will work in partnership with all stakeholders, including championing the voice of children, young people and their families, jointly working with Health and Social Care, to fully implement the Local Area 0-25 SEND Strategy

The Local Area SEND Partnership consists of Northumberland County Council senior leads for education and health and social care alongside NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Work on the delivery of strategic actions described within the Northumberland Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-2024 has been ongoing and the education work is described in this report.

Key delivery highlights from the partnership include:

- > The co-production and launch of the Children's Occupational Therapy Sensory Processing Service for children and young people living in Northumberland.
- > A new team has been developed to support education providers to initiate Early Help Assessments and facilitate Team Around the Family meetings. This is a significant investment of 6 Education EHA workers. The aim was to reach 200 children with EHAs initiated by school in the 2022-23 academic year. At the end of the summer term there have been 420 children with education initiated EHAs demonstrating the impact this has had on children and young people accessing early support.



B) We will lead on the development of a fully inclusive education system

There has been, and continues to be, an increase in the number of learners presenting with SEND in Northumberland. Correspondingly, the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) being applied for and agreed has increased. **Over the last 4 years, the number of EHCPs in Northumberland has increased by 75.6% including 23% in 2022-23.**

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of EHCPs: January 1st	1849	2180	2638	3247

Many schools and settings believe the reasons for this growth include-

- > Improved identification of SEND
- > Increasingly complex young people with SEND (in part, linked to COVID measures)
- > A lack of confidence for some parents that mainstream schools can meet their child's needs
- > The actions in a minority of schools which are less inclusive

Special schools continue to operate at capacity, with learners with the most complex needs being supported into such provision whilst mainstream settings are required to make effective provision for a greater number of pupils with EHCPs.

There are many very inclusive schools and settings in Northumberland. The staff and governors of those schools hold similar principles and a desire to ensure all learners are successful alongside their peers and as close to home as possible.

It is a key responsibility of the local authority to support schools with developing and sustaining their inclusive ethos and provision.



Actions and Impact >

Following a successful pilot of new SEND self-evaluation projects, working with Whole Education and David Bartram (OBE), Northumberland has 150 schools and other educational settings engaged in standardised SEND self-evaluation. This will be supported in 2023/24 with the development of new SEND Reviews for schools, which ensures that the LA have quality assured and moderated oversight of SEND.

Over 150 delegates attended each of our triad of inclusive conferences including the Relationships Matters Conference (March 23), the SENCo Conference (July 23) and the Inclusion Conference (Sept 23).



Joint working with parents, carers and colleagues in all settings has supported the development and launch of the Northumberland Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance document in September 2022. The document promotes Northumberland's vision that learners with SEND have the best start in life and are supported, through highly effective and inclusive educational provision, to attend settings as close to home as possible.

Across the High Incidence Needs Team (HINT), there has been a 14.3% increase in requests for support for individual children and young people (CYP), a 208% increase in whole school activity and a 30% increase in the number of training courses delivered from 2021-22 to 2022-23.



HINT have developed new ways of working to meet increased demand within existing budgets. All teams remained open to referral throughout the year and have developed further improvements to ensure the same in 2023-24.

HINT's 2022-23 training offer comprised of 123 school-based courses being delivered to 2,304 delegates from 103 school settings plus a further 47 Learning Together Courses, 12 Cygnet Courses and 15 Safety Intervention Training courses. 95.4% of respondents stated that their subject knowledge had increased as a result of training attended.



There has been a 19% increase in the number of referrals received by the Low Incidence Needs Team (LINT) team between 2021-22 and 2022-23. There were 15,945 individual support activities carried out 2022-23, including home visits, individual assessments and whole school development visits.



The LINT service has delivered 148 training sessions during 2022-23, ensuring continually improving access to effective education for learners with English as Additional Language and with Vision, Hearing or Multi-Sensory Impairment.



The LINT service has supported an increased number of children and young people, witnessing a rise of 19% in referrals received in 2022-23 compared with 2021-22.

The Educational Psychology service continues to face challenges aligned to national pictures. There are, currently, 3 vacant posts and one psychologist on 12-month sabbatical.

699 educational advices were requested from Educational Psychologists during 2022-23 for Education and Health Care assessment (following request for EHCP).



In 2022, timeliness of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks was 15.9% higher in Northumberland than England as a whole. Northumberland issued 8.8% more of its EHCPs in timescale than the North East as a whole. The proportion of EHCPs issued in timescale has continued to decrease as a result of increased demand and reduced capacity.

The statutory EHCP assessment and Review Team currently have the 2nd highest caseload in the North East. Development work to improve practice and capacity is planned for 2023-24 within existing budgets.

Our teams have remained well connected with colleagues on a regional and national basis over the past year, further developing links with Whole School SEND, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and Whole Education.



Key Priority > 4 <

Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults:

- A) We will develop a curriculum and facilities which both supports the ambition of learners and links to the workforce requirements for Northumberland
- B) We will build on key relationships between education & industry
- C) We will produce clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like to ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations

Northumberland Skills

- > There were **1,659 enrolments** onto programmes across eight campuses in 2022-23 for adult learners and **212 enrolments** for young people aged 16-18 with the largest majority (87.3%) of enrolments being adult learning.
- > Overall achievement rates across the whole Service (all ages) for **2022-23 were 88.7%** (excluding Apprenticeships).
- > Achievement rate for 16-18 (excluding Apprenticeships) is **81.1%**, demonstrating significant distance travelled and with a larger cohort compared to 2021-22 where the achievement rate was 69%.

> Apprenticeship recruitment continues to remain a challenge in 2022-23, headline achievement was **67.1%, 7.1% points above the current national rate and increased by 9.0% from 2021-22**, with availability in many advertised apprenticeships not being filled from the local & regional labour markets.

Northumberland Skills continues to provide training models through apprenticeships in various vocational sectors and have availability in various roles across the county to work directly with internal and external employers.



- > Northumberland Skills' self-assessment grades the service as **GOOD**, in terms of OfSTED gradings for 2022-23.
- > The achievement rate for **GCSE English and mathematics is 84.4%** which is an increase of 5.2% from 2021-22 and is above the National Rate of 82.8%.
- > Pass rates for learners with an EHCP is **outstanding at 100%**.
- > Adult Learning for those aged over 19 years forms the largest majority of the service and remains as a **GOOD performance with an achievement rate overall of 93.6%**.
- > Pass Rate at Entry/**Level 1 (all ages) is 90.5%** and remains the largest cross section of the participation at 1,080 enrolments, Pass Rate at Level 2 (all ages) is 92.7% with 319 enrolments, both demonstrating an increase by 3.0% and 4.7%, respectfully, against 2021-22.
- > Given the legacy Covid-19 challenges to ensure **learners remain on programme, engaged and making good progress**, the achievement rates are reassuring.
- > Attendance in 2022-23 for 16-18 learners was 87.4%, Adults (19+) was 88.9%.
- > Apprenticeship End Point Assessment achievement remains positive with a high number of apprenticeships achieving **Distinction grades** at the end of their programme of training.
- > **Learner Voice surveys** (Student feedback) demonstrate positive examples of good practice and **positive outcome data with an overall Course Satisfaction score of 4.66 out of 5.**
- > Learner's attitudes to their education are positive and have been shown to have improved over time. Behaviour and attitudes of learners is good, with learners demonstrating effective behaviours for learning supporting what we know to be the expectations of employers, an **overall score of 4.65 out of 5 reflected 'How enjoyable is your learning?'**
- > In 2023 The Employability Service successfully completed 2 programmes - The DWP JETS programme (Job entry targeted support) and The Refugee Employability Support Programme.
- > The Employability Service continues to be well positioned to respond particularly to North of Tyne Inclusive Growth projects where the prime aims are to support residents into gaps, reduce inequality and disadvantage gaps and to support progression into employment as well as in work progression through training.



An independent destination survey carried out by J2 research in August 2023 focused on all learners from the 2022-23 cohort and returned the following:

<p>93.8%</p> <p>of former learners stated that it helped them achieve their principal reason or motivation for attending the course</p>	<p>100%</p> <p>of former learners achieved their motivations of:</p> <p>Becoming more active in the community</p> <p>Progressing onto another course afterwards</p>	<p>92.0%</p> <p>of former learners achieved their motivation of hobby and interest</p>	<p>95.9%</p> <p>of former learners achieved their motivation of upskilling for their current or future career</p>	<p>87.8%</p> <p>of former learners achieved their motivation to help them to get a job</p>
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Collaborative Projects

Strengthening Pathways to Employment

Northumberland Skills Welding & Fabrication training facility, Port of Blyth

The capital investment of £1.4m to deliver Northumberland Skills Welding & Fabrication training facility within the clean energy cluster at Port of Blyth reached completion and was handed over to the Skills team April 2023. The facility welcomed its first small pilot cohort of 9 young people for the remainder of the 2022-23 academic year, 2 of which have moved into apprenticeship and employment, while the remainder have returned for training to the next level on their journey to entering the engineering sector.



The facility also welcomed a cohort of 19 adult trainees on a six-week intensive programme designed to prepare them to enter welding roles within local employer Universal Wolf. Four of the candidates were successful in taking the roles while all 15 others have returned for further training to continue on their journey into the sector. Looking ahead to the 2023-24 academic year interest is strong with circa 20 apprentices, circa 30 young people and a growing cohort of adult and commercial trainees planning to study at the centre. Much more will emerge in-year.

Energy Central Campus

Work officially began during the spring of 2023 on the £13.6m Energy Central Learning Hub situated in the clean energy cluster at Port of Blyth, an official ground-breaking ceremony took place during July. The campus will create a high-quality talent pool, supporting the clean energy sector in meeting its ambitious growth aspirations, whilst inspiring, training and providing pathways to employment for the local community and wider region.

The strategic partnership formed between Northumberland County Council, Port of Blyth and the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult to lead the development has focussed upon the construction phase of the project. However, during summer 2023, with construction underway, the focus has shifted and now officers from Education SEND & Skills are front and centre of developments to refine the vision and business model as well as engaging education delivery and industrial partners.



Fuse Campus Developments

During the summer of 2023 plans have been drawn up and costings developed to explore the expansion of learning space within the FUSE campus for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It is concluded that in the region of 60 additional places can be created providing an additional vocational education option for more young people with SEND and providing greater reach of provision into the south and the Tyne Valley. Next steps will be to secure funding to allow works to be taken forward based upon the plans.

Key Priority > 5 <

Develop appropriate high quality educational provision that meets the needs of all children and young people as close to their home communities as possible:

A) We will strive to deliver the right number of places to meet all learner needs in the right place at the right time

Planning permission was granted by the Secretary of State following approval at the Strategic Planning Committee on 6th December 2022 for the rebuild of Astley and Whytrig Schools. RIBA Stage 4 designs are now complete and signed off by the school. **A main contractor has been brought on board to deliver the scheme with the new facilities scheduled to be ready for September 2025.**

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for James Calvert Spence College was approved by Cabinet and a large amount of work was undertaken to develop the designs in readiness of a Planning application with detailed design and construction to follow soon after. In conjunction, designs were completed for the repurposing of the vacated former JCSC middle school building to become a new SEND facility (operated by Barndale SEND School) and a new primary school for Amble First School. In addition, a contractor has been appointed to deliver the additional capacity to enable four feeder first schools to become primaries in September 2024.

During the summer holidays (July 2023 - September 2023), the capital team undertook a range of projects to replace existing dilapidated mobile classrooms which were identified during condition surveys. A further 2 projects were identified to create much needed additional accommodation for James Calvert Spence College and Cramlington Learning Village. These projects include: >

- > **James Calvert Spence College** - Relocation of 3 existing double mobile classrooms and the installation of 1 newly refurbished double mobile classroom to accommodate the reorganisation from a 3-tier to 2-tier education system.
- > **Cramlington Learning Village** - Installation of 1 new double mobile classroom to create additional school places for 60 pupils.
- > **Felton Primary School** - Replacement of 1 existing double mobile classroom unit with a new bespoke double mobile classroom, featuring a kitchenette and toilet facilities.
- > **Seaton Sluice Middle School** - Replacement of 1 existing single mobile classroom unit with a new mobile classroom, including toilet facilities.

The replacement of two dilapidated modular buildings with one state of the art Early Years facility is now complete at Bedlington Station Primary School. The £1.75m project has provided a range of spaces including a Reception classroom, Nursery and a community classroom incorporating dedicated entrances and associated ancillary facilities including kitchens, age-appropriate toilets and enhanced, dedicated outdoor play areas.

The School Capital Improvement Programme has continued through the year and between September 2022 and September 2023 has seen 11 projects completed on site, with a combined value of approximately £1.3 million. Geographically, these projects have ranged from Belford in the North to Seghill in the South and have undertaken a range of works including replacing and upgrading roofs, replacing windows, upgrading heating and sewage treatment systems and improving facilities for pupils with SEND needs.

In addition to the projects completed over this period, many other projects are moving through the design stage or have started work on site. As well as maintaining the school estate, these projects seek to reduce operating costs for the schools and help the Council in achieving its climate change objectives. **The latter has been helped by additional funding being made available from the DfE specifically to help schools improve their energy efficiency.**

Works have been undertaken throughout the county to create a number of Primary Support Bases (PSBs) and Specialist Support Bases (SSBs) that will provide additional support for pupils at a host school. The first 5 PSB's began operations in September 2022 at a range of school sites. The first 6 SSB's will come on stream in September 23.

Redevelopment of a building formerly known as the Sycamore Centre, for use as specialist teaching for students with additional needs has created an additional 30 places for pupils attending Cleaswell Hill Special School. The works were completed in the summer of 2023, with the new facilities opening in September. Works included: the repurposing of existing space into 4 separate teaching rooms (catering, STEM, performing arts, social skills), a hygiene room, and improvements to the outdoor space.



Key Priority 5



Page 204



A project to create an additional 40 places for pupils with ASD and SEMH has also been completed on the site of the former PRU and this is now known as The Woodlands, an offsite provision for Collingwood based at Hepscott Park. This project was also completed for the start of the new academic year and offers a bespoke facilities to support the teaching of vocational subjects, and therapies spaces.

The relocation and refurbishment of Northumberland PRU to the former Atkinson House Special School site in Seghill was undertaken. The relocation and capital investment has also enabled the expansion and change in age range which now means that the needs of KS4 pupils can also be met.

Gilbert Ward School in Blyth opened to students in September and will provide up to 80 places for students with SEMH and ASD over time.

Following more than 2 years of consultation, approval for the reorganisation of Berwick Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure together with £41m funding for buildings was secured in July 2023. Implementation has begun, with approval of a draft Staffing Protocol and technical advisors to support the delivery of the capital investment plans.

Approval of Berwick Reorganisation also included approval and funding for the establishment of SEND Units at St Mary's CE Primary School (as it will be) from September 2025 and at Berwick Academy from September 2026. This will create an additional 70 places across the primary and secondary phases in Berwick for students with SEMH/ASD/MLD/SLCN. Together with approval of the satellite site in Amble of Barndale Special School (to be named Barndale by the Sea), this means that 120 specialist provision places will be created in the North of the county over 3 years from September 2024.

4 Schools have academised successfully in 2023, with £25k costs to the Council successfully recovered.

Key Priority > 6 <

Ensure the Education, SEND and Skills Service fulfils its statutory duties within the legislative framework (including the School Admissions Code, Exclusions, Attendance, Virtual School, School Organisational Regulations, Early Years Sufficiency and those relating to SEND):

- A) We will meet our own statutory duties
- B) We will further develop relationships with the Regional Director and Academy Trusts to ensure they adhere to their statutory duties whilst ensuring equality of access to education

> Admissions

> SEND Commissioning

Primary
98.2% of children were allocated their first choice Primary school, **6% above** the national average

Secondary
95.5% of children were allocated their first choice Secondary school, **13% above** the national average

2,138 'in year' applications were processed within 2022-23

Between Sept 2022 and Aug 2023 the team have **processed 171 applications for Ukrainian children**, all of which were allocated within 15 school days

The School Organisation and Resources Team (SORT) have taken responsibility for the commissioning and allocation of SEND placements.

Revised Terms of Reference for the SEND Placement Review and Transition Panel were put in place and a new commissioning process was developed, implemented and rolled out to colleagues in the SEND team and specialist provisions.

From November 333 students have been considered at panel, with 207 students placed, 55 students considered not to require specialist provision, 16 students where a placement is still to be found, and 55 students in consultation with provisions.

Relationships with Special Schools improved through new processes and communication.

A brochure for Northumberland Special Schools was developed to assist parents in making appropriate school preferences.

Inclusion

In 2022-23 the Inclusion team supported **234 learners in alternative provision** (AP). Out of those, 9 learners reintegrated into Special School and 14 back into mainstream successfully.

In 2022-23 the Inclusion Team supported **63 managed moves, 33 were successful** and 25 were unsuccessful, with 5 pending; the success rate is 52%. Historically, the success rate was 20%.

The Inclusion Panel launched in Sept 2022-this panel considers all referrals into the PRU, Alternative Provision (AP) and Primary Support Bases. In 2022-23 we received 131 referrals, with only 3 going on to be permanently excluded (PEX).

72% of the 2022-23 Year 11 PEX cohort achieved a qualification in English, 61% of the 2022/23 Year 11 PEX cohort achieved a qualification in Maths. These results are lower than the 2021-22 cohort, but it mirrors the national trend due to the re-introduction of formal assessments.

The number of PEX learners in AP in September 2023 was 144. This is double the number in AP in 2021 and reflects the increase in the number of children and young people being PEX from Northumberland schools.

74% PEX learners were in full time suitable provision by day 6 in 2022-23. This is a reduction of 7% on the previous year, however there are several contributing factors which include the availability of AP placements as well as the delay in the LA receiving notifications of PEX from schools.

There have been no permanent exclusions of cared-for children since 2008.

The first Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy was finalised and approved by Cabinet in November 2022. A copy can be found [here](#). Work will continue in 2023-24 on refining and redrafting the strategy with our schools and partners.

Nationally, the highest rate suspension and permanent exclusions rates are in the North East and of the 12 authorities across the North East Northumberland is ranked 4th highest for permanent exclusions and 6th for suspensions.

In 2022-23 Northumberland reported **105 permanent exclusions** and 5,870 suspensions, an increase of 11% and 37%, respectively compared to the previous year. The data also indicates that pupils with SEND and Cared-for children are more likely to be excluded / suspended.

Free School Meals

We are continuing to support families across the county through the HUGGG voucher scheme for meals during the school holidays and uniform provision. From December 2020 to May 2022, 97,143 vouchers were issued valuing £4.3m+ and with a redemption rate of 95%.



School Finance



School Funding and the National Funding Formula

Northumberland moved successfully towards the implementation of the National Funding Formula for 2023-24 schools. The Council classified as a local authority which “mirrors the NFF”. An overall balanced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position was reported to Schools Forum in July 2023, but this also highlighted significant pressures arising within the High Needs Block. This is caused principally by the increase in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the year to January 2023, together with higher inflationary pressures over the last 24 months.

School Balances

A report to Schools Forum in July 2023, illustrated that, after 2 years of increasing school balances, the financial year to March 2023, saw an overall marginal fall in the balances held by Northumberland’s maintained schools.

This fall in balances was most notable across First and Primary Schools, who together with Special Schools would have felt the impact of the general NJC pay award, which was not supported by additional funding in the way the teachers’ pay award was.



The Education Welfare Service

School attendance in Northumberland is gradually improving with overall absence better than regional and national averages in the Secondary and Special phases, and persistent absence better than regional and national averages in the Primary and Secondary phases. The legacy of the pandemic on school attendance is still present, but new initiatives are clearly starting to have a positive impact.

Legal intervention is back to pre-pandemic levels. Whilst it is a last resort, the increase shows that schools are aware that it is an option when all other interventions have been exhausted.

Safeguarding arrangements for identifying children at risk of missing education (CME) are a strength and hundreds of pupils were tracked through the process and re-engaged in education. Validated DfE data available from 2021-22 shows that Northumberland is one of the local authorities with the lowest number of children missing education. Monthly multi-agency CME Tracking Panels continued and were developed to introduce focussed panels on Transition and for cared for children. From Sept 22 to July 23, 286 students were discussed at panel, of which 173 are no longer CME.

The proportion of children in Northumberland that are electively home educated is lower than the national average. The number of children being electively home educated in Northumberland is 385, which is a reduction since earlier in the academic year. 209 children became EHE from September 2022 to July 2023, and 69 returned to school places.

Pupils with health and medical needs who attend Northumberland’s EOTAS provision enjoyed a better teaching and learning experience this year.

- Family Hubs were used as teaching venues.
- A hybrid model of teaching was successfully embedded containing both virtual and face to face delivery.

Safeguarding

School engagement with the Northumberland Children’s and Adult’s Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) is **good**:



In all but one school inspected by Ofsted this year, safeguarding was judged to be at least **Good**.



Recommendations from learning reviews were implemented by education settings with direction from the Schools’ Engagement sub-group.



Over 95% of Ofsted whistleblowing complaints about safeguarding in schools had a response within the required timeframe and no complaints required further action from the local authority or NCASP.



The Schools’ Engagement sub-group successfully developed into the broader, more strategic **Safer in Education Group**.



Virtual School >

Our whole council approach is strengthening corporate parenting to support improvement of educational outcomes for our **cared-for children and young people.**



More pupils are working in their age-related curriculum since last year and a high number of care leavers have been engaged in Education, Training and Employment through the multi-agency ETE Clinics.



More care leavers achieved **Level 3 qualifications** this year compared to last year.

A high proportion of school leavers are choosing to stay in education at 16, and successful liaison with Northumberland College means that our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children have access to and an English language speaking course.



For further details about the education of looked after children **see the forthcoming Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2023.**

Next Steps >

Alongside the many successes highlighted within this report a number of development areas have been rightfully identified.

Moving through 2023-24 and beyond the Local Authority will work closely with children, young people, their families, schools, settings and all other partners to refine and extend the current priorities to meet those development areas.

Key foci for 2024-25 will include:

- > Sufficiency of Early Years provision as entitlements are extended.
- > Ensuring the growth in SEND is well managed and needs are met.
- > Revisiting disadvantaged provision, including that of cared for children, in a drive to ensure inequality gaps are diminished.
- > Developing alternative curriculum pathways for some KS4 learners which enables them to gain stronger outcomes.
- > Strengthening Preparation for Adulthood for all learners.
- > Ensuring the post 16 offer is varied, comprehensive and well communicated to meet the aspirations of learners and the needs of employers.
- > Recruitment and retention across the whole education sector.

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this publication is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of production. Data sources are available upon request.

OTHER FORMATS

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Version 1: November 2023





Northumberland

County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Northumberland Leisure and Wellbeing Procurement and Provision

Report of Councillor(s) Cllr Jeff Watson, Cabinet Member for Promoting Healthy Lives

Responsible Officer(s): Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities

1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

The delivery of a cost-effective and evidence-based community leisure and wellbeing service and consideration of community-based assets which sees the delivery of the Inequalities Plan whilst supporting the aims and priorities of our Corporate Plan 2021 – 2024, to tackle inequalities within our communities and enable our residents to be healthier and happier.

2. **Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet following the conclusion of the Leisure and Wellbeing Service procurement process. The Report also seeks permission to implement arrangements to ensure continuity of provision for the six community facilities excluded from the core contract from 1 April 2024.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Acknowledge that the delegated authority decision notice, was approved on 14th November 2023, enabling the award of this contract to be made by the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities to the successful operator, to deliver the Northumberland Leisure and Well-being Service
- b) Note and accept this report as a conclusion of the leisure procurement conducted in accordance with the Contract Concessions Regulations 2016
- c) Agree, in principle, that the Dave Stephens Centre and Blyth Beach Huts are packaged within a combined Community Asset Transfer to Blyth Valley Enterprise from 1 April 2024, and that the transfer is supported with a one-year revenue

allocation of £50,000 and a £72,000 capital allocation to cover outstanding maintenance.

- d) Agree that responsibility for the management of Northburn Sports and Community Centre is transferred to Northumberland County Council from 1 April 2024 with a two-year revenue contribution of £58,000 per annum.
- e) Agree that responsibility for the management of Druridge Bay Fitness Centre is transferred to Northumberland County Council from 1 April 2024 with a two-year revenue contribution of £61,000 per annum.
- f) Agree that responsibility for the management of Rothbury Sports Centre is transferred to Northumberland County Council from 1 April 2024 with a two-year revenue contribution of £48,000 per annum.
- g) Agree to support Hirst Welfare Centre Trustees to commence management of the Hirst Welfare Centre from 1 April 2024 with a year one contribution of £250,000, a year two contribution of £180,000 and a year three contribution of £100,000 (funded from the Public Health Grant).
- h) Note the preferred bidder and the outcome of the procurement exercise is Places for People Leisure Management Limited (PfPLM).

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Added to the Forward Plan on 9th November 2023. Should the recommendations above be approved, there will be a rapid mobilisation to achieve the 1 April 2024 timeline.

5. Background

- 5.1 A review of the current leisure service was undertaken from October 2021 and concluded in September 2022. The review presented a unique opportunity to focus future investment and service delivery based on tackling inequalities and impacting positively on the demonstrable population health needs of Northumberland residents. The plan being that Northumberland has a fit for purpose, modernised leisure and well-being service based on evidenced based research, best practice and data collated via quantitative and qualitative measures. This has also facilitated and renewed the commitment to support and empower communities, with the health and well-being of residents at the forefront, to address inequalities within Northumberland.
- 5.2 Within this timeframe also saw the refresh of the Corporate Plan and the publication of the Inequalities Plan offering a commitment to:
 - Looking at everything through an inequalities lens
 - Listen to the voice of residents and better data sharing
 - Community strengths are considered first
 - Enhancing our services to ensure equity in access to opportunity
 - Maximising our civic/statutory level responsibilities

5.3 Physical Activity and Health

- 5.4 Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for noncommunicable diseases mortality including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease. People who are insufficiently active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of death

compared to people who are sufficiently active. Regular physical activity, such as walking, cycling, wheeling, doing sports or active recreation, provides significant benefits for health. Some physical activity is better than doing none. Increased levels of physical inactivity have negative impacts on health systems, the environment, economic development, community well-being and quality of life¹.

- 5.5 The understanding that health is influenced beyond individual lifestyle, biology, or genetics and to wider determinants such as socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions, is fully established. Inequalities in health exist because these wider determinants vary significantly across population groups. These determinants can influence adverse health behaviours in socially specific groups which can then lead to adverse marked differences in life expectancy. Physical inactivity negatively impacts both physical and mental health and it is in the top 10 greatest causes of ill health nationally. An increase in physical activity can also positively impact health, social and economic status, meaning it can have a positive correlation between outcomes and structural inequalities².
- 5.6 In the poorest parts of Northumberland, residents are dying earlier than they should and spending longer living in poor health.
- 5.7 Residents in our most deprived communities have an average life expectancy of 75 years compared to 87 years in the least deprived; 12 years more of life if you have the benefits that are not associated with the lowest levels of deprivation. There is a 17-year age gap in good health (healthy life expectancy) between those living in the least deprived areas and those living in the most deprived communities; 70 years of living in good health compared to 53 years.
- 5.8 A Health Equity Audit was undertaken from April 2022 to September 2022 which produced findings highlighting that the current leisure provision is not equitable in access and uptake of leisure opportunities. It is therefore a risk that there could be widening of inequalities. This justifies a more targeted approach to tackling inequalities in our vulnerable communities to increase physical activity and is well embedded within the new service specification.

5.9 The Leisure Transformation Programme

- 5.10 Northumberland County Council (NCC) has invested heavily in leisure and sports facilities in the county over recent years. The asset portfolio is valued at £120m and is deemed to be one of the most significant in the country. The leisure transformation programme has focused upon utilising these assets to be used to their full potential to tackle inequalities to improve health and well-being of the local population, whilst offering a more financially sustainable operating model.
- 5.11 In January 2022, approval was obtained to extend the then current contract for twelve months, from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 to continue with the review and prepare for the procurement process.
- 5.12 The leisure transformation programme has been lengthy and complex. It has adopted methodologies for service improvements including options appraisals and financial review of the current services. It incorporated an evidenced based, best practice approach to improve physical activity levels as well as consideration of strategies to

¹ World Health Organisation, Physical activity, 5/10/22, accessed 01/11/2023

² Public Health England, Understanding and addressing inequalities in physical activity Evidence-based guidance for commissioners, August 2021

improve accessibility and affordability for service users, again whilst ensuring a financially sustainable operating model.

- 5.13 The findings and recommendations of the leisure review were presented to Cabinet on 8th November 2022 where the key decision to proceed with a formal tender exercise was made. Due to the size of the programme with multiple complexities and cross-directorate impact as well as the timeframe required, members approved a decision to extend the current contract to March 2024 to enable a competitive procurement to be conducted.
- 5.14 On 8th November 2022 Cabinet also gave formal approval for the development of a new Service Specification which would maximise the health and wellbeing impacts of the Council's investment into leisure, both through facility-based activity and through wider community engagement and provision.
- 5.15 This increased impact will be achieved through the strategic shift towards proactively engaging with communities as part of the operational delivery model whilst ensuring value for money with demonstrable measured outcomes. It will also facilitate the delivery of community-based services which will align with the NCC Corporate Plan and contribute to the Northumberland Inequalities Plan, the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018 – 2028, and its key themes, outcomes and supporting priority areas. The Key Themes are as follows:
- Giving children and young people the best start in life
 - Bringing different people, professionals, services, and buildings to work together in a whole system approach to health and care
 - Empowering people and communities
 - Tackling the wider determinants of health
- 5.16 A further key recommendation of the Leisure Review was that the smaller facilities included in the current contract should be excluded from the scope of the new arrangements, and that asset-based community development principles should be considered for the following sites:
- The Dave Stephens Centre, Blyth
 - The Blyth Beach Huts
 - Northburn Sports and Community Centre, Cramlington
 - Druridge Bay Fitness Centre, Hadston
 - The Hirst Welfare Centre
 - Rothbury Sports Centre
- 5.17 The newly developed operating contract and service specification for the Northumberland Community Leisure and Well-being Service Contract is for a 10-year period and includes the following facilities:
- Ashington Leisure Centre, Ashington
 - Berwick Sports & Leisure Centre, Berwick
 - Blyth Sports Centre
 - Concordia Leisure Centre, Cramlington
 - New Morpeth Leisure Centre, Morpeth
 - Newbiggin Sports & Community Hub
 - Ponteland Leisure Centre, Ponteland

- Prudhoe Water World, Prudhoe
- Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham
- Willowburn Sport & Leisure Centre, Alnwick

5.18 Work on both programmes, as detailed above, was undertaken in parallel, and the progress reported into the Leisure Transformation Programme Board to ensure the appropriate governance and oversight is in place. The Programme Board is attended by Executive Director for Transformation and Resources and Executive Director for Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities, Director of Stronger Communities, Internal Change Consultant, Head of Corporate Commissioning and Procurement in addition to the leisure procurement experts, The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy Limited.

5.19 The Leisure Procurement Process

5.20 The Northumberland Leisure and Well-being Service procurement has been conducted by an externally commissioned expert leisure consultancy, The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy Limited (SLC). The award of the contract is for a period of ten years with the opportunity to extend for a further five years. The value of the contract is circa £250m (based on turnover).

5.21 An Invitation to Submit an Initial Tender was published on 19 April 2023 and six organisations, comprising of both local and national leisure providers, submitted bids prior to the deadline of 11th August 2023. Clarification meetings were subsequently held with all bidders in September 2023 in order to further refine the Council's requirements.

5.22 A bidder's day was held on 10th May 2023 and operators that had registered interest in bidding for the contract, were invited to attend. The event was also attended by the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives and the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Wellbeing. A presentation was delivered to the attendees raising the importance of our corporate priorities and the aspirations of the service outcomes positively impacting upon inequalities experienced by members of our communities. Multiple leisure facility visits were also facilitated across the portfolio hosted by the incumbent provider, Active Northumberland together with NCC to enable potential bidders to view the high-quality Council owned leisure centres across the County.

5.23 An Invitation to Submit a Final Tender was subsequently published on 18th September 2023 and six final tenders were received prior to the deadline of 27 October 2023.

5.24 On 7th November 2023, Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to enable the contract award to be made to the preferred bidder, following the conclusion of the standstill period. This authority was given to the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities to in consultation with the Leader, also Portfolio Holder for Environment and Local Services and the Deputy Leader, also Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives, the Director of Law and Corporate Governance and the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources.

5.25 On 13th and 14th November 2023, an evaluation panel led by SLC, comprising subject matter experts in leisure, quality assurance, information technology, property and facility management, finance, energy, public health, legal and human resources,

carried out an appraisal of the final submissions in accordance with the following award criteria (further details are provided in annex 1):

- Quality and Social Value 70%
- Price (management fee) 30%

5.26 Annex 1

5.27 The final scores agreed by the evaluation panel are shown in the summary table below:

Bidder	Quality/Social Value Score (70%)	Price Score (30%)	Total Score (100%)	Rank
Bidder D	58.20	30.00	88.20	1
Bidder C	55.40	0.00	55.40	2
Bidder B	42.00	12.36	54.36	3
Bidder F	48.60	0.00	48.60	4
Bidder E	37.60	4.56	42.16	5
Bidder A	29.60	0.00	29.60	6

5.28 Bidder D submitted the most economically advantageous tender in terms of the cost but also scored highest overall on the qualitative criteria including partnership working, approach to tackling inequalities and the delivery of corporate priorities.

