



Northumberland

County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Rebecca Greally

Email:

democraticservices@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622616

Date: Friday, 19 January 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OSC** to be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND, NE61 2EF** on **MONDAY, 29 JANUARY 2024** at **10.00 AM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr Helen Paterson
Chief Executive

To the members of scrutiny committees as follows:-
Corporate Services & Economic Growth, Communities & Place, Family & Children's Services, Health & Wellbeing

Portfolio Holder:s: G Sanderson, R Wearmouth, C Horncastle, W Pattison, W Ploszaj, G Renner-Thompson, J Riddle, J Watson, V Jones, G Stewart



Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive
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AGENDA

PART I

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES

(Pages 1
- 6)

Minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC held on 27th November 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

- a. Which **directly relates to** Disclosable Pecuniary Interest ('DPI') as set out in Appendix B, Table 1 of the Code of Conduct, to disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote and not to remain in room. Where members have a DPI or if the matter concerns an executive function and is being considered by a Cabinet Member with a DPI they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with the matter.
- b. Which **directly relates to** the financial interest or well being of a Other Registrable Interest as set out in Appendix B, Table 2 of the Code of Conduct to disclose the interest and only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain the room.
- c. Which **directly relates to** their financial interest or well-being (and is not DPI) or the financial well being of a relative or close associate, to declare the interest and members may only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak. Otherwise, the member must not take part in discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.
- d. Which **affects** the financial well-being of the member, a relative or close associate or a body included under the Other Registrable Interests column in Table 2, to disclose the interest and apply the test set out at paragraph 9 of Appendix B before deciding whether they may remain in the meeting.
- e. Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registerable Interest or Non Registerable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

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

letter.

4. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS (Pages 7 - 20)

To note the decisions of Cabinet since the previous meeting of the OSC and the latest Forward Plan of key decisions. Any further changes made to the Forward Plan will be reported to the Committee.

5. BUDGET 2024-25 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024-2028 UPDATE (Pages 21 - 38)

This report provides an update on the development of the 2024-25 Budget and the MTFP covering the period 2024 to 2028 following the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 18 December 2023.

6. COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF SICKNESS ABSENCE, CAUSAL FACTORS AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES – SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT TO ANNUAL WORKFORCE REPORT 2022-2023 (Pages 39 - 84)

To examine more closely an increase in sickness absence within the Council, establishing the reasons, along with any internal or external factors that may influence this and to outline proposed interventions in reducing sickness and improving overall wellbeing.

7. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 85 - 90)

The Committee is asked to review and note the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the 2023/24 council year.

8. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

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

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".

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:

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

- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Items	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
10	3 - Contains information relating to business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
AND	The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person/ organisation and could adversely affect commercial revenue.

10. CAMBOIS DEVELOPMENT SITE

A verbal update will be provided to committee.

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

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

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

Registering Interests

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

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

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

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

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

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

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

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

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

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

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in **Table 1**) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2** you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied
9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well- being:
- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

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

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

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

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

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

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

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

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

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

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

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Agenda Item 2

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Conference Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Monday, 27 November 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor D. Bawn
(Chairman in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Beynon, J.
Dunn, E.
Ezilchelvan, P.
Grimshaw, L.

Oliver, N.
Robinson, M.
Wallace, A.

OTHER COUNCILLORS

Sanderson, G.

OFFICERS

Bradley, N.	Executive Director – Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing
Elsdon, A.	Director of Finance and Procurement (Deputy S151 Officer)
Gardner, K. Gerrard, S.	Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Greally, R.	Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Hunter, P.	Director of Strategy and Communications
Neilson, S.	Executive Director – Place and Regeneration
Nicholson, S. ONeill, G.	Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Street, D.	Executive Director – Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities
Willis, J.	Director of Education, SEND and Skills
	Executive Director – Transformation and Resources

17. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Christine Taylor and Richard Wearmouth.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 September 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

19. FORWARD PLAN AND CABINET DECISIONS

The Forward Plan of forthcoming Key Cabinet decisions was reported to the Committee as well as Cabinet decisions made since the previous OSC meeting. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

Councillor Grimshaw sought clarification on the slippage in Ashington within the Capital Programme. It was confirmed that the slippage should not have any effect on funding or the timeline of the projects. It was agreed that an update on the Capital Programme would come to the January meeting.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of key decisions and Cabinet decisions be noted.

20. BUDGET 2024-25 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024-28

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.

It was highlighted that this was not the final version of the budget proposal as Government funding was yet to be confirmed. There was an array of pressures on the Council in the current climate that were factored into the budget proposal. The Authority was still focused on the three priorities and the Leader assured members there would be no service cuts in those areas.

The BEST programme continued to ensure the Authority was working to the best of it's ability and highlighted where efficiencies could be made. It was 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 meeting on 29th January 2024 where all scrutiny members would be invited. 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.
- Work on the Capital programme was still 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 it.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the information in the report be noted, and
- (b) the Cabinet be advised of the Committee's comments when it determines the report on 12 December 2023.

21. BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024-25 DRAFT ENGAGEMENT DOCUMENT

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.

The document circulated with the agenda was a draft of an engagement document 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 online. Members had attended to 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 following comments were made in response to members questions:-

- An assurance was given that the questions in the questionnaire could cover if residents 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 their provisions to small businesses.

- There would be slight modification 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 aren't computer literate.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the information in the report be noted, and
- (b) the Cabinet be advised of the Committee's comments when it determines the report on 12 December 2023.

22. BEST Update

Councillor Sanderson, The Leader of the Council, introduced the report to the committee. Jan Willis, Executive Director – Transformation & Regeneration, and Kelly Gardner, Director of Strategic Change, were in attendance to assist with any queries from members. The BEST programme was a detailed look at how services were running and was put in place to ensure services were efficient and giving residents value for money.

Deloitte had been confirmed as the partner for the BEST programme. The next steps were to agree what areas were to be focused on and to revalidate the strategic business plan. The benefits of the programme would be felt throughout the Authority and benefit residents. Progress had been made since the Caller review and challenge board.

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

- It was confirmed that a deep dive into procurement could be brought to committee to look at the pricing of Council's tenders for work such as members local schemes.
- It was acknowledged that it was the second year of funding for the programme. The funding was drawn down as and when it was needed.
- An assurance was given that retraining and upskilling of staff in services was part of the BEST programme.
- The savings outlined in the report were recurrent savings but projected saving would not be achieved in one go. It was an annual saving and the budget would outline what the BEST saving would be. The team were currently working with Deloitte to identify what was needed to the higher end of the projected savings and to accelerate those savings.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the information be noted, and
- (b) a forward plan of deep dives into specific workstream to be brought to overview and scrutiny

23. WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING FORM

The Committee received an update on its Work Programme for the 2022/23 council year, including an assurance that the additional issues identified at the meeting would be included.

Members reiterated that a report be presented to the Committee regarding the land at Sleekburn at the next meeting, if this needed to be a confidential report due to commercial sensitivity then so be it.

The Budget report would be brought to the January meeting with an invite to all scrutiny members.

RESOLVED that this information be noted.

Chairman _____

Date _____

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Agenda Item 4

DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET SINCE LAST OSC MEETING AND FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS - DECEMBER 2023 TO 16 JANUARY 2024

DECISION	CABINET DATE/DECISION
Cabinet Papers – 12 December 2023	https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=2257
Budget 2024-25 – Draft Engagement Document	12 December 2023 RESOLVED that the Draft Budget Engagement Document be agreed as the basis for consultation with residents, business and partners on the 2024-25 Budget proposals.
Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2028	12 December 2023 RESOLVED that: (a) Cabinet review and note the revisions to the assumptions (and the risks) within the 2024-25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan; (b) Cabinet note that further work is required to refine and finalise the Medium-Term Financial Plan; (c) Cabinet note that the revenue implications of the Capital Programme are still to be updated; and (d) Cabinet 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.
Setting of the Council Tax Base	12 December 2023 RESOLVED that Cabinet 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.
Risk Management Report Update	12 December 2023 RESOLVED that: (a) Cabinet agree the contents of the report in accordance with its responsibility for ensuring effective risk management throughout the organisation; and (b) Cabinet note that 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.
Financial Performance - Position at the end of September 2023	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>(a) Cabinet 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; and.</p> <p>(b) Cabinet note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; and • the details of capital project reprofiling shown at Appendix O.
Q2 Corporate Performance Report	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED the progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in the report be noted.</p>
Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>(1) Blyth Relief Road</p> <p>(a) Cabinet 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; and</p>

	<p>(b) Cabinet authorise the amendment of the Medium-Term Financial Plan spend profile for the Blyth Relief Road as set out in Table 2.</p> <p>(2) Kylee House New Recreation Area</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve spend of £0.271 million for a recreation area and secure walls to the High Dependency Unit at Kylee House. Note the spend is externally funded by the Department for Education (DfE); and</p> <p>(b) Cabinet authorise the amendment of the capital programme as outlined in the spend profile in Table 1.</p> <p>(3) Kylee House New Media System</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve spend of £0.043 million for a new media system at Kylee House. Note the spend is externally funded by the Department for Education (DfE); and</p> <p>(b) Cabinet authorise the amendment of the capital programme to include the proposed spend in 2023-24</p>
<p>Adaptations for Disabled People</p>	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve the revised version of the Council's discretionary housing grants policy attached as the Annex to the report, which adds to the existing policy two new elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; <p>(b) the Executive Director for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing be requested 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</p>

	<p>Government for adaptations and other social care capital costs can more confidently be predicted; and</p> <p>(c) Cabinet confirm the inclusion of the additional Disabled Facilities Capital Grant funding of £290,484 in 2023/24 to the Council's capital plan, and 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.</p>
<p>Outcomes of the Tender for New School Buildings for Astley High and Whytrig Middle Schools</p>	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet 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;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet 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; and</p> <p>(c) Cabinet 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.</p>
<p>Education, SEND and Skills Report 2022-23</p>	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>(1) Cabinet 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;</p> <p>(2) Cabinet receive and review the annual report and recognise the performance given the continued challenges in bouncing back from the impact of the pandemic;</p> <p>(3) Cabinet note the education achievements of our children, young people, and residents across Northumberland in 2022/23; and</p> <p>(4) Cabinet note the valuable support provided to all learners within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Early Years Settings and Schools · Special Education Needs support and service

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Virtual School · Learning and Skills Service · School Organisation and Resources
<p>Northumberland Leisure and Wellbeing Procurement and Provision</p>	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Cabinet 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) Cabinet note and accept the report as a conclusion of the leisure procurement conducted in accordance with the Contract Concessions Regulations 2016; (c) Cabinet 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) Cabinet 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) Cabinet 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) Cabinet 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) Cabinet 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); and

	<p>(h) Cabinet note the preferred bidder and the outcome of the procurement exercise is Places for People Leisure Management Limited (PfPLM).</p>
<p>Merger of North and South Northumberland Coroner Areas</p>	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet agree:</p> <p>(a) to the merger of the North Northumberland and the South Northumberland Coroner 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;</p> <p>(b) that the name of the new service will be the ‘Northumberland Coroner Area’;</p> <p>(c) 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</p> <p>(d) 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 Coroner areas on behalf of the Authority.</p>
<p>PFI Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) Responsibilities</p>	<p>12 December 2023</p> <p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve 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; and</p> <p>(b) an earmarked reserve be 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. The reserve will be created from the remainder from the efficiency saving of £1,375,750 after the existing savings target of £60k pa has been realised.</p>

Cabinet Papers - 16 February 2024	https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=2288
Planning Service Performance	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the recommendation from Scrutiny to consider investment in the enforcement team and the addition of a rolling fighting fund to support this work be accepted; (b) the recommendation from Scrutiny to also consider additional support for the Planning Department to deal with the increase in the number of planning applications and enquiries received be considered as part of the forthcoming budget process; and (c) a policy conference around the planning process and enforcement be set up.
Budget 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-28 Update	RESOLVED that the update be noted.
Budget 2024-25 , Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-28 and 30 Year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet approve the Housing Revenue Account 2024-25 budget as detailed within Appendix 1, which will reduce the balance on the HRA reserve from £28.175 million at 31 March 2024, to £19.193 million at 31 March 2025; and Northumberland County Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 16 January 2024 Agenda Item No Topic Decision 2 note the indicative budgets to 2027-28 which will reduce the balance of the HRA reserve to £13.708 million; 2. Cabinet note that from 1 April 2024, social housing rent will be increased by Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1.00% as per the previously agreed Rent Standard. The budget detailed in Appendix 1 assumes that rents will rise by CPI 6.70% plus 1.00% with recoverable service charges also rising by CPI plus 1.00% for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; 3. Cabinet approve the increase of 7.70% for housing rents from 1 April 2024 in line with the Government rent standard; 4. Cabinet approve the increase of 7.70% for housing service charges from 1 April 2024; 5. Cabinet approve the Non-Recurrent Growth Item Hardship Fund of £0.350 million for 2024-25 to support NCC tenants who may, due to their income, not be eligible to receive any financial assistance through existing benefits (Housing Benefit/Universal Credit/Discretionary Housing Payment) (detailed in points 6.5 & 6.11);

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Cabinet approve that any unspent balance in relation to the Hardship Fund for 2023-24, can be carried forward as an earmarked reserve into 2024-25 (detailed in point 6.5) and added to the 2024-25 in-year budget allocation; 7. Cabinet note the indicative 30-year Housing Revenue Account business plan as detailed within Appendix 1; 8. Cabinet approve the estimated pay inflationary increase for 2024-25 of 4.00% totalling £0.447 million (detailed in point 6.10); 9. Cabinet approve the Non-Pay Inflation Schedule for 2024-25 totalling £0.280 million (detailed in point 6.10); 10. Cabinet approve the Recurrent Growth as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Housing Disrepair of £0.275 million from 2024-25 to cover the costs of housing disrepair mitigation and resolution; and note that the budget will be reduced by £0.150 million after 5 years (detailed in point 6.11). b) Additional staffing budget of £0.367 million from 2024-25 (detailed in point 6.11). c) Additional budget for consumable materials for void properties of £0.159 million from 2024-25 (detailed in point 6.11). 11. Cabinet note the Recurrent Saving in relation to the Introduction of phased Service Charges for Sheltered Housing tenants, with estimated additional income of £0.120 million in 2024-25 (50.00%), £0.180 million in 2025-26 (75.00%) and £0.240 million 2026-27 (100.00%) as agreed within the budget and MTFP 2023-24 (detailed in point 6.12); 12. Cabinet note and approve the expenditure plan relating to £41.434 million which has been set aside over the 4-year period 2024-25 to 2027-28 in the HRA Capital programme to invest in Affordable Housing. Details are set out in Appendix 1; and 13. Cabinet approve an amendment to the Housing Rent policy, to enable re-let of HRA properties at Formula Rent from April 2025 (detailed in point 6.29).
<p>Notification of the Estimated Collection Fund Balances 2023-24 – Council Tax and Business Rates</p>	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Cabinet approve the declaration of a surplus on the Collection Fund for the year ending 31 March 2024 in relation to Council Tax of £4.486 million to be distributed

	<p>to the Council and Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with Council Tax regulations; the Council's share being £4.149 million;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet note the overall estimated surplus on the Collection Fund for the year ending 31 March 2024 in relation to Business Rates of £6.943 million; the Council's share being £3.471 million;</p> <p>(c) Cabinet note the distribution of the estimated Collection Fund surplus for Council Tax to the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner of £0.337 million, and the distribution of the estimated Collection Fund surplus for Business Rates of £3.471 million to the Secretary of State; and</p> <p>(d) Cabinet note the inclusion of the Council's share of the estimated Collection Fund balances distributable in 2023-24 of £4.149 million surplus and £3.471 million surplus for Council Tax and Business Rates respectively, within the Council's budget 2024-25.</p>
<p>Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group</p> <p>(1) Greensfield Farm Alnwick</p> <p>(2) Lyndon Walk</p> <p>(3) Dene Park Windows</p>	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £0.333 million to acquire 2 3-bedroom houses on the Wynyard Homes Greensfield Farm development in Alnwick. Note this will be funded using in year capital receipts and retained capital receipts within the Housing Revenue Account.</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the updated spend of the Lyndon Walk 13 bungalows proposal of £2.796 million. This will be funded from Housing Revenue Account reserves; and</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme for the updated spend as profiled in the report.</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.184 million to replace the windows at Dene Park House. Note that the funding for this project will come from the existing Property Stewardship Budget allocation within the Capital Programme; and</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.184 million from the Property Stewardship Budget to Dene Park House in 2023-24.</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to establish the Energy Central Campus</p>

<p>(4) Energising Blyth Programme – Energy Central Institute</p>	<p>Phase 2 (Energy Central Institute) as a defined project in the Capital Programme with a total budget of £15.421 million as profiled in the body of the report.</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the proposal to accelerate capital spend of £1.404 million in advance of business case approval to drive forward project development inclusive of spend in 2022-23.</p> <p>(iii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration to enter into a contract to the value of £1.060 million to appoint a multidisciplinary Design Team, subject to the appropriate procurement processes being followed.</p> <p>(iv) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.750 million to commence work on demolishing Keel Row Shopping Centre and 3-5/7-9 Bridge Street.</p> <p>(v) authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration to enter into a contract for the demolition of Keel Row Shopping Centre and 3-5/7-9 Bridge Street, subject to the appropriate procurement processes being followed.</p>
<p>(5) Energising Blyth Programme – Technical Fit-Out and Equipment</p>	<p>(i) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to establish the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Fit-Out and Equipment as a defined project with a total budget of £1.450 million as profiled in the body of the report.</p> <p>(ii) Authority be delegated, in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework, to the Council’s s151 Officer following consideration by the Energising Blyth Programme Board to approve the Full Business Case and report any capital implications to Capital Strategy Group for consideration in the Capital Programme.</p>
<p>(6) Woodhorn Lift Replacement</p>	<p>(i) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.121 million to replace the lift in the Winding House at Woodhorn. Note that this is funded from the existing Property Stewardship budget in the Capital Programme.</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.121 million from the Property Stewardship Budget to Woodhorn Lift Replacement.</p> <p>(iii) Cabinet approve the novation of the MEND grant and accept the Grant Funding Agreement Terms (subject to Legal review) from the Arts Council for the sum of £0.107 million.</p> <p>(i) Cabinet note the spend of £0.125 million for the refurbishment of the County Hall Print Room. Also noting</p>

