

Northumberland County Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 13 February 2024

Agenda Item No	Topic	Decision
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Part A – Items considered in public

A1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Apologies were received from Councillor Jones.
A2	MINUTES	RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday 16 January 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.
A4	REPORT OF THE LEADER	RESOLVED that the Budget engagement activities and the summary results of the Budget Consultation Survey undertaken between December and January 2024 be noted.
A5	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that County Council be recommended to:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note that the figures contained within the Budget 2024-25 within Appendix 1 are based on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement of 18 December 2023. 2. Approve: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Revenue Budget for 2024-25 including the efficiencies totalling £10.846 million for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1 (detailed in Appendix 10), subject to the deletion of the proposal in Environment and Transport to increase the charge for a pay and display and display parking permit (2024-25 £0.012m; 2025-26 ££0.011m; 2026-27 £0.015m); and, b) the Schedule of Efficiencies totalling £14.950 million for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1 (detailed in Appendix 10) noting that the efficiencies identified may be progressed during 2024-25 in order to realise the efficiencies early. 3. Note the Revenue MTFP covering the period 2024-28 detailed within Appendix 1

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		<p>and the requirement to deliver budget balancing measures of £20.248 million in 2026-27 and £14.238 million in 2027-28.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Note the estimated receipt of Revenue Support Grant of £14.020 million for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 5. Note the estimated retained Business Rates and the Top-Up Grant funding to be received by the Council for 2024-25 of £103.696 million and £324.303 million over the remaining period of the MTFP contained within Appendix 1. 6. Note the estimated surplus from prior years on Collection Fund Business Rates balance of £3.471 million in 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 7. Note the estimated receipt of Rural Services Delivery Grant of £2.745 million for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 8. Note the estimated receipt of the New Homes Bonus of £1.682 million (excluding service element of £0.028 million) for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 9. Note the estimated receipt of Improved Better Care Funding Grant of £12.496 million for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 10. Note the estimated receipt of Social Care Grant funding of £25.821 million for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 11. Note the estimated receipt of Adult Social Care Discharge Grant funding of £2.920 million in 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1. 12. Note the estimated receipt of Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and

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		<p>Improvement Fund Grant of £6.656 million in 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>13. Note the estimated receipt of the Services Grant of £0.439 million in 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>14. Approve a 2.99% increase in Council Tax for 2024-25, noting that this is in line with the Government’s assumptions regarding the Council’s Core Spending Power; and, within the Government’s referendum limit of 3.00%.</p> <p>15. Note that the MTFP 2024-28 includes a 2.99% annual increase in Council Tax for 2025-26 and then 1.99% thereafter for the remaining years of the MTFP and, that an estimate of annual tax base growth has been included.</p> <p>16. Note the non-collection rate for Council Tax purposes remains at 1.00% for 2024-25 (1.00% in 2023-24).</p> <p>17. Note the estimated surplus of £4.149 million from prior years on the Collection Fund Council Tax balance for 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>18. Approve the Council Tax Support Hardship Scheme 2024-25; a reduction of up to £100.00 to council tax bills for all working age Council Tax Support claimants; and those pensionable age Council Tax Support claimants that do not receive 100.00% Council Tax Support, once all other discounts have been applied.</p> <p>19. Approve a 2.00% increase in Council Tax for 2024-25 for use on Adult Social Care services; raising an additional £4.993 million to support the Budget 2024-25 and note that the assumed increase included in the MTFP is 2.00% for 2025-</p>

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		<p>26 and zero thereafter.</p> <p>20. Approve the Reserves Policy 2024-25 detailed in Appendix 2.</p> <p>21. Note the Schedule of Reserves and Provisions contained within Appendix 3.</p> <p>22. Approve:</p> <p>The net contributions from the Strategic Management Reserve of £20.885 million in 2024-25 and note the proposed net contributions from reserves of £10.831 million in 2025-26 and £0.027 million in 2026-27, and the proposed net contribution to the reserves of £0.997 million in 2027-28, contained within Appendix 1, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) non-recurrent pressures of £7.147 million for 2024-25, and note the non-recurrent pressures totalling £2.084 million in 2025-26, £0.027 million in 2026-27, and £0.028 million in 2027-28, (as detailed within Appendix 9; excluding the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund, Locality Coordinators, Hirst Welfare Centre – transitional support, Council Tax Support Hardship Scheme, and BEST Initiative); b) delayed investment interest due from the airport as a result of Covid-19 will be repaid to the Strategic Management Reserve. It is anticipated that the airport will start to repay the delayed interest over a three-year period, commencing in April 2027 at £1.025 million per annum; c) revenue contribution to capital (RCCO) of £13.171 million in 2024-25; comprising of £8.171 million for investment in the Schools’ Development Programme, and £5.000 million for investment in the enabling works at strategic employment sites within Northumberland; and £6.591 million in 2025-26 for investment in the