5.29 Validation of the financial evaluation was provided both by SLC and a senior Finance representative. The evaluation methodology has been robust, with bids being scrutinised by multiple evaluators and supported by evaluation training thus reducing the risk of subjectivity. The economic and financial standing, technical and professional ability and overall suitability of bidders was assessed through the evaluation of the Selection Questionnaire in September 2023.

5.30 In line with the procurement strategy agreed by the Leisure Transformation Programme Board, the risk of utility increases has been mitigated by an annual benchmarking mechanism and shared risk approach.

5.31 Under the terms of the new contract there will be clear delineation of repairs and maintenance obligations.

5.32 The successful bidder's obligations have been clearly costed within their submission in terms of cost and delivery.

5.33 The new contract, based on the Sport England Leisure Operating Contract and published as part of the procurement process, sets out clear performance standards for asset management and service delivery underpinned by a performance management framework.

5.34 Further details regarding the evaluation criteria and financial scoring can be found in Appendix 2.

- 5.35 A Communication plan, as part of the overarching mobilisation strategy has been implemented to ensure prompt responses to any queries arising from members of the public or from the media relating to the contract or provider.
- 5.36 The procurement process has been reviewed by the Council's internal audit team who have confirmed that no issues have been identified that would prevent the contract from being awarded to the identified successful bidder
- 5.37 The procurement does not replicate previous service delivery, therefore a mobilisation team has been assembled which is being overseen by the Director of Stronger Communities. The mobilisation team will ensure implementation of the new service specification, contract arrangements and ongoing contract performance management to ensure full benefits realisation as set out within the terms of the Contract. Strategic support will also be provided by the newly appointed Corporate Contracts and Supplier Relationship Manager in line with the Council's Contract Management Framework and Policy.
- 5.38 There will also be the formation of a Strategic Partnership Board chaired by Northumberland County Council and attended by the elected member, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives. The first meeting being planned four weeks post contract commencement.

5.39 Contract Award

- 5.40 The final evaluation of the six submitted bids was undertaken on 14th November 2023. At the time of writing, the detail of the final evaluation and contract award cannot be shared but further details will be made available as soon as possible, adhering to legal requirements of the procurement process and standstill period. The contract award will be made following standstill period by Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities as agreed in Cabinet on November 7th 2023. Further information will be added into the report, post standstill period.

5.40.1 Contract Award Update (added to report 1st December 2023 from 5.40.1-5.40.14)

- 5.40.2 The information contained within the Northumberland Leisure and Well-being Procurement and Provision report remains unchanged.
- 5.40.3 On 7th November 2023 Cabinet delegated authority to the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader, Director of Law and Corporate Governance and the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources to award the contract to the preferred bidder.
- 5.40.4 Following on from the evaluation process held on 13th and 14th December 2023, all bidders were notified of the outcome of the procurement exercise on 20th November 2023 and a ten-day standstill period has been observed which concluded on 30th November 2023.
- 5.40.5 On 12th December 2023, Cabinet was informed of the outcome of the scores attained by all bidders, identifying the highest score for quality and cost were attained by Bidder D.

- 5.40.6 At the time of writing the initial Cabinet Report for presentation on 12th December 2023, details of the successful bidder were not shared due to the mandated standstill period.
- 5.40.7 The standstill period for the Leisure and Well-being Service Procurement ended on the 30th November 2023. This now enables the Council to announce publicly, the details of the preferred bidder that will deliver the Northumberland and Well-being Service.
- 5.40.8 Bidder D can now be identified as Places for People Leisure Management Limited (PfPLM) and is the preferred bidder. They submitted the most economically advantageous tender in terms of quality and cost and scored highest overall on the qualitative criteria including partnership working, approach to tackling inequalities and the delivery of corporate priorities as well as, being the highest scorer overall on cost.
- 5.40.9 PfPLM is one of the UK's leading social enterprises and leading leisure management contractors, currently employing over 6000 staff and operating over 100 sites on behalf of 33 local authorities.
- 5.40.10 They are a highly trusted operator with an exemplary reputation evidenced by being triple award winners at the 2023 UK Active Award Ceremony for Outstanding Organisation of the Year Award, Outstanding Leadership and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Award for its Big Sister project.
- 5.40.11 They have pledged to increase physical activity in Northumberland, working closely with the Council and stakeholders and demonstrably contributing to the Corporate Plan and priorities, the Inequalities Plan 2022-2032 and Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018 – 2028 and their key themes.
- 5.40.12 The successful tender reflects the needs and expectations of Northumberland's communities and will be sustainable for the duration of the contract while meeting the local need for high accessibility and social value from the services.
- 5.40.13 The delivery of programmes and activities will not only provide an economic and social return on investment but will also maximise the potential to deliver tangible health, wellbeing and physical activity outcomes that cater to all sections of the community.
- 5.40.14 The Places for People Leisure Management's Healthy Communities Team will work with the Council through a collaborative and integrated approach. Whilst seeking strategic partnerships to drive national initiatives, the team also work locally to identify and implement opportunities tailored to each community.

5.41 Community Assets

- 5.42 The six 'Community' sites currently managed by Active Northumberland vary significantly in terms of origin, purpose, condition and usage. The Leisure Review included a comprehensive analysis of each of the facilities to provide a clear

understanding of stakeholders, usage agreements and leases, dependencies, building condition, financial operating model and staffing considerations.

- 5.43 The table below shows the six community sites currently managed by Active Northumberland under the existing management arrangement, and their ownership.

Asset	Ownership
Druridge Bay Fitness Centre	NCC
Dave Stephens Centre	NCC
Blyth Beach Huts	NCC
Hirst Welfare Centre	The Ashington Joint Welfare Scheme Trustees
Northburn Sports and Community Centre	NCC
Rothbury Pool and Gym	NCC and Dr Thomlinson Trust

- 5.44 NCC Officers have been working with stakeholders to assess the potential of the six smaller sites to be managed by community partners and potentially, if the business case is sustainable, that applications for Community Asset Transfers are considered. The aim being to ensure that residents and local organisations gain maximum benefit from the sites and that they are programmed according to local need and opportunities.

- 5.45 This process has been undertaken in the context of the NCC Community Asset Transfer Policy. The criteria applied for each of the assets is shown below:

Phase	Stakeholders	Description
1	Incumbent	The incumbent has the initial opportunity to take over the asset with consideration for other users to remain in situ for the benefit of the Community – pending maturation and viability assessment
2	Local stakeholders with capacity	If 1 not possible / appropriate, then informal discussions with interested parties including <u>local</u> Town Council, Parish Council and Development Trust.
3	VSCE / Development Trusts	If 1 and 2 not possible, then informal discussions with interested parties within the voluntary sector and development trusts <u>countywide</u> are held
4	Public interest	If there is no agreement under phases 1, 2 or 3, expressions of interest will be advertised and explored with the public / commercial market
5	<u>Refer back</u> to SPAM for decision of requirement/ future management - TBC	There is no interest in developing Community Asset Based Delivery

5.46 The Dave Stephens Centre and Blyth Beach Huts

- 5.47 An application for a combined Community Asset Transfer of the Dave Stephens Centre and the Blyth Beach Huts was received from Blyth Valley Enterprise Limited (BVEL). This application has been considered by an Officer Panel and, subject to Cabinet approval, the terms of transfer of both assets to BVEL will be developed by Strategic Estates, for implementation from 1 April 2024.

- 5.48 The proposal from BVEL is to provide a new community offer which continues to provide a secure tenancy for the Blyth Lifeguards and Swimming Club, Blyth Surf School and a potential new Veterans Hub for the Royal British Legion Branch, Blyth. It is proposed that the site continue to offer and manage the public convenience on site whilst providing a more diverse and inclusive programme of activity to support health and wellbeing and social inclusion across the town and further enhance the

visitor experience. The management of the Dave Stephens Centre will also be combined with the management of the Blyth Beach Huts, and new enterprise and retail pods directly to the rear of the site.

5.49 It is recommended the proposed transfer to BVEL is supported with a one year allocation of £50,000 to cover transition, and a £72,000 capital allocation to cover outstanding repairs.

5.50 Druridge Bay Fitness Centre, Northburn Sports and Community Centre, and Rothbury Sports Centre

5.51 Based on consideration of the Asset Transfer Policy, financial considerations and the need to ensure continuity of vital highly valued community provision, it is recommended that Northburn Sports and Community Centre, Rothbury Sports Centre and Druridge Bay Fitness Centre are managed by NCC on an interim basis from April 2024.

5.52 This interim management by NCC will allow a period of working closely with local communities to determine the most appropriate and sustainable future management arrangements. Due to the similar nature of the facilities, it will allow NCC to manage the sites collectively bringing economies of scale and a central oversight of programming and operation. The interim arrangements for the three sites, whilst ensuring continuity of provision, will also allow consideration of the community outreach potential of the new leisure delivery arrangements.

5.53 Discussions with local stakeholders have taken place regarding options for the future management of the Druridge Bay Fitness Centre, however due to the considerations noted above regarding the advantages of grouping similar provision under NCC management the facility will transfer to NCC management from 1 April 2024. The transfer of the management of Druridge Bay Fitness Centre to NCC will allow increased coordination of the local community health and wellbeing offer. The facility is located adjacent to the NCC Community Centre which presents opportunities for joint programming and maximising use of resources.

5.54 It is recommended that NCC commence management of the Northburn Sports and Community Centre site from 1 April 2024. NCC intend to take back the management of the site to provide a new specialist SEND and Ability to Play offer at the Sports and Community Centre. NCC will continue to support and provide access to community grassroots football in partnership with Cramlington United Football Club. Building on a strong reputation for SEND therapeutic facilities, PAN Disability sports and play offer, NCC Sports Development and NCT will work to bring a diverse and inclusive programme of activity that further enhances and compliments the current service delivery.

5.55 NCC will explore opportunities to maximise facilities improvement and investment to help generate further income and enterprise opportunities, whilst increasing youth participation and involvement.

5.56 Given the unique nature of the Rothbury Sports Centre and Swimming Pool site and the level of financial subsidy required to operate the facility, it is recommended that NCC takes on management of the current provision from 1 April 2024 with a two year revenue contribution of £48,000 per annum.

5.57 The swimming pool is located alongside a small gym and changing rooms on the Dr Tomlinson C of E Middle School site. The Dr Tomlinson Trust own the land under

the pool and NCC own the land under the gym and changing rooms. There is a joint lease from the Dr Tomlinson Trust and the Council to Active Northumberland.

5.58 In late 2020, during lockdown, the swimming pool developed a significant fault which required draining of the pool to allow further inspection. The pool has not re-opened following lockdown because of the high cost of repairing the facility.

5.59 Hirst Welfare Centre

5.60 The Hirst Welfare Centre remains a prominent asset of community value and is very much in the long-term plans and aspirations of both NCC and the Ashington Town Board. The Hirst Welfare Centre features within the current consultation and engagement regarding a future Hirst Masterplan and has the potential to play a pivotal role in helping address inequalities within communities.

5.61 To ensure the continuation of both the leisure and early years offer operating from the site and to help prepare the foundations for the development and delivery of a wider Community Welfare offer, it is proposed to support the Board of Trustees to manage the transition away from Active Northumberland back to a Local Community Management provision from 1 April 2024. It is recommended that the Trustees are supported with a year one contribution of £250,000, a year two contribution of £180,000 and a year three contribution of £100,000 (funded from the Public Health Grant).

5.62 The intention is to further enhance and compliment the current programme of delivery through co-production and delivery in partnership with local schools, family hub, sports development function, and VCSE partners. The new offer will support the Council in addressing inequalities and economic inclusion within the local community.

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

6.1 Agree with recommendations within this report regarding the Community Assets to ensure a timely mobilisation period for commencement of the new delivery arrangements.

6.2 Disagree with the recommendations within this Report regarding the proposals for each of the community assets, this would have implications for continuity of delivery from 1 April 2024.

7. Implications

Policy	Tackling Inequalities is a key priority for the Council. The Community Asset model and the Community Leisure and Wellbeing service is fundamental to addressing inequalities associated with building stronger communities in addition to access and affordability of the Council’s health and well-being offer.
Finance and value for money	NCC has invested heavily in its facilities over recent years including the development of a number of new centres. Achieving value for money from its community leisure and wellbeing assets and services is an important objective for NCC. The expectation is that not only will the contract be delivered

	<p>within the existing revenue budget provision, but it will deliver an improved financial position for NCC which provides a return on the significant investment which has gone into the facilities. To facilitate the transfer of the Community Assets, non recurrent funding of approximately £1.100 million will be required over a 3-year period. This funding is subject to approval by Council at it's Budget meeting on 21 February 2024</p>
Legal	<p>The procurement process has been carried out in accordance with the Council's Finance and Procurement Rules</p> <p>Any Community Asset transfer will be subject to agreement of appropriate terms, subsidy control compliance and any other relevant legal considerations.</p> <p>The return of Rothbury Sports Centre and Swimming Pool will be subject to the termination of the lease in favour of Active Northumberland. Any management by NCC of the swimming pool, which is located on land owned by the Dr Tomlinson Trust, will be subject to a lease being entered into on agreed terms.</p>
Procurement	<p>The procurement has been conducted in accordance with the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation under the Concessions Contracts Regulations 2016</p>
Human resources	<p>The Northumberland Leisure and Well-being Service procurement documents include information re the potential of staff employed by the existing provider to TUPE to the new provider. There is no impact on Council staff.</p>
Property	<p>Ten Council facilities are included within this leisure and well-being contract award. Building responsibilities remain with the Council after much investment. Responsibilities of the operator is detailed within the leases linked to the leisure operating contract and service specification and published with the tender documents.</p>
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	<p>No - not required at this point</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the new specification and service delivery model requires a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment. Support for this will be sourced from the NCC Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Team</p>
Risk assessment	<p>The Local Authority is required to ensure commissioning of services is competitively tendered. As this tender was agreed by Cabinet, the risk of challenge is mitigated</p>
Crime and disorder	<p>There are evidenced examples of increased societal value where leisure services are developed with and for communities, improving self-esteem, improving mental health and reducing</p>

	<p>anti-social behaviours through engaging in sport and leisure facilities.</p> <p>Widening access to vulnerable groups and providing a place-based model, alongside working with community groups, could help reduce crime and disorder statistics supporting other community stakeholders. To facilitate the transfer of the Community Assets, non-recurrent funding of approximately £1.100 million will be required over a 3-year period. This funding is subject to approval by Council at its Budget meeting on 21 February 2024</p>
Customer considerations	Customers and service user feedback will be central to service delivery ensuring a high-quality service is maintained and monitored to ensure continuous improvement
Carbon reduction	The selected operator will work with the Council's Climate Change Team. Consideration is being given to the level of renewable resources needed to reduce the carbon impact of the centres.
Health and wellbeing	<p>'Inequality threatens long term social and economic development, harms poverty reduction and destroys people's sense of fulfilment and self-worth. This, in turn, can breed crime, disease and environmental degradation. Most importantly, we cannot achieve sustainable development and make the planet better for all if people are excluded from opportunities, services, and the chance for a better life.' (UN Sustainable Development Goal No 10).</p> <p>The new Northumberland Leisure and Well-being service and the Asset Based Community Based Development model will deliver a resident focused model to facilitate in depth understanding of the needs of the communities. They can both proactively improve the health and well-being of residents through collaborative working within the Council and with external stakeholders by targeting resources to those with poorer health outcomes creating better outcomes for our most disadvantaged communities</p> <p>Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of a range of health conditions and help prevent or delay onset of these conditions thus contributing to an increase in life expectancy in target groups outlined in the new specification where data will be made available to identify target groups and enable to local delivery of programmes as part of the inequalities strategy.</p> <p>Physical activity is also important in preventing falls in older people and enhancing development in children. Ensuring services are targeted to those groups where increasing activity levels can make the most difference will contribute and have a positive impact on inequalities in health outcomes across Northumberland.</p>
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Service Specification

9. Links to other key reports already published

[Delegate to Award Leisure Contract Award](#)

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Northumberland
County Council

Northumberland County Council Services Specification (Schedule 1 of the Leisure Operating Contract)

**Management Contract for Community Leisure and Wellbeing
Services**

Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	Background	5
1.2	Measurement	6
1.3	Reporting	6
2.	GENERAL CORE REQUIREMENTS	7
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	Contribution to wider strategic priorities and strategic objectives for the Services	7
2.3	Facility Management	8
2.4	Active Communities Partnership Role	18
2.5	Partnership Philosophy and Governance	19
2.6	Management Fee	20
2.7	Asset Management	21
2.8	National Non-Domestic Rates	21
2.9	Utility Costs	21
2.10	Addressing Climate Change	21
2.11	Managing Performance against Strategic Objectives	22
2.12	Quality Management	31
2.13	Social Value	31
3.	Service Requirements	33
3.1	Active Communities Partnership Role	33
3.2	Opening Hours	34
3.3	Access	36
3.4	Reporting Requirements	37
3.5	Customer Experience	37
3.6	Programming for All	40
3.7	Pricing	43
3.8	Staffing and Skills Development	46

3.9	Safeguarding	49
3.10	Equalities	49
3.11	Cleaning and Housekeeping	50
3.12	Food and Beverages	51
3.13	Marketing, Research and Communication	53
3.14	Data and ICT Management	56
3.15	Health and Safety Management	58
3.16	Major Incident Reporting	65
4.	Asset Management	66
4.1	Asset Management Capital and Revenue Funding	66
4.2	Building Maintenance	66
4.3	Maintenance and Replacement of Equipment	75
4.4	Grounds Maintenance	77
4.5	Climate Emergency, Environmental and Energy Management	78
4.6	Legislation and Policy	80
4.7	Water (Hot and Cold Installations)	81
4.8	Drainage	82
4.9	Ventilation	82
4.10	Heating (Thermal Comfort)	82
4.11	Lighting	83
4.12	Pool Water Quality	84
4.13	CCTV and Security	85
5.	Performance Management and Reporting	87
5.1	Planning to Improve (Service Planning)	87
5.2	Meetings and Reporting	88
Appendices		93
Appendix 1 Minimum Opening Hours of Leisure Facilities		93
Appendix 2 Joint Use Arrangements		93
Appendix 3 Protected Bookings		93
Appendix 4 Existing Bookings		93

Appendix 5 Current Pricing / Fees & Charges	93
Appendix 6 Site Boundaries and Plans	93
Appendix 7 Repair and Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrices	94
Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory	99
Appendix 9 Safeguarding	99
Appendix 10 Equalities Policy	99
Appendix 11 OpenActive Requirements	100
Appendix 12 Information Governance Agreement	100
Appendix 13 Public Health Additional Data	100
Appendix 14 Health Equity Audit Report	100

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Services Specification sets out the required Standards and Reporting Requirements that the Operator shall meet during the contract period. It details the requirements that the Operator shall meet for the operation of the services and facilities specified within this Schedule throughout the contract period.
- 1.1.2 The Services Specification forms a Schedule of the Leisure Operating Contract and shall be legally binding.
- 1.1.3 The structure of this Services Specification is set out as follows:

Section 2 – General Core Requirements

- > Contribution to wider strategic priorities and strategic objectives for the Services
- > Facility Management
- > Active Communities Partnership Role
- > Partnership Philosophy and Governance
- > Management Fee
- > Asset Management
- > National Non-Domestic Rates
- > Utilities Costs
- > Addressing Climate Change
- > Managing Performance against Strategic Objectives
- > Quality Management
- > Social Value

Section 3 – Service Requirements

- > Active Communities Partnership Role
- > Opening Hours
- > Access
- > Customer Experience
- > Programming for All
- > Pricing
- > Staffing and Skills Development
- > Safeguarding
- > Equalities
- > Cleaning and Housekeeping
- > Food and Beverages
- > Marketing, Research and Communication
- > Data and ICT Management
- > Health and Safety Management
- > Major Incident Reporting

Asset Management

- > Asset Management Capital and Revenue Funding
- > Building Maintenance
- > Maintenance and Replacement of Equipment

- > Grounds Maintenance
- > Climate Emergency, Environmental and Energy Management
- > Legislation and Policy
- > Water (Hot and Cold Installations)
- > Drainage
- > Ventilation
- > Heating (Thermal Comfort)
- > Lighting
- > Pool Water Quality
- > CCTV and Security

Section 5 – Performance Management and Reporting

- > Planning to Improve (Service Planning)
- > Meetings and Reporting

1.1.4 This Services Specification applies the following structure to each element of the services described in Section 3 – Service Requirements, Section 4 – Asset Management Requirements and Section 5 – Performance Management and Reporting.

Overall Requirement	This document provides the Operator with a high-level summary of the overall requirement for each element of the services
Performance Standards	This document provides a list of standard that set out the required level of performance that the Operator shall meet and which will determine whether the Operator is meeting the requirements of the Authority. The Operator must meet these standards if the Services Specification is deemed to be achieved.
Reporting Requirements	Details of the reporting requirements that the Operator shall meet in relation to each element of the services in included within this document.

1.2 Measurement

1.2.1 Monitoring of the Operator’s performance shall be measured in accordance with Clause 19 (Performance Monitoring) of the Contract. Monitoring of the Services and categorisation and reporting of Performance Failures shall be carried out in accordance with Schedule 5 (Payment and Performance Mechanism) of the Contract.

1.3 Reporting

1.3.1 The Operator is obliged to report on its own performance in accordance with this Services Specification.

2. GENERAL CORE REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section sets out the general core requirements of the Services Specification. The general core requirements underpin the more specific requirements and standards for service delivery and asset management which are described in Sections 3 and 4.

2.2 Contribution to wider strategic priorities and strategic objectives for the Services

2.2.1 The Strategic Objectives, and contribution to local strategic priorities and objectives, including those stipulated within the [Northumberland Physical Activity Strategy 2020-2023](#), aim to reduce the inactivity gap and have a more physically active population. This will be achieved through planning delivery and monitoring through an inequalities lens, to improve equity in access to opportunities including that of sports development from grass roots to elite level sport across the County.

2.2.2 The Operator shall provide services which demonstrably contribute to the following wider local strategic priorities and objectives as set out in Northumberland County Council's [Corporate Plan](#) and the [2022-2032 Inequalities Plan](#). These are:

- > Ensuring the Council does all it can to support economic recovery and growth across the county
- > Tackling inequalities within our communities, supporting our residents to be healthier and happier
- > In everything we do, we will listen to and communicate with residents, businesses, and partners and, ensure value for money in our services

2.2.3 The Operator shall provide services which demonstrably contribute to the [Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018 – 2028](#), its key themes, outcomes and supporting priority areas. The Key Themes are as follows:

- > Giving children and young people the best start in life
- > Bringing different people, professionals, services and buildings to work together in a whole system approach to health and care
- > Empowering people and communities
- > Tackling the wider determinants of health

2.2.4 The Operator shall provide services which demonstrably contribute to the [Northumberland Physical Activity Strategy 2020 –2028](#).

2.2.5 The Strategy recognises that, whilst there is a need to use a universal approach to tackle inactivity across Northumberland, there is a need to focus capacity and resource to tackle a number of stubborn inequalities that exist in the County.

Health Equity Audit

2.2.6 The Authority has reaffirmed its commitment to tackling inequalities across the County and as such has undertaken a health equity audit for leisure (gym, swim and classes) to understand who is currently accessing and how representative that is of the local resident demographic profile. The results of the HEA can be found in the data room and will form a baseline for the new operator to develop targets to close the inequality gap.

2.2.7 Following the HEA, the delivery and monitoring of this contract are expected to be undertaken through an inequalities lens to improve equity in access to opportunity.

Strategic Objectives for the Services

2.2.8 Drawing from the strategic documents above the following Strategic Objectives apply to the contract:

1. To increase physical activity participation in leisure services amongst all residents, with the demographics of service users being representative of the Northumberland population.
2. To contribute towards closing the health inequalities gap in the County by increasing physical activity in leisure services for specific groups identified as inactive or at risk of poor health outcomes:
 - Those from lower socio-economic groups
 - People with long term health conditions
 - People with disabilities
 - Women and girls
 - Young people
 - Residents from rural communities
3. To strive towards all young people obtaining statutory swimming attainment levels by Key Stage 2.
4. To work with the Council and local health partners to deliver, enable and promote specific mental and physical health, recovery and preventative interventions.
5. To deliver high quality leisure facilities and services for physical activity and wellbeing.
6. To clearly demonstrate value for money in relation to Council investment and users in the service.
7. To ensure the leisure facilities contribute towards reducing carbon emissions
8. To ensure the leisure facilities deliver an improved social impact by contributing towards building stronger and more connected communities.
9. To ensure digitally excluded residents have access to leisure services.
10. To maintain a well-trained, motivated, satisfied and supported workforce to deliver the services.

2.2.9 It is recognised that over the life of the Contract the Strategic Objectives will require updating or replacing and it is envisaged that the Operator will play a key role in the process, working in partnership with the Authority over the course of the contract term.

2.3 Facility Management

2.3.1 Table 1 shows the Facilities that are included in the Contract and which are to be managed by the Operator in accordance with this Services Specification.

Table 1: Outline of Facilities

Ashington Leisure Centre		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	Mon – Thurs: 06:15 –22:00 Fri: 06.15 – 21:00	08:00 – 18:00
Address		
Main swimming pool	25m x 13m 6 lanes. Moveable floor	
Teaching pool	13m x 7m	
Leisure water	No	
Sports hall	4 x Badminton Courts	
Treatment rooms	Tranquillity Spa, Steam and Sauna Rooms	
Fitness suite (Gym)	Yes	
Exercise / Dance Studios	2 x Dedicated Cycling Studios	
Bowls	No	
Squash courts	No	
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Yes	
Multi-Use Games Area	Yes	
Outdoor synthetic pitches	Expert Cricket Centre	
Athletics Arena	No	
Gymnastics hall	Yes	
Climbing wall	No	
Dry changing rooms	Yes	
Wet changing rooms	Yes	
Conference rooms	Yes	
Car Parking	Yes	
Northumberland County Council use	Emergency planning and response Polling station Library	
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm	

Berwick Sports & Leisure Centre		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	06:15 – 21:30	08:00 – 18:00
Address	Northumberland Road, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2AS	

Berwick Sports & Leisure Centre	
Main swimming pool	25m x 11m, 5 lane
Learner / Studio Pool	11m x 7m, with moveable floor
Leisure water	Slide & splash area
Sports hall	4 x badminton court sports hall (under construction – completion expected November 2022)
Treatment rooms	Tranquility Spa, sauna & steam room
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x 100 stations
Exercise / Dance Studios	Dedicated cycling / spinning studio (60m ²) 2 fitness studios 180m ² / 36 person & 120m ² / 24 person
Bowls	Indoor Lawn Bowls Hall
Squash courts	No
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Cafe, adjacent to soft play
Multi-Use Games Area	No
Outdoor synthetic pitches	Full size 3G
Athletics Arena	No
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	No
Dry changing rooms	Yes
Wet changing rooms	Yes
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users
Other facilities	Large 3 story soft play adjacent to café area
Northumberland County Council use	Emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 34pm

Blyth Sports Centre		
Current centre opening times:	Monday – Friday	Weekend
	06:15-22:00	Saturday 07:00 – 17:00 Sunday 07:00 – 22:00
Address	Bolam Park, Blyth, NE24 5BT	
Main swimming pool	2 pools, 25m x 13m, 6 lane, movable floor	
Learner / Studio Pool	12.8m x 6m	
Leisure water	No	

Blyth Sports Centre	
Sports hall	8 x badminton court sports hall
Treatment rooms	Tranquility Spa, sauna & steam room
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x plus function training area. 75 stations
Exercise / Dance Studios	Dedicated cycling / spinning studio 2 fitness studios
Bowls	No
Squash courts	No
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Cafe
Multi-Use Games Area	No
Outdoor synthetic pitches	No
Athletics Arena	No
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	No
Dry changing rooms	Yes
Wet changing rooms	Yes
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users
Other facilities	Large 3 story soft play adjacent to café area
Northumberland County Council use	Learning and Skills Service on site Emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

Concordia Leisure Centre, Cramlington		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	06:15 – 22:00	Saturday 07:00 – 19:00 Sunday 07:00-18:00
Address	Cramlington, Forum Way, Cramlington, NE23 6YB	
Main swimming pool	No	
Learner / Studio Pool	No	
Leisure water	Yes	
Sports hall	4 x badminton court sports hall	
Treatment rooms	Tranquility Spa, sauna & steam room	
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x 88 stations	

Concordia Leisure Centre, Cramlington	
Exercise / Dance Studios	1 x dedicated cycling / spinning studio 2 x fitness studios
Bowls	Ten Pin Bowling
Squash courts	No
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Cafe
Multi-Use Games Area	No
Outdoor synthetic pitches	No
Athletics Arena	No
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	Clip & Climb
Dry changing rooms	Yes
Wet changing rooms	Yes
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users – up to 4 hours
Other facilities	Large 3 story soft play adjacent to café area
Northumberland County Council use	Emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

Morpeth Leisure Centre (New)		
Current centre opening times:	Monday – Friday	Weekend
	Monday – Thursday 6.20am - 10pm Friday 6.20am - 9pm	8am - 6pm
Address	Gas House Lane, Morpeth, NE61 1SR	
Main swimming pool	25m x 13m, 6 lane	
Learner / Studio Pool	13m x 7m with moveable floor	
Leisure water	No	
Sports hall	4 x badminton court sports hall	
Treatment rooms	Yes, tranquility spa, sauna, steam room, relaxation area Salus Chiropractic Sports Clinic on site	
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x 100 stations	
Exercise / Dance Studios	Dedicated cycling studio (90m2) 2 x fitness studios 225m2 / 45 person & 150m2 / 30 person	
Bowls	No	

Morpeth Leisure Centre (New)	
Squash courts	No
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Cafe
Multi-Use Games Area	No
Outdoor synthetic pitches	No
Athletics Arena	No
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	No
Dry changing rooms	Yes
Wet changing rooms	Yes, changing places facility
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users, using parking disc
Other facilities	Soft Play
Northumberland County Council use	Library Service on site Learning & Skills Service on site Emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

Newbiggin Sports Centre		
Current centre opening times	Monday – Friday	Weekend
	Monday – Thursday 9am – 10pm Friday – 9am – 8pm	09:00-14:00
Address	Woodhorn Road, Newbiggin by the Sea, NE64 6HG	
Main swimming pool	No	
Teaching pool	No	
Leisure water	No	
Sports hall	6 x Badminton Sports Hall	
Treatment rooms	No	
Fitness suite (Gym)	Yes	
Exercise / Dance Studios	Dedicated Cycling Studio	
Bowls	No	
Squash courts	3 x Squash Courts	
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Yes	

Newbiggin Sports Centre	
Multi-Use Games Area	Yes
Outdoor synthetic pitches	Outdoor Grass Pitch
Athletics Arena	No
Gymnastics hall	
Climbing wall	No
Dry changing rooms	Yes
Wet changing rooms	No
Conference rooms	Yes
Car Parking	Yes
Northumberland County Council use	Library Service Emergency planning and response Polling station Northumberland Communities Together
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday - Friday 7am - 9pm Saturday - Sunday 9am - 4pm

Ponteland Leisure Centre		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	06:00 – 22:00	08:00 – 16:00 08:00 - 1700 Sun
Address	Callerton Lane, Ponteland, NE20 9EG	
Main swimming pool	25m x 13m, 6 lane with moveable floor	
Learner / Studio Pool	13m x 7m	
Leisure water	Aqua play area within pool hall	
Sports hall	4 court sports hall - 33m x 18m with clearance	
Treatment rooms	Tranquillity Spa, jacuzzi, sauna, steam room	
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x 100 stations	
Exercise / Dance Studios	2 studios (school use one during the day) Spinning Studio (28 stations & projection)	
Bowls	No	
Squash courts	No	
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Café & kiosk on ground floor Sports Bar & Kitchen on 1 st floor	
Multi-Use Games Area	2 MUGA accommodating 6 Tennis courts and 4 Netball courts	
Outdoor synthetic pitches	1 x full size pitch	
Athletics Arena	No	

Ponteland Leisure Centre	
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	Clip & Climb with interactive wall
Dry changing rooms	Yes, including outdoor x 8 Gym & Spa change on 1 st floor
Wet changing rooms	Yes for pool
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users
External facilities (grass)	Football x 4 pitches 1 x adult full size pitch – 1 Leased to Ponteland Utd 1 x under 9 pitch 1 x under 7 pitch 1 x under7 / under 8 pitch Rugby x 3 pitches 1 x adult rugby pitch – Leased to Ponteland RFU 2 x rugby training pitches (1 x Floodlight) Cricket x 1 pitch Leased to Ponteland CC
Other facilities	Large soft play
Northumberland County Council use	Library Service on site To be used for emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

Prudhoe Water World		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	07:00 – 21:45 Friday 07:00 – 20:45	08:00 – 18:00
Address	Front Street, Prudhoe, NE42 5DQ	
Main swimming pool	25m x 9m	
Learner / Studio Pool	No	
Leisure water	Yes	
Sports hall	No	
Treatment rooms	No	
Fitness suite (Gym)	48 station health and fitness gym.	
Exercise / Dance Studios	Fitness studio – 13m x 8m.	
Bowls	No	
Squash courts	No	