<p>(7) County Hall – Print Room Refurbishment</p>	<p>that the refurbishment work commenced on 28 November 2023, and that this is funded from the existing Property Stewardship budget in the Capital Programme.</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.125 million from the Property Stewardship budget to County Hall – Print Room Refurbishment.</p>
<p>Ashington Regeneration Programme – Update, Funding and Site Acquisitions</p>	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve the following in respect of site acquisitions and required funding:</p> <p>i) that the Council complete the acquisition of the Wansbeck Square site with vacant possession, as previously agreed in principle, at a market value of £1,365,000, plus Stamp Duty Land Tax.</p> <p>ii) that the Council complete the acquisition of the Woodhorn Road site with vacant possession, as previously agreed in principle, at a market value of £210,000 plus Stamp Duty Land Tax.</p> <p>iii) that the Council approves an allocation of up to £160,000 of revenue funding from the Council’s Regeneration Reserve Development Fund to pay for the holding costs which will be incurred, following acquisition of the Wansbeck Square and Woodhorn Road sites as set out in Section 6 of the report;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet note that following a competitive tender process, Identity Consult has been appointed as the Design Team to take forward ambitious plans for the redevelopment of Wansbeck Square and progress the designs for the Public Realm and Connectivity project, which will enable the creation of Grand Corner Gateway; and</p> <p>(c) Cabinet approve the development of a high-level business case to the North of Tyne Combined Authority in order to secure funding from the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Investment Fund for the redevelopment of Wansbeck Square, with approval of the final bid submission delegated to the Council’s S151 Officer. The Accountable Body will monitor the use of funding subsequently awarded and ensure adherence to the Grant Agreement.</p>
<p>National Funding Formula & School Funding 2024-25</p>	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve the proposals for the continuing implementation of the National Funding Formula for 2024/25 as agreed previously, in line with the recommendation of the Schools Forum meeting of 22</p>

	<p>November 2023 and the results of the subsequent consultation exercise held with schools;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet approve the transfer of up to 0.5% funding from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block, in line with recommendation of the Schools Forum meeting of 22 November 2023 and the results of the subsequent consultation exercise held with schools; and</p> <p>(c) approval of the final formula values be delegated to the Executive Director of Children Young People & Education and Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People in line with the principles agreed at Schools Forum on 22 November 2023, once the final budget allocations are released by the Department for Education in December 2023.</p>
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FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS

<p>Adult Social Care: Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy</p> <p>To present the updated Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy</p>	<p>13 February 2024</p>
<p>Budget 2024-25, Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-28</p> <p>The report presents the updated Budget 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-2028 to Cabinet (for recommendation to County Council) following the receipt of the provisional local government settlement which is due to be announced in December 2023. The report will also include an update on the deliverability of savings.</p>	<p>13 February 2024</p> <p>Council 21 February 2024</p>
<p>Corporate Fraud Policies for 2024-25</p> <p>To provide an update on the County Council's policies in relation to Corporate Fraud activity and seek approval for updated policies.</p>	<p>13 February 2024</p>
<p>North East Investment Zone</p> <p>The report provides an update on the North East Investment Zone. Cabinet are asked to note the regional proposals and asked to approve the inclusion of a Business Rates Retention Site.</p>	<p>13 February 2024</p>
<p>School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2025/2026 Academic Year</p> <p>This report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2025/26 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2021. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought.</p>	<p>13 February 2024</p>
<p>Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group</p> <p>This is a summary of all of the reports discussed by the Capital Strategy Group on 20 December 2023</p>	<p>13 February 2024</p>
<p>Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26</p> <p>To replace the expiring Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23 and to set out our intended strategies for reaching our climate change targets across the next three years and beyond.</p>	<p>12 March 2024</p>
<p>Financial Performance 2023-24 – Position at end of December 2023</p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 December 2023.</p>	<p>12 March 2024</p>

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-28 Update

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

Responsible Officer(s): 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 MTFP covering the period 2024 to 2028 following the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 18 December 2023.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are requested to note the update.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The report first appeared in the forward plan on 19 December 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, and the Local Government Finance Settlement was not received until 18 December 2023. At this point in time no decision is required.

5. Background

5.1 This report updates the MTFP position; and the budget for 2024-25, following the announcement of the Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023 and the provisional

Local Government Finance Settlement on 18 December 2023. The final Settlement is not due until February 2024, and may alter the financial position.

- 5.2 The 2024-25 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (the Settlement) was announced by Government on 18 December 2023. The announcement only provided funding figures for 2024-25 which is up to the end of the current Spending Review period. It is well known that the Government intends to change the funding mechanism for the sector but has stated that this will be with effect from 2025-26 at the earliest. The Council's 2024-25 Budget has been updated utilising the financial data that was published as part of the Settlement, but assumptions have been made with regard to future years.
- 5.3 Further announcements in relation to specific grants will be made by Government departments over the next few weeks and the implications of these announcements will be incorporated into the final budget report to County Council on 21 February 2024.
- 5.4 The table below provides a summary of the grant funding allocations for Northumberland announced in the Settlement, alongside the previous assumptions included in the report to Cabinet on 12 December 2023.

Grants	Provisional Settlement Allocation 2024-25	12 December Cabinet Report	Change - Increase / (Decrease)
	£m	£m	£m
Revenue Support Grant (RSG) *	14.020	13.263	0.757
Social Care Grant (Adults and Children's services)	25.821	25.560	0.261
Improved Better Care Fund	12.496	12.496	-
Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund **	6.656	5.357	1.299
Adult Social Care Discharge Fund **	2.920	2.920	-
Services Grant	0.439	2.787	(2.348)
New Homes Bonus	1.710	0.961	0.749
Rural Service Delivery Grant	2.745	2.456	0.289
Total Grant Funding	66.807	65.800	1.007
Home Office Fire and Pensions grant shortfall *	(0.766)	-	(0.766)
Expenditure matched against Adult Social Care Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund and Adult Social Care Discharge Fund grants **	(9.576)	(8.277)	(1.299)
Net Reduction in Grant Funding	56.465	57.523	(1.058)

* *The Home Office Fire and Pensions Grant has been rolled into the RSG leaving a budgetary pressure within the service which is shown in the table above. The increase in RSG almost compensates for this pressure.*

** *ASC Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund and Discharge grants have specific reporting requirements and are ringfenced/pooled. They have been matched in the MTFP with corresponding expenditure.*

Further information regarding each grant and the national funding total is as follows:

5.5 Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

The 2024-25 RSG amount has been determined using the figures for 2023-24 plus CPI inflation at 6.7%. The Council will receive £14.020 million in 2024-25.

The Home Office Fire and Pensions grant has however been rolled into the RSG, the national grant total for this element is £115 million, and Northumberland's share is £0.766 million.

The Home Office Fire and Pensions grant was previously included as a specific grant within the Northumberland Fire and Rescue service budget. This grant covered the last increase in the employers' pension contribution rate (currently 28.8%). The removal of the specific grant funding creates a budget pressure within the service which will be removed, albeit the funding will now be shown as part of the RSG grant.

The Council will still receive Firefighters Pension Fund Top-up Grant where pensions paid out exceed the contributions made to the fund.

5.7 Specific Grants

a) Social Care Grant (Adults and Children's Services)

The national total for the Social Care Grant has increased from the 2023-24 allocation by £692 million, to £4,544 million. The Budget 2024-25 and MTFP 2024-28 Cabinet report of 12 December 2023 previously forecast an increase in grant of £612 million, which is £80 million lower than the final provisional allocation, therefore the Council's allocation has increased by £0.261 million.

b) Improved Better Care Fund

The national funding total remains at £2,140 million, and the Council's allocation has remained at £12.496 million.

c) Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund

The national total is £1,050 million; and £162 million of this is from the repurposed Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund, plus £683 million new funding which was allocated as part of the 2023-24 Local Government Finance Settlement. Following an announcement by the Government in July 2023 this was increased by £0.365 million in 2023-24 and £0.205 million in 2024-25 for workforce fund funding. The Council's allocation has therefore increased to £6.656 million.

The funding is intended to make tangible improvements to adult social care, and, in particular to address discharge delays; social care waiting times; low fee rates; workforce pressures; and to promote technological innovation in the sector.

This grant is ring-fenced, conditional and has reporting requirements.

d) Adult Social Care Discharge Fund

The national total is £500 million; and it is intended that this grant forms part of Better Care Fund plans and is aimed at reducing delayed transfers of care. The Council will receive £2.920 million.

The NHS is receiving an equivalent amount which is also to be utilised in relation to Better Care Fund plans. (A total of £1,000 million across both sectors for 2024-25).

This grant has reporting requirements, and it will be pooled through the Better Care Fund process.

e) Services Grant

The national grant total has reduced from £483 million in 2023-24 to just £77 million for 2024-25. The funding has been reduced as some of the Services Grant has been used to fund increases to other settlement grants and equalisation of the adult social care precept. A small proportion has also been held back by Government as a contingency. The Council will receive £0.439 million, which represents a reduction of £2.348 million.

f) New Homes Bonus

The 2024-25 national allocation remains at £291 million. There have been no changes to the design of the scheme for 2024-25, with a single year's new allocation, and again there are no legacy payments. Whilst the national funding allocation remained the same the Council significantly increased its number of eligible properties which attracts the bonus. The Council's allocation therefore increased from £0.961 million in 2023-24 to £1.710 million in 2024-25.

The Government's 2023 policy statement said that the future of the New Homes Bonus scheme would be announced in time for the 2024-25 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. This did not happen and there has been no further mention of the future of this scheme within the Settlement.

g) Rural Services Delivery Grant

The 2024-25 national allocation remains at £95 million. The Budget 2024-25 and MTFP 2024-28 Cabinet report of 12 December 2023 previously forecast a national allocation of £85 million, which is £10 million lower than the final provisional allocation, therefore the Council's allocation has increased by £0.289 million.

5.8 Beyond 2024-25

The settlement provided no certainty beyond 2024-25 which makes budget planning difficult. The following risks should be noted:

a) Social Care Grant (Adults and Children's Services)

It is unclear if there will be any new funding when reform is reintroduced, or whether this funding is effectively time-limited and will be repurposed in relation to the reform from 2025-26. The MTFP assumes that this funding will continue at its current level over the duration of the MTFP.

b) Adult Social Care Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund

It is unclear if this will continue beyond 2024-25. This represents a risk as many of the initiatives implemented are recurrent and require funding. The MTFP assumes that this funding and associated expenditure will continue for the duration of the current MTFP.

c) Services Grant

It is unclear if this grant will continue beyond 2024-25 therefore it has been assumed that this grant will not continue beyond 2024-25. The previous two financial years have seen this grant reduce significantly as funding has been diverted to fund other initiatives. There is therefore a risk that this grant could reduce again.

d) New Homes Bonus

It is difficult to forecast the future for this grant. Government has continued to extend the scheme and has once again provided a 1-year allocation in 2024-25 with no legacy payments. As highlighted earlier, an announcement on the future of the scheme from Government was expected prior to the 2024-25 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. This did not happen and there has been no further mention of the future of this scheme within the Settlement. The MTFP assumes that the grant will continue at its current level into 2025-26 but will cease thereafter.

5.9 Budget and MTFP Update

Work has continued to refine the Budget and MTFP and will continue into the New Year. The assumptions will be detailed in full in the report to County Council on 21 February 2024.

The current draft MTFP which incorporates the financial implications of the Settlement that have been received to date can currently be summarised as follows:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	£m	£m	£m	£m
FUNDING:				
Government Grants	(170.475)	(170.073)	(170.284)	(172.546)
Council Tax	(242.823)	(262.547)	(268.572)	(274.559)
Collection Fund Surplus	(7.620)	-	-	-
Use of Reserves	(24.761)	(11.982)	(0.065)	1.060
TOTAL FUNDING	(445.679)	(444.602)	(438.921)	(446.045)
EXPENDITURE:				
Baseline Budget	385.576	424.488	436.060	439.077
Inflation	28.571	17.678	15.119	14.525
Proposed Growth & Pressures	22.642	4.215	2.974	0.634
Revenue Cost of Capital	19.736	13.171	6.000	6.000
Budget Gap	(10.846)	(14.950)	(21.232)	(14.191)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	445.679	444.602	438.921	446.045

5.10 Efficiencies

Executive Directors have proposed a number of efficiencies in order to balance the budget for 2024-25 and 2025-26.

The estimated savings requirement for each year of the MTFP is shown in the table at 5.9. Draft proposals to close this gap are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

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.

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 saving	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	0.163	-	-	-	0.163
Service review	0.156	-	-	-	0.156
Use of grant	0.977	0.472	-	-	1.449
Total Efficiencies	10.846	14.950	5.327	0.690	31.813
Budget Gap	10.846	14.950	21.232	14.191	61.219
Balance to identify	-	-	15.905	13.501	29.406

5.11 Capital Programme Update

Work has continued in earnest with regard to the Capital Programme and it is currently as follows:

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing	5.432	2.000	2.000	-	9.432
Children, Young People & Education	61.461	39.811	42.287	19.569	163.128
Climate Change	1.161	2.639	-	-	3.800
Digital and IT	9.212	2.828	2.269	1.785	16.094
Economic Development & Growth	89.165	77.866	17.022	1.500	185.553
Finance and Procurement	32.003	20.000	6.000	6.000	64.003
Fire and Rescue	2.172	2.129	1.330	1.243	6.874
Highways and Transport	87.492	87.329	25.849	1.137	201.807
Housing – GF	0.720	-	-	-	0.720
Housing – HRA	31.719	25.692	14.701	14.076	86.188
Leisure Services	3.755	1.904	-	-	5.659
Neighbourhood Services	6.281	7.907	8.488	1.000	23.676
Property Services	7.082	5.342	1.342	2.220	15.986
Total Capital Programme	337.655	275.447	121.288	48.530	782.920

The detailed Draft Capital Programme is shown at Appendix 2. The revenue consequences of the proposed Capital Programme are shown in the table at 5.9. The revenue cost of capital figures for 2026-27 and 2027-28 are estimated as the Capital Programme has not yet been fully developed for those years.

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 The report is therefore for Member's information and to note.

7. Implications

Policy	The budget and medium-term financial plan support the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26: Achieving Value for Money; Tackling Inequalities and Driving Economic Growth.
Finance and value for money	The updated financial implications of the 2024-25 budget and the MTFP are detailed within this report. The Section 151 Officer is confident that the budget will achieve balance, but it is evident that the position for financial year 2025-26 and beyond will continue to be challenging.
Legal	It is a statutory requirement under Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, revised under Section 31 of the Localism Bill 2011, for the Council to produce a balanced budget. The Council also has a fiduciary duty not to waste public resources. 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. Cabinet undertakes 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.</p> <p>All individual budget savings proposals for 2024-25 and 2025-26 are being 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 on 21 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</p>

	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.
Risk assessment	<p>The risks associated with the budget proposals are regarded as acceptable, but these risks will continue to be reviewed up to and including implementation of the detailed proposals.</p> <p>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.</p>
Crime and disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
Customer considerations	The individual budget proposals will carefully consider the impact upon both customers and residents of Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	<p>The Council continues to develop proposals concerning the management of energy which are supported by the budget.</p> <p>Executive Directors will advise members of the carbon reduction implications in relation to their own areas of the budget and their budget proposals.</p>
Health and wellbeing	The Council's budget is founded on the principle of promoting inclusivity.
Wards	All wards in Northumberland.

8. Background papers

[Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2028](#)

9. Links to other key reports already published

[Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2028](#)

10. Author and Contact Details

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Draft Proposed Efficiencies

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing					
Care Management savings from the review of individual packages of care	3.000	3.000	-	-	6.000
Social Work/Care Management service review	0.050	-	-	-	0.050
Revise funding arrangements for ceiling track hoists	0.090	-	-	-	0.090
Reviewing staffing within in-house day services	0.095	-	-	-	0.095
Removal of contribution to Local Government Pension Scheme pension fund no longer required	0.120	-	-	-	0.120
Reduction in non staffing budgets	0.012	-	-	-	0.012
BEST Value for Money savings	0.057	0.113	0.057	-	0.227
Additional income as a result of streamlining the process for client charging	0.206	0.418	-	-	0.624
Total Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing	3.630	3.531	0.057	-	7.218
Chief Executive					
HR & OD - non staffing savings	0.037	-	-	-	0.037
Total Chief Executive	0.037	-	-	-	0.037
Children, Education and Young People					
Reduction in Out of County Placements due to children's homes new builds	0.606	2.410	-	-	3.016
Utilisation of grant across Family Help and Family Hub teams	0.472	0.472	-	-	0.944
Completion of the Early Help reorganisation	0.156	-	-	-	0.156
Reduction to historical enhanced pension budgets	0.100	0.100	0.050	0.050	0.300
Education & Skills Management costs offset against grant funding	0.079	-	-	-	0.079
Utilisation of Adolescent Services grant	0.415	-	-	-	0.415
Removal of a vacant post	0.020	-	-	-	0.020
Regional contract renegotiation	0.100	-	-	-	0.100
BEST Value for Money savings	0.136	0.778	0.204	-	1.118

Draft Proposed Efficiencies

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total Children, Education and Young People	2.084	3.760	0.254	0.050	6.148
 Place and Regeneration					
<u>Economic Development & Growth</u>					
Review of Arts and Culture Portfolio	0.013	0.041	-	-	0.054
 <u>Environment & Transport</u>					
Full year effect of home to school transport concessionary travel charge	0.010	-	-	-	0.010
Increase in home to school transport concessionary travel charge	0.007	0.003	-	-	0.010
Increased customer base - trade waste service	0.150	-	-	-	0.150
Review of Streetworks charges	0.031	-	-	-	0.031
Standardising colours of new/replacement bins	0.010	-	-	-	0.010
Increase to Northumberland Pay & Display Parking Permit	0.012	0.011	0.015	-	0.038
Redirect wood waste from recycling to energy recovery	0.250	-	-	-	0.250
Seek alternative funding and renegotiation of contracts for Post 16 Home to School Transport	-	0.320	0.157	-	0.477
Solar Car Port - electricity savings	0.196	-	-	-	0.196
Reduction and review of fleet operating leases	0.270	-	-	-	0.270
BEST Value for Money savings	0.642	0.641	-	-	1.283
Total Place and Regeneration	1.591	1.016	0.172	-	2.779
 Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities					
Reduction in Leisure Management Fee	0.200	0.200	-	-	0.400
Creating a modern sustainable Library Offer	-	0.200	0.200	-	0.400
BEST - Communities First Model (net saving)	0.500	0.500	0.250	-	1.250
Review of Sport Development	-	0.075	-	-	0.075
Total Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities	0.700	0.975	0.450	-	2.125