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		<p align="center">Schools' Development Programme; and,</p> <p>d) contribution from the reserve of £0.567 million in 2024-25 and note the subsequent proposed use of up to £2.156 million in 2025-26 in order to balance the Budget.</p> <p>23. Approve the use of the Public Health Revenue Grant Reserve of £0.428 million in 2024-25, and note the proposed contribution from this reserve of £0.180 million in 2025-26 and £0.100 million in 2026-27 contained within Appendix 1, comprising:</p> <p>a) four fixed term Locality Coordinators totalling £0.178 million in 2024-25; and,</p> <p>b) Hirst Welfare Centre – transitional support at £0.250 million in 2024-25, £0.180 million in 2025-26, and £0.100 million in 2026-27.</p> <p>24. Approve the use of the Council Transformation Fund Reserve of £3.000 million to fund BEST programme delivery costs in 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>25. Approve the use of the Council Tax Hardship and Discount Scheme Fund Reserve of £1.726 million in 2024-25 contained within Appendix 1 to fund the Council Tax Support Hardship Scheme for 2024-25.</p> <p>26. Note the Schedule of Service Specific Grants of £263.663 million contained within Appendix 4, and that some are still indicative pending final confirmation.</p> <p>27. Note the Schedule of Fees and Charges 2024-25 contained within Appendix 5.</p> <p>28. Approve the Inflation Schedule for 2024-25 totalling £28.559 million detailed in Appendix 6.</p>

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		<p>29. Approve the Recurrent Growth and Pressures Schedules of £14.823 million and the additional revenue costs associated with the Capital Programme of £19.100 million for 2024-25; and note the Growth and Pressures of £2.265 million in 2025-26; £3.130 million in 2026-27; and, £0.875 million in 2027-28 and the additional revenue costs associated with the Capital Programme of £12.609 million in 2025-26; £6.000 million in 2026-27; and £6.000 million in 2027-28 included within Appendices 1, 7 and 8.</p> <p>30. Approve the Non-Recurrent Pressures of £15.221 million for 2024-25 and note the Non-Recurrent Pressures of £2.264 million for 2025-26, £0.127 million for 2026-27, and £0.028 million in 2027-28 included within Appendix 9.</p> <p>31. Approve the Non-Recurrent Income of £5.475 million for 2024-25 and note the Non-Recurrent Income of £0.314 million for 2025-26; £0.283 million for 2026-27, and £0.269 million for 2027-28 included within Appendix 9.</p> <p>32. Approve the identified budget balancing measures contained within Appendix 10 of £10.846 million for 2024-25 and £14.950 million for 2025-26; and note those budget balancing measures totalling £6.017 million already identified for 2026-27 to 2027-28.</p> <p>33. Note the Corporate Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 11.</p> <p>34. Note the Budget by Service Area 2024-25 detailed in Appendix 12.</p> <p>35. Note the receipt of Dedicated Schools Grant of £175.086 million in 2024-25; and note the revised allocation of £158.046 million for 2023-24. This is following the</p>

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		<p>conversion of four schools to academy status during 2023-24.</p> <p>36. Approve the Capital Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 contained within Appendix 13.</p> <p>37. Approve the revised Capital Programme as detailed within Appendix 14 and note the increase in the Capital Programme 2024-28 of £277.560 million detailed in Appendix 15.</p> <p>38. Approve the delegation of the detail of the final Local Transport Programme and any subsequent in-year amendments to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for improving our roads and highways.</p> <p>39. Approve the delegation of the detail of the capital allocation for Highways Maintenance Investment in U and C Roads and Footpaths, and the Highway Maintenance and Pothole Repair Fund to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for improving our roads and highways.</p> <p>40. Approve the Capital Prudential Indicators 2024-25 to 2027-28 based on the proposed Capital Programme detailed within Appendix 16.</p> <p>41. Approve the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy detailed in Appendix 17.</p> <p>42. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024-25 detailed in Appendix 18.</p>

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		<p>43. Approve a delegation to the Executive Director for Transformation and Resources (the Council's Section 151 Officer) to draw down a total of £2.000 million from the Council's Transformation Fund Reserve and £0.800 million from the Estates Rationalisation Reserve in order to expedite work required with regard to the BEST initiative. Also, to note that Cabinet will receive updates of any drawdowns in the quarterly financial monitoring reports.</p> <p>44. Approve a delegation to amend the Budget 2024-25 and MTFP in light of any changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement to the Executive Director for Transformation and Resources (the Council's Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services if the final Settlement is received after the 21 February 2024 Council meeting. If the final Local Government Settlement is received prior to the Cabinet or 21 February 2024 Council meeting, then a supplementary report will be provided to Members advising of any changes necessary.</p>
A6	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that County Council be recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the Revenues and Benefits Policies attached as Appendix 1 to Appendix 6; • Approve implementing the 100% Empty Homes Premium after one year from 1 April 2024; and • Make a determination to implement a 100% premium for second homes to increase the council tax charge to 200% from 1 April 2025.