Prudhoe Water World	
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Café
Multi-Use Games Area	No
Outdoor synthetic pitches	No
Athletics Arena	No
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	No
Dry changing rooms	Yes for gym
Wet changing rooms	Yes for pool
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users
External facilities (grass)	N/A
Other facilities	N/A
Northumberland County Council use	To be used for emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	06:30 – 22:00	08:00 – 18:00
Address	Wentworth Place, Hexham, NE46 3PD	
Main swimming pool	2 x 25m x 13m, 6 lane, moveable floor	
Learner / Studio Pool	No	
Leisure water	No	
Sports hall	4 x badminton court indoor sports hall. 26m x 32m with clearance.	
Treatment rooms	Tranquility Spa, sauna & steam room	
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x 76 stations	
Exercise / Dance Studios	Fitness studio 20m x 7m	
Bowls	Ten Pin Bowling	
Squash courts	No	
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Café	
Multi-Use Games Area	No	
Outdoor synthetic pitches	No	

Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham	
Athletics Arena	Synthetic 400m oval track with 110m sprint. 7 sprint lanes and 6 oval track lanes with an infield grass surface.
Gymnastics hall	No
Climbing wall	No
Dry changing rooms	Yes for gym
Wet changing rooms	Yes for pool
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users
External facilities (grass)	N/A
Other facilities	Large soft play
Northumberland County Council use	Learning and Skills Service on site To be used for emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

Willowburn Leisure Centre, Alnwick		
Current centre opening times:	Monday to Friday	Weekend
	07:00 – 22:00	08:00 – 20:00
Address	Willowburn Ave, Alnwick NE66 2JH	
Main swimming pool	25m x 13m, 6 lane, moveable floor	
Learner / Studio Pool	10m x 8m	
Leisure water	No	
Sports hall	4 x badminton court indoor sports hall. 21.35m x 40.6m with clearance	
Treatment rooms	Tranquility Spa, sauna & steam room	
Fitness suite (Gym)	1 x 45 stations	
Exercise / Dance Studios	Fitness studio - 15m x 7m	
Bowls	No	
Squash courts	No	
Ancillary facilities e.g., Café / Bar	Café	
Multi-Use Games Area	No	
Outdoor synthetic pitches	No	
Athletics Arena	No	
Gymnastics hall	No	

Willowburn Leisure Centre, Alnwick	
Climbing wall	Bouldering wall
Dry changing rooms	Yes for gym
Wet changing rooms	Yes for pool
Conference rooms	No
Car parking	Yes – free for all users
External facilities (grass)	N/A
Other facilities	Large soft play
Northumberland County Council use	Office for Sports Development use To be used for emergency planning and response Polling station
Minimum Operating Hours set out in Service Contract	Monday – Friday 7am – 9pm Saturday – Sunday 9am – 4pm

2.4 Active Communities Partnership Role

- 2.4.1 The Operator will act as a partner to the Authority and the Authority’s strategic partners to support, enable, nurture and facilitate community-led and community-based activity in the County. The Operator will have a dedicated senior manager role within the contract who is responsible for overseeing this function. Their primary purpose shall be to develop and maintain partnerships with stakeholders and community groups, ensure integration of this activity with wider delivery of the Services and develop opportunities to maximise the impact and reach of the Services into communities.
- 2.4.2 The Operator will deliver the required outputs which support the Authority’s Strategic Objectives for the service and contribute towards wider local strategic priorities and objectives. The required outputs of the Active Communities Partnership Role are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Active Communities Partnership Role

Required outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To be an active member of the Leisure Collaborative support the coproduction of programmes and activities within communities. > Engage with local employers to improve / impact the health and wellbeing of their staff. > Liaise with Communities, Leisure and Wellbeing Board reporting progress with organisations, clubs providing feedback / surveys / business development opportunities to assist with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of residents from target groups participating regularly in sport and physical activity • A range of high-quality programmes aimed at residents who are inactive or not engaging regularly in sport and physical activity • An increase in the number of volunteers, volunteering opportunities and support volunteers

Required outputs

- Support for local Clubs in terms of access to facilities, assistance with member, volunteer and coach recruitment etc
 - To liaise with National Governing Bodies to widen participation for sports and Sports Clubs
 - To facilitate increased opportunities for access to sport and physical activity opportunities within priority localities as determined by the Health Equity Audit but maintaining local placed based delivery
 - Facilitate / produce a year-round (term time only) programme of after school sport and physical activity and non-term time Holiday Activity and Food Programme as part of the Authority's strategic HAF programme of enrichment.
- > Create a proactive relationship with the Authority's Health Trainers and NHS Social Prescribers to act as bridging advocates to encourage the less confident to try out facilities and encourage regular attendance.
- > Ensure that all staff are trained in Making Every Contact Count to ensure a fully holistic appreciation of barriers and enablers to increasing participation.
- > Develop an Active Communities Plan in conjunction with Public Health and specific services, Sports Development, and Northumberland Communities Together

2.4.3 The Active Communities Partnership Role, shall have a focus on working proactively in partnership with the Authority, Active Partnership RISE , Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), primary care, National Governing Bodies for sports, local community groups, charities, clubs, voluntary organisations and other services such as Public Health, Education, Children and Youth Services and Adult Social Care Northumberland Communities Together and engage with community groups and stakeholders that have a responsibility in physical activity and sport delivery.

2.5 Partnership Philosophy and Governance

2.5.1 The Authority is seeking to establish a Partnership Philosophy with an Operator based on the following overarching principles:

- > The Authority's current Corporate Values of putting residents first, excellence and quality, respect and keeping our communities safe and well
- > Commitment to the Five principles driving the Northumberland Inequalities Plan
- > A shared commitment to increasing participation in sport and physical activity and championing inclusivity in Northumberland particularly amongst identified under-represented groups including disabled people
- > Proactive collaboration and cooperation
- > Partnership working with key public, private and third sector organisations involved with enabling and delivering opportunities for sport and physical activity participation
- > Effective and regular communication
- > A culture of continuous improvement

- > A proactive approach to identifying new opportunities to develop or enhance the services.
 - > Organisational values that are consistent with the values of the Authority with regards to workforce; health and wellbeing, procurement, promotion and overall service delivery including health in all policies
- 2.5.2 The Operator shall commit to the Partnership Philosophy and recognise the importance of working collaboratively with the Authority in delivering the Services.
- 2.5.3 The Partnership Philosophy shall be upheld and governed through the establishment of a Partnership Board for The Community Leisure and Wellbeing Contract.
- 2.5.4 The Partnership Board's Community Leisure and Wellbeing Contract Management meeting programme shall be established within one month of the contract commencement date and the meetings will include the following representatives:
- > Director of Community Life (the Authority)
 - > Contract Manager (the Authority)
 - > Executive Director of Public Health (the Authority)
 - > Managing Director (Operator)
 - > Operations/Regional Director (Operator)
 - > Contract Manager (Operator).
- 2.5.5 The Community Leisure and Wellbeing Contract Management meeting shall be chaired by the Authority, meet quarterly and matters to be discussed shall include but not be limited to the following:
- > Progress on Annual Service Plan and Quarterly Performance Report
 - > Progress against Strategic Objectives and contribution towards wider local strategic priorities
 - > Financial performance
 - > Strategic operational delivery
 - > Service improvement opportunities
 - > Variations to contract and commissioning opportunities
 - > Other matters of a strategic nature considered appropriate for discussion by the Board.
- 2.5.6 Either the Operator or Authority, subject to the agreement of the other party, may invite appropriate third parties to attend the Community Leisure and Wellbeing Contract Management meetings to help the Board's understanding of a particular matter or decision.
- 2.6 Management Fee**
- 2.6.1 The Operator will be required to manage the services as outlined in this Services Specification and in accordance with the Contract in return / in exchange for a management fee. The management fee payment will be payable quarterly in arrears and shall be exclusive of VAT.
- 2.6.2 The facilities will operate under a lease agreement with a peppercorn rent.

2.7 Asset Management

- 2.7.1 The Contract provides for a shared approach to maintenance, repair and lifecycle replacement of assets between the Authority and Operator. Full details of the split in responsibilities are provided in Section 4: Asset Management of this document and Appendix 7.
- 2.7.2 The Operator shall be responsible for repair and maintenance of all fixtures and fittings, plant and equipment at the Facilities (including the renewal/replacement of parts to minor/major plant and equipment that is required through general maintenance/or normal wear and tear), excluding those major plant items listed in Appendix 7 Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Schedule that are shown as being the Authority's responsibility for repair and replacement.
- 2.7.3 The Operator shall install an asset management ICT system to be in place for the period of the Contract. This should include a Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) schedule, which has a record of all new and existing structures, plant, materials, components, and fittings over the Contract period.
- 2.7.4 The Operator shall, if requested, provide the Authority with remote, read-only access to the asset management ICT system for the duration of the Contract. This must be in electronic format using recognised software.

2.8 National Non-Domestic Rates

- 2.8.1 The Operator is responsible for all National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) at the Facilities.

2.9 Utility Costs

- 2.9.1 The contract allows for a shared risk in relation to energy. The Operator is responsible for payment of utility costs at the Facilities and is required to keep a monthly record of all utility consumption for each Facility. The Operator is responsible for submitting, on a monthly basis to the Authority, utility consumption figures for the previous month at each Facility.
- 2.9.2 Adjustments to the management fee the Authority will be subject to actual consumption levels within the target consumptions rates and any changes in energy tariffs, in accordance with an energy benchmarking process set out in Schedule 17 of the Contract.
- 2.9.3 Where viable alternative energy source or energy saving initiatives are identified by the Authority (e.g. connecting centres to District Heating Networks) the Operator will work with the Authority to facilitate their implementation, and review the benchmarking schedule accordingly.

2.10 Addressing Climate Change

- 2.10.1 The Operator shall commit to supporting the Authority's [Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021-2023](#) through responsible environmental and energy management and the efficient use of energy throughout its operations. It shall also recognise that good environmental and energy management helps to protect the environment by conserving natural resources and reducing harmful emissions. The Operator shall take account of, and comply with, the Authority's Climate Emergency commitment which sets out the Authority's ambition for the County of Northumberland to be carbon neutral by 2030" which sets out Northumberland County Council aims and objectives for minimising its environmental impact.
- 2.10.2 The Operator shall provide information for the Authority's Environmental Management Systems to enable it to monitor the Authority's carbon footprint.

2.11 Managing Performance against Strategic Objectives

- 2.11.1 The Operator is required to deliver the services to meet the Authority's Strategic Objectives and to contribute towards wider local priorities and objectives.
- 2.11.2 The Operator will adhere to agreed Key Performance Indicator targets (see below) and also collate information that will inform Public Health intelligence and impact local priorities and objectives. The information required is included in the data room. Please see Appendix 13.
- 2.11.3 The performance indicators shown in Table 3 and Table 4 are designed to help measure the Operator's performance against the Authority's Strategic Objectives. The Operator must ensure it collects information to enable it to measure the performance indicators in Tables 3a and 3b using up to date ICT and innovative data collection methods. The Operator is expected to manage performance and strive towards delivering its performance indicator targets.
- 2.11.4 During the term of the Contract, the Authority, through discussion with the Operator, may consider the use of alternative performance indicators that measure performance in a more effective or efficient way, taking advantage of any advances in technology or innovation in data collection methods.
- 2.11.5 In the event that performance information was not collected in this way under the previous management arrangements, the first year of the Contract will be a baselining exercise. All subsequent years will involve setting targets through a collaborative annual service planning process in partnership with the Authority. The Operator will be expected to draw from national data sources to assist in establishing initial targets.
- 2.11.6 The Operator shall be required to work in partnership with the Authority to review the performance indicators on at least an annual basis and respond to any reasonable requests from the Authority for these to be amended to better reflect any changes to the Authority's Strategic Objectives for the service.

Table 3: Core Measures

	Core Measure	Description	Source	Time Period	Analysis
1	Total Members > Number of members split by membership type > Number of members attending with a carer	Total number of members by facility	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Numbers % change
2	Total casual users > Casual users paying a concession rate > Number of casual users attending within a carer	Total estimate number of unique casual users by facility	Leisure management system feed / Proxies for unique participant equivalent calculation	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Numbers % change

	Core Measure	Description	Source	Time Period	Analysis
3	Baseline activity (active days – at least 30 minute of moderate intensity exercise – per week) a. 0 days b. 1 days c. 2 days d. 3 days e. 4 days f. 5 days g. 6 days h. 7 days	Total members and unique casual visitors (where applicable) by baseline activity level at registration	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Numbers %
4	Gender breakdown a. Male b. Female c. Other	Total number of members and casual visitors (participants) and visits (throughput) by facility split by gender category	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Vs Local catchment demographics – numbers and %
6	Ethnicity breakdown: a. White b. Mixed c. Asian or Asian British d. Black or Black British e. Other ethnic group	Total number of members and casual visitors (participants) and visits (throughput) by facility split by ethnicity	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Vs Local catchment numbers and %
7	Long term (12-months or more) health conditions, impairment or illnesses: a. Long term pain b. Chronic health condition c. Mobility d. Dexterity e. Mental health f. Visual g. Breathing h. Memory i. Hearing j. Learning k. Speech	Total number of members and casual visitors (participants) and visits (throughput) with a long-term health condition, impairment or illness by facility	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Numbers and % vs disease JSNA and local health profile data

	Core Measure	Description	Source	Time Period	Analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l. Social or behavioural m. Other i. None of these j. Prefer not to say 				
8	Socio-economic status (using postcode data and IMD 1-10)	Total number of members and casual visitors (participants) and visits (throughput) by facility split by employment status	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Vs Local catchment - numbers and %
9	Employment status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employee b. Self-employed c. Unemployed d. Full-time Student e. Retired f. Other 	Total number of members and casual visitors (participants) and visits (throughput) by facility split by employment status	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown Last quarter vs same quarter previous year	Vs Local catchment - numbers and %
10	Customer Experience	Customer surveys, NET, QUEST Number of complaints Adherence to complaints timeframe Quality Frameworks	Quality Framework	Monthly breakdown	% Themes Comparison
11	Service Delivery	Recruitment and retention figures Employee Attendance Rate Staff Turnover Annual staff survey -wellbeing, satisfaction	ESR	Monthly breakdown	%

	Core Measure	Description	Source	Time Period	Analysis
		<p>Vacancy rates</p> <p>Cleaning and hygiene audits</p> <p>Staff training – Safeguarding, IG, CPR, Stat Mand, MECC</p>			
12	<p>Social Value Demonstration of stronger more connected communities for social and community development</p> <p>Mental Health Wellbeing Warwick Edinburgh Standardised questions</p>	<p>Quantified social value estimate to inform understanding the wider social benefits and value of sport and physical activity interventions and reporting against the Operator’s tendered social value commitments.</p>	<p>Leisure management system feed</p> <p>Social Value framework</p>	<p>Quarterly reporting. To be reviewed year on year</p>	<p>Estimate of social delivered (annual) - £</p> <p>Numbers and % change</p>
13	Income	<p>Reporting on core areas of income at each facility including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Health and Fitness > Swimming – Lessons > Swimming – Other > Other indoor activities > Outdoor activities > Other Income 	Leisure management system feed	Monthly Breakdown	
14	Expenditure	<p>Reporting on core areas of expenditure at each facility including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Staffing > Utilities 	Leisure management system feed	Monthly breakdown	

	Core Measure	Description	Source	Time Period	Analysis
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repairs and Maintenance > Equipment > Management Costs > Costs of Sales > Other expenditure 			
15	Total throughput by activity (shown below)	Total number of visits to each facility including by members and casuals split by type of activity	Leisure management system feed	Monthly	<p>Numbers and %</p> <p>Activities Numbers of repeat visits</p> <p>Activity levels throughout opening periods – separate gym, classes and swimming</p> <p>Occupancy rates by activity, swimming pools, gyms, indoor / outdoor pitches, fitness studios</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Athletics b. Fitness (Gym) c. Group workout d. Swimming lessons e. Swimming or other pool-based activity f. Badminton g. Martial arts h. Indoor football 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> k. Gymnastics l. Basketball m. Volleyball n. Table tennis o. Tennis p. Other indoor activity q. Other outdoor activity r. Spectator s. Another type of activity (non-sporting) 		

Table 4: Performance Indicators against Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicators
<p>1. To increase physical activity participation in leisure services amongst all residents, with the demographics of service users being representative of the Northumberland population.</p>	<p>PI 1.1 Number of unique participants visiting leisure centres per week as a percentage of the total residents in the County:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> t. At least once a week u. At least twice a week v. At least three times a week <p>PI 1.2 Representation of users compared to NCC demographics (see Core Measure 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Male b. Female c. Other d. Age 1 – 15 e. Age 16 – 24 f. Age 25 – 34 g. Age 35 – 44 h. Age 45 – 54 i. Age 55 – 64 j. Age 65 – 74 k. Age 75 – 84 l. Age 85+ <p>PI 1.3 Representation of users by socio economic group (using postcode data and IMD 1-10) – see Core measure 8</p>
<p>2. To contribute towards closing the health inequalities gap in the County by increasing physical activity in leisure services for specific groups identified as inactive or at risk of poor health outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Those from lower social economic groups b. People with long-term health conditions or disability c. Women and girls d. Young people e. People with disabilities f. Residents from rural communities 	<p>PI 2.1a Number of people with declared disabilities who are residents visiting the leisure centre once per week</p> <p>PI 2.1b Number of people with declared disabilities who are residents visiting the leisure centre twice per week.</p> <p>PI 2.2a Number of people on means tested welfare support low incomes who are residents visiting the leisure centre twice per week.</p> <p>PI 2.2b Number of people on means tested welfare support low incomes who are residents visiting the leisure centre twice per week.</p>

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicators
	<p>PI 2.3 Percentage of front-line staff who have had specialist quality training regarding disabled users for people with physical or mental health conditions within the last 12 months.</p> <p>PI 2.4 Number of programmed sessions per annum targeted at: Beginners People with disabilities Women and girls</p> <p>PI 2.5 Total number of members and unique casual visitors living in outputs areas with a rural area classification (based on resident postcode)</p>
<p>3. To strive towards all young people obtaining statutory swimming attainment levels by Key Stage 2.</p>	<p>PI 3.1 Percentage of children in Northumberland achieving KS2 national curriculum standard.</p> <p>PI 3.2 Number of under 11's (unique participants) participating in swimming lesson programmes within leisure facilities (and as proportion of resident population).</p> <p>PI 3.2 Percentage of local primary schools using NCC swimming pools.</p>
<p>4. To work with the Council and local health partners to deliver, enable and promote specific health and recovery-based interventions.</p>	<p>PI 4.1 Number of specific health and recovery-based intervention sessions delivered (directly or in partnership) at Facilities.</p> <p>PI 4.2 Number of participants (unique users) attending health and recovery-based sessions being delivered at Facilities:</p> <p>PI 4.3 Proportion of health and recovery-based programme attendees becoming regular users.</p>
<p>5. To deliver high-quality leisure facilities and services for physical activity and wellbeing</p>	<p>PI 5.1 Customer and partner satisfaction indicators captured through an on-going monthly rolling programming e.g. Net Promoter Score (NPS):</p>

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Overall service b. Staff / coaches c. Access and parking d. Facilities / Maintenance e. Catering f. Cleanliness g. Changing rooms h. Value for money <p>PI 5.2 Quest / Quest Plus / Quest Stretch scores for Facilities and Active Communities Service. Minimum score of Good or above for all assessments.</p> <p>PI 5.3 Customer retention data – memberships and coaching / lesson courses</p> <p>PI 5.4 Mystery Visit scores</p> <p>PI 5.4 Customer retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Health & fitness attrition rates j. % of swimming lesson service users retained for full year k. Swimming membership attrition rates. l. Reasons for leaving
<p>6. To clearly demonstrate value for money in relation to Council investment and users of the services.</p>	<p>PI 6.1 Customer survey results – satisfaction with value for money Non-use surveys – satisfaction with value for money</p> <p>PI 6.2 Council surplus / subsidy payment per visit to leisure centres</p> <p>PI 6.3 Core facility utilisation for each site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Swimming pools > Health and Fitness gyms > Sports halls > Studios
<p>7. To ensure the leisure facilities contribute towards reducing carbon emissions</p>	<p>PI 7.1 Percentage target reduction in annual energy and water consumption</p>

Strategic Objective	Performance Indicators
	PI 7.2 Carbon emissions by Facility (annual reductions)
8. To ensure the leisure facilities deliver an improved social impact by contributing towards building stronger and more connected communities	PI 8.1 Total social value delivered (using industry recognised methodology agreed with Council) PI 8.2 Percentage of the workforce that are Northumberland residents and the extent to which the workforce is representative of the local demographic profile. PI 8.3 Number of workforce development opportunities provided through the employment of apprentices, new roles and provision of work placements PI 8.4 Number of local companies used in the supply chain.
9. To ensure digitally excluded residents have access to leisure services.	PI 9.1 Provision of non-digital marketing material promoting facilities, services and programmes. PI 9.2 Number of non-digital customer feedback engagements (and % of total) PI 9.2 Number of non-digital customer transactions – i.e. in person and telephone (and % of total)
10. To maintain a well-trained, satisfied and supported workforce to deliver the services	PI 10.1 Staff turnover / retention rates PI 10.2 Staff satisfaction levels from staff surveys PI 10.3 % completion of Annual Training Plan (or equivalent)

2.11.7 The Operator will work with the Authority during Year 1 of the Contract to develop baseline information on the above performance indicators that will be used to set targets for Year 2 and thereafter of the Contract as part of the Health Equity Audit cycle.

- 2.11.8 A draft Annual Service Plan and associated development plans shall be provided to the Authority two months prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
- 2.11.9 The Operator must provide a Quarterly Performance Report and detailed Annual Service Report both containing qualitative (e.g. service user insights and case study examples) and quantitative evidence of how the Operator is delivering the Authority's Strategic Objectives for the service and contributing to wider local Strategic Outcomes.
- 2.11.10 The Annual Service Report should highlight any of the Authority's Strategic Objectives that the Operator has not contributed towards and provide an annual action plan for the following year to address any shortcomings or missed targets. It should also highlight any additional objectives it has achieved in addition to those required by the Authority.

2.12 Quality Management

- 2.12.1 The Operator will be required to have a robust quality management system in place that covers all aspects of the services and is focused on the service users experience.
- 2.12.2 The Operator shall achieve and maintain the Sport England recommended Quest Facility Management accreditation scheme (or any equivalent successor scheme) for the Facilities and Quest for the Active Communities Programme. This should be obtained by the end of year 2 of the Contract for each of the Facilities. The Operator will complete Quest accreditation modules addressing both Inequalities and Data.
- 2.12.3 The Operator shall maintain these accreditations for the duration of the Contract.
- 2.12.4 Quest scores will be included in the Annual Service Plan and improvement targets will be specified
- 2.12.5 The Authority shall commission and fund Quest with the Operator being required to maintain these accreditations throughout the Contract period.
- 2.12.6 The Authority shall inform the Operator of the results of its Quest assessments and any follow-up assessments within seven business days of receiving notification.
- 2.12.7 The Operator shall include its response to Quest assessments via an improvement plan within the appropriate Quarterly Performance Report.

2.13 Social Value

- 2.13.1 The Operator shall deliver the services in accordance with the aims of The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 through the delivery of wider social, economic and environmental benefits.
- 2.13.2 The Operator shall work closely with the Authority and other partners such as education and training providers to develop specific initiatives, which offer realistic and sustainable employment opportunities to disadvantaged people in the County.
- 2.13.3 The Operator shall offer a number of routes to full-time employment or training which are targeted at specific sectors of the community in the County. This should include the provision of work placement opportunities, including apprenticeships, for disadvantaged or underrepresented groups within the labour market including:
- > initiatives targeting lone parents
 - > people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds
 - > women

- > people with physical and learning difficulties
- > Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Aromantic and Agender (LGBTQIA+)
- > long term unemployed
- > care leavers
- > ex-offenders
- > NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- > individuals recovering from homelessness
- > over fifties returning to employment
- > people who are on long term benefits.

- 2.13.4 The Operator shall understand and embrace the role it has in supporting and working with small and medium Enterprises, social enterprises, charities and other third sector providers in the County through its procurement of supplies and sub-contractors and through the delivery of the Services.
- 2.13.5 The Operator shall ensure the Services are fully inclusive to all sections of the community and shall proactively work to eliminate barriers to participation in sport and physical activity through programming, pricing, policies, development plans, marketing and training.
- 2.13.6 The Operator shall work with the Authority and other partners to provide diversionary activities designed to help reduce levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the County.
- 2.13.7 The Operator shall ensure that the environmental wellbeing of the local area is protected and enhanced through best practice approaches to energy and water management, waste and recycling, procurement of supplies and sustainable transport.
- 2.13.8 The Operator shall provide a detailed review of how the Services have achieved the above requirements and have contributed to social outcomes as part of the Annual Report.

3. Service Requirements

3.1 Active Communities Partnership Role

Overall Requirement

- 3.1.1 The Operator shall fulfil a partnership role, supporting the Authority and the Authority's partners to support, enable and facilitate community-led and community-based activity in the County.

Performance Standards

- 3.1.2 The Operator will have a dedicated senior manager role within the contract who is responsible for overseeing this function. Their primary purpose shall be to develop and maintain partnerships and relationships with stakeholders and community groups, ensure integration of this activity with wider delivery of the Services and develop opportunities to maximise the impact and reach of the Services into communities.
- 3.1.3 The Active Communities partnership role will be required to focus upon supporting, enabling and facilitating the delivery of activities and the enabling of support outside and within, the core sport and leisure facilities in order to make them more accessible to priority groups and appeal to residents who would not ordinarily visit a traditional leisure centre setting, with a focus on the priority groups identified in the Strategic Objectives.
- 3.1.4 In fulfilling this role, the Operator will champion inclusion in its widest sense particularly for people with disabilities including those individuals with one, or a combination of the following disabilities:
- > Vision impairment
 - > Deaf or hard of hearing
 - > Mental health impairments
 - > Intellectual disability
 - > Acquired brain injury
 - > Neurodiversity including Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
 - > Physical disability including amputees
 - > Dementia
- 3.1.5 The Operator shall support the implementation of local, regional and national sports development policies where appropriate and provide representation on local and county wide or regional sports development groups. This includes national Sport England campaigns such as this 'This Girl Can'.
- 3.1.6 The Operator shall seek to increase the number of sporting volunteers and provide support to local clubs through community programming.
- 3.1.7 The Operator shall develop an annual Active Communities Plan in partnership with the Authority's Public Health and specific services, Sports Development Service, ce and Northumberland Communities Together teams which clearly identifies how the outputs shown in Table 2 will be achieved. This plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Authority on a quarterly basis.

- 3.1.8 The Operator will be expected to continue to source external funding for sport and physical activity and healthy lifestyles programmes already in place, and new programmes which support delivery of the Strategic Objectives
- 3.1.9 The Operator will be required to work in partnership with the Authority to source external funding for new sport and physical activity and healthy lifestyles programme.
- 3.1.10 The Operator shall provide free use of the facilities at all centres to support specific sport and physical activity development initiatives. Full details of this requirement are provided in Section 3.5.
- 3.1.11 The Operator shall provide appropriately qualified and experienced staff to support specific public health priorities such as liaison and support work with the drugs and alcohol recovery community, those working with Health Trainers, those quitting smoking and wanting to become a healthy weight

Reporting Requirements

- 3.1.12 The Operator shall produce an annual report on the Active Communities Plan within the Annual Service Report and Quarterly Performance Report which highlights how it has performed in meeting the Authority’s Strategic Objectives and contributing to wider local Strategic Outcomes.

3.2 Opening Hours

Overall Requirement

- 3.2.1 Facilities that are fully accessible to the community during the “Minimum Opening Hours” as detailed in this Services Specification.

Performance Standards

- 3.2.2 The Facilities must be available for public use during the Minimum Opening Hours, 7am – 9pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 4pm on Saturday and Sundays.
- 3.2.3 The Authority, in advance of any changes being implemented, must agree in writing, any variations to the Minimum Opening Hours proposed by the Operator at each facility.
- 3.2.4 The Operator shall advertise all opening hours on the relevant Facility website and shall provide printed information on opening hours and timetables of activity programmes on site.
- 3.2.5 The Operator shall operate the vending services during the Minimum Opening Hours but ensure healthy provision in line with the [Healthy Weight Declaration](#).
- 3.2.6 Where appropriate, the Operator shall agree with the Authority closure of the Facilities, or any element therein, for the purposes of maintenance, in accordance with the agreed Schedule of Programmed Maintenance.
- 3.2.7 The Operator will be required to advertise all planned maintenance closures and any variations in opening for at least 4 weeks before the closure period on site and on their website. Where private hire, block or club bookings have been made during a period of closure whether planned or unforeseen, the Operator will be responsible for informing each hirer separately of the changes and meeting all costs incurred, inclusive of the reimbursement of any fees and charges made in advance.
- 3.2.8 In the event of closure of any of the Facilities or part thereof or ceasing of the delivery programme, or part thereof, owing to unforeseen or emergency conditions, the Operator shall inform the Authority and relevant funders immediately, followed up in writing as soon as

practicable. The Operator shall ensure service users are kept informed of the situation in accordance with the agreed Emergency Action Plan (see 3.2.9). The Operator needs to report any closure/ problems of the Active Communities programme with the appropriate funders, in line with specific grant conditions.

- 3.2.9 The Operator shall have an Emergency Action Plan that is reviewed annually. The Minimum Opening Hours shall be reviewed by the parties on an annual basis as set out below. Any decision to amend these times shall take account of throughput trends for the Facilities or bespoke usage patterns.
- 3.2.10 The Operator is advised that variations to the specified opening hours may occur in times of national or local emergency. Section 2.3 provides details of facilities to be used, as required as part of the County's emergency and resilience planning. All main sites have been designated as an emergency rest centres (this will extend to all areas within the building). This includes:
- 3.2.11
- > Ashington Leisure Centre
 - > Berwick Sports and Leisure Centre
 - > Blyth Sports Centre
 - > Cramlington Concordia Leisure Centre
 - > Morpeth Riverside Leisure Centre
 - > Ponteland Leisure Centre
 - > Prudhoe Waterworld
 - > Willowburn Sports Centre, Alnwick
 - > Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham
 - > Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre
- 3.2.12 Should such a situation arise, the services may be temporarily suspended during the period of the emergency, by notification through the Authority's Chief Executive or Authorised Officer. The Operator's staff would be expected to assist with the setup of facilities as rest centres and provide further assistance in any way for which they are qualified during the emergency. This can be found in Clause 17 of the Leisure Operating Contract.
- 3.2.13 The Operator shall be required to close all or part of the Facilities for the following special events:
- > To operate as Polling Stations, in local / national elections
 - > In the event of undertaking mass vaccinations
 - > Signing Books of Condolences, in the event of the death of the Head of State.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.2.14 The Operator may submit proposals to the Authority for any changes to the Minimum Opening Hours for the Facilities annually and no later than 3 months prior to implementation the following Contract Year. The Strategic Partnership Board will be responsible for approving any proposed changes.
- 3.2.15 The Operator shall maintain a daily log of hours that the relevant Facility or area within it is not open and submit details of any performance failures, closures or service limitations during the

Minimum Opening Hours, setting out the details of the closure, the reasons for such closure and any remedial action taken by the Operator as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.2.16 Any unplanned closure should be reported to the Authority in accordance with 3.2.8.

3.3 Access

Overall Requirement

3.3.1 Facilities and services that are fully accessible by all service users during the "Minimum Opening Hours" as detailed in 3.2.2 of this Services Specification.

Performance Standards

3.3.2 The Operator shall ensure that the Facilities including entrances and exits, café / catering / vending areas, toilets, changing and shower facilities, drop off points, spectator and viewing areas, activity areas, courts, buildings, doorways, halls, lobbies, reception areas, loading bays, corridors, lifts, access roads and car parks are open and free from any obstruction or physical destruction or deterioration (save for fair wear and tear). Each Facility must be capable of performing its function and allow access and egress with appropriate controls.

3.3.3 The Facilities and services should be accessible for people with disabilities as per the Equality Act 2010. This should include access and egress in fire/emergencies, suitable evacuation routes and muster points. Specifically:

- > Accessible facilities; physical access and accessible service provision
- > Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited fitness equipment capable of providing a full body workout (cardiovascular and strength based, upper and lower body) for service users with a wide range of impairments and conditions
- > Workforce development; customer service training for all staff and adaptive exercise programming for fitness instructors / sports coaches, management / leadership, good practice and specialist area training (e.g., inclusive communications, access auditing etc.)
- > Inclusive and accessible marketing and communication available in different formats
- > Partnership development within the local community
- > Accessible sport and social activities
- > Appropriate policies and procedures
- > Wide and varied activity and programming offer.

3.3.4 The Operator shall ensure that the Facilities and storage spaces within them are accessible by authorised service users, to include the following:

- > Secure multi-activity stores
- > Storage lockers accessible from all changing cubicles, accessible cubicles and changing rooms, ideally will large, clear and tactile number and be located at a range of heights with 'oversized' lockers for disabled people to store equipment e.g., their prosthetic whilst swimming
- > Secure storage for sporting equipment.

3.3.5 The Operator shall ensure that there is prompt access to the facilities at all times the Facilities are open to the public. Reception staffing levels and access control procedures at times of peak demand shall be such that service users are able to gain access without unreasonable delay.