Draft Proposed Efficiencies

	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
Transformation and Resources					
<u>Finance & Procurement</u>					
Removal of vacant posts no longer required	0.064	-	-	-	0.064
Increase in procurement rebate income target	0.047	0.010	-	-	0.057
Reduction in non-staffing budgets	0.048	0.001	-	-	0.049
Cash in transit and machine maintenance contractual savings	0.066	-	-	-	0.066
Fund 25% of insurance team costs from the Insurance Fund	0.054	-	-	-	0.054
<u>Digital & IT</u>					
Software Licences and Data Centre - contractual savings	0.089	0.105	-	-	0.194
BEST Use of Technology savings	0.150	0.300	0.150	-	0.600
Total Transformation and Resources	0.518	0.416	0.150	-	1.084
Cross Directorate/Corporate					
BEST - Use of Resources savings - Corporate Business Support	-	0.750	0.750	-	1.500
BEST - Use of Resources savings - Employee Service Centre	-	0.112	0.168	0.057	0.337
BEST - Customer Services savings	0.146	0.890	1.326	0.583	2.945
BEST Use of Assets savings	1.000	1.000	-	-	2.000
BEST in Class Commissioning - Category Management savings	0.500	2.000	2.000	-	4.500
BEST in Class Commissioning - Reduction in 3rd party spend	0.500	0.500	-	-	1.000
Procurement - Supplier Incentive Programme savings (net)	0.140	-	-	-	0.140
Total Cross Directorate/Corporate	2.286	5.252	4.244	0.640	12.422
Total Proposed Savings	10.846	14.950	5.327	0.690	31.813

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DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-25 TO 2027-28

Project Title	2024-2025			2025-2026			2026-2027			2027-2028			TOTAL		
	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing															
Disabled Facilities Grant	4,578,012	4,578,012	-	2,000,000	2,000,000	-	2,000,000	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	8,578,012	8,578,012	-
Person Centred Care Information System (SWIFT)	402,400	-	402,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	402,400	-	402,400
Tynedale House Fire Doors	220,002	220,002	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	220,002	220,002	-
Adult Social Care Capital Fund	231,185	231,185	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	231,185	231,185	-
Total Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing	5,431,599	5,029,199	402,400	2,000,000	2,000,000	-	2,000,000	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	9,431,599	9,029,199	402,400
Children, Young People and Education															
Children's Homes Provision (6 no. 1-Bed) - Purchase of six residential properties	500,000	-	500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	500,000	-	500,000
Basic Need - Other	721,654	721,654	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	721,654	721,654	-
School Led - Energy Efficiency Capital Allocation	50,400	50,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,400	50,400	-
Berwick Partnership Schools	4,838,766	1,427,000	3,411,766	3,765,934	-	3,765,934	25,960,000	-	25,960,000	12,980,000	-	12,980,000	47,544,700	1,427,000	46,117,700
Choppington Primary Artificial Pitch	205,000	105,000	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	205,000	105,000	100,000
Coquet Partnership Redevelopment	13,220,999	1,285,784	11,935,215	15,342,114	-	15,342,114	5,899,817	-	5,899,817	147,495	-	147,495	34,610,425	1,285,784	33,324,641
Devolved Formula Capital	591,570	591,570	-	591,570	591,570	-	591,570	591,570	-	-	-	-	1,774,710	1,774,710	-
KEVI New Build Sports Block	2,871,000	2,871,000	-	3,165,817	710,000	2,455,817	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,036,817	3,581,000	2,455,817
Mobile Classroom Replacement Programme	675,721	675,721	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	675,721	675,721	-
School Condition Programme (SCIP) - Remedials / General Programme	2,074,000	2,074,000	-	2,750,000	2,750,000	-	2,750,000	2,750,000	-	2,750,000	2,750,000	-	10,324,000	10,324,000	-
Seaton Valley Federation of Schools	33,652,012	6,138,753	27,513,259	7,721,102	-	7,721,102	1,310,291	-	1,310,291	-	-	-	42,683,405	6,138,753	36,544,652
Special Educational Need (SEN) Capacity Growth	-	-	-	6,474,500	2,400,000	4,074,500	5,775,710	-	5,775,710	3,691,790	-	3,691,790	15,942,000	2,400,000	13,542,000
West of County Schools Restructure	384,878	9,000	375,878	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	384,878	9,000	375,878
Corbridge 3G Pitch	490,601	450,000	40,601	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	490,601	450,000	40,601
Kyloe House - New Recreation Area	251,283	251,283	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	251,283	251,283	-
Family Hubs Grant	59,000	59,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59,000	59,000	-
Northumberland Skills ICT Hardware & Network Refresh	224,000	-	224,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	224,000	-	224,000
Purchase of house to accommodate a disabled child	500,000	500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	500,000	500,000	-
Pegsworth Cemetery Lodge	150,000	-	150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	150,000	-	150,000
Total Children, Young People and Education	61,460,884	17,210,165	44,250,719	39,811,037	6,451,570	33,359,467	42,287,388	3,341,570	38,945,818	19,569,285	2,750,000	16,819,285	163,128,594	29,753,305	133,375,289
Climate Change															
Climate Change Capital Fund	1,160,848	619,064	541,784	2,639,324	-	2,639,324	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,800,172	619,064	3,181,108
Total Climate Change	1,160,848	619,064	541,784	2,639,324	-	2,639,324	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,800,172	619,064	3,181,108
Digital and IT															
CISCO Infrastructure	569,179	-	569,179	100,000	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	669,179	-	669,179
Desk Top Refresh - Phase 2	500,000	-	500,000	750,000	-	750,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,250,000	-	1,250,000
Northumberland WAN and Full Fibre	2,331,290	-	2,331,290	100,000	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,431,290	-	2,431,290
Broadband Phase 2 Gainshare Extension	612,325	-	612,325	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	612,325	-	612,325
Community Broadband	1,662,820	1,156,000	506,820	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,662,820	1,156,000	506,820
Repayment to Building Digital UK (BDUK)	989,000	989,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	989,000	989,000	-
Air Conditioning	159,340	-	159,340	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	159,340	-	159,340
Craster Mast	50,080	-	50,080	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,080	-	50,080
Local Full Fibre Network	82,823	-	82,823	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	82,823	-	82,823
Office 365 Implementation	42,087	-	42,087	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42,087	-	42,087
Server Infrastructure	52,363	-	52,363	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52,363	-	52,363
Hardware Infrastructure	242,550	-	242,550	360,000	-	360,000	-	-	-	685,000	-	685,000	1,287,550	-	1,287,550
Network Infrastructure Modernisation	953,333	-	953,333	953,333	-	953,333	953,334	-	953,334	-	-	-	2,860,000	-	2,860,000
Desktop Refresh	750,000	-	750,000	350,000	-	350,000	1,100,000	-	1,100,000	1,100,000	-	1,100,000	3,300,000	-	3,300,000
Mobile Phone Refresh	215,000	-	215,000	215,000	-	215,000	215,000	-	215,000	-	-	-	645,000	-	645,000
Total Digital and IT	9,212,190	2,145,000	7,067,190	2,828,333	-	2,828,333	2,268,334	-	2,268,334	1,785,000	-	1,785,000	16,093,857	2,145,000	13,948,857
Economic Development and Growth															
Ashington High Street Investment Programme	885,826	582,915	302,911	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	885,826	582,915	302,911
Ashington North East Quarter Re-development Phase 2	100,000	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000	-	100,000
Ashington Town Centre Renewal of Strategic Sites Programme	12,073,858	12,073,858	-	14,832,355	6,081,087	8,751,268	24,000	-	24,000	-	-	-	26,930,213	18,154,945	8,775,268
Bedlington Town Centre Redevelopment Phase 1 & 2	1,173,698	-	1,173,698	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,173,698	-	1,173,698
Energising Blyth Culture Centre and Market Place	3,961,414	-	3,961,414	372,553	-	372,553	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,333,967	-	4,333,967
Energising Blyth Future High Street Fund (FHSF)	4,662,345	2,566,606	2,095,739	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,662,345	2,566,606	2,095,739
Energising Blyth The Link	860,682	-	860,682	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	860,682	-	860,682
Blyth Town Centre Northern Gateway (Phase 2)	1,534,285	1,534,285	-	1,681,925	385,104	1,296,821	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,216,210	1,919,389	1,296,821
Energising Blyth Energy Central Campus Phase 1	1,486,212	1,000,000	486,212	163,184	-	163,184	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,649,396	1,000,000	649,396

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-25 TO 2027-28

Project Title	2024-2025			2025-2026			2026-2027			2027-2028			TOTAL		
	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Energising Blyth Acquisitions / Delivery Costs	2,283,090	-	2,283,090	7,384,969	-	7,384,969	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,668,059	-	9,668,059
Energising Blyth Town Deal 2022-2026	9,076,993	9,026,896	50,097	3,739,214	3,739,214	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,816,207	12,766,110	50,097
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive Funding - Welcoming and Safe Blyth	145,000	145,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	145,000	145,000	-
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive Funding - Housing Renewal and Town Centre Living	6,626,000	6,626,000	-	8,700,000	8,700,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,326,000	15,326,000	-
Energising Blyth Levelling Up Deep Dive - Energy Central Campus Training Kit	1,450,000	1,450,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,450,000	1,450,000	-
Blyth to Bebside Cycle Corridor	3,262,329	3,262,329	-	3,244,739	1,123,859	2,120,880	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,507,068	4,386,188	2,120,880
Borderlands - Berwick Maltings	12,242,012	11,916,597	325,415	7,487,358	7,487,358	-	498,291	498,291	-	-	-	-	20,227,661	19,902,246	325,415
Borderlands - Carlisle Station	3,461,279	3,461,279	-	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,461,279	4,461,279	-
Borderlands - Destination Tweed	750,000	-	750,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	750,000	-	750,000
Borderlands - Carlisle University	14,304,687	14,304,687	-	23,682,615	23,682,615	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37,987,302	37,987,302	-
Great Northumberland Forest	2,135,294	2,135,294	-	16,579	16,579	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,151,873	2,151,873	-
Great Northumberland Forest - Storm Arwen Recovery	250,000	250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	250,000	250,000	-
Hexham HAZ	100,000	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000	-	100,000
Hexham - The Shambles	250,000	-	250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	250,000	-	250,000
Strategic Regeneration Projects	5,540,000	-	5,540,000	1,560,415	-	1,560,415	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,100,415	-	7,100,415
Berwick Gateway	50,000	-	50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	-	50,000
Cramlington	500,000	-	500,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	2,000,000	-	2,000,000	-	-	-	3,500,000	-	3,500,000
Borderlands Place Plans	-	-	-	2,500,000	2,000,000	500,000	11,500,000	10,000,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	-	1,500,000	15,500,000	12,000,000	3,500,000
Ashington Town Centre infrastructure	-	-	-	500,000	-	500,000	3,000,000	-	3,000,000	-	-	-	3,500,000	-	3,500,000
Total Economic Development and Growth	89,165,004	70,335,746	18,829,258	77,865,906	54,215,816	23,650,090	17,022,291	10,498,291	6,524,000	1,500,000	-	1,500,000	185,553,201	135,049,853	50,503,348
Finance and Procurement															
Capital Contract Inflation	5,000,000	-	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000,000	-	5,000,000
Loan to NELEP - Ashwood	1,335,069	1,335,069	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,335,069	1,335,069	-
Strategic Employment Sites Enabling Works	5,000,000	-	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000,000	-	5,000,000
Loans to Third Parties (e.g. Advance Northumberland, Other Organisations)	20,000,000	-	20,000,000	20,000,000	-	20,000,000	6,000,000	-	6,000,000	6,000,000	-	6,000,000	52,000,000	-	52,000,000
Portland Park - Grant to Advance Northumberland	668,548	-	668,548	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	668,548	-	668,548
Total Finance and Procurement	32,003,617	1,335,069	30,668,548	20,000,000	-	20,000,000	6,000,000	-	6,000,000	6,000,000	-	6,000,000	64,003,617	1,335,069	62,668,548
Fire and Rescue															
FRS Fleet Requirement	836,000	-	836,000	1,007,000	-	1,007,000	1,001,500	-	1,001,500	900,292	-	900,292	3,744,792	-	3,744,792
FRS Res Critical Equipment	335,700	-	335,700	121,500	-	121,500	328,438	-	328,438	343,000	-	343,000	1,128,638	-	1,128,638
Fire Control Upgrade / Replacement	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,000,000	-	2,000,000
Total Fire and Rescue	2,171,700	-	2,171,700	2,128,500	-	2,128,500	1,329,938	-	1,329,938	1,243,292	-	1,243,292	6,873,430	-	6,873,430
Highways and Transport															
Blyth Relief Road	8,866,836	8,866,836	-	37,706,723	35,706,723	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,573,559	44,573,559	2,000,000
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure	3,864,000	3,000,000	864,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,864,000	3,000,000	864,000
Newcastle Northumberland Rail Line	17,386,829	12,000,000	5,386,829	7,500,000	7,500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24,886,829	19,500,000	5,386,829
A1068 Shilbottle Road Junction Improvements	1,090,518	-	1,090,518	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,090,518	-	1,090,518
CP - Car Parks General	1,480,337	-	1,480,337	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,480,337	-	1,480,337
Levelling up Fund for Rapid Electric Vehicle Chargers	156,000	106,000	50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	156,000	106,000	50,000
Levelling Up Funds - Hexham to Corbridge	4,590,000	4,590,000	-	4,225,000	3,225,000	1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,815,000	7,815,000	1,000,000
Levelling Up Funds - Bedlington East to West	3,910,000	3,910,000	-	3,748,000	2,748,000	1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,658,000	6,658,000	1,000,000
FCERM - Beadnell	145,000	145,000	-	1,805,000	1,600,000	205,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,950,000	1,745,000	205,000
FCERM - Branton Surface Water	20,261	20,261	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,261	20,261	-
FCERM - Cresswell Coastal Management	450,000	335,000	115,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	450,000	335,000	115,000
FCERM - Haydon Bridge	108,000	108,000	-	788,000	708,000	80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	896,000	816,000	80,000
FCERM - Hepscott FAS	177,692	177,692	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	177,692	177,692	-
FCERM - Kirkwell Cottages	41,440	41,440	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41,440	41,440	-
FCERM - Loansdean	45,000	45,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45,000	45,000	-
FCERM - Meggie's Burn	6,000	6,000	-	33,000	33,000	-	11,000	11,000	-	-	-	-	50,000	50,000	-
FCERM - Stocksfield & Riding Mill	26,000	26,000	-	314,000	285,000	29,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	340,000	311,000	29,000
FCERM - Next Generation Flood Resilience	1,212,000	1,212,000	-	1,049,000	1,049,000	-	1,125,000	1,125,000	-	-	-	-	3,386,000	3,386,000	-
Highways Laboratory Expansion	300,000	-	300,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300,000	-	300,000
Highway Maintenance Investment in U and C roads and Footways	4,450,000	-	4,450,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,450,000	-	4,450,000
LTP - Local Transport Plan	26,021,619	26,021,619	-	23,426,000	23,426,000	-	23,426,000	23,426,000	-	-	-	-	72,873,619	72,873,619	-
Members Local Improvement Schemes	2,418,037	-	2,418,037	1,035,000	-	1,035,000	1,035,000	-	1,035,000	1,035,000	-	1,035,000	5,523,037	-	5,523,037
Salt Barns	1,350,148	-	1,350,148	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,350,148	-	1,350,148
Tyne Mills Depot, Hexham	110,987	-	110,987	162,372	-	162,372	3,683	-	3,683	6,480	-	6,480	283,522	-	283,522
Highway Maintenance and Pothole Repair Fund	5,770,500	3,270,500	2,500,000	5,268,000	2,768,000	2,500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	11,038,500	6,038,500	5,000,000

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024-25 TO 2027-28

Project Title	2024-2025			2025-2026			2026-2027			2027-2028			TOTAL		
	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding	Gross Budget	External Funding	NCC Funding
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
New DfT Challenge Fund Bid Support - Steel Structures	26,000	26,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26,000	26,000	-
FCERM - Lynemouth Bay Landfill Encapsulation	3,179,000	400,000	2,779,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,179,000	400,000	2,779,000
FCERM - Ovingham Surface Water	52,756	-	52,756	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52,756	-	52,756
FCERM - Red Row	51,779	51,779	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	51,779	51,779	-
FCERM - Wylam SW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	96,000	96,000	-	96,000	96,000	-
FCERM - Brumwell Court & Guessburn	12,000	12,000	-	162,000	132,000	30,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	174,000	144,000	30,000
Powburn Depot Recycling Facility	133,833	-	133,833	94,850	-	94,850	247,786	-	247,786	-	-	-	476,469	-	476,469
Longhorsley Flood Alleviation Scheme	40,000	40,000	-	12,000	12,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52,000	52,000	-
Total Highways and Transport	87,492,572	64,411,127	23,081,445	87,328,945	79,192,723	8,136,222	25,848,469	24,562,000	1,286,469	1,137,480	96,000	1,041,480	201,807,466	168,261,850	33,545,616
Housing - General Fund															
Community Housing Fund	719,806	710,307	9,499	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	719,806	710,307	9,499
Total Housing - General Fund	719,806	710,307	9,499	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	719,806	710,307	9,499
Housing - HRA															
HRA Miscellaneous / Other	93,000	-	93,000	80,000	-	80,000	80,000	-	80,000	80,000	-	80,000	333,000	-	333,000
HRA Energy Efficiency	500,000	-	500,000	500,000	-	500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Grants	516,000	-	516,000	531,000	-	531,000	546,000	-	546,000	561,000	-	561,000	2,154,000	-	2,154,000
Homes England Grant Recovery (re RTB)	75,000	-	75,000	75,000	-	75,000	75,000	-	75,000	75,000	-	75,000	300,000	-	300,000
Affordable Homes	15,838,703	3,744,000	12,094,703	12,742,412	3,593,000	9,149,412	3,300,000	400,000	2,900,000	2,760,000	260,000	2,500,000	34,641,115	7,997,000	26,644,115
Major Repairs Reserve	10,600,000	-	10,600,000	10,700,000	-	10,700,000	10,700,000	-	10,700,000	10,600,000	-	10,600,000	42,600,000	-	42,600,000
Amble HUSK bungalows	2,493,497	-	2,493,497	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,493,497	-	2,493,497
Affordable Homes - Riverbrook Gardens Development	39,492	-	39,492	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39,492	-	39,492
Lyndon Walk (Dementia Bungalows)	1,563,796	-	1,563,796	1,063,795	-	1,063,795	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,627,591	-	2,627,591
Total Housing - HRA	31,719,488	3,744,000	27,975,488	25,692,207	3,593,000	22,099,207	14,701,000	400,000	14,301,000	14,076,000	260,000	13,816,000	86,188,695	7,997,000	78,191,695
Leisure Services															
Haltwhistle Football Project	46,486	-	46,486	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,486	-	46,486
Northumberland Playzones	300,000	-	300,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300,000	-	300,000
Library Service New Vehicle	225,000	-	225,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	225,000	-	225,000
Concordia Leisure Centre	1,048,376	-	1,048,376	503,525	-	503,525	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,551,901	-	1,551,901
Willowburn Sport Centre	1,338,521	-	1,338,521	956,882	-	956,882	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,295,403	-	2,295,403
Wentworth Sport Centre	796,854	-	796,854	444,135	-	444,135	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,240,989	-	1,240,989
Total Leisure Services	3,755,237	-	3,755,237	1,904,542	-	1,904,542	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,659,779	-	5,659,779
Neighbourhood Services															
Fleet Replacement Programme	5,680,592	-	5,680,592	7,507,000	-	7,507,000	8,488,000	-	8,488,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	22,675,592	-	22,675,592
Parks Enhancement / Green Spaces Programme	600,000	-	600,000	400,000	-	400,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Total Neighbourhood Services	6,280,592	-	6,280,592	7,907,000	-	7,907,000	8,488,000	-	8,488,000	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	23,675,592	-	23,675,592
Property Services															
County Hall Refurbishment	515,000	-	515,000	3,900,000	-	3,900,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,415,000	-	4,415,000
County Hall Solar PV	98,939	-	98,939	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98,939	-	98,939
Cowley Road Depot Refurb & Car Park	24,005	-	24,005	281,881	-	281,881	2,346	-	2,346	1,505,517	-	1,505,517	1,813,749	-	1,813,749
Depot Rationalisation	555,861	-	555,861	282,198	-	282,198	1,315,501	-	1,315,501	51,000	-	51,000	2,204,560	-	2,204,560
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial	1,000,000	-	1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Leisure Buildings - Essential Remedial - Prudhoe Waterworld Wet Change	160,000	-	160,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	160,000	-	160,000
The Living Barracks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	663,000	-	663,000	663,000	-	663,000
Prudhoe Waterworld Improvements	1,410,000	-	1,410,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,410,000	-	1,410,000
Property Stewardship Fund - Backlog M&E and Fabric	1,900,000	-	1,900,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,900,000	-	1,900,000
Property Stewardship Fund - Bearl Depot Drainage and New Build	1,549	-	1,549	48,186	-	48,186	24,322	-	24,322	-	-	-	74,057	-	74,057
Property Stewardship Fund - Powburn Depot Roof	119,636	-	119,636	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	119,636	-	119,636
Property Stewardship Fund - Public Toilet Refurbishment	470,100	-	470,100	258,240	-	258,240	-	-	-	-	-	-	728,340	-	728,340
Property Stewardship Fund - Woodhorn Heapstead	726,525	-	726,525	571,000	-	571,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,297,525	-	1,297,525
Property Stewardship Fund - Woodhorn Walker Fan Building	100,000	-	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000	-	100,000
Total Property Services	7,081,615	-	7,081,615	5,341,505	-	5,341,505	1,342,169	-	1,342,169	2,219,517	-	2,219,517	15,984,806	-	15,984,806
TOTAL DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME	337,655,152	165,539,677	172,115,475	275,447,299	145,453,109	129,994,190	121,287,589	40,801,861	80,485,728	48,530,574	3,106,000	45,424,574	782,920,614	354,900,647	428,019,967