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A7	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	RESOLVED that County Council be recommended to approve the updated Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report.
A8	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>Energising Blyth Programme – Culture Hub and Market Place</p> <p>a) Cabinet approve the amended budget, shown in table 6.16, for inclusion in the Capital Programme of £16.546 million including £6.135 million from the Energising Blyth Project Delivery Support budget which is included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan;</p> <p>b) authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration to enter into the main construction contract relating to the project, subject to the appropriate procurement processes being followed.</p> <p>c) Subject to approval by North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) of the £2.5m Business Case, this be added to the Culture Hub & Market Place budget within the Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the associated financial profiles be approved as set out in the report; and</p> <p>d) Cabinet approve the transfer of funding of £0.388 million from the 2024-25 Climate Change Fund to the Culture Hub Project.</p> <p>Gilesgate Structural Works</p>

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		<p>a) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.100 million to undertake the structural works at 2 Gilesgate, Hexham. This spend will be funded from the Property Stewardship budget within the Capital Programme;</p> <p>b) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate the funding from the Property Stewardship budget to the 2 Gilesgate, Hexham project.</p> <p>Broadband Connectivity and Oracle Upgrade</p> <p>a) Cabinet note the receipt of a Gainshare payment from BT of £3.707 million;</p> <p>b) Cabinet approve the payment of a portion of the Gainshare receipt of £1.723 million to BDUK as per the terms of the funding agreement. Approve the allocation of the remaining Gainshare receipt of £1.984 million to the Community Broadband project in the Capital Programme. The £1.984 million will be profiled with £0.044 million in 2023-24 and the remaining £1.940 million in 2024-25;</p> <p>c) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.088 million for the implementation of new functionality in the Oracle system. This will be funded as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reallocation of £0.044 million from the Community Broadband project in 2023-24. • A reallocation of £0.042 million from the Microsoft 365 project in 2024-25. • A reallocation of £0.002 million from the Computer Hardware project in 2024-25; <p>and</p> <p>d) Cabinet approve the amendments to the capital programme as per the above.</p>
A9	REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CARING FOR ADULTS	RESOLVED that:-

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		<p>(a) Cabinet endorse the Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy as the overarching strategy that will provide the context, vision and aspirations for delivery of projects in Northumberland;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet support opportunities which are consistent with the strategy including those that involve the use of Council land or buildings and planning decisions;</p> <p>(c) Cabinet note that some schemes can be developed without Council funding, whilst others may require support including capital funding and/or the use of Council land. Where Council capital funding is required for the viability of schemes, detailed business cases will be prepared; and</p> <p>(d) the Executive Director for Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing be requested to prepare a future report on the capital requirements of this programme once a number of submissions have been analysed.</p>
A10	REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS FOR SUPPORTING BUSINESS AND OPPORTUNITIES AND THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet note the proposals in relation to the North East Investment Zone (NEIZ), including the inclusion of the Blyth Energy Central Site as an Investment Zone (IZ) Tax Site;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet authorise inclusion of the Blyth Energy Central BRR Site in the NEIZ for 25 years, noting the NEIZ Business Rates Reinvestment Strategy (attached at Appendix 1); and</p> <p>(c) Cabinet authorise the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration, in</p>

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		<p>consultation with the Director of Finance, the Director of Law and Corporate Governance, the Cabinet Member for Supporting Business and Opportunities and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources, to finalise the elements of the NEIZ proposal specific to Northumberland County Council in conjunction with the Interim Chief Executive Officer for the North East Mayoral Combined Authority, and enter into a written agreement with the North East Mayoral Combined Authority and constituent local authorities.</p>
<p>A11</p>	<p>REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet note the outcomes of the six week consultation undertaken in relation to the Council’s proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025/26 that took place between 10th November 2023 and 22nd December 2023;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet approve the proposed co-ordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies, as provided in Appendix 1 of the report;</p> <p>(c) Cabinet approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria and proposed admission numbers for First and Primary community and voluntary and controlled schools, as provided in Appendix 2 of the report;</p> <p>(d) Cabinet approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and Secondary Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, including sixth forms, as provided in Appendix 3 of the report;</p>

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		<p>(e) Cabinet approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Seahouses Primary School from 21 to 15 with effect from September 2025, in view of current and future pupil numbers; and</p> <p>(f) Cabinet Approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Longhoughton Primary School from 30 to 15 with effect from September 2025, in view of current and future pupil numbers.</p>