3.3.6 The Operator shall ensure that all signage directing service users to and within the Facilities is clear and instructive and complies with the Equality Act 2010 and any relevant planning restrictions and should ideally comply with [Sport England's Wayfinding and Signage Design Guidance Note \(2013\)](#).

3.4 Reporting Requirements

3.4.1 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.5 Customer Experience

Overall Requirement

3.5.1 A consistently high level of customer care that ensures all service users receive a high quality and enjoyable experience where inclusion, in its widest sense, is the norm. The level of customer care shall reflect good industry practice and provide a level of customer service that will facilitate achievement of the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribute to wider local priorities and objectives.

Performance Standards

ICT, Website and Bookings

3.5.2 The Operator shall implement and maintain a website and booking system for the Facilities and Active Communities Programme that is accessible, flexible, innovative and meets the needs of all users (including those with a visual impairment, cognitive disability and hearing disability) in order to optimise access to information and maximise participation. This should comply with the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#). The Operator will also ensure access and booking for those who do not have access to digital technology.

3.5.3 The website and booking system shall incorporate comprehensive terms and conditions for hire, advanced booking arrangements, cancellation and non-attendance policies, customer information, effective administration and operational information systems to record and effectively deliver all bookings. The system should support the development of deeper, more value-added relationships with users to enable better personalisation of services and promoted activities to support their lifestyle changes and behaviours.

3.5.4 The system shall enable users to easily access and navigate the range of services available and the price of activity including concessions, enable bookings to be made in person, by phone, in writing and online (including via smartphone apps) in accordance with e-government for both members and non-members. Bookings should incorporate a 'fast track' service where possible for high volume, peak time activities.

3.5.5 The system should enable better personalisation of services and promoted activities to support their lifestyle changes and behaviours.

3.5.6 The Operator shall ensure that an online booking system is provided including smartphone Apps with equivalent functionality to the website.

3.5.7 The Operator will provide the necessary hardware and software equipment to sustain a website and computerised booking facility, which will be used to manage online bookings, bookings and to

provide reports broken down by categories of user and activity (the format to be agreed by the Authorised Officer).

- 3.5.8 The Operator will be responsible for all maintenance costs relating to the website and computerised booking system, including the replacement of hardware, consumable items and software licenses.
- 3.5.9 The Operator must provide advanced booking a minimum of 7 days prior to the day of the activity, by telephone or in person.
- 3.5.10 The Operator must provide an advance booking facility for clubs / organisations who wish to make a regular booking.
- 3.5.11 The Operator must give priority to existing clubs and organisations who wish to make further regular bookings at the end of their existing period.
- 3.5.12 The Operator must provide an advance/priority booking facility for schools/colleges curriculum swimming and water safety lessons during normal school term time. The Operators will be expected to liaise directly with schools and provide updates in performance reports.
- 3.5.13 The Operator must as far as practicably possible, allow for casual use at all times. At times of no casual use being available, the Operator must give advance warning to users of the Facility. This includes any non-availability of facilities as a result of regular bookings or events.
- 3.5.14 The Operator must acknowledge and indicate acceptance or otherwise, in writing, for all applications for regular bookings, functions or events within four weeks of receipt of an application.
- 3.5.15 The Operator must accept any form of British legal tender, in sterling, cheques, and debit cards and / or credit card or any other credible alternative provided for payment and will issue a receipt for all payments accepted.
- 3.5.16 The Operator will be required to formulate a booking application form, which will include reference to the above conditions of hire available both in hard copy and electronically.
- 3.5.17 All bookings are inclusive of rigging and derigging time for equipment relating to that particular facility / activity. The Operator should ensure that service users are aware of this arrangement and that the Operator adheres to it, without adversely affecting the service.

Customer Services Policy and Complaints

- 3.5.18 The Operator shall provide a comprehensive and inclusive customer service policy that ensures that service users, partners and visitors are dealt with promptly, effectively and courteously at all times. This includes clear response times for all customer enquiries and complaints.
- 3.5.19 The Operator shall operate and administer a comprehensive and effective customer comments and feedback system, to encourage feedback and record verbal and written comments. This shall apply to all customer groups covering sporting and nonsporting use. The Operator must also record its response time to complaints and comments including identifying themes and resolution obtained. This will be shared as part of quarterly meetings with the Authority.
- 3.5.20 The Operator shall carry out a range of innovative and robust monitoring evaluation and reporting activities to demonstrate:
- > Service user (customer) satisfaction from a representative sample covering all aspects of the service throughout the contract period

- > Comparative performance through a recognised benchmarking approach e.g., Sport England National Benchmarking Service (NBS)
- > An understanding of changes to the communities' needs reflected in the programming of facilities and services.

- 3.5.21 The Operator will share the outcomes of these with the Authority as part of working towards the five principles of the inequalities plan and listening to the voice of residents as equal to data.
- 3.5.22 The Operator shall ensure a smart appearance by all staff at all times, with appropriate uniform and name badges being worn.
- 3.5.23 The Operator shall ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to meet the demands of the activity/usage patterns at each Facility and Active Communities programme to ensure high standards of customer service.
- 3.5.24 The Operator shall formally display in public areas results from internal and external monitoring visits, Customer Forums, customer comments/complaints and responses, reports, surveys and other customer care activities. This shall include what action has been taken as a result customer engagement.
- 3.5.25 The Operator shall provide training in customer experience as part of its new staff induction and on-going refresher training.
- 3.5.26 "Making Every Contact Count" (MECC) training will be an expected part of the mandatory training programme for all staff to ensure staff are able to hold holistic conversations and undertake brief interventions
- 3.5.27 Mental health awareness training for all staff will be undertaken and sufficient mental health first aiders will be available at all times across all facilities.
- 3.5.28 Safeguarding and Information Governance Training will also be included in the mandatory training programme.
- 3.5.29 The Operator shall keep notice and display boards updated at all times, including high level information on energy reduction policy and measures.
- 3.5.30 The Operator shall provide at all times information to the public on the availability of courses, activities and events delivered and/or hosted by the Operator and the Authority through a variety of channels to meet the needs of target populations and communities.
- 3.5.31 The Operator shall ensure that any out-of-order equipment is clearly labelled accordingly within 15 minutes and information provided as to who reported and when, the estimated timescale for repair, and when it will be back in use.
- 3.5.32 The Operator shall operate an effective system for dealing with lost and found property.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.5.33 The Operator shall provide a report to the Authority on a quarterly basis detailing all complaints and action taken. The Operator shall ensure that a summary of this report and details of any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above are included within the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.5.34 The Operator shall ensure that an annual report detailing the outcomes of the customer feedback system is submitted to the Authority including on-going collection of customer satisfaction information.

- 3.5.35 The Operator will collect on-going information on customer experience.
- 3.5.36 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to implement the required website and booking system as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.5.37 The Operator shall comply with and shall provide details of its compliance with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) for credit and debit card payment handling.
- 3.5.38 The Operator shall provide monitoring data on sources of bookings (e.g., in person, online, via a smart app etc) as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.6 Programming for All

Overall Requirement

- 3.6.1 A dynamic, innovative, inclusive and responsive programme of activities provided at the Facilities and through the Operator's Active Communities Partnership Role that meets the needs of all sections of the community, promotes behaviour change and ensures the delivery of the Authority's Strategic Objectives.

Performance Standards

- 3.6.2 The Operator shall ensure a reasonable proportion of casual use and block bookings at the Facilities consistent with a balanced programme of use by the public, communities, inclusive and mainstream sport and recreation clubs, schools, and instructed development courses.
- 3.6.3 There must be a sustainable balanced and flexible Programme of Use to accommodate community and club activity and to contribute towards the Authority's Strategic Objectives and local Strategic Outcomes.
- 3.6.4 There shall be activities and sessions to meet the needs of specific service users in accordance with the agreed activity programme. The Programme of Use should be dynamic, innovative and responsive to the requirements of service users, including frequent or seasonal variations and should seek to target non-users as appropriate. The programmes should consider the various types of service users and use to ensure that they are balanced. The Programme of Use shall meet the needs of specific service users by offering activities and opportunities that are culturally sensitive and relevant to diverse communities across age, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation and disability.
- 3.6.5 The Operator shall work with the Authority to deliver and / or support the delivery of specific targeted mental and physical health recovery and prevention interventions that the Authority, acting reasonably, identifies as being required to support reduced levels of inactivity, improved health outcomes and tackling inequalities in the County. This may include primary, secondary and / or tertiary prevention interventions.¹
- 3.6.6 The Operator shall provide the activities and sessions to meet the needs of specific service users in accordance with the agreed Programme of Use and Annual Service Plan.
- 3.6.7 The Operator shall submit the initial proposed Programme of Use to the Local Authority for approval two months prior to the Commencement Date.
- 3.6.8 The Operator shall submit a subsequent proposed Programme of Use to the Local Authority three months prior to the start of each new contract year.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/our-improvement-offer/care-and-health-improvement/integration-and-better-care-fund/better-care-fund/integration-resource-library/prevention>

- 3.6.9 The Programme of Use should consider the following:
- > The need to offer a wide-ranging and diverse programme of activities designed to encourage greater levels of community participation across all relevant local social and cultural groups with a particular focus on increasing participation from members of the community with specific health needs and using group activity to improve retention
 - > Provision of a wide range of recreational opportunities to all Northumberland residents and visitors, including a balanced programme of pre-paid courses, classes, pay-as-you play sessions, club and school block bookings, casual usage and where applicable, special events
 - > Proactively supporting talent pathways through clubs affiliated to National Governing Bodies
 - > A management philosophy that encourages participation and engagement with all sections of the community
 - > A regular and planned review of the programme of activities that considers the results of customer and non-user research
 - > Responsiveness to recreational and leisure trends to provide a dynamic and forward-looking service
 - > Setting and reviewing programme objectives on at least an annual basis
 - > Having a promotional strategy in place that keeps service users informed of the programme and any planned changes – utilising various mediums to take into consideration average reading age of 10 across the North East
 - > Outreach activities
 - > Making optimum use of all available resources and facilities
 - > Monitoring usage levels
 - > Contributing towards the Authority’s Strategic Objectives and local priorities and objectives
 - > Supporting the activities and initiatives of the Authority and its strategic partners, particularly the Authority’s Public Health specific services and Sports Development Service including the provision of “hot desking” office space.
- 3.6.10 The Authority’s Sports Development Service and Public Health specific service make use of the Facilities to deliver activities or initiatives which are designed to increase participation, particularly amongst inactive groups in the County. This includes initiatives delivered by third parties with the support or at the instigation of the Authority. The Operator, acting reasonably to accommodate facilitate access at the times required, shall provide free access to the Facilities for the Sports Development Service and Public Health specific services (for example, Health Trainers and Social Prescribers), on the following basis at a minimum:
- > 10 activity hours per month at each Facility
- 3.6.11 The facility areas which can be used will encompass all of the following (with simultaneous use of two facility areas to be counted as 2 activity hours):
- > Sports hall
 - > Exercise studio
 - > Teaching pool
 - > Main pool (non-exclusive use)

> Fitness gym (non-exclusive use)

- 3.6.12 The Operator, acting reasonably to accommodate facilitate access at the times required, shall provide free exclusive use access to consultation rooms for Public Health specific services, for example, Health Trainers to deliver one-to-one support and advice on the following basis at a minimum:
- > 10 hours per month at each Facility
- 3.6.13 The Operator should be familiar with and apply insight and knowledge from the latest research into swimming participation such as Swim England’s Three Frontiers Toolkit. This insight should be used to programme swimming facilities to meet the needs of the local community whilst maximising usage.
- 3.6.14 The Operator shall ensure that the Programmes of Use across the Facilities complement each other and provide an appropriate balance of activities.
- 3.6.15 The Operator shall review the effectiveness of the Programme of Use on a regular basis, but in any event, as a minimum every 12 months using market information and through consultation with relevant service users.
- 3.6.16 The Operator shall ensure that any future Programme of Use will continue to support the established arrangements with identified clubs and enable these to be expanded to meet demand where possible.
- 3.6.17 The Operator must be able through its ICT system to demonstrate the extent to which its programme is engaging with the community and specific hard to reach groups.

Joint Use Arrangements

- 3.6.18 Joint use arrangements are in place for Ponteland High School governing their use of facilities at Ponteland Leisure Centre. The Operator shall honour the terms of these arrangements, details of which are included in Appendix 2.

Special Events and Protected Bookings

- 3.6.19 The Operator shall honour any special events and club bookings already booked into the Facilities as set out in Appendix 4 of this Schedule. These may only be altered following consultation with the club/organisation and with written approval from the Authority.
- 3.6.20 A list of protected bookings has been provided in Appendix 3. All existing hire slots at the Facilities will be honoured unless it is clear that hirers do not intend to re-book.
- 3.6.21 Special events will be organised by the Operator who will ensure that all statutory licences and arrangements are in place for the safe operation of the event. The Operator will be required to provide operational support for special events as required. This will include event supervision, cleaning, building security, equipment rigging and de-rigging and engineer support as required.
- 3.6.22 For all special events, the Operator must give adequate notice to service users, in an appropriate format to minimise any inconvenience. Where possible, alternative provision will be identified.
- 3.6.23 The Programme of Use must be designed to ensure that regular activities are not unduly disrupted by special event use. Any event requiring use of a facility, which precludes community use for two or more consecutive days requires the written permission of the Authorised Officer.

Non – Sporting Events

- 3.6.24 Facilities within the leisure centres may be used by the Operator to provide a varied and balanced programme of non-sporting events providing that the proposed activity is not of a sensitive nature, is not an activity that might damage the Facility, its fixtures or equipment or detract from the image of the Authority. The Authority should be informed at the time of booking of any such proposed event, reserves the right to cancel any such proposed event and will accept no responsibility for any loss incurred as a consequence of such a cancellation.
- 3.6.25 The Authority reserves the right to reject a booking from organisations with a political affiliation, those are that are linked to pressure groups / lobbying groups whose association, whether direct or indirect with the Authority could result in reputational damage. If there is any doubt, the Operator should refer this to the Authority for approval.
- 3.6.26 As at the Commencement Date, there are a number of pre-booked events, functions and other hire arrangements. The Operator shall honour the dates and details of these bookings, including the terms and conditions prevailing at the time of booking. The income for these will go to the Operator as part of the contract handover reconciliation.
- 3.6.27 The Authority reserves the right to make use of the Facilities as a Polling Station and / or Count Centre as required for Parliamentary, European, Local Government or other Elections or By-Elections or Referenda. The Authority also reserves the right to make use of the facilities in the event of an emergency. The Authority shall endeavour to give the Operator reasonable notice of such matters and the Operator shall ensure that all facilities requested by the Authority are available for the purposes referred to in this condition.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.6.28 The Operator shall submit a Programme of Use for each Facility three months prior to the Commencement Date and, annually thereafter, for the duration of the contract for the Authority's approval and the Operator's implementation the following contract year.
- 3.6.29 A Programme of Use Progress Update must be supplied to the Authority as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.6.30 The Operator will facilitate a quarterly recorded meeting with the Head of Physical Education at Ponteland High School and include any issues arising from this meeting as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.6.31 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to honour any events, functions and hire arrangements that are pre-booked at the commencement of this Contract as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.6.32 The Operator shall maintain a record concerning actual use of all of the Facilities and activities and shall submit details of the outcome of programming reviews, activity usage, and of any failure to meet the specified Performance Standards, as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.7 Pricing

Overall Requirement

- 3.7.1 A pricing scheme that is consistent and aligned to local market rates ensuring that all sections of the community are able to access the Facilities and Active Communities Programme. The pricing scheme should be designed in a way that best meets the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contributes towards its local Strategic Outcomes.

Performance Standards

- 3.7.2 The current pricing for the Facilities is set out in Appendix 5 Current Pricing/Fees & Charges.
- 3.7.3 The Operator is free to set prices for all activities, services and memberships providing that a concessionary scheme is offered at the Facilities in accordance with Table 4. Any increases to prices above CPI will be subject to written approval from the Authority.
- 3.7.4 The Operator shall offer the concessionary pricing scheme as shown in Table 4. The scheme shall apply to the following groups in Table 5.

Table 5: Concession Groups

Concession Group	Concession	Applicable Activities
Protected Characteristics		
Children 0 - 4	Minimum of 50% discount on standard charge	PAYG activities Not Soft Play
Juniors 5 - 17	Minimum of 50% discount on standard charge	Memberships and PAYG activities
Residents aged over 66 (in receipt of State Pension)	Minimum of 50% discount on standard charge	Memberships and PAYG activities
Socio-economic		
Northumberland residents in receipt of Universal Credit (UC), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Housing Benefit.	Minimum of 50% discount on standard charge	Memberships and PAYG activities
Students in higher education (up to the age of 21)	Minimum of 50% discount on standard charge	Memberships and PAYG activities
Inclusion		
Serving Members or Veterans of the Armed Forces	Free	Memberships and PAYG activities
Northumberland residents in receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance	Minimum of 50% discount on standard charge	Memberships and PAYG activities
Northumberland Residents in receipt of a Carer Allowance when accompanying a registered carer	Free access when accompanying a registered carer	PAYG activities
Talented Sportspeople for Northumberland residents who are members of a national or regional team and have competed at that level	Free Annual Membership (with proof of registration from sporting body those affiliated with Sport England)	Membership

Concession Group	Concession	Applicable Activities
or above in a Sport England registered sport		
Looked After Children and Family Members resident in Northumberland	Free Annual Membership	Membership
Other		
Sports club and community groups delivering activities instigated or supported by NCC Sports Development or Public Health Specific services	Minimum of 25% discount on standard charge	Hire of facilities
NCC Sports Development and Public Health Services	Minimum of 25% discount on standard charge. Free use for 10 hours per month per centre	Hire of facilities

- 3.7.5 The marketing of the concessionary pricing scheme must be integrated into branding and promotional material in a manner which avoids stigmatising or differentiating eligible service users.
- 3.7.6 The concessionary pricing scheme shall be made available during all opening hours except where otherwise indicated.
- 3.7.7 The concessionary pricing scheme should be designed in a way that allows data to be captured on user demographics (e.g., age, ethnicity, area of residence) and visit behaviour (e.g., record of visits broken down by type of activity).
- 3.7.8 The Operator's Pricing Policy shall promote the principles of equality of access and sustainability. Usage and attendance by all sections of the wider and local community shall be encouraged through the Operator's Pricing Policy to support delivery of the Authority's Strategic Objectives.
- 3.7.9 The Operator shall offer a range of membership and payment options including direct debit, annual payments, course payments and pay as you go.
- 3.7.10 No charges shall be collected by the Operator in respect of services extending beyond the contract period other than those authorised by the Authority during the last year of the Contract period.
- 3.7.11 The Operator must ensure that all current fees and charges are displayed prominently in the reception area of the Facilities and on the centre websites and as appropriate within the Facilities.
- 3.7.12 The Operator shall operate comprehensive and effective systems for cash and non-cash methods of payment and booking administrative services.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.7.13 The Operator must provide proposals for pricing as listed in Appendix 5 Current Pricing/Fees & Charges annually to the Authority no later than three months prior to the start of each Contract year. Additional variations in excess of CPI can only be made with written agreement between both parties.

- 3.7.14 The Operator must submit details of any failure to achieve the required Performance Standards as set out above, as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.8 Staffing and Skills Development

Overall Requirement

- 3.8.1 Sufficient and suitably qualified staff to provide the services required in this Services Specification, to comply with legislation and industry guidance and to best meet the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribute towards its wider local Strategic Outcomes.

Performance Standards

- 3.8.2 The Operator should have a recognised industry continued professional development programme such as that provided by the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport & Physical Activity (CIMSPA). It shall implement a scheme for the continued assessment and development of staff. The Operator shall therefore ensure that, through individual staff training plans where applicable to each role, staff undertake regular training (including refresher and advanced courses) to achieve qualifications relevant to their role. The Operator shall ensure that this is appraised at least annually.
- 3.8.3 The Facilities and Active Communities Partnership service shall have a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff to provide the services required by this Specification and to meet all relevant legislation and industry guidance.
- 3.8.4 The Operator is required to have sufficient suitably qualified competent staff within the building during all opening hours to comply with the agreed Emergency Action Plan.
- 3.8.5 The Operator is required to have qualified personnel head office HR support (for example Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development).
- 3.8.6 The Operator is required to have a comprehensive set of supporting policies including disciplinary, safeguarding, training, induction processes etc. in accordance with industry best practice.
- 3.8.7 The Operator must ensure that TUPE is fully complied with and that the transfer of staff is handled smoothly and sensitively without any disruption to the service. This includes any self-employed staff working in the service. Staff employed, licensed, or permitted to offer personal training services or to deliver coached activities and courses must be qualified to the appropriate level according to the Governing Body for the sport/activity or recognised training provider such as CIMSPA and in line with any required legislation. The Operator shall ensure that, as a minimum, staffing levels are appropriate to the size of the Facilities and those activities are delivered by suitably trained personnel.
- 3.8.8 The Operator should aim to employ staff that are representative of the demographic profile of Northumberland and shall undertake annual workforce monitoring to measure this. Reports from such monitoring shall be provided to the Authority on an annual basis.
- 3.8.9 The Operator shall employ sufficient qualified and experienced staff to ensure a high standard of service and customer care at all times. Accordingly, it will be necessary for the Operator to employ sufficient reserves of staff to provide these high standards in times of sickness, leave, training and other absence from work.
- 3.8.10 The Operator shall keep available and maintain an emergency maintenance back up, qualified to the level of Technical Assistant, with a response time of not more than one hour, for response to any failure of equipment / plant under the Operator's responsibility at all times. A continuous back up available to provide telephone solutions on request, must also be provided.

- 3.8.11 The Operator will ensure that all coaches and deliverers used meet the minimum standards set out by National Governing Bodies and all qualifications are checked prior to delivery commencing. Any sub-contracted deliverers of activities should be bound by a Service Level Agreement between the Operator and the deliverer to ensure the same standards as set out in this Services Specification and that when required, replacement sports coaches can be found by the deliverer to ensure programmes can continue as planned.
- 3.8.12 The Operator must make available for inspection copies of certificates for coaches, instructors, leaders and others as appropriate to the Authorised Officer upon request.
- 3.8.13 The Operator shall employ staff suitably trained in order to conduct induction training courses for service users on all exercise equipment in the fitness suite.
- 3.8.14 The Operator shall also employ suitably qualified staff for School Holiday, Holiday Activity and Food Programmes and the Active Communities Programme in accordance with relevant legislation.
- 3.8.15 The Operator shall only employ staff that are registered on CIMSPA's Exercise and Fitness career stream or Register of Exercise Professionals or equivalent subsequent industry standard. The Operator shall ensure that any transferring staff that are not registered are registered within three months of the commencement date.
- 3.8.16 The Operator shall ensure compliance in respect of all persons employed or seeking employment with the provisions of all employment legislation.
- 3.8.17 The Operator must meet the Disclosure and Barring Scheme requirements adopted by the Authority as outlined in 3.8 below in relation to all staff employed in relation to the provision of Services including any third-party club and coach or self-employed staff.
- 3.8.18 The Operator shall ensure compliance, where relevant, with the local OFSTED registration requirements, the relevant Local Authority Social Services Department, meeting the standards outlined in National Standards for under 8's Day Care and Child-minding as set out in The Children Act.
- 3.8.19 The Operator shall be entirely responsible for the employment and conditions of service of its employees.
- 3.8.20 The Operator shall be solely responsible for the employment and dismissal of all staff employed at the Facilities and through the Active Communities Programme, including all payments which may arise under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and any amendments thereto. The Operator shall at all times be fully responsible for the payments of all salaries, wages, taxes, National Insurance contributions, or levies arising out of employment.
- 3.8.21 The Operator will be fully responsible for all training of staff employed and shall ensure that sufficient, regular training is undertaken to:
- > Provide a high-quality service
 - > Ensure that all employees and volunteers, providing supervision of activities undertake an induction course which includes ensuring a full working knowledge of Normal Operating Procedures and the Emergency Action Plan. Ensure fitness and awareness to perform all duties required in an efficient and prompt manner
 - > Ensure all staff receive regular awareness training in customer care, health and safety, equality and diversity, safeguarding etc. and the special needs of target user groups

- 3.8.22 All staff (including casual staff) to be used by the Operator, at any time, for poolside responsibilities must be qualified to the minimum standards laid down by the Royal Life Saving Society.
- 3.8.23 The Operator shall maintain detailed training records to include attendance at training sessions.
- 3.8.24 The Operator shall offer apprenticeships, placements and volunteer opportunities to local residents and shall ensure that there are a number of apprentices employed in the Facilities and/or Active Communities programme at all times for the duration of the Contract.
- 3.8.25 The Operator must carry out an annual staff satisfaction survey and share the results with the Authority.
- 3.8.26 The Operator shall ensure that appropriately qualified persons or sub-contractor companies carry out all maintenance works.
- 3.8.27 The Operator shall ensure that user data developed and shared through Open Data Institute standards can be analysed by trained staff and reported on to support the Operator and Authority in determining the effectiveness of programming and interventions.
- 3.8.28 The Operator shall ensure that specialist staff can provide the analysis and insight to support the development of a programme to reflect the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribute towards its local Strategic Outcomes.
- 3.8.29 The Operator shall, on request, provide a list of named staff with the necessary professional and technical competence as appropriate to fully discharge the requirements of this Services Specification in a safe and efficient manner.
- 3.8.30 The Operator shall appoint an overall contract manager to be its Operator Representative. The Operator's Representative shall consult with the Authority as often as may reasonably be necessary for the efficient provision of the Services and shall attend meetings on a regular basis.
- 3.8.31 The Operator shall submit written Codes of Conduct for both service users and staff to be approved by an Authorised Officer by Contract commencement.
- 3.8.32 The Operator's staff should not conduct or present themselves in any way that, in the opinion of an Authorised Officer, is detrimental to the image or reputation of the Authority, or which would not uphold the professionalism of the service.
- 3.8.33 No views should be expressed by the Operator's staff, which could appear to represent the Authority's view of particular issues or policies. Enquiries on such matters which are received from the press must be referred to the Authorised Officer to reply on the Authority's behalf.
- 3.8.34 The Operator will provide workplace health programmes for their staff which will create opportunities for them to eat well, be active and make lifestyle changes
- 3.8.35 The Operator will adopt the [Healthy Weight Declaration](#) and contribute to the whole system approach by working closely with the Authority and its healthcare partners
- 3.8.36 The Operator must adhere to other policies regarding appropriate places for consumption (away from activity areas) and sale of inappropriate products such as chewing gum.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.8.37 The Operator shall include in the Annual Service Report to the Authority information on the extent to which the workforce is representative of the local demographic profile.

3.8.38 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the Overall Requirements set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.9 Safeguarding

Overall Requirement

3.9.1 All activities and programmes involving young people and vulnerable persons are carried out adhering to legal and best practice safeguarding standards.

Performance Standards

3.9.2 All staff delivering services to or in contact with children and young people and adults at risk must have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in line with DBS guidelines. The Operator will be responsible for all costs relating to DBS checks.

3.9.3 The Operator must comply with all safeguarding legislation, statutory guidance and the Authority's Safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure all children, young people and adults at risk are protected from abuse and neglect. The current policies and procedures can be found in Appendix 9. All staff must be registered where a professional register exists.

3.9.4 The Operator will be required to submit their safeguarding policy and procedures for review before the commencement of the Contract, whenever the policy or procedures are amended and whenever deemed necessary by the Authority during the Contract term.

3.9.5 All new staff are required to undergo safeguarding training prior to commencing work within the Facilities or the Active Communities Programme.

3.9.6 Existing staff are required to have refresher training on safeguarding as a minimum annually or when there are significant changes to legislation or the Authority's safeguarding policies.

Reporting Requirements

3.9.7 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.10 Equalities

Overall Requirement

3.10.1 The services provided adopt a holistic and inclusive approach to equality of access and participation for all users, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Performance Standards

3.10.2 The Operator shall employ sufficient staff, coaches and instructors currently qualified to promote and foster an inclusive approach to the provision of services with appropriate equality and diversity training, disability inclusion training and specialist training for staff delivering instruction or classes.

3.10.3 All new staff are required to undergo equality and diversity training and disability inclusion training prior to commencing work within the Facilities or the Active Communities Programme. This should also include all head office staff that visit public facing areas, and specialist contractors involved in the delivery of services.

3.10.4 All staff delivering services are required to undergo regular (at least once every two years) recognised equality and diversity training and disability inclusion training.

- 3.10.5 The Operator will be required to submit their Equalities Policy for review before the commencement of the Contract, whenever the policy is amended and whenever deemed necessary by the Authority during the Contract term.
- 3.10.6 The Operator shall be required to undertake equalities monitoring of its staff and of users of the services, at least annually and in accordance with all relevant data protection legislation.
- 3.10.7 The Operator should where appropriate implement guidance on equalities provided by National Governing Bodies.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.10.8 The Operator shall submit to the Authority a breakdown of equalities information relating to staff employed and users of the services within the Annual Service Report.
- 3.10.9 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.11 Cleaning and Housekeeping

Overall Requirement

- 3.11.1 Facilities that are maintained to a high level of cleanliness so as to provide a healthy, high quality and safe environment for all service users, allowing for efficient and effective operational use of the Facilities and promoting a positive image of the Facilities at all times.

Performance Standards

- 3.11.2 The Operator shall provide cleaning services in the Facilities as required over the Contract period to meet the overall requirement described in 3.11.1.
- 3.11.3 The Operator shall be aware, and factor into its Cleaning Schedule, that some cleaning requirements may, of necessity, require to be undertaken outside the public opening hours or need to be more intensive when events dictate e.g., on open days/special events.
- 3.11.4 The Operator will ensure that cleaning schedules are designed to meet cleaning requirements during peak periods.
- 3.11.5 The Operator shall ensure that the Facilities are consistently maintained to the standard of cleanliness set out above. The Operator shall determine the precise nature of cleaning required in each centre depending upon the design, interior fitment and decoration of the building and usage level.
- 3.11.6 The Operator shall determine the cleaning frequency for each area within the Facilities.
- 3.11.7 The Operator shall be responsible for litter picking the car parks at the Facilities.
- 3.11.8 The following standards are required to be met by the Operator:

a. Routine Cleaning

- 3.11.9 The Operator shall carry out routine (planned) cleaning at times that causes minimal or no disruption to the use of the areas being cleaned. The Operator shall supplement routine cleaning with continuous and spot cleaning to achieve a consistently high quality of cleanliness / finish at all times. The Operator shall carry out other non-routine cleaning in order to achieve the required Overall Requirement.

b. Reactive Cleaning

- 3.11.10 The Operator shall provide non-routine (reactive) spot cleaning requirements on a continual basis as required in all the facilities. They shall ensure that the Facility is comprehensively monitored for non-routine cleaning and this cleaning is undertaken as and when necessary and in accordance with the agreed procedures for reactive cleaning as set out in the Operator's Quality Management System.
- 3.11.11 The Operator shall ensure that all cleaning materials and equipment are appropriate for the job required and are used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, British Standards and relevant health and safety requirements.

c. Deep and High-Level Cleaning

- 3.11.12 The Operator shall develop a robust schedule of 'deep and high-level cleaning' to maintain the required standards of cleanliness. This should include high level cleaning and deep cleaning of Facilities both internally and externally.
- 3.11.13 If, in the opinion of the Authorised Officer, standards of cleanliness or hygiene fall below an acceptable level, the Operator shall be required to rectify this as soon as practicable.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.11.14 As part of the on-going capture of customer satisfaction, the Operator will provide robust information on customer satisfaction with the cleanliness of each of the Facilities.

3.12 Food and Beverages

Overall Requirement

- 3.12.1 A high quality, value for money, food and beverage service that offers a range of appetising and nutritious food and drink to service users including a full range of healthy food options.
- 3.12.2 Provision of a very limited range of foods that are high in salt, sugar and saturated fats.
- 3.12.3 Clear guidance using a traffic light system (or similar) on the relative levels of salt, sugar and saturated fat in all food items.

Performance Standards

- 3.12.4 The Operator shall ensure that as a minimum, the existing catering and vending areas provided at each Facility continue to be provided, unless otherwise agreed with the Authority.
- 3.12.5 The catering activities which shall be undertaken by the Operator include but are not limited to:
- > Compiling a nutritionally well-balanced menu to primarily feature healthy food and drink and ability to cater for special dietary requirements
 - > Offering a range of meals, snacks and beverages which address the needs of all user groups, reflecting current trends with daily specials and seasonal variations
 - > Ensuring that all menus are reviewed on at least an annual basis
 - > Providing a counter service of food and beverages
 - > Providing a catering service for children's parties including healthy party food options at no additional cost

- > Providing vending machines offering a wide range of hot and cold drinks and light snacks / limited selection of confectionary and healthy food and drink options
- > Offering a licensed service providing a range of beers, wines and spirits comparable with service users' requirements.

3.12.6 The Operator shall provide a comprehensive food and drink selection that caters for different groups of customers as well as different dietary requirements including provision for:

- > NGBs, elite athletes and sports coaches
- > Community, club, disability and school-aged service users
- > Commercial customers such as conference delegates
- > Staff members and volunteers
- > Group/ individual visitors and spectators
- > Vegetarians, vegans and persons with particular dietary needs e.g., gluten-free
- > Diverse cultural and religious background of service users
- > Customers at special functions such as events, celebrations etc.