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Northumberland County Council

Committee Name: Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 29 January 2024

Comprehensive analysis of sickness absence, causal factors and intervention strategies – supplementary report to Annual Workforce Report 2022-2023

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

Responsible Officer(s): Sarah Farrell, Director of Workforce and OD,

Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

Value for Money - By having a clear understanding of the reasons for sickness absence, we can offer a range of preventative and supportive measures with the aim of minimising absences and the associated impact this may have on overall service delivery and associated budgets. We aim to create a culture that delivers a better employee experience allowing our workforce to maintain strong, physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Tackling inequalities - Recognising we have a diverse workforce, with diverse wellbeing needs, we need to ensure that we understand fully the issues that may impact on overall wellbeing, enabling us to respond effectively, offering a range of health and wellbeing services to support our staff but also allow them to manage their own health and wellbeing.

1. Purpose of report.

- 1.1 To examine more closely an increase in sickness absence within the Council, establishing the reasons, along with any internal or external factors that may influence this and to outline proposed interventions in reducing sickness and improving overall wellbeing.

2. Recommendations.

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report as supplementary to the previously considered annual workforce report discussed at committee on 25 September 2023.
- 2.2 Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee determine relevant content from this supplementary report that might be included in future annual workforce reports for every financial year.

3. Background and Introduction.

- 3.1 In recent months, a steady increase in sickness absence has been observed. For the purposes of comparing sickness from previous years, 2019 is the year that has been utilised as this was prior to the emergence of Covid i.e. the most recent complete year that could be considered 'typical'.
- 3.2 A comprehensive analysis of sickness absence has been undertaken, examining the causal factors and exploring potential intervention strategies.
- 3.3 When considering the report, it is important to be cognisant of the establishment changes which occurred during the reporting period, most significantly, the TUPE transfer of over 600 employees from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust into the council in October 2021, with most staff transferring into Adult Social Care.
- 3.4 The recent senior management restructure has resulted in new Directorates being formed and services moving between Directorates e.g. Housing moving from Public Health to Place and Regeneration, services within the former Communities and Business Development Directorate becoming part of Transformation and Resources and Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities etc.
- 3.5 The report will cover;
 - Sickness levels, considering overall increases across NCC and within Directorates.
 - Benchmarking data and how we compare with others.
 - Analysis by reasons – What is the issue?
 - Analysis by Directorates – Where is the issue?
 - Examining the main cause of sickness absence (Mental Health) in depth.
 - Potential causal factors - roles, gender, age, vacancy rate.
 - Other data sources - Exit intelligence, OH referrals, latest pulse survey insight.
 - Overall conclusions based on above analysis.

- What are we currently doing to support wellbeing and address rising sickness absence levels.
- Other options to be considered for implementation.

4. Sickness absence levels.

4.1 There has been an overall increase in sickness absence from 4.25% days lost to 5.26% and an increase from 9.44 to 11.68 average days per employee when comparing 2019 to 2023.

4.2 An analysis of sickness across directorates shows that Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing and Childrens Young People and Education currently experience the highest levels of sickness absence.

4.3 The overall increase in sickness absence is highest within Adult Ageing and Wellbeing, Place and Regeneration and Chief Executive Directorates. There are smaller increases within other directorates (see charts 1 to 3). Please see section 7 below for detailed analysis of absence patterns within these directorates.

Charts 1 to 3 Sickness levels; overall and by directorate 2019 v 2023

Chart 1 – percentage of days lost

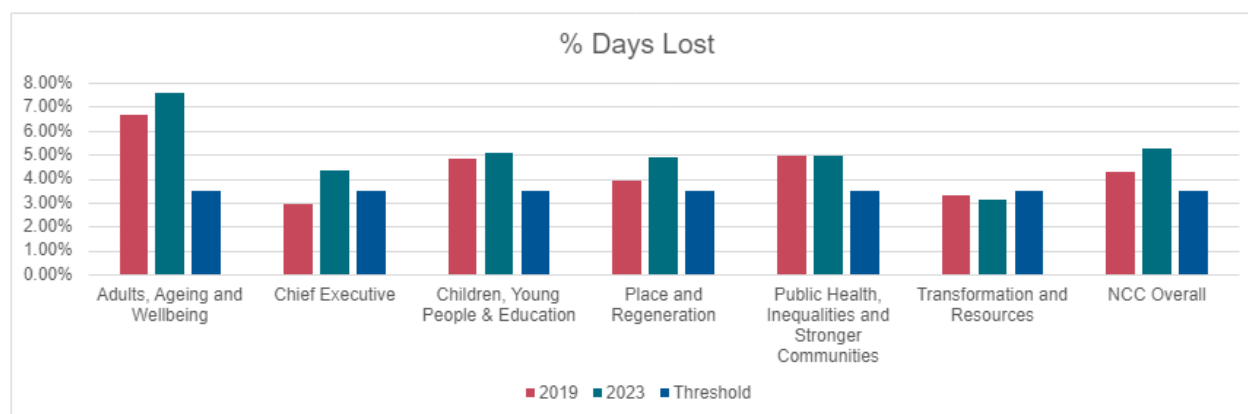


Chart 2 - Average FTE days lost per FTE

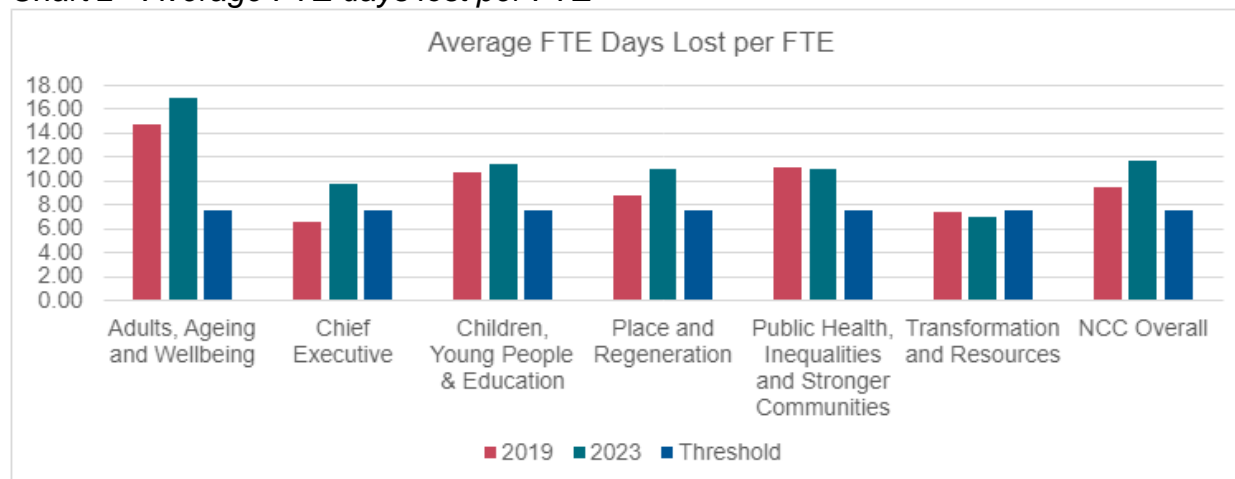
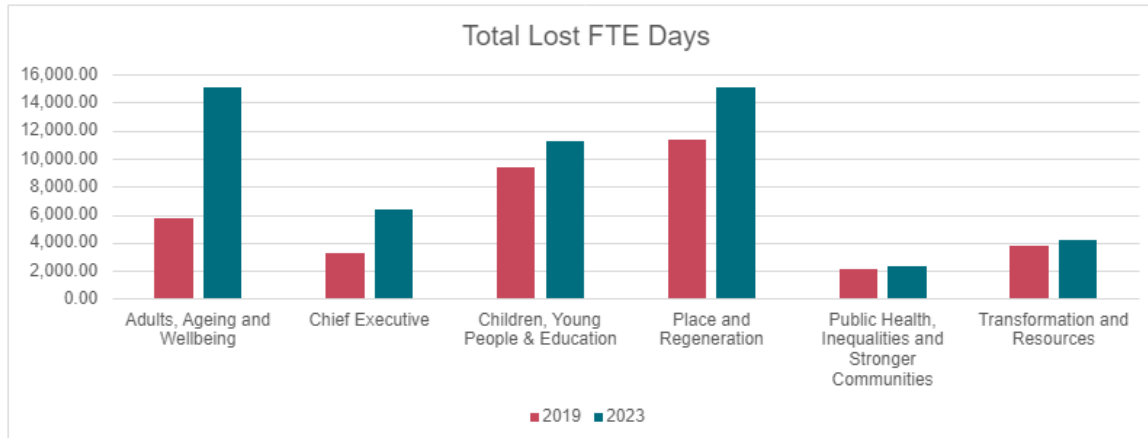


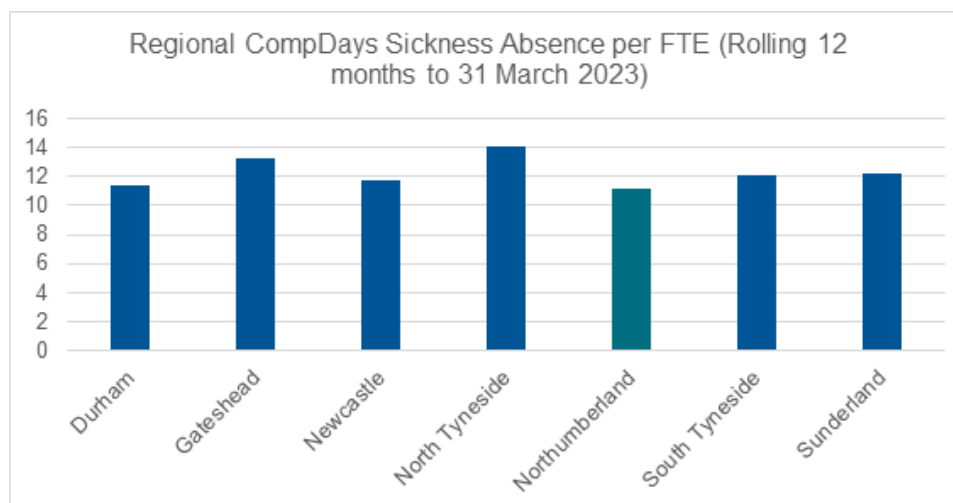
Chart 3 - Total Lost FTE days



5. External Benchmarking.

- 5.1 National position - Using the latest available benchmarking data from the Local Government Association (LGA), the average number of days lost per FTE for the 22/23 financial year was 9.6 days for All English authorities, 10 days for All English single tier and county councils and 8.8 days for All English district local authorities. Northumberland's figure for the same period was 11.16 days and over the last 12 months the figure is 11.68 days.
- 5.2 Regional Position - The regional position is set out below which shows Northumberland as having the lowest average days lost FTE within the region.

Chart 4 – Regional comparison of sickness absence levels 2022 – 2023.



5.3 CIPFA benchmarking data (table 1 below) shows that on average, Northumberland is lower than our ‘nearest neighbours’ for levels of sickness absence (mean score).

Table 1 - Northumberland compared with CIPFA ‘Nearest Neighbours’ *

Year	Northumberland (average)	Northumberland CIPFA nearest neighbours (average)	Minimum for Northumberland CIPFA nearest neighbours	Maximum for Northumberland CIPFA nearest neighbours
2022/23	11.16	11.4	8.7	14.0
2021/22	10.00	13.3	N/A	N/A
2020/21	8.03	10.20	7.1	14.1
2018/19	11.2	12.2	9.3	14.3

*CIPFA maintains a model that generates sets of statistical nearest neighbours. The default model uses 20 factors including demographic variables, deprivation, employment and population density. Northumberland CIPFA nearest neighbours include the following Local Authorities: East Riding of Yorkshire, Wirral, Isle of Wight, Barnsley, Wakefield, Rotherham, Dudley and St. Helens.

5.4 UK sickness data reported by Personnel Today in September 2023 (CIPD – Simply health survey - 918 organisations representing 6.5 million employees) showed that UK employees were absent for 7.8 days on average over the past year, the highest level reported over a decade and two days more than a pre pandemic sickness absence rate of 5.8 days.

5.5 Public sector average absence levels were reported to be considerably higher at 10.6 days.

5.6 The most prevalent reason for long term absences was cited as ‘mental health’ (63%)

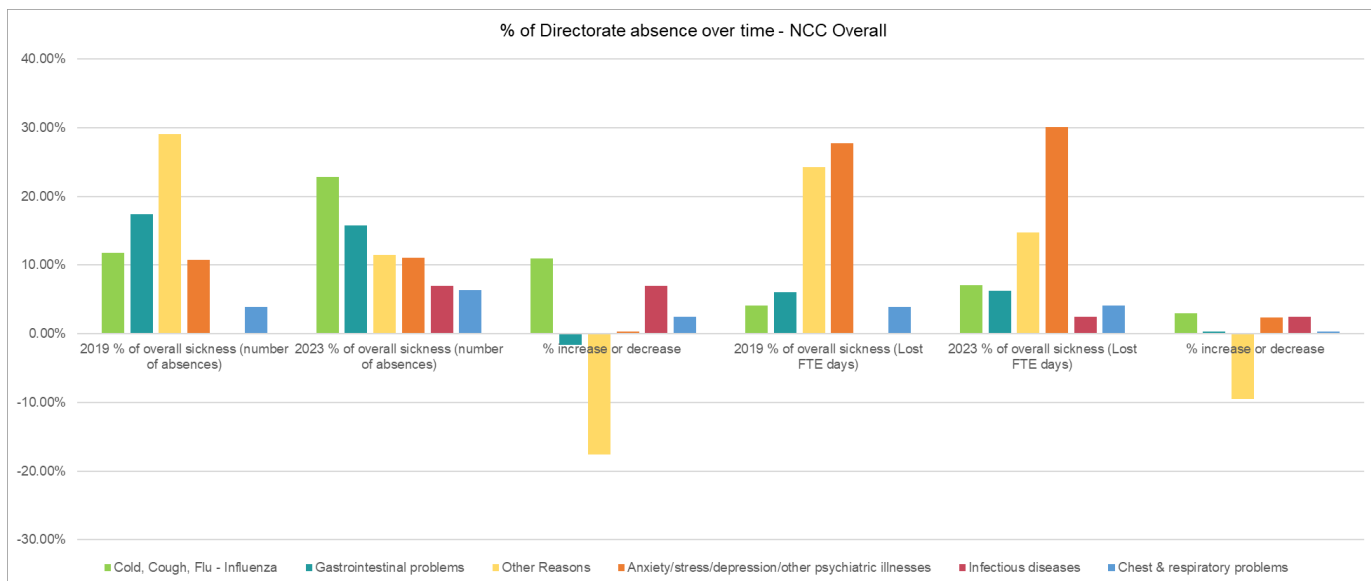
5.7 The most prevalent reason for short term absences were cited as ‘minor illnesses’ (94%) and ‘musculoskeletal issues’ (45%)

6. Analysis of sickness absence reasons – Council view.

6.1 Chart 6 highlights the current main reasons for sickness absence, but also identifies the specific reasons for the increases from 2019 to 2023.

6.2 All absence reason data in this report is reliant on the accurate recording of absence reasons by managers.

Chart 6 – sickness reasons 2019 v 2023

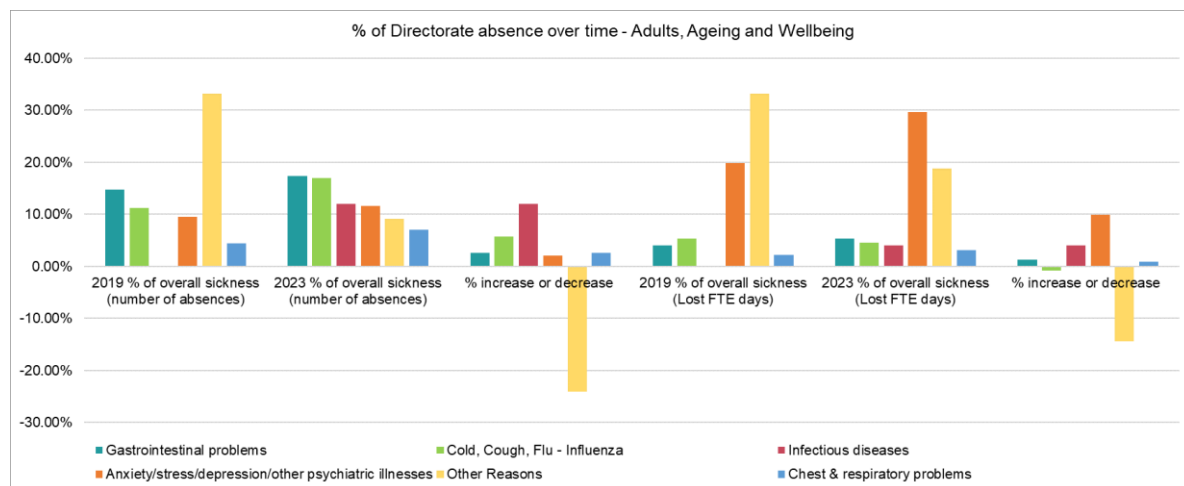


- 6.3 The HR / OD service is currently working to devise a solution to address the overuse of the ‘other’ category in our absence recording system. It is acknowledged that until this is implemented, data on the reasons for absence will not be entirely accurate or distinguishable.
- 6.4 Absence due to ‘respiratory’ reasons is the main contributor for shorter term absence and we have seen an increase in absences of these types since 2019. Covid will clearly have had an influence on this and can be evidenced through an emerging reason of ‘infectious diseases’ recorded in 2023.
- 6.5 The introduction of the ‘Managing Respiratory Infections in the Workplace’ policy in 2021 will also have had an impact on the incidence of respiratory illness being recorded as an absence reason due to the clear policy position that ‘*If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses and a high temperature, stay at home and avoid contact with other people until you feel well enough to resume normal activities.*’
- 6.6 In terms of longer terms absences, mental health is the main contributor, again showing an increase from 2019 to 2023. Respiratory and infectious diseases have also seen an increase. Again, those suffering from long covid may be influencing this.

7. Analysis of sickness levels and reasons in Directorates experiencing the highest increases in absence.

7.1 Adults Ageing and Wellbeing

Chart 7 – Sickness reasons in the Adults Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate

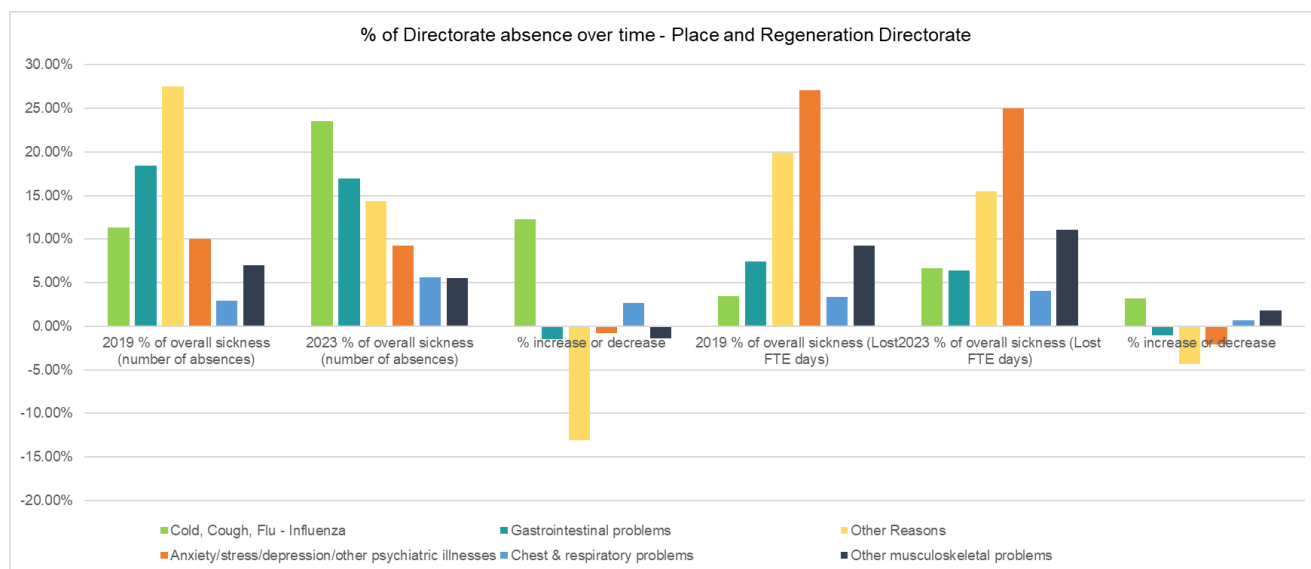


7.1.1 Gastrointestinal problems and respiratory illnesses are the main short-term absence reasons, both seeing increases when comparing 2019 with 2023. Infectious diseases have seen the largest increase in relation to number of absences, however this could likely be attributed to covid.

7.1.2 Mental health related absences are the main reason for long term absences in Adults, Ageing and wellbeing. There has also been a large increase in this area when comparing 2019 with 2023.

7.2 Place and Regeneration

Chart 8 – Sickness reasons in the Place and Regeneration Directorate

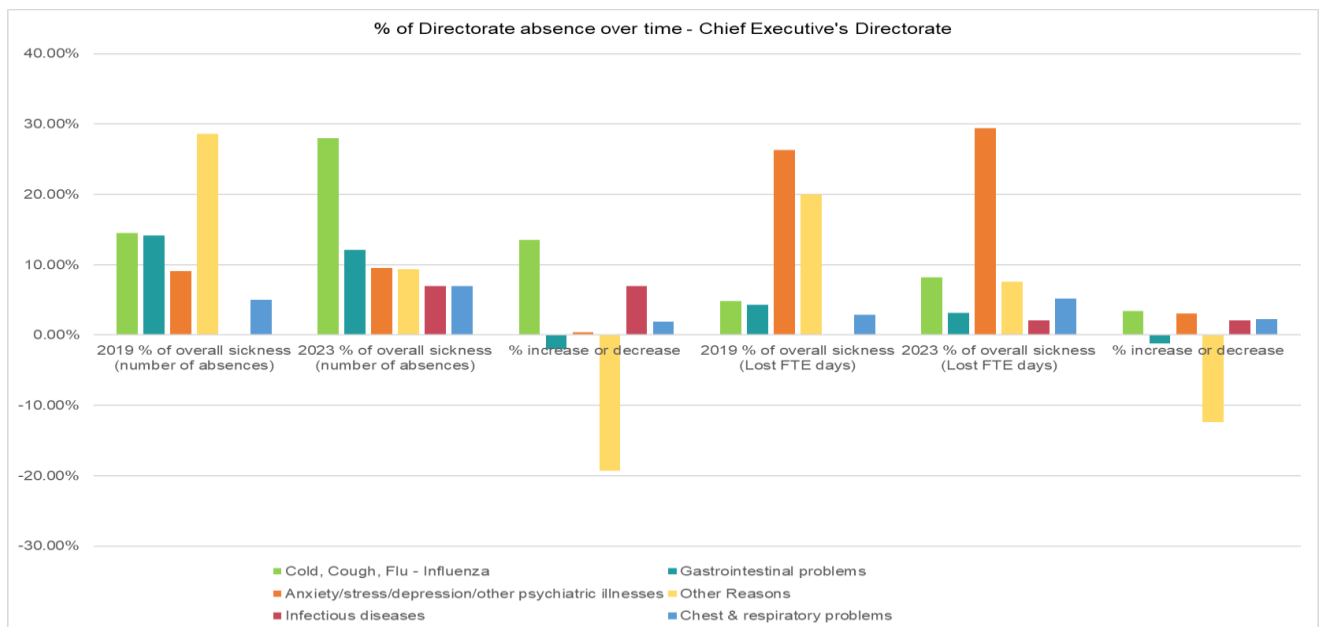


7.2.1 Respiratory illness accounts for the largest proportion of short-term absences and has seen a marked increase when comparing 2019 with 2023.

- 7.2.2 Mental health related illness accounts for the largest proportion of long-term sickness, with a slight decrease from 2019 compared to 2023.
- 7.2.3 Musculoskeletal reasons account for the next highest long-term absence and there has been an increase in this area when comparing 2019 with 2023. The main reasons recorded are back ache/pain. The reason for this could be due to the physical nature of the work within the directorate.
- 7.2.4 Respiratory illnesses have seen the largest increase in long term absences. Section 9 of this report provides further detail on staff who were shielding and had underlying health conditions during the height of the pandemic. 104 staff within Place and Regeneration (7.75% of Directorate) are highlighted within the data and therefore the higher incidence of underlying health conditions may result in longer term absences within the directorate.

7.3 Chief Executive

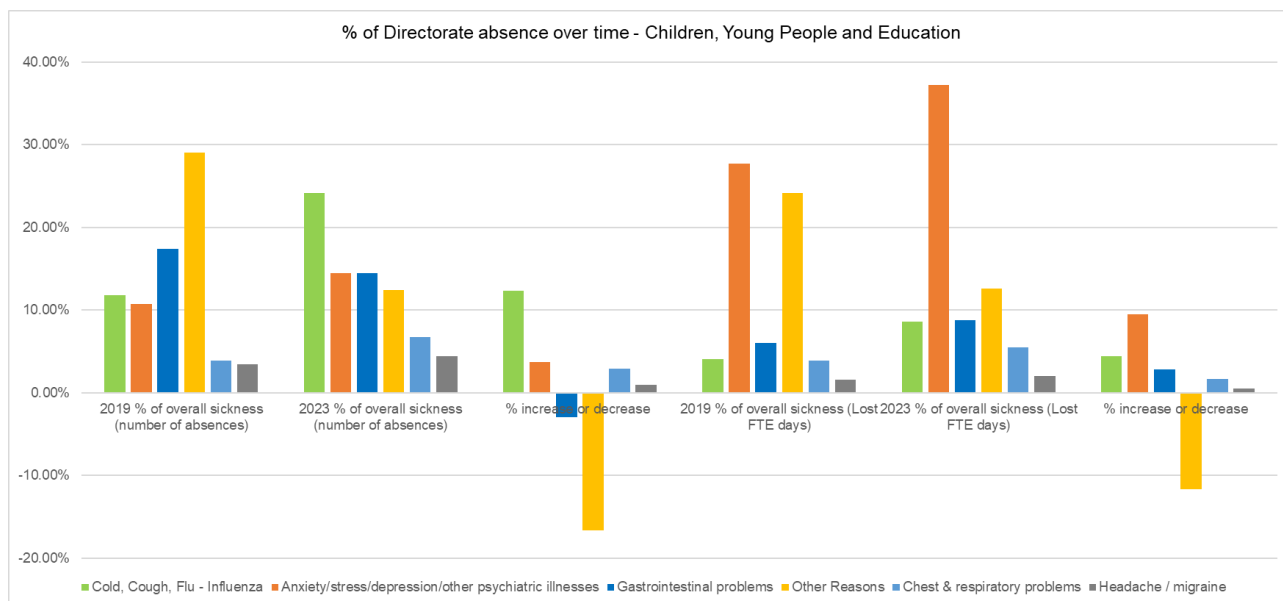
Chart 9 – Sickness reasons in the Chief Executive’s Directorate



- 7.3.1 Respiratory infections account for the largest short-term absences, seeing a large increase when comparing 2019 with 2023.
- 7.3.2 Mental health related illness account for the largest proportion of long-term sickness, with an increase from 2019 compared to 2023.

7.4 Childrens, Young People and Education

Chart 10 – *Sickness reasons in the Children, Young People and Education Directorate*



7.4.1 Respiratory infections account for the largest short term absence reason seeing a large increase when comparing 2019 with 2023. Mental health related illness is the second highest reason, also seeing an increase.

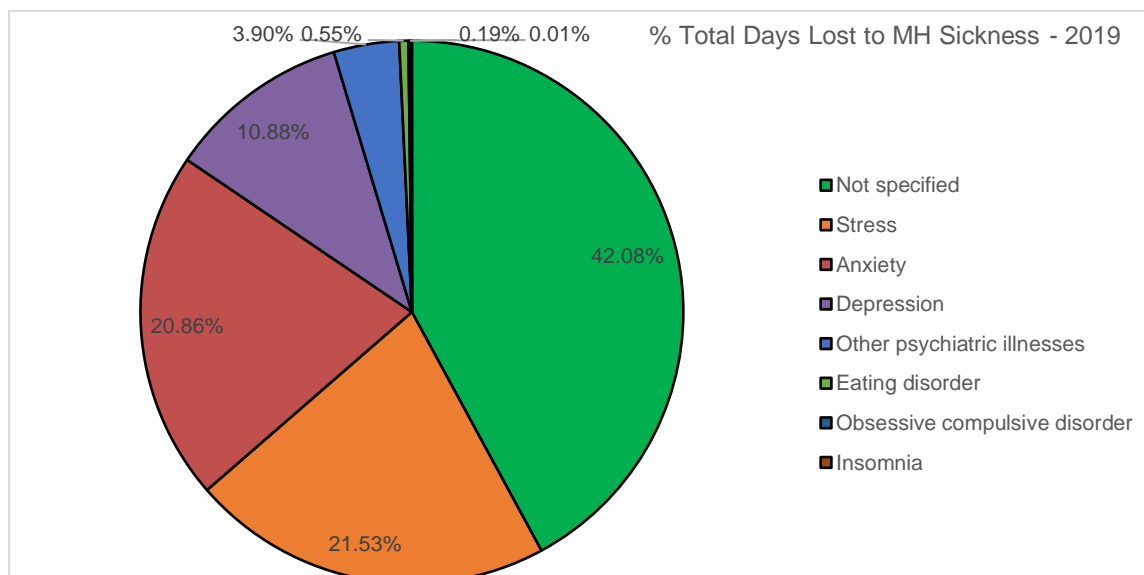
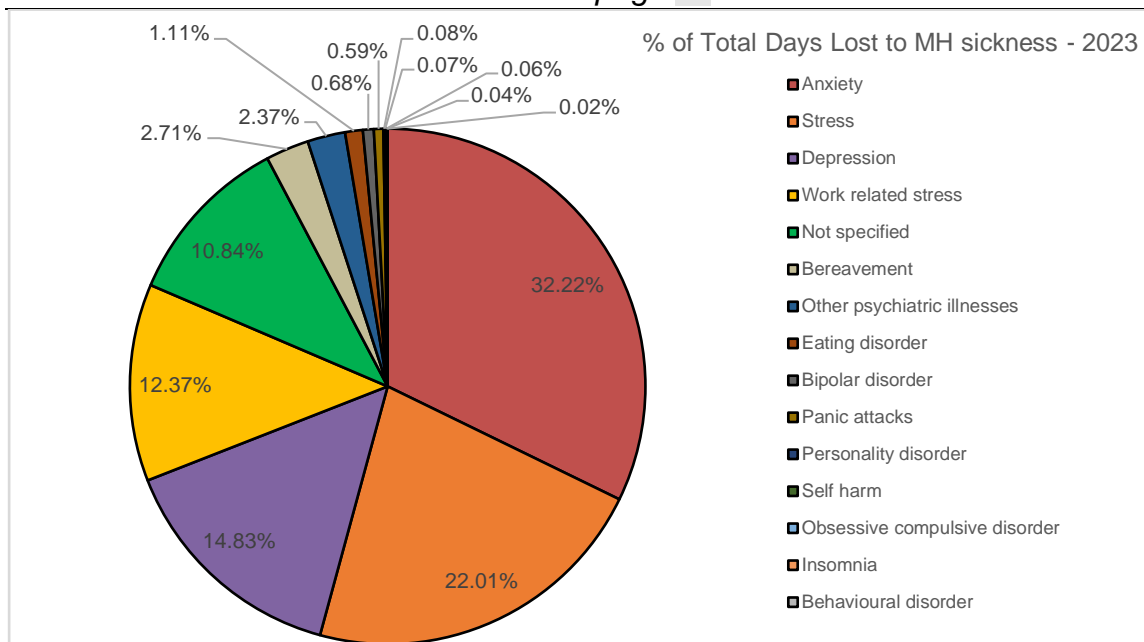
7.4.2 Mental health accounts for the largest long-term sickness seeing a large increase when comparing 2019, with 2023.

8. Analysis of increase in mental health related absences.

8.1 Mental health related absences account for the largest proportion of long-term sickness overall and levels have increased by 2.32% in days, when comparing 2019 with 2023.

8.2 Chart 11 shows a further breakdown of the reasons provided for mental health absences, comparing 2019 with 2023.

Chart 11 – *Breakdown of reasons categorised as 'Mental Health related' and associated days lost 2019 v 2023*



- 8.3 Anxiety accounts for the largest mental health related absence (32.22%) and where we have seen the largest increase since 2019. (20.86%)
- 8.4 Non-work-related stress accounts for 22.01%, with work related stress being 12.37%. (Work related stress was not a category available in 2019).
- 8.5 It is worth noting that multiple factors can cause poor mental health, but GPs tend to assign singular causes on fit notes and the absence recording system only allows a singular reason to be recorded.

9. Analysis of roles attracting the highest levels of sickness absence.

9.1 An analysis of sickness absence across all roles has been conducted. Table 2 highlights the roles which currently carry the highest sickness levels based on percentage of head count with an absence.

Table 2 – high absence roles

Role	No of absences	Head count absent	Head count	% of headcount with absence	Total lost FTE Days
Contact Centre Adviser	58	35	41	85%	464.82
Neat Team Operative	115	65	78	83%	1473.04
Highway operative /Driver	76	28	36	78%	721
Care Worker	187	99	128	77%	1828.54
Apprentice	104	53	70	75%	401
Reablement worker	110	62	84	74%	1311.42
Social worker	205	129	175	74%	2805.09
*Social worker support assistant	112	61	83	73%	1351.74
Refuse loader	72	42	58	72%	1219
*Occ Therapist	43	23	32	71%	356.52

9.2 Of the roles that carry the highest percentage of headcount sickness, table 3 highlights percentage increase when comparing to the 2019 reporting period.