3.12.7 The Operator is required to provide a licensed service, where appropriate, from 6pm to 10.50pm Monday to Friday on each day the Facility is open to the public. Additional opening hours are at the Operator's discretion. The bar is to be opened if required for a Private Function or requested by a Hirer subject to authorisation from the Authorised Officer. Current locations with licences are:

- > Concordia
- > Newbiggin
- > Ponteland
- > Wentworth

3.12.8 The Operator shall obtain and / or renew licences as necessary for the provision of the food and beverage services.

3.12.9 The Operator may sub-contract food and beverage services including vending.

3.12.10 The Operator shall ensure that a healthy, balanced menu is offered that is updated frequently. The Operator shall ensure that the marketing associated with the catering facilities focuses on and promotes healthy eating options and links to local healthy eating campaigns and key health messages identified through Public Health agencies.

3.12.11 The Operator shall promote and develop healthy food and beverage products by:

- > linking calorific intake to activity levels for a balanced lifestyle with clear labelling;
- > ensuring food and beverage offers are based around healthy options and choices, using this as an opportunity to educate and promote the benefits of healthy eating to our service users and the general public; and

- > promoting a new attitude towards healthy eating with a responsible approach to educating service users

- 3.12.12 The Operator must comply with EC Reg 852/2004 and the Food Safety Act 1990 and associated regulations such as the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulation 2013.
- 3.12.13 The Operator will be expected to obtain a 5 Star score from the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme within 12 months of contract commencement.
- 3.12.14 The Operator shall ensure that all food handlers are qualified to Level 2 Food Safety & Hygiene for Catering and have regular training in food hygiene.
- 3.12.15 The Operator shall ensure that trays, litter and other debris shall be cleared away and tables wiped periodically to provide a tidy and clean environment at all times.
- 3.12.16 The Operator shall ensure that as a minimum the catering services shall be subject to an annual hygiene inspection (if requested) by the Authority's Environmental Health team.
- 3.12.17 The Operator shall ensure that catering service satisfaction is measured as part of the on-going collection of customer feedback. The Operator shall ensure that the catering equipment, crockery and eating utensils are maintained in a clean, functional and hygienic condition, in compliance with all applicable health and safety regulations.
- 3.12.18 The Operator shall ensure that the provision of the catering service complies in all respects with relevant health and safety regulations. The Operator shall ensure that appropriate safe methods of work i.e., risk assessments are in place and all staff shall have access to relevant information relating to health and safety and risk assessments.
- 3.12.19 The Operator shall ensure that all accidents and near misses are recorded in accordance with health and safety regulations and its own procedures and in accordance with Health and Safety Management3.15 Health and Safety Management.
- 3.12.20 The Operator shall, wherever possible, make use of locally sourced produce and suppliers to contribute to the local economy and improve sustainability.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.12.21 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.13 Marketing, Research and Communication

Overall Requirement

- 3.13.1 An approach to Marketing, Research and Communication that promotes the Facilities and the Active Communities programme in a way that best meets the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contributes towards local Strategic Outcomes.
- 3.13.2 Any communications relating to the Facilities and Service outside of day-to-day operational communications will be coproduced and jointly approved prior to being released

Performance Standards

- 3.13.3 The Operator shall be required to market and promote the services by means of the complete range of marketing communications at their disposal.
- 3.13.4 The Operator shall develop a Marketing Plan for the Facilities and the Active Communities programme to ensure that existing and potential service users are made aware, through a wide

range of channels, of the services being offered and are encouraged to use and re-use the services. This plan shall promote community services alongside 'commercial' activities.

- 3.13.5 The Operator shall carry out an ongoing programme of research that captures the needs and views of both service users and non-users.
- 3.13.6 The Marketing Plan shall identify the approach to Marketing to be undertaken by the Operator to attract and retain user resulting in increased physical activity participation, particularly amongst those from target groups that have been identified as less active or inactive.
- 3.13.7 The Operator is required to work with the Authority and its partners in the delivery of the services. This will include a requirement for the Operator to manage all display areas within the Facilities for cross-venue selling, proactively requesting and updating material for inclusion.
- 3.13.8 The Operator will be responsible for monitoring the publicity material displayed by clubs and other hirers of the Facilities to ensure material is up to the standard agreed by the Authority and Operator, and that permission is requested by clubs and hirers in the first instance.
- 3.13.9 Branding is an important element of the services and there is a requirement to implement a modern approach to branding that is compatible and complimentary to the Authority's corporate image and Strategic Objectives.
- 3.13.10 The Operator will be required to install the necessary ICT capacity to enable it to use the latest relationship and digital marketing techniques including a website with booking and transactional capability, mobile phone apps, social media and targeted communications including email and texting.
- 3.13.11 The Operator will be required to install an ICT suite that can analyse their existing members and identify where inactive residents live within the local area to deliver targeted campaigns and outreach programmes to key priority groups e.g., BAME, inactive people.
- 3.13.12 The Operator will support the Authority and RISE North East through promoting their activities and supplying them with updates on the Operator's programmes.
- 3.13.13 The Operator must ensure that the service has strong branding for the Facilities and Services which links to the Authority's Strategic Objectives and enhances the reputation of the Authority.
- 3.13.14 The Operator shall develop, maintain and improve the standards and the quality of the presentation of the Services in order that all available and potential resources are used effectively. The Operator shall ensure that the Marketing Plan is used as a key tool in promoting usage of and access to the Facilities and increasing commercial and brand awareness of the Facilities. The Operator shall ensure that the materials and channels produced for marketing should reflect the Authority's objective to raise the profile of the Facilities and increase participation in sport and physical activity.
- 3.13.15 The Operator should have a digital marketing platform that is used to communicate targeted messages to specific groups or localities.
- 3.13.16 The Operator shall ensure that the Marketing Plan is prepared in consultation with the Authority.
- 3.13.17 The Operator shall ensure that the Authority's name and logo appears and is of equal size and prominence as the Operator's logo on external signage, signage in reception areas and all promotional mediums including web sites and published material relating to the service.
- 3.13.18 The Operator must have a planned approach to relationship and digital marketing and carry out full evaluations of this including website hits, downloads, open email etc.

- 3.13.19 The Operator shall ensure that the names and photographs of the Operator's Representative, Facility Managers and other senior staff must be prominently displayed at all times, in a prominent location close to the entrance to the Facilities and in full view of service users
- 3.13.20 Should the Operator wish to enter into third party sponsorship / advertising agreements/ promotion, such arrangements must be approved in advance in writing by the Authority, and in particular before the third party's name can be displayed in the Facilities.
- 3.13.21 The Operator shall ensure that at all times the service is open there is always digital and printed information available on the opening hours of the Facilities, services, activities and prices.
- 3.13.22 The Operator shall ensure that this information is also made available to all local Tourist Information Centres, other departments of the Authority, other sports facilities throughout the County, all public libraries and, where appropriate, to local clubs and organisations.
- 3.13.23 The Operator shall ensure that no publicity material or notices are produced or displayed in handwritten form.
- 3.13.24 The Operator shall ensure that all standards laid down by the Advertising Standards Authority and Trading Standards Board are adhered to at all times.
- 3.13.25 The Operator shall provide appropriate versions of published materials for people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.13.26 The Operator may, with the Authority's prior written approval in accordance with this Contract, sell a limited amount of advertising space within the Facilities. The Operator shall not negotiate any agreement with any third party beyond the Expiry Date of the Contract.
- 3.13.27 The Operator will promote joint programmes set up with partners and promote partner websites through web links at no charge to the partner.
- 3.13.28 The Authority reserves the right to make use of appropriate display space within the Facilities, free of charge, for promotional and publicity material.
- 3.13.29 The Operator shall, from time to time, be expected to support activities being run by the Authority either through cross-promotion or by being present at an event.
- 3.13.30 The Operator shall ensure that club notice boards are retained and clearly named, and that no information shall be displayed outside of the notice board area.
- 3.13.31 The Operator shall ensure that no publicity material whatsoever is affixed to walls, doors, glass or any surface with clear adhesive tape or adhesive putty.
- 3.13.32 The Operator may seek sponsorship for events and activities. The Authority reserves the right to veto any sponsorship, which could result in reputational risk / damage to the Authority.
- 3.13.33 The Operator shall ensure that no advertising/publicity material likely to cause offence to or mislead the public, or cause embarrassment to the Authority is used. The Authority retains the right to veto any advertising or promotional material, which is likely to breach this condition, and the Operator shall remove such material immediately. The Authority accepts no responsibility for any loss incurred as a consequence of the removal of such material.
- 3.13.34 Any potential sponsorship the Operator may wish to enter into must be authorised by the Local Authority in writing.
- 3.13.35 The Operator shall adopt a partnership approach to external communications by submitting draft copies of any press releases or media statements to the Authority for approval prior to them being

issued. The Authority shall be permitted to include a statement from its own officers or Elected Members as part of the communication if deemed relevant.

- 3.13.36 The Operator shall ensure that compliance with the Marketing Plan is assessed annually.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.13.37 The Operator shall ensure that a Marketing Plan is submitted to the Authority in accordance with the Meetings and Reporting requirements in this Specification.
- 3.13.38 The Operator shall ensure that a report on progress against the Marketing Plan and any failure to deliver the Overall Requirement set out above is submitted as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

3.14 Data and ICT Management

- 3.14.1 Overall Requirement

3.14.2 Data will be shared with NCC in order to continually inform the Health Equity Audit and inform public health intelligence in addition to enabling NCC to measure service efficiency and undertake reviews. Appropriate agreements will be in place to ensure safe, legal data sharing and ownership that will be used for the purposes of audit, impact assessments, needs assessments.

3.14.3 The provision of a robust, innovative Information and Communications Technology (ICT) system which enables a high quality of customer service and can comprehensively record, track and report on customer profiles and visit behaviour. This will enable the Operator and Authority to effectively measure the Operator's performance in meeting the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribution towards wider local Strategic Outcomes through the performance indicators based on high quality data collection.

3.14.4 The operator must hold valid and up to date Cyber Essentials plus or / and ISO27001 accreditation.

3.14.5 The operator must adhere and demonstrate accreditation to PCI-DSS where any online payment systems are used.

3.14.6 Contractual obligations are set out in the Contract, Schedule 13.

Performance Standards

3.14.7 The Operator shall ensure that fully functioning and efficient ICT systems are maintained throughout the services for the duration of the Contract.

3.14.8 The Operator shall be the custodian and processor of customer and operational data on behalf of the Authority. All of the data captured, including direct debit membership data and originator numbers, will be deemed as being owned by the Authority with the Operator acting as the managing agent. The Operator must provide a web link for authorised Authority officers to have 'read only' access to customer and operational data within its ICT system. The data must be handed back in full to the Authority at the end of the Contract at no cost to the Authority and the Operator may not make copies or store the data for its own subsequent use.

3.14.9 Where data has been gathered as part of a grant funded programme it must be stored securely for a period of 6 years after the project has finished or longer if specified by grant conditions.

3.14.10 Participation data should be shared openly in compliance with OpenActive data standards. The main booking system should work on common OpenActive data standards.

- 3.14.11 The Operator is encouraged to participate in sector initiatives (such as, DataHub and Open Active, Moving Communities) supporting the standardisation and processing of participation data to generate sector wide insight and valuable benchmarks that can be used to track performance and understand best practices for continuous improvement across all local authorities and Operators.
- 3.14.12 The Operator's ICT system must have, as a minimum, the following capability:
- > On-line bookings and payments, block bookings and Facility hire
 - > A fully integrated swipe card membership system which allows authorised entry into designated areas regardless of where the membership was initially taken out by the customer (subject to membership status)
 - > Usage and membership tracking enabling the Operator to track participation and collect the information required for the Key Performance Indicators. This also includes tracking usage of target groups and postcode analysis to enable tracking of participation by underrepresented groups and residents from priority areas
 - > Real-time tracking of income and expenditure
 - > On-line training and web performance
 - > Data sharing protocols with partners
 - > Comprehensive database of customer groups accessible by authorised staff at all customer reception points.
- 3.14.13 The Operator must ensure that all data is protected through appropriate security protocols and related legislation; in particular, The Data Protection Act (2018) which is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Additionally, the Operator must comply with General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2018 and Freedom of Information Act (2000) and any subsequent legislation relating to the management and use of data. The Operator must ensure the safeguarding of customer data and that all staff with access to the data are appropriately screened as set out in the safeguarding policies of the Authority highlighted in Appendix 9.
- 3.14.14 The Operator shall ensure that its administration and finance systems are digitally based and compatible with the Authority's systems (e.g., Microsoft Office).

Reporting Requirements

- 3.14.15 The Operator is required to make best use of its ICT systems to report on the Performance Indicators linked to the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribution towards wider local Strategic Outcomes. This includes collecting real time data on participation and engagement with the service.
- 3.14.16 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to provide open data as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.14.17 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.14.18 Should the Authority wish to analyse any specific ICT reports, the Operator must produce the relevant report within seven business days from the initial request.

3.15 Health and Safety Management

Overall Requirement

- 3.15.1 Services that fully comply with all relevant Health and Safety legislation, guidance and recognised industry best practice.
- 3.15.2 Services that implement continuous improvement of Health and Safety management, capturing and implementing learning and good practice throughout the period of the Contract.
- 3.15.3 Provide a service that demonstrates keeping people acceptably safe, avoiding life changing injuries and compliance with health and safety legislation and guidance as a minimum standard of acceptable performance.
- 3.15.4 Provide a service which demonstrates improvement in the health, safety and welfare standards for people over the duration of the contract.
- 3.15.5 Implement and maintain a health and safety management system that conforms to the HS(G)65 or ISO 45001 model. External certification to ISO 45001 is not essential if this model is used.

Performance Standards

- 3.15.6 The Operator shall comply with all relevant health, safety and welfare legislation including specifically the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974).
- 3.15.7 The Operator must implement and maintain a health and safety management system that conforms to the HS(G)65 or ISO 45001 model.
- 3.15.8 The Operator must maintain a system that includes competent health and safety advice.
- 3.15.9 The Operator must provide one member of staff of sufficient authority and responsibility who will act as the “Appointed Person” for health and safety. This person must hold the NEBOSH National Certificate in Health and Safety or equivalent and must be written into policies and the job description. This job role will act as the contract coordinator for all matters relating to health and safety.
- 3.15.10 All health and safety documentation shall be available for inspection by the Authority or other authorised bodies/persons at any reasonable time.
- 3.15.11 The Operator shall have documented arrangements to review all new, updated and existing relevant guidance relating to the management of health and safety in sports and leisure facilities and services.
- 3.15.12 The Operator shall submit to the Authority a Health and Safety Policy including the following written documents upon contract start handover:
 - > Written policy on all appropriate safety training guidelines
 - > Risk assessments for tasks and activities with significant risk
 - > Codes of practice for safe work
- 3.15.13 And the following within the first three months of the contract period:
 - > Written policy for staff in reporting / dealing with violence
 - > Written policy on incidents and accidents

- > Evidence compliance with HSG 179
 - > Codes of safe working practices
 - > Risk Assessment Guidelines
 - > Codes of Safe Working Practice.
- 3.15.14 All of the above documents shall be reviewed by the Operator regularly (normally annually) and when there is reason to believe improvements may be needed, e.g., following an incident, on the introduction of new legislation or working practices, and on the introduction of new equipment, plant or staff.
- 3.15.15 The Operator shall conduct review of the strategic risks of the organisation and operation and use this as the basis of the safety management system and for business planning. The strategic risk assessment shall be reviewed at least annually by the senior management team the results of this review will be available to authorised persons.
- 3.15.16 The Operator shall comply with all relevant regulations including the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and in particular, the duty to make suitable and sufficient risk assessments of all the significant hazards associated with the premises, operations and services under their control.
- 3.15.17 The Operator shall carry out risk assessments which should be updated and reviewed at least annually and be available to the Authority at any time.
- 3.15.18 The Operator shall carry out risk assessments and revise them:
- > if there is an accident or incident where a change is required to prevent a recurrence
 - > if a new task (for staff) or activity (for members of the public) is introduced where a new risk assessment is required before commencement
 - > before and after a new item of plant or equipment is purchased for use which may change the risk or operation.
 - > if a change to the building or premises is planned where new / revised arrangements for its safe use will be needed; and
 - > when there is a significant change of personnel carrying out the task.
- 3.15.19 The Operator shall consult with staff on safety issues that affect their safety at work.
- 3.15.20 The Operator shall consult with industry bodies, user groups and neighbours on safety issues that affect the safety of people when deciding policy, conducting risk assessments and agreeing actions to prevent accidents e.g., as part of accident investigation process.
- 3.15.21 The Operator shall complete a fire risk assessment by a competent person. These shall be reviewed and updated whenever necessary and at least once per year. The Operator shall ensure that copies are available to all staff, neighbours, tenants and landlords and for inspection by the Authority at all times.
- 3.15.22 The Operator shall provide safe up to date working procedures for all activities, equipment, cleaning maintenance and tasks rigging/de-rigging undertaken by staff.
- 3.15.23 The Operator shall ensure that all staff, agents or suppliers who may be required to enter the Facilities are fully aware of all relevant rules and procedures concerning safeguarding, health and

safety at work, Fire and emergency arrangements. This includes the relevant sections of the Asbestos Register, COSHH assessments and the regular recording and “signing-in” of sub-Operators (permit to work system).

- 3.15.24 The Operator shall ensure that all surface water and other liquid spillage within internal areas causing dangerous floor surfaces is dealt with immediately on identification of the problem and documented appropriately.
- 3.15.25 The Operator shall comply with all requirements of the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 as amended, including the provision and maintenance of adequate equipment, facilities and first aid personnel.
- 3.15.26 The Operator shall ensure arrangements for first aid cover for service users, visitors and participants based on the operation and activities are in place.
- 3.15.27 The Operator will ensure that First Aiders are appropriately trained and retrained as required, and that both employees and service users are adequately informed of the arrangements made in connection with First Aid.
- 3.15.28 The Operator shall physically check the First Aid equipment, including any defibrillators (AED’s) and supplies weekly and shall ensure that a record of such checks is available for inspection by the Authority.
- 3.15.29 The Operator shall ensure that the Facilities have a minimum of one trained appointed person on site at any time during opening hours a trained First Aider must be on site when service users are on site.
- 3.15.30 The Operator shall display information in all public areas stating how to obtain appointed first aiders in a prominent position on the wall in the reception area at each Facility.
- 3.15.31 The Operator shall ensure that all staff are competent and adequately equipped to undertake all health and safety responsibilities relevant to their individual roles and duties. A training needs analysis will be conducted to plan training requirements which will include all job roles.
- 3.15.32 The Operator shall maintain a record of all training undertaken by staff with respect to health and safety training. The record shall include records of what knowledge or skill the person obtained.
- 3.15.33 The Operator shall include health and safety training in the staff induction programme and provide appropriate refresher training in accordance with industry guidance.
- 3.15.34 The Operator shall ensure that all signs relating to exits and fire exits are to the standards required by health and safety Legislation and the requirements of Fire and Licensing Officers in respect both of general operation and of special events. For the avoidance of doubt, the Operator shall by default be the ‘responsible person’ as defined by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 unless a suitable alternative is agreed in writing in the contract.
- 3.15.35 The Operator shall ensure that all exits are not blocked at any time and are cleared of rubbish and debris and are checked regularly as part of daily inspections by duty managers or other named job role.
- 3.15.36 The Operator shall maintain records of cleaning and maintenance of plant and equipment relevant to the minimisation of any possible infectious diseases, in particular with respect to:
 - > Air conditioning and ventilation systems.
 - > Showers, toilets and hot water systems.

- > Pest control.
- 3.15.37 The Operator shall maintain records of inspection and testing in accordance with the statutory scheme outlined by a competent person to maintain safety, in particular with respect to:
- > Air conditioning and ventilation systems.
 - > Electrical systems
 - > Pressure systems
 - > Lifting equipment
 - > Ventilation and air handling equipment
 - > Grinding wheels
 - > Fuel and heating systems
 - > Machinery guarding
 - > Boilers, condensers, engines and pumps (e.g., those covered above, and which could through poor maintenance, fitting or operation produce CO
 - > Flooring and surfaces.
- 3.15.38 The Operator will ensure that any and all cooling towers or evaporative condensers are notified to the licencing authority with correct and up to date details in compliance with the Notification of Cooling Towers and Evaporative Condensers Regulations 1992.
- 3.15.39 The Operator must maintain records of precautionary measures carried out and of monitoring results. If monitoring shows an increased level of risk, or changes are made to a system or the way it is operated, the Operator must inform the Authorised Officer and, if necessary, carry out a new risk assessment.
- 3.15.40 The Operator will ensure that every employee and temporary employee and agency worker receives a suitable induction which covers the safety policy expectations, safe working practices and the controls required to conduct their job safely. The induction should also cover how to get help and assistance and how supervision is provided. Each person being inducted should provide evidence that they have read and accepted the information and know how to get further help. e.g., by way of a short test, exam or demonstration of skills to perform the role, or all or a mix of these things as appropriate.
- 3.15.41 The Operator shall provide sufficient numbers of qualified employees to be present at all operating times across the facilities to ensure the safety of employees, service users and sub-operators.
- 3.15.42 The Authorised Officer retains the absolute right to, at any time, issue instructions to the Operator and its contractors prohibiting unsafe practices and, if necessary, require the closure of any facility or building in the interests of Health and Safety.
- 3.15.43 Any facility or equipment in an unsafe condition shall be withdrawn from use immediately and stored safely until the necessary repairs can take place. A log of these items of equipment, plant or locations shall be maintained and made available to the Authority.
- 3.15.44 The Operator shall permit access at all times during the Minimum Opening Hours to all areas of any Facility by the Authority, any relevant corporate health and safety advisor, Licensing Officer,

Environmental Health Officer, Fire Officer or officer of the Health and Safety Executive that has responsibility for matters concerned with health and safety or for the purpose of inspecting plant and equipment. The Operator shall provide assistance to these officers as requested and in accordance with both parties' legal obligations and in the interests of ensuring safety and good working practices and health business relationships.

- 3.15.45 The Operator will inform the Authorised Officer by the quickest practicable means, of any visit, inspection, or inquiry made by any Enforcement Authority (HSE / Local Authority / Fire Officer etc.) in connection with their undertaking, and of any subsequent enforcement action, including informal advice.
- 3.15.46 The Operator shall ensure that all aspects of the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 are adhered to and that suitable Hearing, respiratory and eye protection is provided, as necessary.
- 3.15.47 The Operator shall set out the levels, types and quantities of protective clothing and equipment to be provided for each job role and/or operation. The Operator shall also detail the minimum frequency with which all protective clothing and equipment shall be replaced. The operator will assess the use and suitability of the selected PPE and will ensure that training on its use, limitation, fitting and replacement are provided before it is expected to be used.
- 3.15.48 Records of issue of PPE to employees shall be kept by the Operator and made available for inspection by the Authority when required.
- 3.15.49 The Operator shall at all times ensure compliance with maximum occupation levels for each area within the Facilities as stipulated in the Fire Risk Assessment and/or Public Entertainments Licence if applicable.
- 3.15.50 The Operator shall monitor and maintain safe occupancy levels bearing in mind the numbers and qualifications of staff on duty at the time and the nature of the activity taking place.
- 3.15.51 The Operator shall control public throughput of the Facilities to a level that does not jeopardise the safety of service users, reduce hygiene standards or compromise the provision of a quality service.
- 3.15.52 The Operator shall ensure that an induction session is carried out for all fitness gym service users. If the customer is an experienced fitness gym user and is unwilling to undertake an induction, the service user must sign a disclaimer stating that they are an experienced gym user and do not require an induction. The Operator shall keep records of induction sessions and make them available for inspection by the Authority when required.
- 3.15.53 The Operator shall complete a registration pack in accordance with OFSTED requirements for all service users of the Children's Holiday Schemes. The Operator shall carry out suitable and timely risk assessments for all Children's Holiday Schemes.
- 3.15.54 The Operator shall ensure that all catering services provided by the Operator or concessions and event contractors are in accordance with the Food Safety Act 1990 and the regulations and orders made thereunder and with particular regard to any existing Food Hygiene Orders.
- 3.15.55 The Operator shall submit detailed procedures and action plans to deal with evacuation and emergency procedures for all buildings and shall inform the Authority in writing of any subsequent alterations necessary because of changes in legislation, changes in the Facility or improvements to the procedures.
- 3.15.56 The Operator shall provide all staff, where necessary, with instructions regarding emergency procedures, fire procedures including check / inspection and test procedures. The Operator shall

ensure that all staff are fully conversant with such procedures and use of emergency equipment from the start of employment.

- 3.15.57 The Operator shall enforce strictly all fire safety regulations and shall carry out practice evacuation drill at least every 6 months on a scheme which covers all opening scenarios over time. A record of the event, and corrective actions to ensure safe evacuation in future should be maintained. This record could include details of staff taking part, time taken for evacuation,
- 3.15.58 Regular checks must be taken on firefighting equipment, including an annual service of such equipment by a recognised company.
- 3.15.59 The Operator shall ensure that hazardous materials or equipment at the Facilities, which are to be used in the provision of the Services are kept under proper control and safekeeping, are properly and clearly labelled on their containers, and comply with the relevant Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended). The Operator shall provide staff with training based on written procedures on the safe storage and handling of any hazardous substances. The Operator must also ensure COSHH data sheets are easily accessible areas at each Facility, for ease of reference should an accident involving any chemicals occur.
- 3.15.60 The Operator shall have a system to ensure that all cleaning materials substances and chemicals and equipment are appropriate for their required function and are used safely.
- 3.15.61 The Operator shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation, recommendations, regulations or Acts of Parliament with respect to the reporting of accidents, injuries, dangerous occurrences and diseases. This will include maintenance of all documentation, and notification to the HSE or Enforcing Authority in accordance with RIDDOR 2013.
- 3.15.62 The Operator shall maintain comprehensive records of:
- > All injuries involving staff, members of the public and sub-contractors that are reported.
 - > Records that all staff training on the procedures for reporting incidents and accidents, who the nominated persons are and what information will be required.
 - > The persons nominated to complete accident reports and complete RIDDOR reports. Evacuations, emergencies, dangerous occurrences and unusual incidents occurring at the premises.
 - > Records of reports made in accordance with Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).
- 3.15.63 The Operator shall ensure that any RIDDOR reportable incident is reported to the Authority within the required time period of its occurrence.
- 3.15.64 The Operator shall ensure that incident and accident investigations are conducted in proportion to the potential severity and likelihood of recurrence of the events preceding the incident. Records of action needed and taken to prevent reoccurrence must be retained indefinitely for the period of the contract and handed to the Authority at the end of the contract.
- 3.15.65 Records include details of any relevant actions taken / to be taken shall be made available to the Authority at any time.
- 3.15.66 The Operator shall ensure that there are full and comprehensive Normal Operating Plans (NOPs) and Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) in place as part of the safety management system for the operation.

- 3.15.67 The Operator shall ensure that only competent contractors can work on site and that records of competence for individuals and companies conducting work are retained for the life of the system in question.
- 3.15.68 The Operator shall ensure that only authorised personnel are permitted in non-public areas of the Facilities, such as offices, plant rooms, storage areas etc. Clearly visible signs shall be displayed to this effect and suitable security systems in place to restrict unsafe and criminal access.
- 3.15.69 Suitable security systems should be in place to restrict child access to unsuitable or unsupervised places around the site. This would include a pool hall when not supervised.
- 3.15.70 The Operator shall enforce the Smoking at Work Act 2007 which relates to smoking in public places and ensure that there is no smoking of cigarettes and e-cigarettes or any tobacco or substitute tobacco indoors or close to entrances and windows.
- 3.15.71 The operator will determine, implement and enforce a written access and behaviour standard for the site. This must be posted prominently in reception or similar location. Staff must be trained to deal with people or situations which breach the standard. Breaches of the standards must be recorded as an 'incident'.
- 3.15.72 The Operator's staff shall cooperate fully with the Authorised Officer in any investigation or enquiry carried out in respect of the operation of the Facilities or any incident which may have occurred therein or any insurance claim which may arise from the use of the Facilities, including cooperation in the preparation of legal proceedings and availability and attendance at any Court or enquiry to give evidence on behalf of the Authority at no cost to the Authority.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.15.73 The Operator will produce a Health and Safety Management Improvement Strategy endorsed by the senior managers and operational management at the site.
- 3.15.74 The Operator will review performance against the health and safety improvement strategy at least annually provide a copy of the review findings and the new strategy to the Authority one month before the start of each subsequent contract year.
- 3.15.75 Performance reviews will consider
- > Accident rate (per 100,000 employees and per 100,000 footfall visitors or other agreed metric)
 - > Accident severity (number of days lost)
 - > Near misses reported and action taken/ closed out
 - > incidence of ill health absence
 - > Complaints
 - > Number of unsafe situation reports, and corrective actions taken (e.g., from results of inspections or other monitoring activity)
 - > Cost and number of H&S specific training hours conducted
 - > Reports from Enforcement bodies
 - > The results of any monitoring activities e.g., inspections, engineering reports, external audits
 - > The level of compliance with contractors and sub-contractors relating to competence, permit to work, risk assessments and accidents.

- 3.15.76 The Operator must provide the Authority with a copy of its Quest Compliance Declaration on an annual basis.
- 3.15.77 The Operator shall make a formal record of all inspections or visits made by Environmental Health Officers, the Health and Safety Executive and any other person or body who, in the proper execution of their duties requires or is entitled to access to the relevant Facility.
- 3.15.78 The Operator shall provide a summary of all accidents, incidents and near misses occurring at the Facilities as part of the Major Accidents and Incident report.
- 3.15.79 The Operator shall maintain records of precautionary measures carried out in respect of Legionella prevention and control and of monitoring results.
- 3.15.80 The Operator is required to commission at its own cost, an annual independent health and safety review and audit of each Facility for submission to the Authority.
- 3.15.81 The Operator shall submit details of any failures to maintain the required Performance Standards as set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report.

3.16 Major Incident Reporting

Overall Requirement

- 3.16.1 The Authority and if appropriate all other relevant authorities (e.g. Police, Fire, HSE, etc.) are to be made aware of all major incidents as soon as possible.

Performance Standards

- 3.16.2 The Operator shall ensure the Authority is made aware of all major incidents at the earliest appropriate moment
- 3.16.3 The Operator shall ensure it makes records of all major incidents, accidents, near misses and actions taken available for inspection.
- 3.16.4 The Operator shall ensure that all major incidents involving the service in the Facilities or Active Communities Programme are reported to the Authority by telephone as soon as practicable followed by a full report by email.
- 3.16.5 The Operator shall ensure that, in the event of an incident relating to security, severe injury as defined by RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations, 1995) or death or any other Emergency occurring within the service, the incident is reported to the Authority by telephone at the earliest opportunity.

Reporting Requirements

- 3.16.6 The Operator shall maintain an up-to-date log of all major incidents and severe injuries as defined by RIDDOR and their response to them.
- 3.16.7 The Operator shall ensure that, as soon as practicable, following any emergency, a full report of the actions taken and the implications for future training, is provided to the Authority. In the event of the Authority or its insurers wishing to undertake an investigation, the Operator shall fully comply with any reasonable requests for information from staff attending such an inquiry.
- 3.16.8 The Operator shall provide a summary of all accidents, incidents and near misses occurring at the Facilities or in the Active Communities Programme as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.16.9 The Operator shall ensure that details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above should be included as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4. Asset Management

4.1 Asset Management Capital and Revenue Funding

- 4.1.1 The Operator is responsible for meeting the costs of all planned and reactive maintenance, lifecycle replacement and equipment maintenance and replacement excluding those items listed as the responsibility of the Authority in Appendix 7 Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrix.
- 4.1.2 Certain of the Facilities have been the subject of significant building works and may still be within their defects liability periods and / or the relevant contractors may retain liability for latent defects. In these circumstances, the Operator shall, notwithstanding this Services Specification and, in particular, Appendix 7, not be liable for any repair or replacement to the extent that the Authority has a right to pursue a remedy against the relevant contractor or contractors in relation to the defect which has given rise to the need for that repair or replacement. The Operator shall, instead, be required to notify the Authority promptly if it believes that a defect has arisen and shall co-operate with the Authority in relation to any claim the Authority may wish to bring against a contractor and in carrying out any of the resultant remedial works.

4.2 Building Maintenance

Overall Requirement

- 4.2.1 That all buildings, plant and equipment included in the Contract are maintained to a high standard to ensure a high-quality customer experience, to conform with legislation and statutory requirements and to maximise the lifecycle of the Authority's assets.

Performance Standards

- 4.2.2 The Operator shall be responsible for repair and maintenance of all fixtures and fittings, plant and equipment at the Facilities (including the renewal/replacement of parts to minor/major plant and equipment that is required through general maintenance/or normal wear and tear) excluding those items listed below.
- 4.2.3 The Authority shall maintain, repair and replace the following items of the Facilities so that they remain structurally sound, wind protected and watertight:
- d. The structure of the buildings to include foundations and underground services (excluding those belonging to statutory undertakers), structural steelwork and concrete, load bearing walls and beams (but not the plastered surfaces or finishes of such walls and beams), external walls, roofs, ramps, staircases and floor structure (but not the tiles, surfaces or coverings)
 - e. Access roads, kerbs, car parks and external drains
 - f. External landscaping and pathways
 - g. all external fencing and floodlighting to the car park and any associated areas including the Artificial Turf Pitch, Multi Use Games Area and Athletics Arena
 - h. Renewal / replacement of major plant, assets and equipment listed in Appendix 7 Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Schedule as being the Authority's responsibility.
- 4.2.4 The Operator shall ensure that all repair, maintenance and servicing of plant, assets and equipment is undertaken by suitably trained and qualified staff.