Table 3 – high absence roles % increase 2019 v 2023

Role	2019 % of headcount with absence	2023 % of headcount with absence	% Increase
Contact Centre Adviser	80%	85%	5%
Neat Team Operative	52%	83%	31%
Highway operative /Driver	54%	78%	24%
Care Worker	73.0%	77%	4 %
Apprentice	69%	75%	6%
Reablement worker	71%	74%	3%
Social worker	71%	74%	3%
*Social worker support assistant		73%	
Refuse loader/HGV	46%	72%	26%

*Occ Therapist	Not Employed by NCC	71%	
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*These roles did not exist within NCC in 2019 prior to NHCT TUPE in October 2021

- 9.3 Neat Team Operatives, Refuse Loaders /HGV and Highway Operative Drivers have seen the largest increases in relation to percentage of headcount with absence.
- 9.4 Table 3 shows the percentage of staff that were identified during the Covid pandemic as having an underlying health condition and therefore were placed in an ‘at risk’ category and shielding during covid. (Staff who left prior to November 22 have been removed from this data and it has not been refreshed since it was collated for the purposes of the pandemic).
- 9.5 We can see that roles which currently show high sickness levels, are also where we have seen staff working with significant levels of underlying health conditions, such as Care Workers, Social Workers and NEAT Operatives and therefore this may have continued to have an impact on sickness levels linked to respiratory infections.

Table 4 – Staff with underlying health condition

Directorate	Number of staff with underlying health conditions	% of directorate workforce at that time	Role (% of those with underlying health conditions)	Types of Conditions
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing	70	6.86%	Care Worker (13.24%), Reablement Worker (20.99%)	Chest and Respiratory, Heart/Blood/Blood Pressure & Circulation
Chief Executive	33	4.92%	Exec PAs (50.00%), Licensing Officer (40.00%)	Chest and Respiratory, Heart/Blood/Blood Pressure & Circulation
Children, Young People & Education	87	8.25%	Contact Officer (18.92%), Residential Shift Co-ordinator (25.00%), Social Worker (7.59%)	Chest and Respiratory, Diabetes
Place and Regeneration	104	7.75%	NEAT Team Specialist (5.08%), NEAT Team Operative/Driver (4.49%), Homelessness and Housing Options Officer (33.33%)	Chest and Respiratory, Diabetes
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities	19	5.12%	Library and Information Assistant (10.00%), Registration Officer (15.79%)	Chest and Respiratory, Diabetes
Transformation and Resources	56	9.03%	Cleaner (5.00%), Support Officer - ICT Practitioner SIFA Level 4 (16.67%), Benefit Assessment Officer (18.18%)	Chest and Respiratory, Heart/Blood/Blood Pressure & Circulation
NCC Total	369	7.26%		

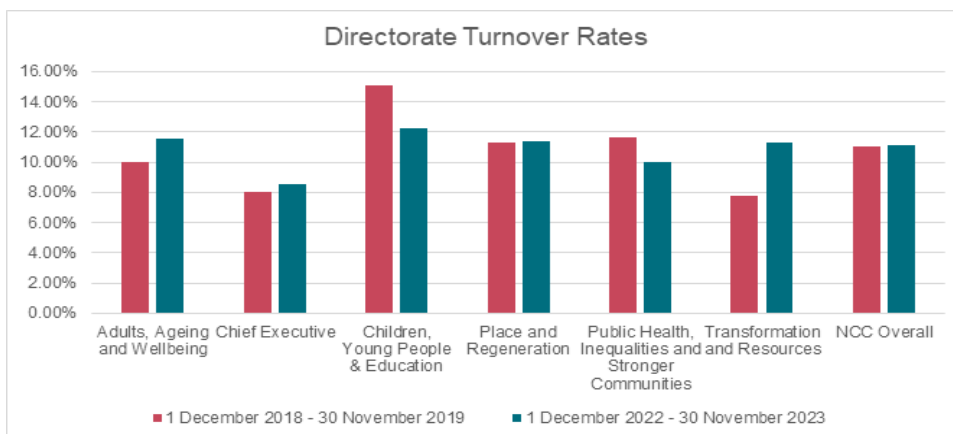
- 9.6 The roles with the highest rates of absence are also front line, direct delivery roles. It may be the case that when ill health occurs there are fewer options available to these staff groups and absence is necessary. In back-office roles, although there is no available data to measure the phenomenon, it may be that staff can for work

from home during illness and recover without the need to take time off from work.

10. Analysis of Vacancy Rate/ Turnover in relation to sickness absence.

- 10.1 Analysis has been undertaken to specifically address the hypothesis that services that carry the highest level of vacancies and staff turnover experience the highest levels of sickness.
- 10.2 ‘Vacancy rate’ is defined as the measurement of vacant positions v established positions and is expressed as a percentage.
- 10.3 Inaccessible establishment data has prevented accurate calculation of vacancy rate (NB This has been identified as an area for improvement). The vacancy rate therefore can only be calculated based on vacancies that have been linked to active recruitment efforts.
- 10.4 This data has been available since April 2023 when the new Tribepad (recruitment) system was introduced, and the data became trackable.
- 10.5 The overall advertised vacancy rate for the council is currently 1.02 % (1 April – 31 December 2023).
- 10.6 Analysis by Directorate - turnover

Chart 12 – Turnover rates 2019 v 2023



10.6.1 Chart 12 shows that across directorates, turnover levels remain highest within Children Services. There has however been a decrease in turnover if we compare to 2019. Childrens services sickness levels have marginally increased despite a decrease in turnover. Based on this, no correlation between turnover and sickness can be observed in Children’s Services.

10.6.2 Transformation and Resources directorate and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing directorate have seen the largest increase in turnover since 2019. Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing have seen an increase in sickness levels and currently carry the highest levels of sickness absence. Transformation and Resources have seen a decrease in sickness absence. Based on this, there may be some correlation between turnover and sickness in the Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing directorate but no evidence of this is apparent in the Transformation and Resources directorate.

10.6.3 Place and Regeneration has seen an increase in sickness but has experienced stable levels of turnover. Based on this, no correlation between turnover and sickness can be observed in the Place and Regeneration directorate.

10.6.4 Overall, based on this analysis, it cannot be concluded that turnover is directly impacting sickness absence levels in all areas.

10.7 Analysis by Directorate – advertised vacancy rate

Table 5 – Advertised vacancy rate by Directorate

Directorate	Headcount	No of advertised vacancies (04/23 to 11/23)	Advertised vacancy rate
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing	1041	60	0.72%
Chief Executive	678	13	0.24%
Children, Young People & Education	1110	151	1.70%
Place and Regeneration	1381	101	0.91%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities	348	21	0.75%
Transformation and Resources	649	79	1.52%
NCC	5207	425	1.02%

10.7.1 Directorate vacancy rates, show Transformation and Resources having the highest at 1.52%, however, they have the lowest sickness levels.

10.7.2 Childrens, Young People and Education show the second highest vacancy rate and although they do have one of the highest sickness levels, there was only a marginal increase when compared to 2019.

10.7.3 It would therefore suggest that vacancy rate at directorate level does not show any strong correlation with sickness, and we need to look more closely at roles if we are to draw any meaningful conclusions.

10.8 Analysis by role – advertised vacancy rate

Table 6 – Vacancy rate by high absence role

Role	Headcount	% of headcount with absence	No of vacancies (04/23 to 11/23)	Number Filled	Number remain vacant	Vacancy rate
Contact Centre Adviser	41	85%	4	3	1	1.21%
Neat Team Operative	78	83%	11	10	1	1.76%
Highway operative /Driver	36	78%	4	1	3	1.38%
Care Worker	128	77%	16	13	3 (bank)	1.56%
Reablement Worker	84	74%	6	5	1	0.89%
Social Worker	205	74%	25	16	9	1.52%
- Adults	116	74%	18	10	8	1.93%
- Childrens	89	73%	7	6	1	0.98%
Social worker support assistant (Adults)	83	73%	20	20	0	3.01%
Refuse Loader	58	72%	6	4	2	1.29%
Occ Therapist	32	71%	5	5	0	1.95%

NB – vacancy rate has been calculated on average vacancy numbers over the last 8 months, and assuming headcount has remained static.

10.8.1 If we look at the top 9 roles that carry the highest sickness levels (see table above), they all have advertised vacancy rates in excess of the council average across all directorates. The highest advertised vacancy rates are within Social Worker Support Assistant (Adults), Occupational Therapists and Adult Social Worker (highlighted in table).

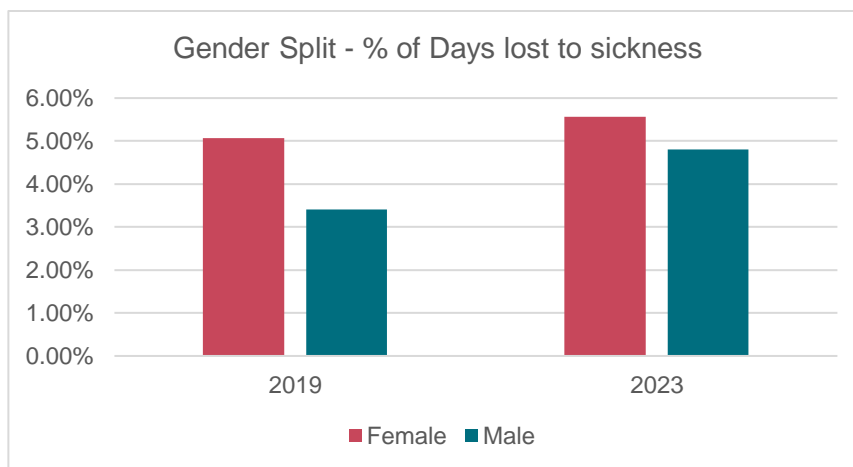
10.8.2 It would appear that there is some correlation between advertised vacancy rates and sickness within specific roles.

10.8.3 It is inevitable that a vacancy in a front-line service such as care provision will have a greater overall impact on not only service provision, but also create pressure on colleagues who may have to cover the abstraction. This becomes perpetuated when unfilled vacancies create pressure and may impact on overall sickness levels.

11. Analysis of gender in relation to sickness absence.

11.1 Calculation of the percentage of overall sickness split by gender (adjusted as proportion of overall headcount) shows that females have higher levels of sickness absence than males. However, there has been a greater rate of increase in male sickness when comparing 2019 with 2023 with the percentage of days lost to sickness absence increasing from 3.41% to 4.81% compared to female sickness absence increase from 5.07% to 5.56% over the same period.

Chart 13 – Sickness rate by gender 2019 v 2023



11.2 The reasons for sickness absence when looking at gender split are relatively similar, with ‘Respiratory’ causes accounting for the largest number of short-term absences and ‘Mental health’ for longer term absences.

11.3 The increase in male sickness is likely due to the increased sickness levels in Place and Regeneration and roles such as Refuse Loader, Neat Operative and Highways Operatives. These roles are filled by a predominantly male workforce.

12. Analysis of age in relation to sickness absence.

12.1 When examining sickness rates across age profile, the percentage of days lost due to sickness absence increases with age.

12.2 The most significant increases when comparing 2019 with 2023 can be observed in the 50+ age bracket.

Chart 14 – Sickness rate by age 2019 v 2023

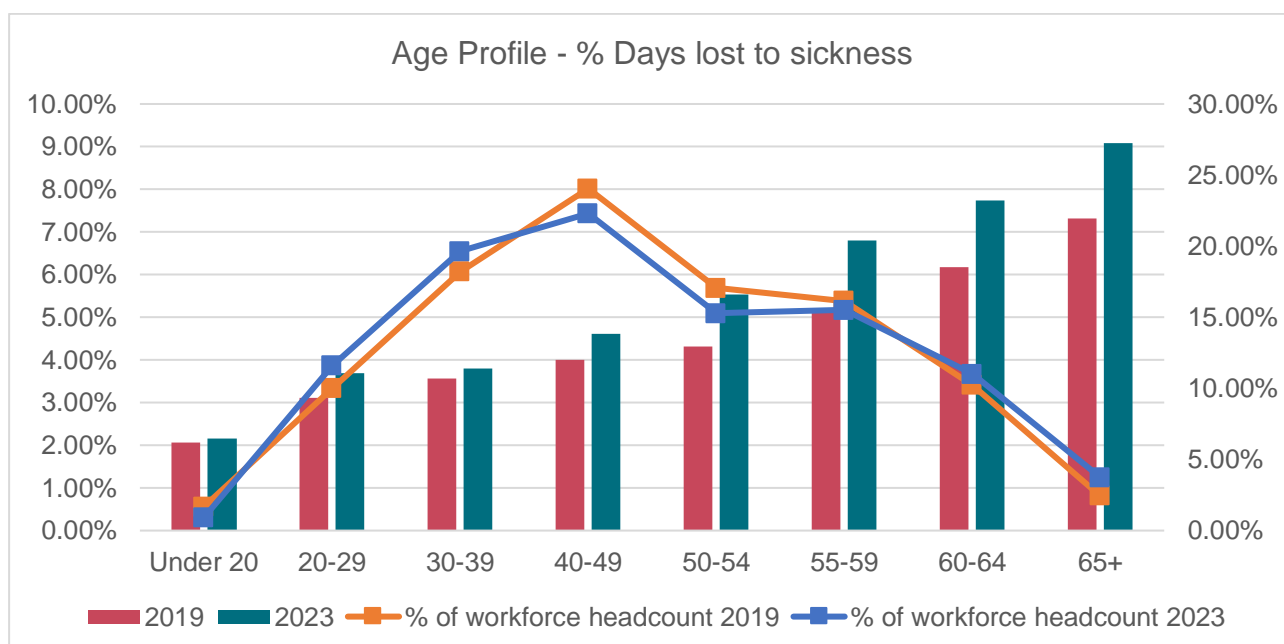


Table 7 - Average Age by Directorate

Directorate	Average Age - 2019	Average Age - 2023
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	50	48
Chief Executive Directorate	43	44
Children, Young People & Education Directorate	44	44
Place and Regeneration Directorate	46	46
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	47	48
Transformation and Resources Directorate	46	47
NCC overall	45	46

12.3 The majority of those aged 55 and above are working within Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing (44.7%), Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger communities (31.4%) and Place and Regeneration (30.8%).

12.4 As we know from previously stated analysis, the largest increases in sickness are seen within Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing and Place and Regeneration. These directorates are positioned as top and third in terms of average age of their respective workforces. Based on this, it can be inferred that there is some link between age and absence levels.

13. Exit Intelligence.

13.1 The exit survey is issued to leavers of the council and is designed to better understand an individual's reasons for leaving. This information is used to address areas of concern and develop strategies for effective future attraction and retention.

13.2 A wider analysis of exit survey feedback has been completed and is provided at **Appendix 1**. For the purposes of this report, focus has been given to the questions which are directly related to wellbeing.

13.3 118 exit surveys have been completed between December 2022 and November 2023. This equates to a 21.38% completion rate by all leavers.

13.4 50% of leavers who completed the survey resigned, with the remainder having either retired, come to the end of their fixed term contract, or retired on the grounds of ill health. 25% stated they were leaving by 'other' routes. Unfortunately, the survey does not currently allow us to follow this up and understand the more detailed reasons for method of leaving.

13.5 Of those that resigned, breakdown for reasons given is outlined below;

Career development 25%

Higher salary 24%

More job satisfaction 24%

Other 17%

Recognition 9%

13.6 'Health and Wellbeing' is not currently a selectable option to be offered as explanation for leaving.

13.7 The table below provides more detailed response to wellbeing questions from organisational and then directorate level from the 118 leavers who responded.

Table 8 – Wellbeing data as derived from responses by 118 leavers to exit survey

Questions within survey	% based on overall exit data submissions.	Adults	Childrens	Place & regen	Resources and Transforma tion	Public Health	Exec
		% is based on exit submissions at directorate level.					
The Council took my wellbeing seriously	83% agreed with this statement	78%	79%	80%	100%	92%	100%
Do you feel you have suffered any work-based stress beyond a level that you feel is acceptable?	40% felt they had suffered work-based stress beyond a level that they felt was acceptable	48%	44%	40%	60%	69%	14%
Do you feel you were given support from managers and colleagues? (related to above question)	58% responded yes	74%	91%	65%	100%	92%	86%
Do you feel your workload was manageable?	77% responded yes	74%	72%	65%	100%	100%	86%
Would you recommend NCC as a good employer?	87% responded yes	89%	84%	85%	100%	92%	86%
Total response rate		23%	36%	17%	7%	11%	6%

14. Occupational Health Referral Intelligence.

14.1 Our Occupational Health provider, Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust implemented a new case management system in April 2023. Accordingly, the following analysis is based on data for the period March 2023 to September 2023.

14.2 This data is considered relevant as it highlights the level of active intervention by managers seeking to understand the reasons for an individual’s health and wellbeing situation and to put in place appropriate support strategies.

14.3 Table 9 below shows the reason for referrals to Occupational Health. ‘Mental health’ was observed as being the highest reason for referral.

Table 9 – Cited reasons for referral to Occupational Health

TOTAL	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Totals
Mental Health	12	19	32	30	20	23	31	167
1* Concerns for employees ability	5	33	20	19	30	28	18	153
2 * Early Intervention	15	17	19	8	10	20	16	105
Musculoskeletal (MSK)	9	16	17	17	15	16	13	103
Continued Sickness Absence	12	9	12	15	12	15	11	86
Absence that gives cause for Concern	9	2	4	7	2	5	5	34
Pre-surgery Referral	0	3	3	2	3	4	5	20
Support During a Formal Process	0	3	1	1	1	2	2	10
Atypical Employee Behaviour	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3

Explanation re terminology;

1* - Staff member normally on long term sickness absence or with a disability and advice sought re issues that may impact on sickness, support which can be put in place, whether they can return to role and whether unfit for foreseeable.

2* - Referrals made when staff member not on sick leave or has just reported sick. Aim being to retain at work with adjustments.

14.4 Table 10 below highlights referral levels for each directorate. The highest referral levels being generated in Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing, which correlates to the highest sickness absence levels.

Table 10 - Referral levels by Directorate

Directorate	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Totals	Total HC	% of HC Referrals
Active Northumberland	1	5	2	4	7	7	4	9	5	44		
Adults, Ageing And Wellbeing Directorate	17	34	38	35	33	34	24	38	35	288	1041	28
Children, Young People And Education Directorate	14	12	21	22	11	20	19	23	26	168	1110	15
Fire And Rescue	2	11	4	13	3	9	9	7	2	60	492	12
Place And Regeneration	9	20	22	14	19	29	22	21	25	181	1383	13
Public Health, Inequalities And Stronger Communities	3	4	8	6	6	2	6	7	5	47	348	14
Transformation And Resources	5	9	10	5	10	8	16	7	9	79	647	12
Chief Executive directorate	4	7	3	0	6	4	2	5	2	33	186	18
TOTAL	55	102	108	99	95	113	102	117	109	900		

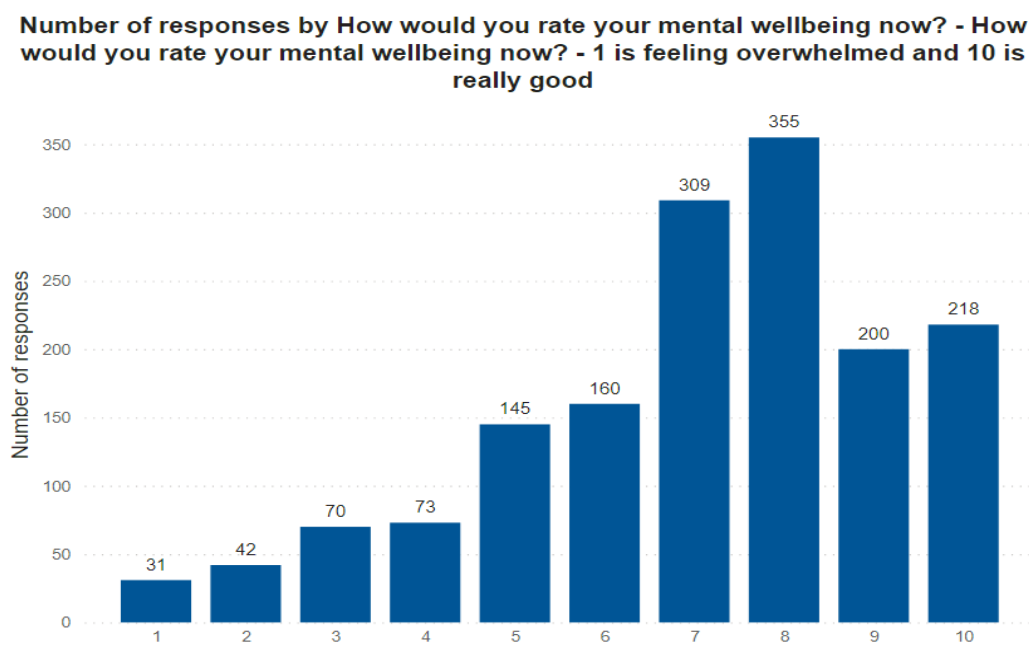
14.5 Work is ongoing in relation to improving the data we receive from Occupational Health, both in terms of frequency of reporting and qualitative data. The data should enable the organisation to ensure we are responding appropriately to reported sickness, taking a proactive approach with timely referrals being made through the correct pathway.

15. Pulse Survey Intelligence

15.1 The response to the recent pulse survey (undertaken December 2023) is currently being analysed. Given the timescales for this report, we have not had sufficient time to explore this fully, therefore the below is a snapshot of data collated so far.

15.2 Our intention will be to analyse this further across directorates and roles, exploring the themes already identified within this report to identify any further causal factors.

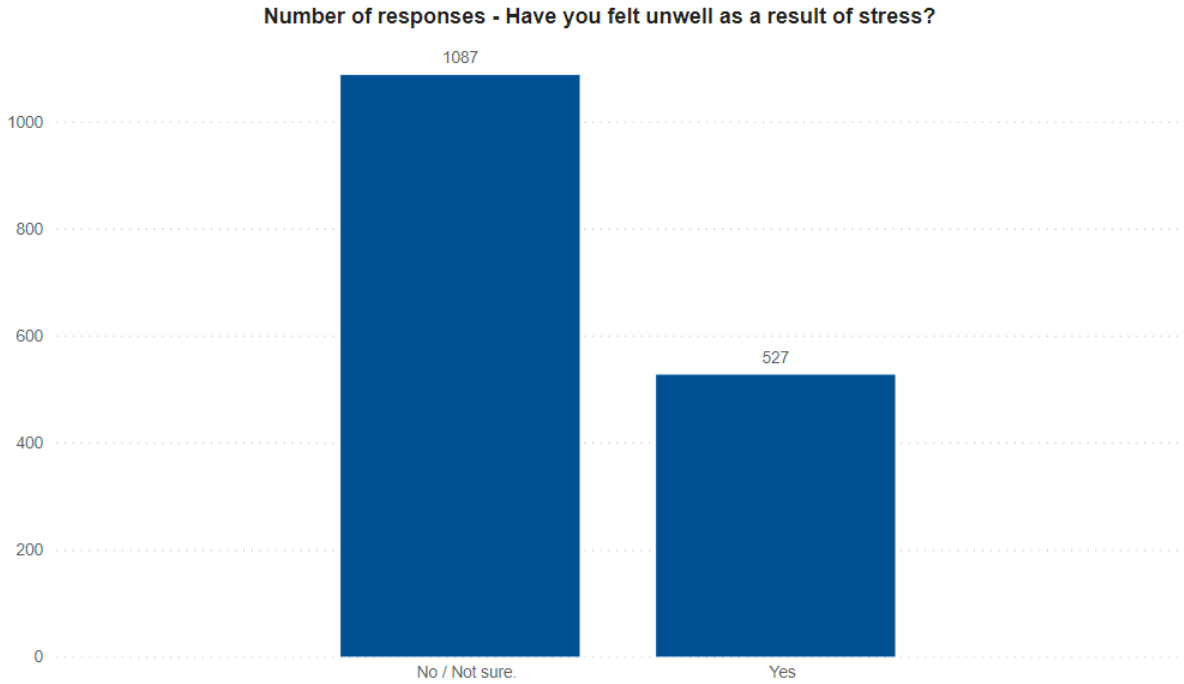
Chart 15 – Wellbeing scores from Pulse survey December 2023



15.3 67% of respondents would rate their mental wellbeing as 7 and above.

15.4 A more in-depth analysis of responses scoring 6 and below will be carried out to explore locations and roles, where data allows.

Chart 16 - Stress scores from Pulse survey December 2023



15.5 33% of respondents stated that they have felt unwell as a result of stress which correlates with the previous wellbeing question.

16. Conclusions drawn from analysis

- 16.1 When comparing sickness to the pre covid period, there has been an overall increase in sickness absence from 4.25% days lost to 5.26% and an increase from 9.44 to 11.68 average days per employee. This scale of increase is however a national trend and is not unique to the council.
- 16.2 The main reason recorded for sickness absence is respiratory related, particularly within short term absences and mental health related for long term absences. This is not surprising given the impact, directly and indirectly related to the pandemic. Staff are encouraged to remain at home if they have tested positive for covid or suspect they have covid.
- 16.3 People are generally taking more precautions with respiratory related illnesses, particularly those who were previously shielding and categorised as having a higher risk of becoming infected or living with family members who are at risk.
- 16.4 In terms of mental health incidence increases, nationally, the increase is being linked to the pandemic and more recently, the cost-of-living crisis.
- 16.5 When looking further into mental health illnesses, the main reason cited at the council is anxiety related (32%), however, the specific reasons vary from relationship breakups, bereavement, and family conflict. Work related mental health reasons account for 12% of all mental health related illness.
- 16.6 We also need to be mindful of the shift in society's attitudes in relation to mental health. People are becoming accepting of mental health conditions and more supportive of people with issues. There is a greater awareness of common mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety and people are more open about their mental health and more willing to talk to health professionals and seek treatment. Within work we are more active in encouraging people to talk about their mental health, promoting self-help.
- 16.7 We can see both from exit intelligence and the recent pulse survey that work based stress is present in some areas, with around 40% of staff who completed an exit survey and around 30% of staff who have completed the recent pulse survey citing they had experienced some level of stress as a result of aspects of their work for the council.
- 16.8 The highest sickness levels occur within Adult, Ageing and Wellbeing and Childrens, Young People and Education and are aligned to Care Worker and Social Worker roles. Both services have seen increases in respiratory illnesses (short term absences) and Mental Health (longer term absences).
- 16.9 Given the explanation for respiratory increases at 16.2 above and the link with heightened infection vigilance caused by the pandemic, it is understandable there has been an increase in this area and amongst the roles outlined.

- 16.10 A further understanding of mental health related absences needs to be explored as an initial review of reasons indicate several factors - bereavement, family conflicts, relationship breakdowns, relationships at work, stress caused by high number of vacancies, trauma. There appears to be no predominant reason.
- 16.11 Although Place and Regeneration does not have the highest sickness levels, they have seen a marked increase in respiratory short-term absences, but also respiratory long-term absences and for musculoskeletal reasons. This can be attributed to the physical nature of NEAT Team Operative, Highways Operative and Refuse Loader roles. These are predominantly outdoor workers who may be more susceptible to seasonable illness and have been further impacted by the pandemic. Long term covid may also have had an impact.
- 16.12 When analysing advertised vacancy rates, the data suggests there is no strong correlation if considering at directorate level, however, it is probable that vacancies within specific care roles, including Social Workers, could be contributing to absence levels. This needs to be further explored and recruitment and retention strategies implemented to fill established posts.
- 16.13 Sickness levels are higher amongst females, which aligns to the national picture, however we have recently seen greater increases in male sickness, which may account for the increased sickness levels within Place and Regeneration which has a predominantly male workforce. This also needs to be explored further.
- 16.14 In summary, the increased sickness levels mirror the national picture, and higher levels within the northeast region. It is important however that we further explore the reasons for absences within specific service areas, such as front-line services, where we employ Care workers, Social Workers, NEAT Team Operatives, Highway Operatives and Refuse Loaders. This will enable us to respond appropriately with targeted interventions.
- 16.15 Further analysis of the pulse survey will also provide greater insight into areas and roles where people have experienced stress, enabling appropriate support and interventions to be explored.

17. Current methods of monitoring and managing sickness absence levels and improving wellbeing.

17.1 Internal Wellbeing Offer

The council has developed an overall wellbeing provision that focuses on support to assist individuals to proactively manage and strengthen their own wellbeing. This includes:

- Development of an online Wellbeing portal, offering support resources in relation to Mental, Physical and Financial wellbeing.
- Organised events and campaigns aligned to the national wellbeing calendar.

- Establishment of the role of Lead Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator. This role supports the organisation and managers to roll out Health and Wellbeing support within their teams. This has included Mental Health training for Managers.
- Establishment of the role of Psychological Wellbeing Co-ordinator. This role provides 1:1 support for staff experiencing work or home life stress in order to create bespoke wellbeing packages. This is not a therapy service, but a triage service, signposting staff to the relevant support.

17.1.2 The above offering is very much welcomed by both managers and staff and consistently receives positive feedback.

17.1.3 The introduction of the Psychological Wellbeing Co-ordinator role has lessened demand on Occupational Health Psychology Services. The postholder sees individuals experiencing challenges and supports them through triage often without the need to escalate to Psychology Services.

17.1.4 This is a well utilised service. There have been 643 referrals since Nov 2021. The monthly referral averages at 29 people. 6.66% of the total workforce have been referred in the past year.

17.1.5 The key themes supported through these sessions are outlined below. Generally, staff have more than one issue ongoing, so the percentage does not add up to 100%. This is provided simply to indicate the range of issues presented.

- Poverty and cost of Living crisis (15%)
- Bereavement (15%)
- Being an unpaid carer and working. (15%)
- Vacancies in the team (10%)
- Pressures of work (10%)
- Physical health problems or new diagnoses for staff members and their family leading to low mood. (20%)
- Long term mental health concerns that cycle up and down. (25%)
- Relationship breakdown. (10%)
- Past domestic violence and child abuse experiences. (10%)
- Past/current drugs and alcohol concerns for the staff member and family members (15%)

Some staff groups are more affected than others by particular issues, such as the lowest paid part time staff also on universal credit are most affected by poverty.

Table 11 : Overview of Main Health & Wellbeing Support offered in last 12 months (1/10/23 – 30/11/23).

Mental Wellbeing	All NCC (%)	% Attendance of all who attended					
		Adults (%)	Childrens (%)	Chief Exec (%)	Place and Regeneration (%)	Public Health (%)	Transformation and resources (%)
Psychological Wellbeing Co-ordinator Referrals (PWC)	6.66 %	28.8%	28.80%	10.21%	17.80%	28.10%	8.90%
Calm Space	3.83 %	28.18%	26.18%	13.18%	13.64%	9.55%	17%
Line Managers Mental Wellbeing Surgeries	0.85 %	34.70%	14.29%	28.57%	6.12%	8.16%	6.12%
Line Managers Mental Wellbeing Training	0.61 %	31.43%	11.43%	5.71%	38.88%	17.41%	8.27%
Resilience Training (Learning Together)	0.26 %	73.33%	20%	0%	6.66%	0%	0%

17.2 Health and Wellbeing policy and HR Advisory activity

17.2.1 The council's Health and Wellbeing policy supports appropriate management of sickness cases, clearly setting out areas of responsibility and processes to follow.

17.2.2 Return to work interviews are an essential part of this process and managers must ensure these are completed following each period of sickness.

17.2.3 Where an employee has breached triggers, wellbeing reviews are conducted by the manager, supported by an HR adviser where appropriate.

17.2.4 Occupational health is integral to this policy and further detail is outlined below.

17.2.5 Reasonable adjustments are a key consideration, enabling employees to remain at work or return to work following a period of sickness.

17.2.6 Monitoring of wellbeing reviews is overseen by the HR department, both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

17.3 Occupational Health

- 17.3.1 Occupational Health assists managers in the provision of medical advice to enable effective management of sickness absence. Occupational Health plays a major role in the health and wellbeing of employees, particularly mental health, and musculoskeletal injuries.
- 17.3.2 Occupational Health also carry out health surveillance to ensure risk assessments are undertaken and action and controls are advised to comply with HSE legislation.
- 17.3.3 Managers are encouraged to make early referrals to occupational health to ensure the necessary support and advice is provided with the aim of either preventing an absence or reducing the length of absence and supporting a return to work.
- 17.3.4 Managers must refer an employee to Occupational Health:
- On the first day of absence for those relating to Musculoskeletal reasons (or as soon as reasonably practicable).
 - By the fourteenth day, or earlier, if an absence is, or is likely to be, for a period of 2 weeks or more.
 - As soon as a concern arises about the health of an employee that may be affecting their ability to attend work, provide effective reliable service and/or perform in the role in which they are employed.
 - If it is felt that early intervention would benefit an employee, a referral to Occupational Health can be made at any time.
- 17.3.5 For absences relating to Mental Health, stress, anxiety, depression and other psychiatric illnesses, the employee is referred to the Psychological Wellbeing Co-ordinator as mentioned above on the first day of absence. This process ensures that the employee is getting the necessary support as soon as is practically possible. The PWC will then decide as to whether the line manager will need to refer to the Occupational Health unit.

18. Other potential options open to the Council

- 18.1 Section 17 above outlines the council's current approach to managing sickness absence and supporting employee welfare. It is recognised that despite effective execution of the above approach, sickness levels continue to rise and given the diversity of our services and associated roles, a broad spectrum 'one-size fits all' approach may not be fit for purpose.
- 18.2 The following section represents options currently under consideration for implementation. This will enhance our ability to manage absence and support employee welfare but will also allow for a more tailored approach dependent on the challenges unique to service areas.
- 18.3 Occupational Health.**
- 18.3.1 We are working closely with our Occupational Health provider (NHCFT) to improve the service in the following areas;
- Referral response times – with the aim of reducing wait times from referral to appointment.

- Quality of reports – ensuring reports address the questions presented at referral and express a balanced position considering both needs of Organisation and individual.
- Reporting and performance monitoring – Comprehensive and timely performance information, enabling the organisation to respond to trend/ patterns emerging and to focus support in areas where we see greatest need.

18.3.2 A 3-month improvement plan is being developed, along with comprehensive performance reporting which will monitor key performance indicators.

18.4 Internal Mental Health Therapy Provision

18.4.1 Considerable demand is being placed on primary and secondary care psychology services resulting in longer than usual wait times. We currently have staff who are waiting 2/3 months for referrals, with realistic wait times of 4 months being advised. This clearly has an ongoing impact on the staff members' mental wellbeing which may lead to increased absences and impact on overall performance.

18.4.2 We currently have staff awaiting psychology treatment through Occupational Health. Some cases are regarded as too complex for treatment via Occupational Health and therefore staff are having to seek support elsewhere from GP or Talking Therapies services. We are working with Occupational Health to explore further cases and numbers.

18.4.3 Reasons for referrals to psychology are for a variety of reasons such as anxiety, work related stress, bereavement, non-work related stress and unprofessional conduct.

18.4.4 We also have around 13 members of staff currently receiving psychology interventions through Occupational Health.

18.4.5 An alternative model could be considered which would offer an internal therapeutic service, employing a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist (CBT) which is the most common therapeutic intervention used to treat people with mental health disorders. Other organisations have adopted this approach to support staff who present with conditions and symptoms which require therapy. Those that require immediate treatment would be prioritised via our inhouse triage process, but also via Occupational health mainstream referral.

18.4.6 A business case is under development outlining the approach and benefits.

18.5 Psychological Risk Management

18.5.1 The council could consider adopting a psychological risk management approach, recognising that some roles in the Council may carry additional vulnerability, which can interfere with an individual's emotional and mental wellbeing due to the nature of the role and day to day activities. Many people have an ability to deal with certain levels of psychological stress, but the ability varies from person to person and changes over time or circumstances, largely dependent on stress and resilience levels.

18.5.2 Once these roles are identified, psychological screening could be introduced for staff working in these roles to monitor their overall resilience and wellbeing, allowing interventions to be introduced at an earlier stage preventing more longer-term illness or absence.

18.6 **Mental Health Training**

18.6.1 Mental Health training is an intervention already offered by the council and is currently delivered by our wellbeing team. This tends to be offered on a bespoke basis following requests from managers or where concerns have been identified via Human Resources through case management.

18.6.2 Consideration needs to be given to adopting a more preventative approach which would ensure all line managers are provided with the knowledge and tools needed to recognise signs of poor mental health, enabling them to support and lead resilient team.

18.6.3 The following framework of mental health training is planned to be adopted;

- Induction – Develop an on-line mandatory training module for all staff focused on managing their own mental health, outlining signs and triggers of poor mental health, and introducing strategies and ways of managing this and building resilience.
- Manager Induction- The above module would be extended further as part of managers induction, specifically focussing on triggers of poor mental health, signs and building resilient teams.
- Leadership Programme – Mental health training would be embedded with the leadership programme and content designed appropriate to each level of leadership.
- Bespoke Delivery – Bespoke delivery of mental health training incorporating elements of the above would be available and delivered to targeted services informed by data and insight.

18.7 **Health checks and Flu Jabs**

Rather than deploying a broad spectrum approach we will ensure the annual programme is data led, with a focus being placed on those areas where we are seeing increased short-term absence due to respiratory reasons. A more targeted campaign needs to be adopted for front line workers in relation to receiving the flu jab.

18.8 **Musculoskeletal.**

We will examine more closely musculoskeletal cases to determine reasons and whether measures can be put in place to mitigate risk of injury. This may involve, reviewing training provision and effectiveness.

18.9 **Focus Groups.**

Within the services and roles where we are seeing higher sickness levels, we will conduct focus groups to engage further with staff to understand more fully any factors that may be contributing to overall sickness. Organisational Development

Partners will engage initially with Heads of Service and Directors within these areas to identify the outcomes to inform the approach and design of these focus groups. This will also be the approach to explore further increase in male sickness levels.