- 4.2.5 The Operator is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the building, including maintaining floor, ceiling and wall coverings and finishes (including the resealing of all sports floors), the sanding of the squash court floors and plastering repairs of squash court walls, maintaining internal decorations, sanitary ware, all internal/external glazing, repairs and adjustments to internal and external doors, skylights and windows including ironmongery; and the cleaning and clearing of rainwater goods and drains, traps and waste pipes.
- 4.2.6 The Operator is responsible for the repair, maintenance and lifecycle replacement of all telephone, ICT and associated data systems.
- 4.2.7 The Operator is responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of all plant and equipment as specified. This extends to the maintenance, repair and replacement of all consumable items (e.g., pool filter sand media, UV tubes/Arc tubes to UV system, cables and pulleys to poolside floors and booms, hoses etc.)
- 4.2.8 Any underwater works to the pools must comply with the HSE Diving at Work ACOP's (Inshore 104) standard.
- 4.2.9 The Operator must demonstrate all fixed plant is maintained in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations on a regular basis.
- 4.2.10 Due to the specialist nature of some items of plant, machinery and equipment, the maintenance of which may be beyond the normal scope of the operation, the Operator will enter into direct servicing contracts with specialist companies.
- 4.2.11 The Operator shall not enter into a maintenance agreement with a specialist sub-contractor, which continues beyond the term of the Contract, without the prior written approval of the Authorised Officer. In the event of the Operator entering into an agreement, which continues beyond the term of the Contract without the prior written approval of the Authorised Officer, the Operator, shall indemnify the Authority against any costs including legal costs involved in the termination of any such maintenance agreement.
- 4.2.12 The Operator is responsible for the operation, repair, and maintenance of all building services, including heating, ventilation, hot and cold and drinking water, electric power and lighting, alarms, communications, time and sound systems, CCTV, lightning conductors, lifts etc.
- 4.2.13 The Operator shall ensure that the Facilities and all equipment are fully functioning and available for use, conform to legislation and comply with statutory requirements, perform in the most efficient manner and achieve full economic life.
- 4.2.14 The Operator shall be responsible for maintaining the Facilities to a high standard of repair, maintenance, decoration and cleanliness to ensure the proper performance of the Services. The Operator is responsible for all costs and charges relating to the maintenance, repair and cleanliness of the Facilities.
- 4.2.15 The Operator shall regularly service, maintain and replace as appropriate all buildings, equipment and plant in accordance with this Services Specification.
- 4.2.16 The Operator shall undertake all Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) and reactive repairs including equipment maintenance and replacement as set out in this Services Specification and in accordance with the Operator's Facilities Management Method Statement or any subsequently agreed method.
- 4.2.17 The Operator shall implement and maintain an electronic ICT asset management system to list details of assets and equipment including records of any replacement, to record details of

maintenance contracts and to log all servicing and maintenance of assets and equipment including both PPM and reactive maintenance. The ICT asset management system should allow for read only access to be provided to the Authorised Officer.

4.2.18 The Operator shall ensure that the interior and exterior appearance of the Facilities are kept up to date and reflect the needs and expectations of service users.

4.2.19 The Operator shall carry out breakdown and repair maintenance for all buildings and services to ensure that, at all times, the plant, buildings and equipment at the Facilities are maintained to a standard of good repair and are fully functional in respect of the activities taking place at the leisure centres.

4.2.20 The Operator as a minimum shall ensure that:

- > Both planned preventative lifecycle and reactive maintenance is carried out in accordance with the Operator's previously agreed Facilities Management Method Statement and the agreed Schedule of Programmed Maintenance
- > Maintenance procedures ensure Facilities:
 - Comply with all applicable statutory requirements and Legislation and Approved Codes of Practice
 - Are in a safe, secure, wind protected and watertight condition
 - Are maintained to such levels of condition and to such specifications as are consistent with principles of good estate management applied to the Facility as a whole and in accordance with current and future industry standards, and
 - Are maintained in a manner that prevents deterioration save fair wear and tear of any part thereof;
- > All maintenance repairs use materials that are comparable and compatible with existing materials used at each Facility
- > All maintenance activity is recorded on the ICT asset management system
- > All work is carried out in accordance with appropriate British Standards and Approved Codes of Practice.

4.2.21 The Operator shall ensure that on a continuing basis the maintenance and operating procedures comply with this Contract.

4.2.22 The Operator shall take responsibility for and be responsible for the costs of all maintenance services as set out in this Contract.

4.2.23 The Operator shall be responsible for all costs of the replacement of all items as set out in this Agreement and shall comply with the provisions of this Contract with respect to the Authority's assets.

4.2.24 The Operator shall implement programmed maintenance, comprising of:

- > Planned Preventative Maintenance
- > Statutory/ mandatory testing/ inspections
- > Repair and replacement (in accordance with the terms of this Contract).

- 4.2.25 The Operator shall carry out reactive maintenance in accordance with this Services Specification and applicable response/ rectification times.
- 4.2.26 The Operator shall maintain on the asset management system records of all breakdown failures, incidents or accidents involving any plant, machinery and equipment, together with details of all servicing or other such investigations that are carried out to plant, machinery and equipment.
- 4.2.27 The Operator is required to keep Building Manuals containing operating and maintenance instructions for each of the Facilities. They must be kept up to date whenever work is carried out and provide a copy to the Authority when requested.

Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM)

- 4.2.28 The Operator shall design, implement and maintain a Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) Schedule to manage the maintenance, testing and operation of all items of plant, equipment and building fabric within the Facilities, inclusive of fixtures and fittings.
- 4.2.29 The Operator shall ensure the PPM Schedule is used in a manner that helps optimise the performance of all assets for the duration of their effective life.
- 4.2.30 The Authority may at any time carry out checks of the PPM Schedule and check any replacement, maintenance or repair of assets carried out by the Operator.
- 4.2.31 The Operator shall meet their respective minimum response times to ensure that any reactive repairs are completed with the least inconvenience and disruption to the operation of the Facilities.
- 4.2.32 The Operator shall ensure that only appropriately trained personnel are dispatched to undertake PPM.
- 4.2.33 The Operator shall ensure that all maintenance repairs use materials that are comparable and compatible with existing materials used at the Facilities.
- 4.2.34 The Operator shall ensure that, where glass is replaced for whatever reason, the replacement glass meets the standards as set out in Regulation 14 of the Workplace (Health and Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, and BS 6262: Part 4 and areas of special risk Class C of BS 6206 or any subsequent revision.
- 4.2.35 The Operator shall ensure that where materials have to be replaced, for whatever reason, the replacement materials match in every way the specification, quality, performance, and appearance of the original materials.

Fabric Maintenance

- 4.2.36 The Operator shall maintain, repair and replace all internal building fabric excluding those items listed as the responsibility of the Authority in Appendix 7 Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrix.
- 4.2.37 Building maintenance and repairs will include:
- > Repairs and replacement to woodwork, masonry, floor, wall and ceiling finishes (including squash courts/studios), ceilings and all internal / external glazing
 - > Damage to the building caused by misuse or vandalism
 - > Internal joinery, locks, door fittings, spring and panic bolts

- > Gutters and down pipes, including concealed gutters, wastes, drains, soil pipes and fittings
 - > Water waste preventers, cisterns, ball valves, taps, stop valves and associated equipment
 - > Data cables, ports and protective trunking
 - > Health and safety fittings and appliances
 - > Replacement to electrical fittings, fuse and switch gear.
- 4.2.38 The Operator shall provide a professionally managed programme of building fabric maintenance. It shall make sure that the Facilities are in a safe, secure, wind protected and watertight condition.
- 4.2.39 The Authority must provide the Operator with comprehensive Asbestos register, and associated risk analysis, of all areas within the Facilities, identifying those areas which:
- > Are presumed by the Authority to contain Asbestos, or
 - > It has been concluded by the Authority that they do contain Asbestos, or
 - > It has been concluded by the Authority that they do not contain Asbestos, or
 - > Are presumed by the Authority not to contain Asbestos.
- 4.2.40 The Operator shall discharge its obligations under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 and its amendments. This includes the publishing and maintenance of a comprehensive Asbestos Register, and associated risk analysis, of all areas within the Facilities, identifying those which reviewing and amending the survey provided by the Authority at the start of the Contract.
- 4.2.41 The Operator shall make this Asbestos register permanently available to the Authority, sub-contractors and suppliers and any other operatives carrying out work on either the Operator's or the Authority's behalf at the Facilities.
- 4.2.42 The Operator shall ensure that all activities are executed, and records updated with due regard to the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 and its amendments.
- 4.2.43 The Operator shall ensure that information relating to Asbestos and associated work schedules is maintained on its facility management ICT system and supplied to the Authority.
- 4.2.44 The Authority will provide the Operator an Asbestos Survey at the start of the contract that will be as comprehensive as the legislation requires. However, other asbestos may be present in the Facilities which would only be uncovered by an intrusive survey or by workers when maintaining or adapting the building e.g., plumbers, electricians, alarm/ICT contractors etc. It is therefore a requirement that the Operator and the Authority to only allows asbestos trained contractors to carry out maintenance (CHAS or another accreditation). If asbestos is noticed during works, they should stop immediately, make the area safe and notify the Authority who will arrange for the asbestos to be removed to be rendered safe.
- Mechanical and Electrical Maintenance*
- 4.2.45 The Operator shall provide a professionally managed, high-quality Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) maintenance service through a regular and organised regime.
- 4.2.46 The Operator shall follow the maintenance requirements specified by:
- > Original equipment manufacturer's recommendations
 - > The Authority's requirements as set out in this Services Specification

- > All relevant statutory regulations and requirements
- > Specific warranty period maintenance requirements.

4.2.47 The Operator shall use the Building Management System (BMS) to ensure operating conditions at each Facility are maintained effectively and efficiently and to record the performance of equipment and systems.

Statutory/ Mandatory Inspections

4.2.48 The Operator shall ensure that all statutory and other mandatory requirements are met in respect of the maintenance services and inspections. The Operator shall inform the Authority in the first instance of any breaches of these obligations together with a programme for rectification and measures to safeguard against a repeat.

4.2.49 The Operator shall set up a programme of statutory, mandatory and insurance inspections to ensure all assets receive the required inspections at the correct time. The annual programme shall be issued to the Authority in advance of the inspection. The Operator shall at all times comply with all relevant EC and UK statutory and legislative requirements and all relevant guidance (including British Standards) including any alterations that may take place.

4.2.50 The Operator shall cooperate with any periodic inspections made by the Authority, partners or any authorised external agencies and shall provide such reasonable assistance to such inspectors as may be necessary.

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

4.2.51 The Operator shall ensure that as a minimum, PAT is implemented and carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice for in-services inspection and testing of Electrical Equipment published by the Institution of Electrical Engineers, as amended from time to time. The Operator shall ensure that all portable appliances are tested and certified with copies of certificates promptly forwarded to the Authority.

4.2.52 PAT testing shall be risk based. The Operator shall determine the frequency based on the risk presented to the Class 1 and 2 electrical and electronic equipment used at the Facilities and by the working environments within them.

4.2.53 The Operator shall test any item of equipment introduced to the Facilities prior to its being used. Once tested, items shall be tagged and logged in accordance with the above regime by the Operator.

4.2.54 The Operator shall maintain a register of portable appliances held at the Facilities, including but not limited to portable items and static items. The Operator shall maintain the register containing details of the executed PAT tests. Such testing shall form part of the overall PPM regime and the Operator shall ensure that all reports and recommendations are held centrally.

Fire Detection, Emergency Lighting and Fighting Systems

4.2.55 The Operator shall ensure that all fire detection alarm systems are maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5839: Part 1 (or replacement standards) with copies of the relevant certificate promptly forwarded to the Authority.

4.2.56 The Operator shall ensure that all Emergency Lighting Systems are maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5266: Part 1 (or any replacement standards) with copies of the certificates promptly forwarded to the Authority following each service.

- 4.2.57 The Operator shall test all fire detection equipment and emergency lighting on a weekly basis and in a manner, which ensures that every manual call point is activated through the testing period and cyclically at a frequency and at a time to be agreed between the Authority and the Operator in accordance with manufacturer's and installer's guidance and in line with the above statutory guidance. The Operator shall ensure that the results are logged within each location and centrally within the [CAFM] system. The Operator shall ensure that all abnormal test results are acted upon and the appropriate action is taken to remedy any abnormal test results in line with the required response and rectification times.

Security, Access and Intruder Systems

- 4.2.58 The Operator shall maintain any internal and external CCTV and intruder alarm systems at the Facilities to always ensure their proper functioning at all times. The Operator shall ensure that any failure in such systems is rectified within the required rectification times.
- 4.2.59 The Operator shall ensure that all intruder alarm systems are maintained and tested in accordance with BS 4737 (or replacement standards) with copies of the certificates forwarded to the Authority when requested.
- 4.2.60 The Operator will maintain all Fire Exits and access doors at all times.

Re-Lamping

- 4.2.61 The Operator shall carry out all necessary re-lamping at the Facilities. The Operator shall adopt an organised approach to re-lamping across the Facilities. The Operator shall monitor the provision of this service for efficiency with a view to achieving the greatest possible reductions in replacement frequency and cost. All existing fittings and lamps will be replaced with LED replacements (including fixtures and fittings) for the duration of the contract period.

Duct Maintenance

- 4.2.62 The Operator shall regularly maintain and clean all ducts, shaft, risers and associated ventilation at the Facilities.

External Maintenance

- 4.2.63 The Authority will be responsible for the maintenance of the external structure of the building. The Operator will be responsible for ensuring that any defects or damage to the external structure, whether caused accidentally or not, will be reported to the Authorised Officer as soon as possible.
- 4.2.64 The Authority will retain responsibility for the ground's maintenance and general cleansing, grass cuttings, drain and litter clearance etc. of the access areas and surroundings of the Facilities.
- 4.2.65 The Operator will be responsible for litter picking all external areas and for all litter clearance following local sporting and special events / community events held at the Facilities, to the standard required in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Car Parks

- 4.2.66 The Authority shall be responsible for maintaining the car parks at the Facilities to include the maintenance, repair and replacement where required of the following:
- > Paved or tarmacadam roadways and footpaths
 - > Foul and surface water drain, covers, manholes

- > Access ramps
- > All external lighting including free standing lighting columns
- > Electrical cables
- > Fences, handrails and barriers (including redecoration and wood treatment)
- > Illuminated and non-illuminated signs and notices
- > Litter bins
- > Landscape furniture i.e., benches, raised planters, bollards.

4.2.67 The Operator shall not hire / use the Facilities' car parks for any other purpose than the parking of cars by users / visitors to the Facilities.

Artificial Turf Pitches

4.2.68 The Operator will be responsible for the regular maintenance, sweeping and all repairs to the Artificial Turf Pitches (ATPs), surrounding areas, fencing and pavilion. The Operator will be responsible for the general cleanliness of the ATPs area including removal of litter. The Operator will be responsible for repairs to the boundary fence.

4.2.69 The Operator will ensure:

- > Extensive weed clearing and moss control
- > Power sweeping
- > Drag brushing ensuring even coverage of infill crumb
- > Full inspection/repair of playing surface area, all seams and play lines.

Multi Use Games Area

4.2.70 The Operator will be responsible for the maintenance, repairs and cleanliness of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Ponteland and Newbiggin including repairs to the boundary fence.

Athletics Facility

4.2.71 The Operator will be responsible for the maintenance repairs and cleanliness to the Athletics Track and associated buildings at Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham

4.2.72 The Operator will be responsible for the general cleanliness and maintenance of the Athletics Track, Shot Circle, Throwing and Landing Areas and associated buildings within the boundary to the rear of the building.

4.2.73 The Operator will be responsible for repairs to the boundary fence.

Modifications

4.2.74 The Operator will not be allowed to make any modifications to either the building, plant or equipment provided for the services without the written permission of the Authorised Officer.

Services and Utilities

4.2.75 The Operator will be responsible for ensuring that the means of sewerage disposal and supplies of mains water, electricity, gas and external telephone communications are maintained to the

Facilities. The Operator will be responsible for the prompt payment of all charges in connection with the provision of these services during the period of the contract.

- 4.2.76 The Operator will not permit the disconnection of any electricity, gas or water supply to the Facilities without the written agreement of the Authorised Officer, except where these are to be carried out by the utilities themselves under their emergency or statutory powers. The Operator will be responsible for any costs arising from the interruption to supplies, which are due to his failure to make payments for accounts or to make service agreements.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.2.77 The Operator shall ensure that results of all non-compliant measurements are recorded on the asset management ICT system.
- 4.2.78 The Operator shall report on all inspections and maintenance checks for the purpose of a building audit over the Contract Period. The Operator shall ensure that this information is stored on the asset management ICT system.
- 4.2.79 The Operator shall on an annual basis, review and update the Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) Schedule for the facilities. This must be submitted to the Authority in accordance with the reporting requirements in Section 5 Performance Management and Reporting.
- 4.2.80 The Operator shall on an annual basis, produce a Schedule of Programmed Maintenance for the Facilities. This must be submitted to the Authority in accordance with Section 5 Performance Management and Reporting.
- 4.2.81 The Operator shall provide a Maintenance Programme Progress Update as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 4.2.82 The Maintenance Programme Progress Update should cover (without limitation):
- > Any health and safety issues relating to buildings, plant and equipment
 - > Contractual issues requiring discussion and resolution
 - > Review of action plans as necessary
 - > Review of financial matters
 - > Overall contract compliance including completed and not completed PPM activities, completion of reactive maintenance within and outside the specified response and rectification times and exception report covering the maintenance activities
 - > Results of any audits
 - > Proposals for continuous improvement
 - > Review of cost saving / cost avoidance initiatives
 - > Review of any matters affecting or affected by third party suppliers.
- 4.2.83 The Operator shall submit details of any failures to follow the Schedule of Programmed Maintenance or achieve the required Overall Requirement as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.3 Maintenance and Replacement of Equipment

Overall Requirement

- 4.3.1 Equipment that is available, well maintained, safe and fit for purpose for the activity it is designed for, considering the standard of sport or activity being undertaken and is able to meet the programming requirements of the Services.

Performance Standards

- 4.3.2 The Operator shall maintain all equipment listed in Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory and return them all on the expiry date, or if earlier, the termination date, in good working condition (taking into account fair wear and tear).
- 4.3.3 The Operator shall replace, when that item reaches the end of its useful life, all equipment listed in Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory, excluding any items identified as the responsibility of the Authority, with equipment that is of equivalent or superior quality.
- 4.3.4 The Operator shall provide, at its own cost, any additional equipment and materials required for carrying out the Services. The Operator is responsible for the maintenance and replacement of any such additional equipment.
- 4.3.5 The Operator shall make provision for the hire of sports equipment within the Facilities in order to meet customer requirements.
- 4.3.6 The Operator shall ensure that all equipment listed in Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory, and any replacement or additional equipment is fit for purpose, safe and is maintained to a suitable standard of repair and cleanliness at all times in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.
- 4.3.7 Equipment must be stored safely and securely.
- 4.3.8 The Operator accepts that the equipment listed in Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory, is sufficient to deliver the Services set out in this Services Specification.
- 4.3.9 The Operator shall ensure that an Equipment Inventory is updated on a regular basis to reflect any replaced equipment and to identify any new or written off equipment. The Operator shall confirm the Equipment Inventory to the Authority within one month following the Commencement Date and provide a revised Equipment Inventory to the Authority on an annual basis within one month of the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
- 4.3.10 The Operator shall ensure that all equipment shall comply with relevant industry standards, National Governing Body requirements and British and European Standards and shall be limited to the use it was designed for, as specified within the manufacturer or supplier's guidelines and/or operating manuals.
- 4.3.11 The Operator shall use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that all equipment is replaced on a like for like basis having due regard to relevant advances in equipment manufacture, trends in activity programming and in compliance with relevant industry standards, National Governing Body requirements and British and European Standards.
- 4.3.12 The Operator shall replace the health and fitness equipment in accordance with the agreed Lifecycle Replacement Schedule. Any residual value of equipment that is replaced may be retained by the Operator.

- 4.3.13 The Operator shall ensure that any item of equipment that is found to be defective or has failed is immediately withdrawn from service and repaired or replaced. The Operator shall make it secure and ensure it cannot inadvertently be used whilst withdrawn from service.
- 4.3.14 The Operator shall test all portable electrical appliances to ensure compliance with The Electricity at Work Regulations (1989) and shall maintain a record of the equipment, test results and date of tests and action to be taken in a schedule, which is readily available for inspection by the Authorised Officer.
- 4.3.15 The Operator shall ensure that all equipment is regularly inspected and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer or industry guidelines and appropriate records kept. Inspections and servicing of specialist equipment shall be undertaken regularly by a recognised supplier in accordance with the manufacturer or industry guidelines.
- 4.3.16 The Operator shall ensure that all areas of the Facilities have equipment provided in accordance with the following standards:
- > Sufficient equipment for the activity programmed
 - > Suitable and reasonable arrangements for service users with disabilities
 - > 90% of the following to be available at any one time.
 - Health & Fitness Suite
 - cardiovascular and resistance machines
 - high quality audio/visual systems (95%)
 - Changing & Toilet Facilities
 - male/ female/disabled changing cubicles
 - male/ female/disabled toilets
 - shower cubicles/open showers
 - secure storage lockers
 - sanitary/hair-drying facilities
 - Catering & Vending Facilities
 - vending product range
 - covers/seating area
- 4.3.17 The Operator shall not introduce any additional coin-operated equipment (in addition to items identified in Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory), including gaming and amusement machines, to the Facilities without consultation with the Authority.
- 4.3.18 The Operator shall ensure that the Facility has a defibrillator on each site and that supervisory staff receive regular training updates in line with British Association of Cardiac Rehabilitation (BACR) regulations.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.3.19 The Operator shall provide an updated version of the Equipment Inventory found in Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory to the Authority within one month of the Commencement Date and, annually thereafter, within one month of the commencement of each subsequent Contract Year.
- 4.3.20 The Operator shall submit details of any failures to maintain the required Performance Standards as set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.4 Grounds Maintenance

Overall Requirement

- 4.4.1 External grounds within the site boundaries of the Facilities to be maintained in such a way as to provide a well presented and safe environment for all service users, allowing for efficient and effective use of the Facilities and promoting a positive image of the Facilities at all times.

Performance Standards

The Grounds

- 4.4.2 The Authority will retain responsibility for grounds maintenance and general cleansing which includes sweeping, re-marking and maintenance of car parks, maintenance of grassed and landscaped areas, drains and litter clearance of the access areas and surroundings of the Facilities.
- 4.4.3 The Authority will be responsible for the maintenance of boundary fences surrounding the Facilities as identified in Appendix 6 Site Boundaries.
- 4.4.4 The Operator will be responsible for all litter clearance following local sporting and special events / community events held at the Facilities, to the standard required in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Slippery Surfaces

- 4.4.5 The Authority shall treat hard surfaces, with an appropriate herbicide/fungicide or other suitable material to ensure that at no time there is a formation of algae, moss etc. causing the surface to be slippery.

Snow and Ice

- 4.4.6 During periods of snow and ice, the Operator shall distribute de-icing salt over pathways and external entrances to provide safe routes for service users and staff entering / exiting the Facilities.
- 4.4.7 The Operator shall ensure that any specific hazards caused by inclement weather shall be made safe and reported to the Authority immediately.

Graffiti and Flyposting

- 4.4.8 The Operator shall remove all graffiti and flyposting from all external walls of the Facilities to ensure that the site remains graffiti free and shall use reasonable endeavours to prevent and reduce the writing of graffiti in the sites.
- 4.4.9 The Operator will be responsible for ensuring that any defects or damage to the external structure of the facilities is reported to the Authorised Officer with the minimum delay and confirmed in writing.

Pests, Vermin and Wild Animals

- 4.4.10 The Operator shall eradicate rats and remove wasps' nests, swarms of bees, pests, including Brown Tail Moth and vermin within the Facilities.

General

- 4.4.11 The Authority shall give priority to areas of need in line with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and follow the general principle that the 'dirtier' an area has become, the more quickly it should be cleaned and returned to "Grade A" in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 4.4.12 The Operator shall make proper financial and operational arrangements for the disposal of all effluent, waste and refuse arising from all Sites during the Contract Period.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.4.13 The Operator shall report to the Authority any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.5 Climate Emergency, Environmental and Energy Management

Overall Requirement

- 4.5.1 Facilities that are operated in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner, to reduce energy consumption, minimise chemical usage, recycle appropriate non-hazardous wastes and contribute to the delivery of the Authority's policies for Climate Action Plan, safeguarding the environment and promoting sustainability.

Performance Standards

- 4.5.2 The Authority is committed to reaching carbon neutral by 2030 .and has a strategy to achieve this. The Operator must be aware of the Authority's environmental policy and perform their work to maximised opportunities to reduce pollution.
- 4.5.3 The Operator shall have a clear environmental and energy management policy and implement effective operational practices that have a demonstrably positive effect on the environment that includes:
- > Reduction of pollution to air, water and land
 - > Reduction in the use of environmentally harmful chemicals
 - > Improved energy management (including as appropriate reducing energy consumption, energy conservation and use of renewable energy)
 - > Increasing water efficiency and maximising water recycling opportunities
 - > Maximising recycling and reducing waste, and ensuring that all waste is disposed of correctly
 - > Developing and promoting opportunities for sustainable transport to and from the Facilities
 - > Encouraging the purchase of environmentally sound, locally produced goods and services
 - > Raising awareness amongst staff and service users to ensure these environmental issues are addressed
 - > Protecting and enhancing the town's built and natural environment.

- 4.5.4 The Operator must establish an Environmental and Energy Management Plan covering all the above requirements to be updated with new targets on an annual basis. The Operator must comply fully with any environmental audit carried out by the Authority or external agencies.
- 4.5.5 The Authority is committed to responsible energy management and the efficient use of energy throughout its operations. It also recognises that good energy management helps to protect the environment by conserving natural resources and reducing harmful emissions. The Operator shall take account of, and comply with, the Authority's Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23 (and subsequent replacements) which sets out the which sets out the Authority's aims and objectives for minimising its environmental impact.
- 4.5.6 The Operator shall provide information for the Authority's Environment Management Systems (EMSs). Where applicable, the Operator shall implement systems which are based on, or modelled upon, a recognised standard such as ISO 14001 or Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).
- 4.5.7 The Operator shall be responsible for the procurement and management of Utilities and payment of the Utilities bills for all sites.
- 4.5.8 The Utilities bills shall be in the name of the Operator.
- 4.5.9 The Operator shall monitor and validate all meter readings at all of the Facilities.
- 4.5.10 The Operator shall take all responsible steps to ensure that meter readings (i) can be reconciled to Utilities bills, (ii) are correctly calculated and (iii) accurately reflect actual energy consumption. For each Facility, the Operator is to prepare a monthly report that shall include the following information, set out for the relevant Month and for the Year to Date: Electricity consumption (including half-hourly consumption data), Gas consumption, Other fuel use, and Total energy consumption in terms of kWh and CO₂.
- 4.5.11 The Operator shall ensure contingency plans are in place to address the loss of each or all energy supplies, and that these have been reviewed and tested to a programme agreed with the Authority.
- 4.5.12 The Operator shall ensure its contingency plans are executed as planned with due expediency following the loss of one of more energy supplies. The Operator shall, as soon as it is aware, immediately inform the Authority's Representative of all scheduled interruptions to any energy supply whether or not it may affect the Authority's operations.
- 4.5.13 The Operator shall arrange the implementation, display and renewal of Display Energy Certificates (DECs) at any Properties required by the Authority, including those Properties which require DECs under Government legislation.
- 4.5.14 The Operator shall ensure all DECs are correctly displayed by the required date. The Operator shall advise the Authority on which recommendations to follow in the supplementary advisory reports.
- 4.5.15 The Operator shall advise the Authority on how to meet existing and forthcoming statutory requirements and compliance activities related to Air Conditioning plant (TM 44).

Reporting Requirements

- 4.5.16 The Operator will record and report on all energy consumption (electricity, gas and water) and the amount of non-recyclable waste collected from the Facilities on a monthly basis included total metered consumption and cost. Details of energy consumption shall be provided to the Authority as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

- 4.5.17 A complete record of waste disposal records is to be kept on site as required by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
- 4.5.18 The Operator shall develop an Environmental Management Plan on an annual basis with clear targets to reduce energy consumption and non-recyclable waste. The Environmental Management Plan shall be provided to the Authority one month prior to the Commencement Date and annually thereafter for the duration of the Contract period.

4.6 Legislation and Policy

Overall Requirement

- 4.6.1 Services that comply fully with all Legislation relating to the management of the Facilities and the provision of Services.

Performance Standards

- 4.6.2 The Operator shall ensure that there are no breaches of Legislation, including without limitation, that in respect of health and safety, data protection, child protection and the Equality Act 2010. The Authority and Operator shall also ensure that any relevant planning conditions attached to the Facilities are complied with.
- 4.6.3 The Operator shall ensure that all employees and any sub-contractors or third parties employed by the Operator, have a working knowledge of the Legislation, Regulations and guidelines relating to best practice in managing sport, leisure and community facilities. In particular, the Operator should ensure that:
- > All agents or suppliers who may be required to enter the Facilities are fully aware of all relevant rules and procedures concerning the safeguarding, health and safety regime and fire risk and precautions
 - > All surface water and other liquid spillage within internal areas causing dangerous floor surfaces are dealt with immediately on identification of the problem and signed appropriately
 - > The first aid equipment and supplies, including signage for first aid provision, is physically checked weekly and a record is made which is available for inspection by the Authority
 - > Hazardous materials or equipment at the Facilities, which are to be used in the provision of the Services, are kept under proper control and safekeeping. The hazardous materials or equipment are properly and clearly labelled on their containers and comply with the relevant Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (2002)
 - > It undertakes, at its own cost, its own risk assessments and associated training
 - > It keeps records of accidents and actions taken and these are to be made available for inspection by the Authority
 - > There is a full and comprehensive fire and evacuation procedure. The Operator shall ensure all fire and evacuation systems, and associated equipment are maintained to relevant standards and regulations and shall keep appropriate records. The Operator shall develop and maintain a Normal Operating Procedure and Emergency Action Plan that aligns with the Authority's overall approach to Emergency Planning
 - > Only authorised personnel are permitted in non-public areas of the Facilities, such as plant areas, staff rooms, offices etc.

- 4.6.4 The Operator shall ensure that the Health & Fitness facilities are managed in accordance with the CIMSPA document "Health and Fitness Partner Operators' Guide" or the UK Active Code of Conduct for fitness suite operators or any replacement industry guidance.
- 4.6.5 The Operator shall ensure that OFSTED registered Holiday Schemes are provided where appropriate. The Operator shall ensure that the Scheme is managed in accordance with standards required by The Children Act, OFSTED requirements and the requirements under 4.8 Safeguarding.
- 4.6.6 The Operator shall comply with all relevant Authority policies as notified to the Operator from time to time in accordance with this Contract. These may include policies for Customer Service, Safeguarding, and Environmental Sustainability etc.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.6.7 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.7 Water (Hot and Cold Installations)

Overall Requirement

- 4.7.1 The provision of a hot and cold water supply that meets the required standard for the operation of the Facilities.

Performance Standards

- 4.7.2 The Operator shall ensure provision of a constant supply of hot and cold water to those areas requiring water for domestic usage, also ensuring that where such water is required for drinking purposes that it is from a potable source.
- 4.7.3 The Operator shall ensure water temperatures are maintained at required standards to prevent legionella and other water-borne contaminants.
- 4.7.4 The Operator shall ensure the water system is maintained in accordance with the appropriate health and safety Legislation, standards, guidance and Approved Codes of Practice.
- 4.7.5 The Operator shall work proactively to develop and promote effective best practice water saving efficiency measures across the Facilities.
- 4.7.6 The Operator shall ensure that where domestic hot water is supplied all taps are appropriately labelled.
- 4.7.7 The Operator shall ensure that water closets, drinking fountains and urinals have a supply of cold water, which allows these services to be usable in accordance with the manufacturers' specification.
- 4.7.8 The Operator shall ensure that free drinking water is available at the Facilities.
- 4.7.9 The Operator shall undertake quarterly bacteriological testing of the hot and cold water systems, including sampling for Legionella.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.7.10 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.8 Drainage

Overall Requirement

- 4.8.1 Drainage systems that provide safe effective removal of wastewater, surface water and liquid and solid waste from the facilities in compliance with relevant Legislation and internal and external drainage systems that are maintained in accordance with the appropriate Health and Safety legislation and standards.

Performance Standards

- 4.8.2 The Operator shall ensure that requirements in building regulations are complied with for foul and surface water drainage.
- 4.8.3 The Operator shall ensure that all relevant areas within the facilities have an adequate drainage and sewage system operating.
- 4.8.4 The Operator shall ensure that discharge temperatures do not exceed recommendations set by the Environment Agency.
- 4.8.5 The Authority shall undertake regular testing and, where appropriate, visual inspections of the external drainage systems.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.8.6 The Operator shall ensure that results of all non-compliant measurements are reported to the Authority.
- 4.8.7 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report with actions identified for rectification.