18.10 **Change Management**

18.10.1 As the organisation embarks on a period of meaningful change through BEST new ways of working, we need to ensure our workforce are fully prepared to embrace such change and help them to maintain their sense of wellbeing.

18.10.2 All too often, we see the negative impact change can have on staff and during a time where our workforce is facing additional external pressures such as cost of living crisis, we need to ensure we provide the necessary support to managers in facilitating positive change, but also to staff in how they experience change.

18.10.3 A programme supporting and preparing people for change is currently under development.

18.11 **Exit Intelligence – Improvement in response rate**

18.11.1 A review of the exit survey process will be undertaken to ensure it is accessible, responsive and questions inform meaningful feedback.

18.11.2 The exit survey completion rate is low with current completion rate sitting at 21.28% and therefore insights are limited. By reviewing the process, our ambition will be to increase completion rate along with exit interviews enabling the organisation to access rich and meaningful data which will support in shaping employee experience and overall culture and improve overall employee wellbeing.

18.12 **Implementation of Proposals**

18.12.1 We intend to take a staged approach to implementing the outlined proposals, ensuring they are embedded within the People Strategy and prioritised and aligned to key deliverables and outcomes.

18.12.2 Where there is a financial impact linked to proposals, the necessary engagement and consultation will be undertaken and approvals sought.

END

Policy	All workforce actions need to be in line with government regulations and guidelines.
Finance and value for money	The workforce is of significant cost to the Council and therefore it is essential that the workforce performs efficiently to ensure that the Council achieves value for money in relation to service provision.
Legal	There are legal implications for the Council if employment practices are not in line with the law and best practice.
Procurement	Dependant on outcome of Occupation health improvement plan. Soft market testing may be required initially to explore alternative Occupational Health service.
Human resources	As included in the report. The development and introduction of further proposals linked to proposed business cases and training/support packages.
Property	None have been identified.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point All HR policies and procedures are subject to an equality impact assessment.
Risk assessment	Risks relating to the ongoing health and wellbeing of staff are managed locally and both Strategic and Operational Risk registers are in operation
Crime and disorder	None
Customer considerations	An increase in attendance will allow NCC to maximise its use of resources to improve overall service provision.
Carbon reduction	None have been identified.
Health and wellbeing	The recommendations will support overall improvement of employee wellbeing.
Wards	All

18 Background papers.

[OSC Workforce Report of 25 September 2023](#)

19 Links to other key reports already published.

Not Applicable

20 Authors and Contact Details.

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Appendix 1 – Exit Interview Analysis

The exit survey is issued to leavers of the council and is designed to better understand an individual's reasons for leaving. This information is used to address areas of concern and develop strategies for effective future attraction and retention.

118 exit surveys have been completed between December 2022 and November 2023. During the same period there were 552 leavers which means 21.28% of leavers opted to complete the survey.

Directorate	Number of Exit Survey Responses	Number of Leavers	% of Surveys completed (based on number of leavers)
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	27	115	23.48%
Chief Executive Directorate	7	54	12.96%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	43	128	33.59%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	20	149	13.42%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	13	35	37.14%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	8	71	11.27%
Grand Total	118	552	21.38%

Q1 - Were you offered an exit interview by your manager?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	18.52%	81.48%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	71.43%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	41.86%	58.14%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	40.00%	60.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	7.69%	92.31%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	25.00%	75.00%
Grand Total	30.51%	69.49%

Q2 - Did you take up this offer and have an exit interview? (If 'Yes' to Q1)

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	4.55%	95.45%
Chief Executive Directorate	20.00%	80.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	28.00%	72.00%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	16.67%	83.33%

Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	8.33%	91.67%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	16.67%	83.33%
Grand Total	15.85%	84.15%

Q3 - Please give your reason for leaving the Council

Directorate	End of fixed-term contract	Ill Health Retirement	Other	Redundancy	Resignation	Retirement
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	48.15%	18.52%
Chief Executive Directorate	0.00%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	4.65%	2.33%	23.26%	0.00%	55.81%	13.95%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	10.00%	0.00%	15.00%	0.00%	55.00%	20.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	23.08%	0.00%	23.08%	0.00%	38.46%	15.38%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	0.00%	37.50%	12.50%	37.50%	12.50%
Grand Total	5.93%	0.85%	25.42%	0.85%	50.85%	16.10%

Q4 – Please indicate your reason(s) for resigning

Directorate	Retiring	Seeking higher salary	Seeking more job satisfaction	Seeking better career prospects	Seeking better job security	Lack of recognition	Relationships at work (colleagues)	Relationships at work (manager)	Difficulty travelling to work	Leaving during probationary period - role wasn't as expected	Other
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	1	6	4	5	0	2	2	3	1	0	4
Chief Executive Directorate	0	3	2	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	0	14	10	13	1	5	2	2	2	0	7
Place and Regeneration Directorate	0	4	5	5	2	2	0	1	0	0	4
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0	1	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	1	29	26	30	3	11	5	6	4	1	20

Q5 - What will you be doing now you have left the Council?

Directorate	Not in regular employment	Not yet known	Other	Registered as a student	Retired	Self-employed	Working for another Local Government Organisation	Working for the NHS	Working for the voluntary sector	Working in another public sector organisation	Working in the private sector
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	0.00%	7.41%	7.41%	3.70%	25.93%	3.70%	18.52%	14.81%	0.00%	7.41%	11.11%
Chief Executive Directorate	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%	0.00%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	0.00%	6.98%	11.63%	6.98%	13.95%	4.65%	20.93%	6.98%	0.00%	4.65%	23.26%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	5.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	15.00%	0.00%	35.00%	0.00%	5.00%	15.00%	20.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	7.69%	15.38%	15.38%	0.00%	15.38%	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	0.00%	23.08%	15.38%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%
Grand Total	1.69%	7.63%	9.32%	4.24%	16.95%	3.39%	21.19%	6.78%	0.85%	9.32%	18.64%

Q6 – My manager set clear objectives for my role

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	44.44%	7.41%	48.15%	0.00%
Chief Executive Directorate	42.86%	0.00%	42.86%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	39.53%	6.98%	48.84%	4.65%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	55.00%	5.00%	35.00%	5.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	38.46%	7.69%	53.85%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	75.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	45.76%	5.93%	44.92%	3.39%

Q7 - My manager provided honest feedback about my performance in relation to my work

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	37.04%	7.41%	55.56%	0.00%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	34.88%	13.95%	48.84%	2.33%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	60.00%	0.00%	35.00%	5.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	23.08%	7.69%	69.23%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	37.50%	0.00%	62.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	38.14%	7.63%	51.69%	2.54%

Q8 – When I performed well this was recognised

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	37.04%	18.52%	44.44%	0.00%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	44.19%	18.60%	32.56%	4.65%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	45.00%	15.00%	35.00%	5.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	23.08%	7.69%	69.23%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	50.00%	12.50%	37.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	39.83%	15.25%	41.53%	3.39%

Q9 - I was provided with adequate support from my colleagues and manager

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	33.33%	22.22%	40.74%	3.70%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	14.29%	71.43%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	46.51%	4.65%	44.19%	4.65%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	30.00%	25.00%	35.00%	10.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	23.08%	7.69%	69.23%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	75.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	38.14%	12.71%	44.92%	4.24%

Q10 - I was dealt with fairly by my manager

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	29.63%	22.22%	44.44%	3.70%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	0.00%	71.43%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	34.88%	13.95%	46.51%	4.65%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	40.00%	5.00%	45.00%	10.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	15.38%	7.69%	76.92%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	33.05%	11.86%	50.85%	4.24%

Q11 - I had access to the tools, equipment and information which I needed to do a good job

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	44.44%	7.41%	44.44%	3.70%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	14.29%	71.43%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	58.14%	6.98%	34.88%	0.00%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	35.00%	15.00%	45.00%	5.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	23.08%	7.69%	61.54%	7.69%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	42.37%	10.17%	44.92%	2.54%

Q12 - I was offered appropriate learning and development opportunities

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	37.04%	22.22%	40.74%	0.00%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	14.29%	71.43%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	48.84%	20.93%	30.23%	0.00%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	25.00%	30.00%	30.00%	15.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	30.77%	7.69%	53.85%	7.69%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	12.50%	37.50%	37.50%	12.50%
Grand Total	35.59%	22.03%	38.14%	4.24%

Q13 - I was offered regular opportunity to meet with my manager to discuss my performance and development needs

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	37.04%	18.52%	44.44%	0.00%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	14.29%	57.14%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	41.86%	9.30%	44.19%	4.65%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	35.00%	20.00%	40.00%	5.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	30.77%	7.69%	61.54%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	75.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	39.83%	12.71%	44.92%	2.54%

Q14 - My workload was manageable

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	48.15%	14.81%	25.93%	11.11%
Chief Executive Directorate	57.14%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	44.19%	18.60%	27.91%	9.30%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	40.00%	15.00%	25.00%	20.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	38.46%	0.00%	61.54%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	62.50%	0.00%	37.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	45.76%	13.56%	31.36%	9.32%

Q15 - I enjoyed working for Northumberland County Council

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	40.74%	14.81%	37.04%	7.41%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	0.00%	57.14%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	53.49%	13.95%	32.56%	0.00%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	38.46%	0.00%	61.54%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	50.00%	12.50%	37.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	46.61%	13.56%	37.29%	2.54%

Q16 - I felt I was able do my job to a standard I was pleased with

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	29.63%	70.37%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	85.71%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	18.60%	81.40%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	35.00%	65.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	25.00%	75.00%
Grand Total	22.03%	77.97%

Q17 - I felt I was able make suggestions to improve the work of my team/department?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	29.63%	70.37%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	85.71%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	27.91%	72.09%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	25.00%	75.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	23.08%	76.92%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	25.00%	75.00%
Grand Total	26.27%	73.73%

Q18 - I felt I was able make improvements happen in my area of work

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	37.04%	62.96%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	85.71%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	34.88%	65.12%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	35.00%	65.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	30.77%	69.23%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	50.00%	50.00%
Grand Total	34.75%	65.25%

Q19 - I felt I was able meet all the conflicting demands on my time at work

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	40.74%	59.26%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	85.71%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	20.93%	79.07%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	40.00%	60.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	15.38%	84.62%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Grand Total	26.27%	73.73%

Q20 - I felt I was able to deliver the service I aspired to

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	48.15%	11.11%	29.63%	11.11%
Chief Executive Directorate	57.14%	0.00%	42.86%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	39.53%	18.60%	39.53%	2.33%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	50.00%	10.00%	30.00%	10.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	30.77%	7.69%	61.54%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	62.50%	0.00%	37.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	44.92%	11.86%	38.14%	5.08%

Q21 - The Council took my Health & Wellbeing seriously

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	48.15%	11.11%	29.63%	11.11%
Chief Executive Directorate	57.14%	0.00%	42.86%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	39.53%	18.60%	39.53%	2.33%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	50.00%	10.00%	30.00%	10.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	30.77%	7.69%	61.54%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	62.50%	0.00%	37.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	44.92%	11.86%	38.14%	5.08%

Q22 - Do you feel that you have experienced any work-related stress or pressure beyond a level that you feel is acceptable?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	51.85%	48.15%
Chief Executive Directorate	85.71%	14.29%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	55.81%	44.19%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	60.00%	40.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	69.23%	30.77%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	62.50%	37.50%
Grand Total	59.32%	40.68%

Questions 23 – 27 were asked if a 'yes' response was given to Q22.

Q23 - Did you raise your concerns with anyone?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	7.69%	92.31%
Chief Executive Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	5.26%	94.74%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Grand Total	6.25%	93.75%

Q24 - Did you feel you were given support?

Directorate	No	Not Answered	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	53.85%	7.69%	38.46%
Chief Executive Directorate	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	42.11%	5.26%	52.63%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	62.50%	0.00%	37.50%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Grand Total	45.83%	6.25%	47.92%

Q25 - Do you feel that you have experienced different treatment as a result of your age, sex, race, disability or other unfair reason?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	69.23%	30.77%
Chief Executive Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	89.47%	10.53%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	87.50%	12.50%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	50.00%	50.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	81.25%	18.75%

Q26 - Did you raise your concerns with anyone?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	61.54%	38.46%
Chief Executive Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	63.16%	36.84%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	62.50%	37.50%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	75.00%	25.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	66.67%	33.33%

Q27 - Did you feel you were given support?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	61.54%	38.46%
Chief Executive Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	52.63%	47.37%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	87.50%	12.50%

Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	50.00%	50.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	66.67%	33.33%
Grand Total	62.50%	37.50%

Q28 - Have you encountered any menopause symptoms which have affected your work life?

Directorate	No	Not applicable	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	48.15%	40.74%	11.11%
Chief Executive Directorate	42.86%	57.14%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	41.86%	48.84%	9.30%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	25.00%	75.00%	0.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	30.77%	61.54%	7.69%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	12.50%	62.50%	25.00%
Grand Total	37.29%	54.24%	8.47%

Q29 - Did you raise your concerns with your manager? (Asked if a 'yes' response to Q28)

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	33.33%	66.67%
Chief Executive Directorate	0.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	25.00%	75.00%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	0.00%	0.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	100.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	40.00%	60.00%

Q30 - Did you feel you were given support from your line manager? (Asked if a 'yes' response to Q28 and Q29)

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	50.00%	50.00%
Chief Executive Directorate	0.00%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	33.33%	66.67%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	0.00%	0.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	40.00%	60.00%

Q31 - The Vision and Values of NCC were reflected within my service

Directorate	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	62.96%	3.70%	29.63%	3.70%
Chief Executive Directorate	57.14%	0.00%	42.86%	0.00%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	48.84%	13.95%	37.21%	0.00%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	40.00%	20.00%	35.00%	5.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	38.46%	7.69%	53.85%	0.00%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	75.00%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%
Grand Total	51.69%	11.02%	35.59%	1.69%

Q35 - Would you apply to work for NCC again in the future if a suitable post was advertised?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	25.93%	74.07%
Chief Executive Directorate	28.57%	71.43%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	25.58%	74.42%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	10.00%	90.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	15.38%	84.62%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	37.50%	62.50%
Grand Total	22.88%	77.12%

Q36 - Would you recommend Northumberland County Council as a good employer?

Directorate	No	Yes
Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing Directorate	11.11%	88.89%
Chief Executive Directorate	14.29%	85.71%
Children, Young People and Education Directorate	16.28%	83.72%
Place and Regeneration Directorate	15.00%	85.00%
Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities Directorate	7.69%	92.31%
Transformation and Resources Directorate	0.00%	100.00%
Grand Total	12.71%	87.29%

Northumberland County Council

Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2023-2024

1. Terms of reference:

- (1) To maintain an overview of the Council's Annual Budget and Budgetary Management via the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- (2) To review the state of Northumberland and the County Council's activity in delivering its Corporate Plan.
- (3) To maintain an overview of the Council's performance management arrangements; highlighting areas of poor performance and monitoring recovery delivery plans.
- (4) To maintain an overview of the Management Agreements in place between the Council and Advance Northumberland.
- (5) To monitor, review and make recommendations about:
 - Corporate Services: Organisational Development, Health and Safety, ICT Strategy, Corporate Governance, Financial Services, Procurement Strategy, Risk Strategy, Shared and Traded Services
 - Partnership development coordination with local organisations
 - Relationships with external bodies
 - Regeneration and Economic Development
 - Strategic Transport Network and Infrastructure
 - Employability, Skills, and removing barriers to work
 - Capital Programme and Asset Management
 - Support to VCS organisations and the Council's relationship with town and parish councils.

To be Timetabled:

This will include the OSC being more proactive in early stage development work in formulating new policies and strategies; to investigate matters of interest and concern to the wider community, and to keep under review the performance and financial position of the Council.

- Capital Programme (monitoring slippage)
- Gigafactory Site, Cambois

Northumberland County Council
Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-2024

26 February 2024

Broadband Rollout

To receive an update on broadband rollout in the county.

Debt Recovery Update

To receive the six monthly update.

BEST: Commissioning and Procurement

The Committee identified this work stream for further examination.

25 March 2024

Advance Northumberland

To receive an update on the operations of Advance Northumberland in the previous year.

**Financial Performance 2023-24 as at
December 2023**

To receive the quarterly update.

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Northumberland County Council
Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2023-2024

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1.	26 June 2023	Presentations from Executive Directors on Forthcoming Issues (Jan Willis/Simon Neilson)	RESOLVED that the information was noted and the issues identified for further examination be included on the Committee's work programme.	The work programme will continue to develop in accordance with the Committee's priorities.
2.	26 June 2023	Financial Performance 2022/23: February 2023 (Provisional Outturn 2022/23)	RESOLVED that (a) the information be noted, and (b) a report be presented to the next meeting setting out the proposals for ensuring the delivery the Parks and Green Spaces Programme.	A report on the issues identified regarding Parks and Green Spaces be prepared for the next meeting.
3.	26 June 2023	Debt Recovery Update	RESOLVED that the report be noted.	The Committee will continue to receive six monthly updates.
4.	25 September 2023	Regeneration Update	RESOLVED that the information in the presentation be noted.	Further updates be presented as requested by the Committee.
5.	25 September 2023	Parks and Green Spaces	RESOLVED that the information be noted.	No further action necessary.
6.	25 September 2023	Financial Performance 2023/24 - Position at End of June 2023	RESOLVED that the information be noted.	The Committee will continue to receive further updates.
7.	25 September 2023	Performance of the Northumberland Lottery	RESOLVED that the information be noted.	No further action necessary.
8.	25 September 2023	HR Annual Update	RESOLVED that (a) the report be noted; (b) the Committee agreed to continue to receive the Workforce Update annually; (c) the data that was contained in the whistleblowing report and the ongoing work to promote a safe environment for staff to raise concerns through various mechanisms across the Council be noted;	A further update on outstanding issues be presented to the OSC in January 2024.

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			<p>(d) the continued use of Safecall across the Council as an additional mechanism for staff to raise concerns be supported, and</p> <p>(e) the additional information requested by members as set out above, be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.</p>	
9.	27 November 2023	Budget 2024-25 MTFP 2024-28	<p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(a) the information in the report be noted, and</p> <p>(b) the Cabinet be advised of the Committee's comments when it determines the report on 12 December 2023.</p>	Cabinet considered the OSC's comments when it dealt with this report on 12 December 2023.
10.	27 November 2023	Budget Consultation 2024-25 Draft Engagement Document	<p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(a) the information in the report be noted, and</p> <p>(b) the Cabinet be advised of the Committee's comments when it determines the report on 12 December 2023.</p>	Cabinet considered the OSC's comments when it dealt with this report on 12 December 2023.
11.	27 November 2023	BEST Update	<p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(a) the information be noted, and</p> <p>(b) a forward plan of deep dives into specific workstream to be brought to overview and scrutiny</p>	A report on Commissioning and Procurement will be presented to the OSC on 26 February 2024.

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