4.9 Ventilation

Overall Requirement

- 4.9.1 Ventilation within the Facilities that provides a healthy and suitable environment conducive to the enjoyment of the sport, leisure or recreational activity being carried out at that particular time and is provided in an energy efficient manner.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.9.2 The Operator shall ensure that results of all non-compliant measurements are reported to the Authority.
- 4.9.3 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report with actions identified for rectification.

4.10 Heating (Thermal Comfort)

Overall Requirement

- 4.10.1 A thermal environment conducive to the enjoyment of the sport, leisure or recreational activity being carried out in an area within the Facilities at a particular time in an energy efficient manner.

Performance Standards

- 4.10.2 The Operator must ensure the heating system is maintained in such a manner to achieve the standard in 4.10.4.

- 4.10.3 The Operator must ensure the heating system is maintained in accordance with the appropriate Health and Safety legislation and standards.
- 4.10.4 The temperature levels which must be maintained will be as follows:
- > Changing accommodation / Wet side – minimum 21°C
 - > Changing accommodation / Dry side - 21°C
 - > Sports Hall – 12 - 18°C
 - > Fitness Suite – 14-18°C
 - > Other Areas (Bar / Café / Reception / Multi-Purpose Rooms, Circulation Areas) – 18 - 22°C.
- 4.10.5 The Operator will be required to record the room temperatures of pool and sporting areas on a weekly basis to ensure the recommended temperatures are maintained.
- 4.10.6 Humidity and temperature within the pool hall must be controlled to prevent undue wear and tear to the building fabric. The Operator will be required to log the results of any tests taken and will be deemed financially responsible for any costs incurred by the Authority as a result of any such damage.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.10.7 The Operator shall ensure that results of all non-compliant measurements are reported to the Authority.
- 4.10.8 The Operator must submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.11 Lighting

Overall Requirement

- 4.11.1 Adequate levels of lighting for the particular activity being undertaken within each area of the Facilities provided in an energy efficient manner.
- 4.11.2 Lighting levels that create a safe and comfortable level of illumination for users, spectators and staff.

Performance Standards

- 4.11.3 The Operator shall ensure that each area within the Facilities has a sufficient lighting level appropriate to its specified use.
- 4.11.4 The Operator shall consider switching off lighting banks parallel to windows and adopt energy management control systems such as time switches, dimmable controls, and presence detectors.
- 4.11.5 The Operator shall ensure the lighting system is maintained in accordance with appropriate health and safety Legislation and standards and to address particular requirements of special needs groups for less powerful lighting.
- 4.11.6 Maintenance of lighting throughout the Facilities must be carried out by a NICEIC approved and / or suitably qualified contractor, with due regard to the recommendations of Sport England Technical Unit. The Operator shall certify that the works are in accordance with current recommendations and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

- 4.11.7 The Operator shall ensure that external lighting is provided for security purposes adjacent to the leisure centres, and the Authority shall ensure the same for the car parks.
- 4.11.8 The Operator shall ensure that the number of non-operating lights or tubes does not exceed 10% of the total in any one area of the Facilities.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.11.9 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.12 Pool Water Quality

Overall Requirement

- 4.12.1 Swimming Pools with a safe and comfortable environment in which service users can participate in both swimming and water sports as required in this Services Specification.

Performance Standards

- 4.12.2 The Operator shall ensure that the Swimming Pools are maintained in accordance with the appropriate current and future health and safety legislation and that the following standards are complied with:
- > HSG 179 – Health and Safety in Swimming Pools
 - > Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) – Code of Practice²
 - > The Handbook of Sports and Recreational Building Design Volume 3 published as of 1996 and The Pool Water Guide; Treatment and Quality of Swimming Pool Water
 - > The Prevention or Control of Legionellosis (including Legionnaires Disease) – Approved Code of Practice L8 (2013).
- 4.12.3 The Operator shall ensure that all pool water is of the level of quality and temperature stipulated within the guidance listed in 4.12.2.
- 4.12.4 The Operator shall ensure that the pool water is maintained in a ‘balanced’ condition. The Operator shall ensure that a balanced water test is taken weekly, duly recorded and action taken to ensure that the pool water is ‘in balance’, corrosion is eliminated, precipitants do not form, and the water is safe for pleasant bathing conditions.
- 4.12.5 The Operator shall ensure that the pool water is tested for pH and free Chlorine as recommended in the guidance highlighted in 4.12.2. The Operator shall ensure that complete records are kept of all readings, date, time and type of test. These shall be available for inspection by the Authority at any time.
- 4.12.6 The Operator shall ensure that the filters are backwashed as recommended in the relevant plant maintenance instructions to ensure that the water quality is maintained at the required standard.
- 4.12.7 A pool water dilution rate of 30 litres per bather per day is a PWTAG recommendation that should be followed by the Operator at the swimming facilities. Standards shall be maintained in line with the up-to-date PWTAG recommendations and industry standards.
- 4.12.8 In the event of more stringent standards being set by the Sports Authority and/or the Health and Safety Executive during the Contract Period, the Operator shall adhere to these more stringent

² Further information on the PWTAG can be found via <https://www.pwtag.org.uk/>

standards. The Operator shall not use different chemical constituents to maintain the above standards without the prior approval in writing of the Authority.

- 4.12.9 The Operator shall ensure that monthly bacteriological tests are undertaken.
- 4.12.10 The Operator shall ensure that no person is permitted to use the swimming pools who is clearly unwell and may pose a risk of infection to others, including persons with open wounds or sores, wearing a bandage, sore or infected eyes or skin and / or discharges from the ears or nose.
- 4.12.11 Environmental Health Officers from the Authority retain the right to take occasional samples of water in the pools for the purpose of verifying the condition of the water.
- 4.12.12 The Operator shall ensure that the maximum instantaneous bather load is not exceeded.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.12.13 The Operator shall report inspections and results of all non-compliant measurements on the ICT Asset Management system. The Operator shall ensure that non-conformance is reported to the Authority.
- 4.12.14 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

4.13 CCTV and Security

Overall Requirement

- 4.13.1 Facilities that are secure and are supported by systems that provide a safe level of security to service users and staff, but which do not compromise the personal privacy of service users.

Performance Standards

- 4.13.2 All relevant areas within the Facilities shall have adequate security arrangements in place.
- 4.13.3 CCTV shall be maintained according to the manufacturer's specification and operated in line with a system that provides a safe level of security to service users during their visit, but which does not compromise the personal privacy of service users.
- 4.13.4 The Operator shall ensure compliance with the Information Commissioner's Code of Practice issued under the Data Protection Act 1998 (or any replacement legislation).
- 4.13.5 The Operator shall at all times be responsible for the total security of the Facilities including all assets, equipment and stock.
- 4.13.6 The Operator shall utilise the security systems installed or provided at the Facilities and shall be fully responsible for its proper maintenance and function. In the event of any alarms or security devices or radios being removed or becoming non-operational or non-maintainable, the Operator shall replace the same with a suitable alternative approved by the Authority.
- 4.13.7 The Operator shall ensure that all external and internal operational CCTV security cameras as part of the security system are operational within the Facilities.
- 4.13.8 The Operator shall be responsible for the safekeeping of any keys to the Facilities and the maintenance of a key register. The Operator shall ensure that a list of key holders, together with their addresses and telephone numbers is supplied to the Authority, the alarm company and the Police before the Commencement Date. The Operator shall update the list whenever changes are made and at least quarterly.

- 4.13.9 The Operator shall ensure that the Authorised Officer is informed immediately of any loss of any such keys, and the Operator shall, at their own cost, replace any such keys or replace locks are required by the Authorised Officer and shall reimburse to the Authority any cost of replacement and / or any reasonable security measures implemented as a result of such a loss.
- 4.13.10 The Operator shall supply a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of members of the Operator's staff who are on a 24 hour call out contact to the Authority, Police, and alarm companies prior to the Commencement Date. This list shall be immediately updated by the Operator and a new list provided in the event that there is a change to any member of staff on the list. One key holder must always be available for call-out in the event of an emergency out of normal operating hours, at a response time of not more than one hour.
- 4.13.11 The Operator shall ensure that only authorised personnel are admitted to any plant areas containing specialist equipment and machinery, e.g., boiler rooms.
- 4.13.12 The Operator shall ensure that appropriate out of hours key holders are appointed to respond to intruder alarms.

Reporting Requirements

- 4.13.13 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Performance Standards set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

5. Performance Management and Reporting

5.1 Planning to Improve (Service Planning)

Overall Requirement

- 5.1.1 An Annual Service Plan that is developed in partnership with the Authority which clearly sets out how the services are to be developed and delivered over the forthcoming year in order to best meet the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribution towards wider local Strategic Outcomes.
- 5.1.2 The Operator will be required to establish a baseline against the Authority's Strategic Objectives and in partnership develop an Annual Service Plan for continuous improvement in the contribution of the service in delivering those objectives.

Performance Standards

- 5.1.3 The Operator acknowledges the importance of a balanced programme and shall prepare an Annual Service Plan for approval by the Authority.
- 5.1.4 The Operator shall ensure that the Annual Service Plan is effective, measurable and sustainable with clearly developed actions on how the Services are to meet the Authority's Strategic Objectives and contribute towards wider local Strategic Outcomes.
- 5.1.5 The Annual Service Plan will set out how the Operator intends to meet the performance Indicator targets following Year 1 of the Contract once a baseline has been established. It will also address issues identified from customer satisfaction data and the achievement of financial targets.
- 5.1.6 The Operator shall identify through the Annual Service Plan and through consultation with the Authority, where it will work with partners within the Facilities and through its Active Communities Partnership Role.
- 5.1.7 The Annual Service Plan shall identify specific areas of joint working with the Authority to reflect the partnership approach in delivering the Services.
- 5.1.8 The Operator shall attend an Annual Service Plan workshop with the Authority one month prior to the Commencement Date and within two weeks of the start of each subsequent year for the duration of the contract.
- 5.1.9 The Annual Service Plan workshop shall provide an opportunity for both parties to work collaboratively to review the Annual Service Plan Report, assess progress and agree targets and actions for the Service Plan for the year ahead.
- 5.1.10 The Operator shall be responsible for producing a draft Annual Service Plan for review at the workshop and for producing the final Annual Service Plan following the workshop.
- 5.1.11 The Operator shall ensure that the Annual Service Plan is developed and implemented. It shall ensure that the draft plan is submitted to the Authority for approval two months prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent year for the duration of the Contract.

- 5.1.12 The Operator shall ensure that the Annual Service Plan sets out in detail how programmes will be measured through the Key Performance Indicators highlighted in 2.11. It should make use of best practice improvement tools including Sport England’s Quest scheme and National Benchmarking Service (NBS), DataHub and Sport England Moving Communities platform.
- 5.1.13 The Operator shall ensure that a key focus of the Annual Service Plan is the development of pathways into sport and physical activity and relationships with local sports clubs, schools and community groups in line with both National Governing Bodies of Sport and RISE North East’s priorities.
- 5.1.14 The Operator shall ensure that the activity programmes within the Annual Service Plan include the following requirements:
 - 5.1.15 The programme of activities must meet the aims and objectives of the Service and are flexible enough to accommodate future changes in local demographics, participation trends, needs and policy
 - 5.1.16 It should be dynamic, innovative and responsive to the requirements of existing and potential future service users and partners
 - 5.1.17 The programme must ensure that all members of local communities may use the Facilities, including underrepresented groups and those from priority localities
 - 5.1.18 It must also reflect appropriate local, regional and National Governing Bodies of Sport’s policies and programmes with clear pathways identified for participants to progress and develop skills in line with RISE North East’s priorities.

Reporting Requirements

- 5.1.20 The Operator shall ensure that an Annual Service Plan Progress Update is provided to the Authority on a quarterly basis as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 5.1.21 The Operator shall submit details of any failure to maintain the required Overall Requirement set out above as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 5.1.22 The Operator shall ensure that the draft Annual Service Plan is provided to the Authority two months prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.

5.2 Meetings and Reporting

Overall Requirement

- 5.2.1 A structured programme of partnership meetings between the Operator and the Authority and a series of reports, which provide the Authority with information on the Operator’s performance in delivering the Services and plans for the future delivery of the Services.
- 5.2.2 A clear governance structure for the Contract through a Community Leisure and Wellbeing Contract Partnership Board which meets quarterly.

Performance Standards

- 5.2.3 The Operator shall ensure that there is in place at all times a clearly defined responsibility chain for implementing, monitoring and reviewing service delivery.
- 5.2.4 The Operator shall provide one overall representative or Contract Manager to be its authorised representative for the Facilities and Services operated on behalf of the Authority.

- 5.2.5 The Operator's Contract Manager shall consult with the Authority's authorised officers as often as may reasonably be necessary for the efficient provision of the Services.
- 5.2.6 The Authority shall be entitled to undertake inspections of the facilities and services at any time to monitor and review service delivery. This may include a monthly service review visit by an authorised officer.
- 5.2.7 The Authority and Operator will use Quest reports and other data sources where applicable to monitor, benchmark and improve performance.
- 5.2.8 The Operator 's representatives shall attend meetings with the Authority's representative(s) in accordance with the schedule set out in Table 6.

Table 6: Meetings Schedule

Meeting	Attendees	Agenda
Monthly (during 1st week of each month to review previous month)	Operator's Contract Manager Authority's Representatives	Review of operational matters
Community Leisure and Wellbeing Contract Meeting (Quarterly)	Partnership Board: Operator's Representatives including senior manager/director Authority's Representatives	Progress on Annual Service Plan and Quarterly Performance Report Progress against Strategic Objectives and contribution towards local priorities Financial performance Service improvement opportunities Variations to contract and commissioning opportunities Other matters of a strategic nature considered appropriate for discussion by the Board.
Annual Service Plan Workshop (within 2 months of the start of each contract year)	Operator's Representatives including senior manager/director Authority's Representatives	Review of Annual Service Report (previous year) Development of Annual Service Plan (forthcoming year)

Reporting Requirements

- 5.2.9 The plans / programmes listed in Table 7 are to be submitted by the Operator to the Authority for approval.
- 5.2.10 The reports listed in Table 8 are to be submitted by the Operator to the Authority.

Table 7: Plans and Programme Reporting

Plan Title	Frequency	Submission Date
Draft Annual Service Plan	Annual	Submission Date
Final Annual Service Plan	Annual	Two months prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent contract year
Active Communities Plan	Annual	Within two weeks following the Annual Service Plan Workshop.
Safety Management Improvement Strategy	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and one month prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Programme of Use	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and one month prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Performance Indicator Targets (for implementation the following Contract Year)	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and one month prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Marketing Plan	Annual	Agreed as part of the Annual Service Plan.
Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) Schedule	Annual	Year 1 of the contract will be baselining in order to set new Performance Indicators for Year 2. Subsequent years to be agreed at the Annual Service Plan Workshop.
Schedule of Programmed Maintenance	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and one month prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Environmental and Energy Management Plan	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Proposal for changes to Minimum Opening Hours	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Proposal for changes to Pricing Schedule	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and two months prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Emergency and business continuity Plan	Annual	Minimum of 3 months prior to implementation of proposed changes.
Quest™ Plus Action Plan	In line with Quest™ Plus assessment frequency	Minimum of 3 months prior to implementation of proposed changes.

Plan Title	Frequency	Submission Date
Workforce Development Plan	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and one month prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.

Table 8: Reports

Report Title	Frequency	Submission Date
Quarterly Performance Report	Quarterly	Within one month of the end of each quarter.
Annual Service Report incorporating Active Communities Report	Annual	Within one week of the start of the second Contract Year and one week prior to the Annual Service Plan Workshop for each subsequent Contract Year.
Maintenance Report	Annual	Within one month of the start of the second Contract Year and within one month following each subsequent Contract Year.
Fire Risk Assessments	Annual	One month prior to the Commencement Date and one month prior to the start of each subsequent Contract Year.
Electrical Certificates	As specified by IEE regulations	Within two weeks of receipt of certificate.
Equipment Inventory	Annual	Within one month following the start of each Contract Year.
Licenses and Legislation Compliance Report	Annual	Within one month following the start of each Contract Year.
Quest Plus Report	Biennial	Within one week of receipt (if commissioned by the Operator).

5.2.11 The Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report shall contain details of any failures to maintain the Overall Requirement as set out in this Services Specification.

5.2.12 The Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report should be concise and contain a maximum 1-page summary on each of the areas shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Quarterly Performance Report

Consolidated Customer Complaints and Feedback Summary
Consolidated Major Accidents, Incidents, Insurance Claims and near misses Report

KPIs – progress against performance targets
Equalities Impact Monitoring
Energy consumption data
Membership numbers broken down by type
Income and Expenditure accounts broken down by budget headings
Maintenance Programme Progress Update
Service Plan Progress Report
Marketing Plan Progress Report
Service Review Summary Report
Sport England Quest outputs and subsequent improvement plans
Staff Update: > Statutory and Mandatory Training Breakdown > Vacancy Rates > Staff Turnover > Employee Attendance Rates

- 5.2.13 An assessment of Key Performance Indicator shall be included as an Appendix to the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 5.2.14 The Annual Service Report shall, as a minimum, provide a summary of the results and recommendations set out in all the reports outlined in Table 7 and report on performance against the annual plans and programmes agreed prior to the commencement of the relevant Contract year.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Minimum Opening Hours of Leisure Facilities

Facility	Monday to Friday	Weekend
Ashington Leisure Centre	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Berwick Leisure Centre	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Blyth Sports Centre	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Concordia Leisure Centre, Cramlington	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Morpeth Leisure Centre (New)	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Newbiggin Sports Centre	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Ponteland Leisure Centre	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Prudhoe Water World	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Wentworth Leisure Centre, Hexham	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm
Willowburn Leisure Centre, Alnwick	7am – 9pm	9am – 4pm

Centres may offer reduced opening times on bank holidays, the times to be determined in advance with the Authorised Officer.

Centres may be closed to members of the public on the following Public Holidays:

- > New Year's Day
- > Christmas Day
- > Boxing Day

Appendix 2 Joint Use Arrangements

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 3 Protected Bookings

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 4 Existing Bookings

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 5 Current Pricing / Fees & Charges

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 6 Site Boundaries and Plans

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 7 Repair and Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrices

The Operator shall service and maintain all items in accordance with statutory requirements and manufacturers recommendations and the other provisions of this Contract.

However, there are a number of items which the Authority will retain repair responsibility for as set out below and as described at Clause 14 (Condition of the Facilities) of this Contract.

For the avoidance of doubt, any items not covered within this matrix shall be the responsibility of the Operator.

The **repair** responsibilities of the Operator and the Local Authority are set out in the table below:

Repair Responsibility Matrix		
Item	Authority	Operator
All water or air heating plant and systems.		✓
All pipe work systems, valves, and fittings within the Facilities.		✓
All heating/cooling and domestic water services treatment plant and chemicals (including chemical supply).		✓
Outdoor pitches and courts, surface maintenance and line markings.		✓
Outdoor pitches and courts surface replacement.	✓	
All fans, air moving equipment inclusive of but not limited to filters, dampers, fan motors and control gear.		✓
All alarm systems inclusive of but not limited to intruder alarms, fire alarms, emergency assistance alarms.		✓
All lighting fittings, internal and external.		✓
All electrical accessories associated with the lighting and power distribution systems, inclusive of but not limited to fuse-boards and fuses, switchgear, switches and socket outlets, contactors, transformers, and any automatic control sensors.		✓
Fixed wiring systems of less than mains voltage alarms, telephones, data cables etc.		✓
All portable appliances and the obligatory annual testing required under the Public Entertainments Licence including Fire Alarm Inspections, gas equipment safety inspections and Fire Appliance testing.		✓
All telephone systems and equipment, whether leased, rented or owned.		✓
All public address systems and equipment.		✓

Repair Responsibility Matrix		
Water Safety Policy Management Plan and Monitoring Schedule.		✓
All portable firefighting appliances, inclusive of any discharge or replacement. The Operator shall ensure that suitable firefighting appliance cover is maintained at all times.		✓
All sanitary ware inclusive of but not limited to WC's, wash hand basins, sinks, water closets, showers, and wastewater preventers.		✓
Any internal rainwater systems.		✓
All cleaning, sterilisation, and certification of domestic water systems inclusive of all water storage vessels in accordance with BS 6700 with copies of the certification forwarded to the Authority's Representative.		✓
Fixtures, fittings, and appliances.		✓
Internal joinery, locks, floor fittings, spring, and panic bolts.		✓
Internal and exterior window cleaning.		✓
Light bulbs, light fittings, electrical fittings, sockets etc. and high-level cleaning roof lights.		✓
Emergency lighting systems.		✓
All other furniture, fittings, and contents.		✓
All glazing through the Facilities including glazed walls.		✓
Repair / replacement of any wall finishes damaged by the Operator, their employees, agents, or licensees in the performance of its obligations.		✓
Floor finishes.		✓
Waste drains, rainwater pipes, soil pipes and fittings and the free flow of all the wastewater systems.		✓
Internal damage to building caused by misuse or vandalism.		✓
External damage to building caused by misuse or vandalism.		✓
Water waste preventers, cistern ball valves, taps, stop valves etc.		✓
Health and safety fittings and equipment		✓
Internal and external signs and notices.		✓
Internal and external CCTV.		✓
Internal decoration and the protection of the fabric of the structure (as may be necessary for the proper performance of the Service), including all tiled, boarded or otherwise covered surfaces.		✓

Repair Responsibility Matrix		
External decoration and the protection of the fabric of the structure (as may be necessary for the proper performance of the Service), including all tiled, boarded or otherwise covered surfaces.		✓
Static components such as but not limited to boiler shells, air handling units, air ducting, cold water storage cisterns.		✓
Underground services external to the Facilities.	✓	
Fixed mains electrical wiring systems within the buildings, including accessories and other items.		✓
Utilities cable and pipework external to the building. Including gas, electric, water and telephone mains, lightening conductors or rods.		✓
All below ground drainage inclusive of inspection chambers, interceptors and access points excluding access covers, seals, and galleys.	✓	
Foundations.	✓	
External walls excluding the internal finish of such walls, except when disturbed by the Operator undertaking repairs (in which case it is the Operator's responsibility).	✓	
The structural frame of the Facilities including chimneys, where they exist, excluding any internal finishes, except when disturbed by the Operator undertaking repairs (in which case it is the Operator's responsibility).	✓	
Roof coverings and structures, excluding suspended ceilings.	✓	
Structural floors, including any screed finish, but excluding any coverings that are loose laid or form a finish on the surface of the screed, except where disturbed by the Operator undertaking repairs.	✓	✓
Rainwater pipes and gutters, external soil and waste pipes, service entry connections, flues, light fittings, and signs fitted to the external roof or wall.		✓
External door and window structures including decoration but excluding glazed walls		✓
Lifts (Including maintenance, testing and inspections in accordance with Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998).		✓

The Operator shall service and maintain all items in accordance with statutory requirements and manufacturers recommendations and the other provisions of this Contract.

However, there are a number of items which the Authority will retain lifecycle replacement responsibility for as set out below and as described at Clause 14 (Condition of the Facilities) of this Contract.

For the avoidance of doubt, any items not covered within this matrix shall be the responsibility of the Operator.

The **lifecycle replacement** responsibilities of the Operator and the Local Authority are set out in the table below.

Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrix		
Item	Authority	Operator
All water or air heating plant and systems.	✓	
All pipe work systems, valves, and fittings within the Facilities.	✓	
All heating/cooling and domestic water services treatment plant and chemicals (including chemical supply).		✓
Outdoor pitches and courts, surface maintenance and line markings.		✓
Outdoor pitches and courts surface replacement.	✓	
All fans, air moving equipment inclusive of but not limited to filters, dampers, fan motors and control gear.	✓	
All alarm systems inclusive of but not limited to intruder alarms, fire alarms, emergency assistance alarms.	✓	
All lighting fittings, internal and external.		✓
All electrical accessories associated with the lighting and power distribution systems, inclusive of but not limited to fuse-boards and fuses, switchgear, switches and socket outlets, contactors, transformers, and any automatic control sensors.	✓	
Fixed wiring systems of less than mains voltage alarms, telephones, data cables etc.		✓
All portable appliances and the obligatory annual testing required under the Public Entertainments Licence including Fire Alarm Inspections, gas equipment safety inspections and Fire Appliance testing.		✓
All telephone systems and equipment, whether leased, rented or owned.		✓
All public address systems and equipment.		✓
Water Safety Policy Management Plan and Monitoring Schedule.		✓
All portable firefighting appliances, inclusive of any discharge or replacement. The Operator shall ensure that suitable firefighting appliance cover is maintained at all times.		✓

Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrix		
All sanitary ware inclusive of but not limited to WC's, wash hand basins, sinks, water closets, showers, and wastewater preventers.		✓
Any internal rainwater systems.		✓
All cleaning, sterilisation, and certification of domestic water systems inclusive of all water storage vessels in accordance with BS 6700 with copies of the certification forwarded to the Authority's Representative.		✓
Fixtures, fittings, and appliances.		✓
Internal joinery, locks, floor fittings, spring, and panic bolts.		✓
Internal and exterior window cleaning.		✓
Light bulbs, light fittings, electrical fittings, sockets etc. and high-level cleaning roof lights.		✓
Emergency lighting systems.	✓	
All other furniture, fittings, and contents.		✓
All glazing through the Facilities including glazed walls.		✓
Repair / replacement of any wall finishes damaged by the Operator, their employees, agents, or licensees in the performance of its obligations.		✓
Floor finishes.		✓
Waste drains, rainwater pipes, soil pipes and fittings and the free flow of all the wastewater systems.		✓
Internal damage to building caused by misuse or vandalism.		✓
External damage to building caused by misuse or vandalism.		✓
Water waste preventers, cistern ball valves, taps, stop valves etc.		✓
Health and safety fittings and equipment		✓
Internal and external signs and notices.		✓
Internal and external CCTV.		✓
Internal decoration and the protection of the fabric of the structure (as may be necessary for the proper performance of the Service), including all tiled, boarded or otherwise covered surfaces.		✓
External decoration and the protection of the fabric of the structure (as may be necessary for the proper performance of the Service), including all tiled, boarded or otherwise covered surfaces.		✓
Static components such as but not limited to boiler shells, air handling units, air ducting, cold water storage cisterns.	✓	

Lifecycle Replacement Responsibility Matrix		
Underground services external to the Facilities.	✓	
Fixed mains electrical wiring systems within the buildings, including accessories and other items.		✓
Utilities cable and pipework external to the building. Including gas, electric, water and telephone mains, lightening conductors or rods.		✓
All below ground drainage inclusive of inspection chambers, interceptors and access points excluding access covers, seals, and galleys.	✓	
Foundations.	✓	
External walls excluding the internal finish of such walls, except when disturbed by the Operator undertaking repairs (in which case it is the Operator' s responsibility).	✓	
The structural frame of the Facilities including chimneys, where they exist, excluding any internal finishes, except when disturbed by the Operator undertaking repairs (in which case it is the Operator' s responsibility).	✓	
Roof coverings and structures, excluding suspended ceilings.	✓	
Structural floors, including any screed finish, but excluding any coverings that are loose laid or form a finish on the surface of the screed, except where disturbed by the Operator undertaking repairs.	✓	
Rainwater pipes and gutters, external soil and waste pipes, service entry connections, flues, light fittings, and signs fitted to the external roof or wall.		✓
External door and window structures including decoration but excluding glazed walls	✓	
Lifts (Including maintenance, testing and inspections in accordance with Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998).	✓	

Appendix 8 Equipment Inventory

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 9 Safeguarding

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/care/support/safeguarding.aspx>

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Safeguarding.aspx>

<https://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/resources.html>

Appendix 10 Equalities Policy

Appendix 11 OpenActive Requirements

Delivering OpenActive as part of your contract

Appendix 12 Information Governance Agreement

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 13 Public Health Additional Data

Provided within Data Room

Appendix 14 Health Equity Audit Report

Provided within Data Room



Northumberland
County Council

Appendix 2

Northumberland Leisure and Well-being Service Evaluation Criteria Guidance

1. Quality / Social Value Method Statements

Method Statement Questions	% Points (Quality total – 70%)	Anticipated Outcomes (All responses must be in a format compatible with Microsoft Word)	Page Limit
1 How will your organisation be an active partner working with the Council's Health and Wellbeing team? What resources will you put in place to support this? Please include a draft Active Communities Delivery Plan for Year 1 of the Contract as an Appendix	6	<p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The innovative and creative approaches you will bring to make leisure centres outward looking and to become anchor organisations within their communities. A description of how you will stimulate activity in the local community The resources you will allocate/re-deploy to support an Active Communities partnership role? Which residents of the County would you propose to target Who would you envisage as the key partners that you will need to engage with? Clear outline plan for year 1 of the contract showing proposed programmes you will deliver and where you will support the Council and other active partners The anticipated impact on physical activity levels expected from the active communities offer. 	Maximum of 7 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt Plus Active Communities Delivery Plan as an Appendix

2	How will you deliver the Authority's Strategic Objectives, identified in the Services Specification, over the life of the Contract?	10	<p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline of how you will contribute towards each of the Strategic Objectives Outline how your approach will contribute towards tackling inequalities in the County Identification of what your priorities will be for raising activity levels Indicative targets for the key performance indicators in the Services Specification. 	Maximum of 10 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt
3	What targeted initiatives will you install for people who are inactive or with health challenges which could be improved through physical activity?	8	<p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you will work in partnership with primary care and healthcare providers in the County to develop pathways from primary care How you will identify those who are inactive in Northumberland How you will target and communicate with those individuals/groups and targeted groups for example, those residents with disabilities The proposed interventions to be delivered directly or in partnership you propose, taking into consideration needs relating to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention 	Maximum of 7 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt

4	<p>Explain how your approach to programming, pricing and community and stakeholder engagement will be designed to support increases in physical activity participation, improve health and wellbeing and help tackle inequalities. Please also provide your proposed core prices for the contract in year 1 clearly showing how they compare to the current prices.</p>	8	<p>How you will track progress and the overall effectiveness of the proposed interventions.</p> <p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you will design, review and deliver programmes for the services to increase participation and tackle inequalities How your approach to pricing will support access for all residents of the County and contribute towards tackling inequalities How your design and delivery of the services will be informed by regular community and stakeholder engagement How you will engage with stakeholders and communities to maximise participation, particularly among target groups A list of proposed core prices and how they compare with current prices. 	<p>Maximum of 8 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt Appendix showing proposed core prices and how they compare to current prices.</p>
5	<p>Explain your approach to managing the mobilisation of the Contract and the resources that you will dedicate to mobilisation. Your response should include a detailed mobilisation plan as an appendix.</p>	5	<p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of your approach to mobilisation The resources you will dedicate to mobilisation including head office resources 	<p>Maximum of 4 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt plus Mobilisation Plan as an appendix</p>

6a	Please provide Planned and Preventative Maintenance (PPM) and Lifecycle replacement plans for the leisure facilities.	5	<p>Detailed Mobilisation Plan as an appendix.</p> <p>Your response should include for all leisure facilities:</p> <p>Detailed PPM plan for the life of the Contract</p> <p>A robust estimate of the costs for the PPM and lifecycle replacement items</p> <p>Clear identification of costs borne by the Authority and the Operator as set out in the Services Specification</p> <p>PPM and Lifecycle risk matrix for the top 5 risks with proposed mitigation measures.</p>	None
6b	What resources will you put in place to deliver the Operator repair and maintenance responsibilities in the Services Specification?	4	<p>Your response should include:</p> <p>Clearly identified local resources proposed for the Northumberland contract detailing how and where resources will support be provided from</p> <p>Any head office or regional support</p> <p>Sub-contracted resources</p> <p>Contingency resources.</p>	Maximum of 5 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt
7	How will you ensure that you and your onward supply chain will meet the sustainability requirements of the Contract and contribute towards the Authority's carbon neutral ambition?	5	<p>Your response should include:</p> <p>How you will maximise energy and water efficiency in the delivery of the services and management of facilities</p>	Maximum of 5 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt

			<p>Approach to waste management</p> <p>Climate resilience – ability to respond to effects of climate change which may be included in business continuity</p> <p>How you will engage your workforce and customers on the sustainability agenda</p>	
8	<p>What HR resources and training opportunities will you bring to the Authority’s community leisure and wellbeing offer?</p>	5	<p>Your response should include:</p> <p>Your approach and experience of managing staff transfers (TUPE)</p> <p>Clear identification of HR and training resources</p> <p>A demonstration of how your appraisal system links into training and continuous improvement</p> <p>Core annual training programmes for staff within the Contract</p> <p>Your approach to workforce development</p> <p>How you will support staff and workplace wellbeing.</p>	<p>Maximum of 6 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt</p>
9	<p>How will your Quality Assurance system ensure high standards of customer satisfaction for key operational areas including cleaning, customer service, health and safety and maintenance?</p>	4	<p>Your response should include:</p> <p>Diagram showing your quality assurance system and how audits and/or customer feedback links with improvement planning</p> <p>Any quality assurance certifications held such as ISO or Sport England’s Quest</p>	<p>Maximum of 5 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt</p>

10	Outline how you will track the progress of the Contract including the use of ICT and reporting progress against the key performance indicators for the Contract.	5	<p>Diagram illustrating your health and safety management system.</p> <p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of your ICT capability How you will accurately collect data required for the performance indicators and contribute to public health indicators How you will collect and report on qualitative measures How you will present a “dashboard” to the Authority for monthly and quarterly reporting How the presentation of information can be adapted for different audiences How information will be used to drive service improvements. 	<p>Maximum of 5 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt</p> <p>Example dashboard reports can be included as Appendix</p>
11	Please outline what wider social value you will bring to the Contract including training and employment opportunities, use of the local supply chain and social investment.	5	<p>Your response should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you will measure Social Value How you will use your role as a major employer in the County to deliver social value, including details of training and employment opportunities expected Impact of investment on the local supply chain. 	<p>Maximum of 6 A4 sides, minimum font size 11pt</p>

Maximum % Points Available 70

2. Method statement scoring evaluation criteria

Assessment	Scores 0-5	% Equivalent (Unweighted)	Reason to award this score based on evidence provided against the criteria included
Unacceptable	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not meet the Core Requirements Does not comply and/or insufficient information provided to demonstrate that the Candidate has the ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource & quality measures required to meet the Core Requirements, with little or no evidence to support the response Does not submit a reply to the question.
Serious reservations	1	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets some of the Core Requirements with major reservations. Considerable reservations of the bidder's relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, and resource & quality measures required to meet the Core Requirements, with little or no evidence to support the response.
Minor reservations	2	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfies the Core Requirements with minor reservations Some minor reservations of the Candidate's relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, and resource & quality measures required to meet the Core Requirements with little or no evidence to support the response.
Satisfactory	3	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfies the Core Requirements Demonstration by the Candidate of the relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource and quality measures required to meet the Core Requirements with evidence to support the response.
Good	4	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfies the Core Requirements with minor additional benefits Good demonstration by the Candidate of the relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource & quality measures required to meet the Core Requirements

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response identifies factors that will offer potential added value, with evidence to support the response.
Excellent	5	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfies the Core Requirements with major additional benefits • Exceptional demonstration by the bidder of the relevant ability, understanding, experience, skills, resource & quality measures required to meet the Core Requirements • Response identifies factors that will offer potential added value, with evidence to support the response.

3. Price Award Criteria

The bidder offering the most favourable annual average management fee payment over the 10-year period to the Authority / payment to the Operator will be awarded the full 30 percentage points available for price.

Other bids will be scored according to where their bid falls within a determined range from the highest bidder, based on 1% having a value of £40,000.

Bids that fall outside of this range (£1,200,000 below the highest tender price) will be awarded 0%. Price scores will be calculated using the following approach:

Price Scoring Example

First place is an annual average management fee payment to the Authority of £100,000 = 30% points

Second-place is an annual average management fee payment to the Authority of £50,000 Difference between bids = £50,000

% Value of difference = $\frac{£50,000}{£40,000} = 1.25\%$ points Bidder 2 score = 30 points – 1.25 points = 28.75% points

Third place is an annual average management fee payment to the Operator of £50,000 Difference between bids = £150,000

%Value of difference = $\frac{£150,000}{£40,000} = 3.75$ points Bidder 3 score = 30 points – 3.75 points = 26.25% point

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet
Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Merger of North and South Northumberland Coroner Areas

Report of Councillor(s) Councillor Gordon Stewart, Cabinet Member for Looking After our Communities

Responsible Officer(s): Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

Achieving Value for Money

- 1.1 The Authority has a statutory duty to appoint a Senior Coroner and to provide sufficient resources for the coroner to undertake that role. The service has undergone a transformation programme since 2019, which has seen the county transition from operating the Coroner Service with two Senior Coroners, to operating with one. New systems and improved ways of working have been deployed to become standard operating practice and have been endorsed by the Chief Coroner for England and Wales. By merging the North and South Northumberland coroner areas, this will be the ultimate step in this programme of change which has delivered best practice and improved services to bereaved families, along with value for money.

Tackling Inequalities

- 1.2 The one coronial area for the county will ensure equity to provision of service for the whole of Northumberland.

Driving Economic Growth

- 1.3 None.

2. Purpose of report

This report seeks Cabinet approval to the proposed merger of the North and South Northumberland Coronial areas and the Business Case for the merger, detailed in the confidential appendix elsewhere on this agenda.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:

- 3.1 To the merger of the North Northumberland and the South Northumberland Coronial areas and to endorse the Business Case for the merger included on the agenda as a confidential appendix for submission to the Ministry of Justice,
- 3.2 That the name of the new service will be the 'Northumberland Coroner Area',
- 3.3 To authorise the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Looking After our Communities to take all necessary steps to progress the Business Case including (but not limited to) making amendments or adjustments to the Business Case and to authorise the submission of the Business Case to the Ministry of Justice on behalf of the Authority, and
- 3.4 To authorise the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Looking After our Environment to take any further steps necessary to facilitate the merger of North and South Northumberland Coronial areas on behalf of the Authority.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The report was added to the Forward Plan on 8 November 2023. As the merger of the North Northumberland and South Northumberland Coroner Areas impacts all wards within the county of Northumberland, then the decision to merge to become one Northumberland Coroner Area is a key decision.

5. Background

- 5.1 The previous Senior Coroner for South Northumberland, Mr Eric Armstrong, retired during September 2019. Following Mr Armstrong's retirement, the Senior Coroner for North Northumberland Mr Tony Brown became the Acting Senior Coroner for South Northumberland effective from October 2019 and plans were made to merge the North and South Northumberland areas to become one Northumberland district.
- 5.2 In February 2020, Mr Tony Brown advised Northumberland County Council of his intention to retire, effective from September 2020. Mr Brown then took a period of sickness absence effective from February 2020 and did not return prior to his formal retirement on 30 September 2020.
- 5.3 During this period (February to September 2020), Assistant Coroner for North Northumberland, Mr Andrew Hetherington, was made Mr Brown's Nominated Deputy and judicially led and delivered the Coroner Service for the North and South Northumberland areas.
- 5.4 In June 2020, a recruitment process commenced to seek a new Senior Coroner for North Northumberland and Acting Senior Coroner for South Northumberland. Mr Andrew Hetherington was appointed into this post, effective from 1 October 2020.
- 5.5 When the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 came into force in 2013, over 100 coroner areas existed across England and Wales. The small size of some of these areas prevented their effective management and cost efficiency. Consequently, the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor took a view that the volume of areas should reduce via a scheme of appropriate mergers, with determining factors for suitability focused on the volume of reported deaths and geographical area.

- 5.6 When a local authority wishes to merge one or more coroner areas into a new area, it must apply to the Lord Chancellor with written reasons, providing a business case for the merger. The Ministry of Justice administer this process and provide a template business case for local authorities to complete. This template has been used to produce the Northumberland merger business case.
- 5.7 A merger cannot take place unless the newly formed area will consist of a whole local authority area, more than one local authority area, or two or more old coroner areas each of which was wholly within the same local authority area.
- 5.8 When a merger takes place, the Order that merges the coroner areas will specify the name of the new area. Should the proposed merger progress, this will create a new area for the county, known as the Northumberland Coroner Area.
- 5.9 The merger which is proposed to create one Northumberland coroner area is the ultimate action to be taken following the retirements and changes outlined above and to conclude the Coroner Service transformation programme which began in 2019. Senior Coroner Hetherington supports this action.
- 5.10 Finally, this merger is proposed to follow national policy established by the Ministry of Justice and supported by the Chief Coroner to merge smaller coronial areas and to replace acting Coroners with full time equivalents with a much larger case load relevant to the area and to deliver efficient, consistent, and proportionate working practice across the service.
- 5.11 If the Ministry of Justice agrees to the merger of the North and South Northumberland Coronial areas, then, subject to the making of the Order by the Lord Chancellor, Mr. Andrew Hetherington will become the Senior Coroner for the newly merged Coronial area of Northumberland. The Ministry of Justice have indicated their full support for this merger to take place.
- 5.12 The merger will have a positive impact on service delivery; indeed, this has already happened under the judicial leadership of Mr Hetherington since he assumed his position of Senior Coroner for North Northumberland and Acting Senior Coroner for South Northumberland on 1 October 2020.
- 5.13 The attached Business Case, which Cabinet is invited to endorse, reflects the current operational arrangements and should the Ministry of Justice agree the merger it will make no noticeable difference to the way in which the Coroner Service has operated for that period.

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

- 6.1 Agree to support the proposed merger of the North Northumberland and South Northumberland Coroner areas, enabling the county to deliver a Coroner Service for the whole county, under the administrative framework of one single area, known as the Northumberland Coroner Area.
- 6.2 In doing so, the Coroner Service for Northumberland will align to Chief Coroner guidance which recommends that smaller coroner areas merge to create one proportionate area, where economies of scale can be achieved. Operational arrangements such as this are defined by the Chief Coroner as a model coroner area.

- 6.3 By merging and becoming one single coroner area, the Senior Coroner will be able to submit one single annual statistical return to the Ministry of Justice, therefore streamlining this process.
- 6.4 Continue to operate as North Northumberland and South Northumberland Coroner Areas, with Senior Coroner Andrew Hetherington sitting as Senior Coroner for North Northumberland and Acting Senior Coroner for South Northumberland.
- 6.5 In not merging, the two areas will continue to co-exist and deliver an excellent service to the county and its residents, but without the simplicity and clarity that a single Northumberland Coroner Area provides to all stakeholders, bereaved families included.
- 6.6 As two areas which operationally co-exist but remain as separate coroner jurisdictions, the Senior Coroner will continue to be required to complete two annual statistical returns to the Ministry of Justice.

7. Implications

Policy	National policy established by the Ministry of Justice and supported by the Chief Coroner, seeks to merge smaller coronial areas and to replace acting Senior Coroners with full time equivalents with a much larger case load relevant to the area and to deliver efficient, consistent, and proportionate working practice across the service.
Finance and value for money	Northumberland County Council provides 100% of the funding to provide a local Coroner Service for the county. There are no financial implications from the merger.
Legal	There are no legal issues that need to be resolved before a merger can go ahead (in addition to the Lord Chancellor making an order under Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act).
Procurement	None arising from this report.
Human resources	None arising from this report.
Property	None arising from this report.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified The areas have effectively operated as a single area for a substantial period and no equality or diversity issues have been identified or raised during that time.
Risk assessment	None arising from this report.

Crime and disorder	None arising from this report.
Customer considerations	If Cabinet approves the Business case for submission to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Justice then conducts a public consultation exercise in advance of any decision to merge the relevant areas.
Carbon reduction	None arising from this report.
Health and wellbeing	Steps have already been taken to improve services to bereaved families in the county, and across the two jurisdictions local people have benefited from improved systems and working practices in the Coroner Service as well having better accessibility to the service when needed, which is inevitably at one of the most challenging times in their lives.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Business Case – Appendix 1

[Merger of North and South Northumberland Coroner Areas MOJ Business Case.docx](#)

Note: Annex A of Appendix 1 contain information relating to an individual’s salary and are excluded from publication under paragraph 3 of Schedule 2A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Annex B contains individual email addresses of the consultees and have been excluded under Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Chief Coroner Guidance No. 14 – Mergers of Coroner Areas

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GUIDANCE-No.14-MERGERS-OF-CORONER-AREAS-final.pdf>

9. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable.

10. Author and Contact Details

Karen Lounton, Service Manager – Registrars, Coroners and Archives
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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

PFI Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) Responsibilities

Report of Councillor(s) Cllr Gordon Stewart, Cabinet Member for Looking After our Communities

Responsible Officer(s): Graeme Binning, Chief Fire Officer Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This recommendation directly supports the NCC Corporate Plan Priority of Achieving Value for Money. This will be achieved by ensuring that the money spent on maintaining, repairing and replacing furniture, fixtures and equipment at the PFI community fire stations at Pegswood and West Hartford (including Headquarters) reflects the needs of the Service. The current arrangement involves paying the PFI provider in excess of £80k per annum, when the cost of the service provided is unlikely to be in excess of £30k.

This recommendation has potential to indirectly support the NCC Corporate Plan Priorities of Tackling Inequalities and Driving Economic Growth by delivering an annual efficiency of £60k, which can be invested in other service areas.

2. Purpose of report

This report provides the detail of this provision and seeks Cabinet approval for the removal of the loose furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) element of the current North East Fire & Rescue Authority (NEFRA) Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. This proposal has potential to achieve a total efficiency of £1,375,750, from its proposed effective date of 1st April 2022 to the expiration of the contract in 2035/36.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the removal of the FF&E element of the current NEFRA PFI contract, in order to realise efficiencies in the region of £1,375,750 from its proposed effective date of 1st April 2022 up to the expiration date

of the contract in 2035/36 and delegates authority to the Chief Fire Officer to authorise the deed of variation to be entered into, to effect this variation.

- 3.2 It is also recommended that an earmarked reserve is created to facilitate an alternative more cost effective solution for FF&E ongoing repair, maintenance and parts, following the proposed withdrawal from the existing FF&E element of the current NEFRA PFI contract. It is proposed to create the reserve from the remainder from the efficiency saving of £1,375,750 after the existing savings target of £60k pa has been realised.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

This report first appeared on the Forward Plan on 27th October 2023.

5. Background

- 5.1 Since 2010, Northumberland has been the lead Fire Authority in a 25-year, three partner PFI contract provided by Collaborative Services Support (CSS). The other partners being Durham & Darlington and Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Authorities. The proportion of the contract value between the three Authorities is as follows:
- Northumberland – 51.3%
 - Durham & Darlington – 32.1%
 - Tyne & Wear – 16.6%
- 5.2 The contract, which runs to 2035, includes the provision of community fire stations at West Hartford, Pegswood, Tynemouth, Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland; as well as the NFRS Service Headquarters (SHQ) at West Hartford.
- 5.3 The contract is funded via the payment of a monthly Unitary Charge by the Authorities to CSS. The current monthly charge is £449,697.46, of which £230,739.77 (51.3%) falls to be payable by Northumberland. This payment is offset by quarterly PFI Credits of £825,722, i.e. £275.240 per month; provided by Central Government. This equates to a contribution of £404,688 per quarter or £134,895 per month for Northumberland. This results in monthly payment deficit for Northumberland of £95,845, which is funded through the NFRS mainstream budget.
- 5.4 The Unitary Charge covers several elements, which include:
- Mortgage payment – the Authorities will own their respective buildings post 2035.
 - Provision of a Facilities Management Service.
 - Provision of a Grounds Maintenance Service.
 - Provision of a FF&E maintenance, repair and replacement service.
- 5.5 In June 2021, a proposal was made by the NFRS Estates Manager to the NFRS SLT, recommending that the FF&E provision of the PFI contract be removed, with a view to realising an efficiency for the Authority of approximately £775k over the remainder of the contract. The recommendation proposed that NFRS/NCC would assume responsibility for the maintenance, repair and replacement of any FF&E items.

- 5.6 The FF&E element of the PFI contract is defined in an elementary manner such as desks, chairs, tambour units, small fridges etc. Under the initial contract arrangements the PFI provider, CSS, would be responsible for the maintenance, repair and where necessary replacement of such items.
- 5.7 The initial proposal identified the 2022/23 annual FF&E element of the Unitary Charge was £118,729, of which £79k was charged to Northumberland. This figure is index linked and will increase with inflation on an annual basis. However, when the Deed of Variation was produced by CSS; the annual reduction in the UC was £163,526.56, of which £83,889 would be credited to Northumberland for 2022/23. The effective date for the Deed of Variation is 1st April 2022. The refunds due for 2022/23 will be credited during 2023/34 should this recommendation be approved.
- 5.8 The recommendation accepted by the NFRS SLT included a budget efficiency to NCC of £60k per annum and utilisation of the remainder of the efficiency to create a fund for any FF&E requirements which emerged during the remainder of the contract period. This fund is to be cumulative, i.e. building each year, as the majority of the requirements are likely to be towards the end of the contract. A separate Direct Agreement has been established between NFRS and the Facilities Management provider to provide 180 hours of labour per annum for the maintenance and repair of FF&E items, at an annual cost of £4,500. This maximises the use of FM staff on-site, thus reducing travel costs to carry out repairs and maintenance. This contract does not include the provision of parts for repairs or replacement, such costs to be borne by NFRS/NCC. This will be funded via the accumulating FF&E fund taken from the efficiency balance.
- 5.9 The decision to accept this recommendation was taken by the NFRS SLT, which was chaired by the previous Chief Fire Officer on 24th June 2021. The decision is duly recorded in the SLT Decision Log and the Minutes of that particular meeting. The decision did not involve contractually committed expenditure; it was based upon the realisation of an efficiency rather than expenditure. At that time, the anticipated total efficiency over the length of the contract was in the region of £775k and was therefore considered to be within the Delegated Authority of the Chief Fire Officer under Part 9. Section 2.4 of the NCC Constitution extant at that time.
- 5.10 Subsequently, the CSS Legal Team has asked for evidence of the authority of the Chief Fire Officer to make this decision under the Delegated Authority. Pending receipt of such evidence, they are currently unable to sign the Deed of Variation.
- 5.11 This matter has been discussed at length with the NCC Legal Team and the advice is that the decision should be escalated to the NCC Cabinet for approval. The reason for this is that, whilst the recommendation does not relate directly to expenditure, it does relate to financial matters and the total figures being considered exceed the Delegated Authority for Corporate Directors in Part 9: Sections 2.3 (£500k) and 2.4 (£1m) of the Constitution extant at that time.
- 5.12 The financial incentives to support this recommendation are:
- 2022/23 – financial efficiency for Northumberland - £83,889 - £10,000 legal fees = **£73,889**. (this efficiency will be back dated once the Deed of Variation is signed by CSS. It should be noted that £60k of this efficiency was previously agreed as a NCC budget efficiency and removed from the NFRS revenue base budget in 2021/22.

- Assuming an average RPI of 2.5% the accumulated efficiencies from 2023/24 to 2035/36 will be:

Financial Year	Efficiency based on 2.5% RPI
2023/24	£85,986
2024/25	£88,135
2025/26	£90,339
2026/27	£92,597
2027/28	£94,912
2028/29	£97,285
2029/30	£99,717
2030/31	£102,210
2031/32	£104,765
2032/33	£107,384
2033/34	£110,069
2034/35	£112,821
2035/36	£115,641
Total 2023/24 to 2035/36	£1,301,861

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

- 6.1 Agree to the recommendation to remove the FF&E element from the NEFRA PFI contract. If this recommendation is agreed, NFRS/NCC will carry the financial risk associated with maintaining, repairing and replacing the furniture, fixtures and equipment at both Pegswood and West Hartford Community Fire Stations (including Service Headquarters). However, this risk will be offset by a reduction in the Unitary Charge paid to the PFI provider. It is anticipated that this saving will be in the region of £1,375,750 up to the end of the contract in 2035/36.
- 6.2 Not agree to the recommendation to remove the FF&E element from the NEFRA PFI contract. This option would remove the risk for NFRS/NCC to carry the costs of maintaining, repairing and replacing the furniture, fixtures and equipment at both Pegswood and West Hartford Community Fire Stations (including Service

Headquarters). However, not agreeing to the recommendation will negate any reduction to the Unitary Charge paid to the provider, which has potential to result in a saving in the region of £1,375,750 up to the end of the contract in 2035/36. It should also be noted that included within this amount is a £60k per annum saving which is already built into the NFRS revenue base budget; this would not be delivered, leaving a recurrent budget pressure of £60k.

7. Implications

Policy	There are no policy implications associated with this recommendation.
Finance and value for money	<p>The financial implications of this recommendation are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional expenditure - £10k legal fees to be reduced from UC credit in 2023/24. 2. Additional expenditure – to fund any FF&E maintenance, repair or replacement requirements. This will be funded from the surplus savings over and above the £60k budget efficiency. 3. Reduction in PFI Unitary Charge with potential savings in the region of £1,375,750 up to the end of the contract in 2035/36; in accordance with the table provided at section 5.12. 4. The £60k pa recurrent budget saving already built into NFRS revenue base budget will be realised. 5. Create an FF&E earmarked reserve to enable an alternative more cost effective solution for the repair, maintenance and parts over the remainder of the PFI contract. The reserve will be created from the PFI contract underspend of £1,375,750 less the annual efficiency saving amount of £60k pa which is already built into the NFRS revenue base budget.
Legal	The decision is an executive function in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 and within the delegated powers of the Chief Fire Officer under the Constitution. The Chief Fire Officer considers the matter to be of such importance or sensitivity that their delegated authority should not be exercised. In these circumstances he or she may refer the matter back to the delegator for determination under Part 5 Article 6.1(h) of the Constitution.
Procurement	There are no Procurement issues associated with this recommendation.
Human resources	There are no Human Resources implications associated with this recommendation.
Property	Whilst this recommendation directly impacts on property, there will be no impact on the property infrastructure. The only implication is that the reporting of any FF&E defects will be via

	the mainstream NCC defect reporting scheme, rather than the bespoke PFI scheme system. The majority of the issues identified will continue to be managed by the NFRS Estates and Contracts Manager.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified There are no Equality implications associated with this recommendation, therefore no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment to be conducted.
Risk assessment	An initial risk assessment was conducted when this proposal was considered by NFRS Service Leadership Team. There will be no significant risk to NCC. The risk assessment is provided with this paper.
Crime and disorder	No crime and disorder implications have been identified.
Customer considerations	There will be no direct change for customers of NCC/NFRS. However, approval of this recommendation will identify efficiency savings for NCC, which may result in improved customer services elsewhere in the Authority.
Carbon reduction	There will be no changes to the current carbon emissions identifiable from this recommendation.
Health and wellbeing	There are no Health and Wellbeing issues associated with this recommendation.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) Service Leadership Team (SLT) Report of the Estates Manager – NEFRA PFI – Removal of Loose FF&E from Contract dated 24th June 2021.
Risk Assessment.
NFRS SLT minutes of meeting 24th June 2021.
NFRS SLT Decision Log.
Deed of Variation.

9. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable.

10. Author and Contact Details

Robin Clow, Area Manager – Fire and Rescue
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Jillian Grieves, Personal Assistant – Fire and Rescue
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SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

24TH JUNE 2021

REPORT OF THE ESTATES MANAGER

NEFRA PFI - REMOVAL OF LOOSE FF&E FROM CONTRACT

1. SYNOPSIS

- 1.1 Removal of the Loose FF&E element from the NEFRA PFI contract would realise £1,780,947 savings over the remainder of the contract which equates to £118,729 per annum from the annual Unitary Charge and would be indexed linked for the next 15 years.
- 1.2 This saving is broken down by Authority which equates to
- NFRS £79,471 per annum (£1,192,065 for remainder of contract)
 - DDFRS £26,380 per annum (£395,700 for remainder of contract)
 - TEFRS £12,878 per annum (£193,170 for remainder of contract)
- 1.3 If the responsibility and risk of the loose FF&E is accepted by NFRS, a reserve fund is to be setup to cover repairs/maintenance/replacements for the remainder of the contract. In order to manage the volume of repairs it is proposed that a service level agreement be agreed with RFM outside of the PFI contract.
- 1.4 In order to build a reserve to cover current and future requirements it is proposed that £30k per annum be allocated for loose FF&E at West Hartford and Pegswood.
- 1.5 Therefore it is proposed that a saving of £49,471 per annum be achievable once £30k reserve fund taken into account.

2. IMPLICATIONS

Policy: No implications

Financial:

A reduction in total PFI unitary charge by £118,729 per year indexed linked for the remainder of the contract (2035) for the whole of NEFRA.

Legal fees £20k due to CSS and lender legal fees.

Year 1

- UC reduction £118k
- Minus £20k legal fees
- Saving of £98k

NFRS share is £79k - £10k share of legal fees = £69k

NFRS reserve fund contribution £30k

Actual year 1 saving **£39k**

Year 2 - 14

UC reduction £118k (indexed linked)

NFRS share is £79k

NFRS reserve fund contribution £30k

Actual year 2-14 saving **£49k** (£735k remainder of contract)

Service level agreement with Robertsons Facilities Management (RFM) to deliver repairs/maintenance/replacement on an 'as and when required' basis. Of the £30k it is estimated the normal annual cost of repair/maintenance/replacement would be circa £20k and the remaining £10k to go into reserve to cover bigger ticket items in coming years, although would need to be continually reviewed.

Proposed reserve fund deposit of £10k per annum plus any underspend from the £20k maintenance budget to cover larger lifecycle replacements in future years e.g. gym equipment.

Personnel:

Proposed defect reporting mailbox that would be monitored by the Estates Manager/FSS and actioned by RFM. Budget for repairs and maintenance to be managed by Estates Manager.

Utilisation of RFM staff for repairs and inspections – SLA to be agreed, either on a retainer basis or per item cost.

Property:

Storage facility for off the shelf regularly replaced items to be identified. Investigate potential in stores or mezzanine level in appliance bay.

Health & Safety:

Ensure existing inspection regime is continued for all equipment to identify any failures/risks early.

Risk Assessment: To follow.

Crime & Disorder: No Implications

Equalities: No implications

3. CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 - Other FRS's within NEFRA
 - RFM potential to pick up repair/maintenance SLA
 - CSS
 - NCC Finance Alan Mason, Natalie McDermott, Andy Stewart to confirm slush fund arrangements.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 NEFRA take back loose FF&E from PFI contract and manage internally through an SLA with RFM, to realise savings circa £49k per annum after year 1.
- 4.2 A reserve fund be setup to accumulate funds for future larger loose FF&E costs.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 During 2018/19, the PFI facilities management company (Carillion) went into administration. As part of the appointment of the replacement FM contractor (Robertsons), CSS raised the potential of NEFRA managing the loose FF&E element of the contract. A consideration was given by the regional Authority's, however the limited time and protracted legal process to appoint RFM meant it was not possible to cover both items at the same time and was subsequently put on hold. To carry our as a separate legal matter attracted circa £20k legal costs and there was no appetite for this regionally at the time.

6. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

This report has been prepared by Phil Barry Estates Manager & NEFRA project lead.

For further information please contact Phil Barry 01670 621198.

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APPROVED

**SERVICE LEADERSHIP TEAM
MINUTES OF MEETING
HELD ON 24th JUNE 2021**

PRESENT:

[REDACTED]

APOLOGIES:

[REDACTED]

	ACTION
AGENDA ITEM 4 – PFI LOOSE FF&E	
<p>[REDACTED] joined the meeting for this item. The paper he prepared can be accessed here.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>4.1 NEFRA take back loose FF&E from PFI contract and manage internally through an SLA with RFM, to realise savings circa £49k per annum after year 1.</p> <p>4.2 A reserve fund be setup to accumulate funds for future larger loose FF&E costs.</p> <p>Following discussion between SLT Members, Paul said that a Risk Assessment is required to underpin this report.</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>

APPROVED

Risk Assessment Form

Directorate:		Service: Fire & Rescue		Reference:	
Activity: Management of Loose FF&E			Site: Northumberland Fire & Rescue Fire Stations		
People at Risk: Employees , Visitors			Additional Information:		
Contact Person: Phil Barry Job Title: Estates Manager Date: 24/06/2021					Review Date: 24/06/2023

Risk Evaluation

Hazard	Risk	Initial Rating (L, M, H,)	Control Measures	Final Rating (L, M, H,)	Additional Action Required (action by whom and completion date)
Page 353 Broken furniture	Personal injury ranging from minor bruising to sprains or broken bones	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual inspection of equipment carried out by site supervisor on Weekly/Monthly basis TBA. Staff informed of defect reporting process change from RFM to NFRS and importance of timely reporting. Staff already used to defect reporting via RFM, only contact details will change, similar to change from Carillion to RFM. Email inbox setup within FSS for reporting defects to. SLA setup with RFM outside of PFI to repair/replace items. 	L	Setup FSS inbox for defect reporting – Estates Manager Communication to all staff on new defect reporting contact details/process/expectations - Estates Manager SLA setup with RFM to maintain FF&E - Estates Manager

			Clear signage in meeting rooms for visitors to report any defective equipment to reception to log.		
<p>Unable to carry out timely repairs and key items unavailable.</p> <p>Page 354</p>	<p>Disruption to service, loss of working hours</p> <p>Personal injury ranging from minor bruising to sprains or broken bones</p>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items removed from use immediately on discovering defect. • Identify regularly replaced items and keep stock of items on each site. • Survey carried out by FF&E supplier to identify any long lead times for certain items and agreement to keep limited stock. • Items that would result in workstations being unavailable keep in stock i.e. spare chairs. • Hot desking facilities should workstations become unavailable temporarily. • Working from home should workstations become unavailable temporarily. 	L	Order in stock once identified – Estates Manager
<p>Accumulation of broken items.</p>	<p>Trips, falls.</p> <p>Personal injury ranging from minor bruising to sprains or broken bones</p>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify area to store items awaiting repair. • Timely communication between FSS inbox and RFM 	L	Clear space on mezzanine level to accommodate items awaiting repair - RFM

Financial risk	<p>Unable to achieve efficiencies and deliver balanced budget</p> <p>NFRS responsible for maintenance and replacement of FF&E</p>	H	<p>Implement proposal to take back loose FF&E and manage in-house</p> <p>Internal management of FF&E, accumulation of slush fund to manage future larger cost items.</p>	L	<p>Formally accept PFI contractor response and instruct NCC Solicitor to review Deed of Variation</p> <p>Setup process for management of FF&E, defect reporting, stock, SLA with RFM and supplier.</p>

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Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service
Service Leadership Team

Action and Decision Log
Period: April 2021 to March 2022

Ref No.	Action / Decision Taken	Date Taken	Date Implemented	Rationale / Background paper	Actions
81	Approve in principle the proposal for NFRS to accept liability for replacement/repair of PFI Loose FF&E. Risk assessment to be developed and advice taken on any EIA issues.	24.06.2021	To be confirmed	Taking on the liability will realise financial efficiencies for the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See SLT minutes dated 24-06-2021

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DATED _____ **2023**

CERTIFICATE

SECTION 3 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CONTRACTS) ACT 1997

DEED OF VARIATION TO THE PROJECT AGREEMENT

Relating to

The removal of Loose Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment from the scope of Services to be provided by the Contractor under the Project Agreement

**CERTIFICATE ISSUED UNDER SECTION 3 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(CONTRACTS) ACT 1997 (THE “ACT”)**

This certificate has been issued by Northumberland County Council (the “**Authority**”) under section 3 of the Act in respect of the Deed of Variation to the Project Agreement dated on or around the date of this certificate in relation to a request by the Authority together with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority for the removal of certain items of loose fixtures, fittings and equipment (the “**Loose FF&E**”) from the scope of the Services provided pursuant to the terms of the Project Agreement (as defined below) (“**PA DoV**”) between (1) County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, (2) the Authority, (3) Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and (4) Collaborative Services Support NE Limited (the “**Contractor**”).

The PA DoV is supplementary to the Project Agreement dated 26 June 2009 in relation to the North East Fire and Rescue Authorities PFI Project (as amended from time to time) (the “**Project Agreement**”) between (1) County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, (2) the Authority, (3) Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and (4) the Contractor.

1. PERIOD OF CONTRACT: SECTION 3(2)(A) OF THE ACT

The PA DoV is to operate from the date of the PA DoV until the earlier of the Expiry Date (as defined in the Project Agreement) or the Termination Date (as defined in the Project Agreement).

2. PURPOSE OF CONTRACT: SECTION 3(2)(B) OF THE ACT

The purpose of the PA DoV is to provide for the removal of the Loose FF&E from the scope of the Services (as defined in the Project Agreement) provided by the Contractor under the Project Agreement.

3. CONTRACT TYPE: SECTION 3(2)(C) OF THE ACT

The PA DoV falls within section 4(3) of the Act.

4. POWERS TO ENTER INTO CONTRACT: SECTION 3(2)(D) OF THE ACT

The Authority has the power to enter into the PA DoV pursuant to section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 1(1) of the Act.

5. COPIES OF CERTIFICATE: SECTION 3(2)(E) OF THE ACT AND REGULATIONS 3 AND 4 OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (CONTRACTS) REGULATIONS 1997 (AS AMENDED) (THE “REGULATIONS”)

A copy of this certificate is to be given to each person to whom a copy is required to be given by the Regulations as follows:

- 5.1 pursuant to regulation 3 of the Regulations, to the Contractor, to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and to County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority; and
- 5.2 pursuant to regulation 4 of the Regulations, to the monitoring officer and the auditor of the Authority.

6. MATTERS TO BE DEALT WITH IN CERTIFICATE: SECTION 3(2)(F) OF THE ACT AND REGULATION 6 OF THE REGULATIONS

The main relevant functions, the discharge of which the PA DoV is calculated to facilitate, and / or is conducive to or incidental to, are those conferred by Part 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

7. REQUIREMENTS FOR ISSUE OF CERTIFICATE: SECTION 3(2)(G) OF THE ACT

The Authority has complied with or will comply with all requirements imposed by the Regulations with respect to the issue of certificates under section 3(2) of the Act.

8. CONSENT OF ALL PARTIES TO ISSUE OF A CERTIFICATE: SECTION 3(4) OF THE ACT

The Contractor, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority are the only other parties to the PA DoV and by clause 11 of the PA DoV those parties have consented to the issue of this certificate.

Signed Dated

Name:

being duly authorised for and on behalf of the Authority as a chief finance officer or a person who, as respects all or most of the duties of their post, is required to report directly or is directly accountable to the chief finance officer, as required by regulation 7(3) of the Regulations.

Northumberland County Council
 County Hall
 Morpeth
 Northumberland
 NE61 2EF

- copies to:
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
 - County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority
 - The Contractor
 - The Authority's monitoring officer
 - The Authority's auditor

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