



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Karon Hadfield

Email:

Democraticservices@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 0345 600 6400

Date: Tuesday, 2 April 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **CABINET** to be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL** on **TUESDAY, 9 APRIL 2024** at **10.00 AM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr Helen Paterson
Chief Executive

To Cabinet members as follows:-

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



Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive
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AGENDA

PART I

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES

(Pages
1 - 4)

Minutes of the meeting of the meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday 12 March 2024, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 4. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 5 - 20)
- Q3 Corporate Plan Performance Report**
- This report provides a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 3, 2023/24 (Q3).
- 5. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 21 - 80)
- Hirst Masterplan**
- To introduce the Hirst Masterplan to Cabinet and seek authorisation to move forward in developing its contents further.
- 6. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 81 - 90)
- Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group**
- This report summarises proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the Capital Strategy Group.
- 7. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SUPPORTING BUSINESS AND OPPORTUNITIES** (Pages 91 - 114)
- Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Training Kit: Outline Business Case**
- In accordance with the Energising Blyth Programme - Local Assurance Framework, the report seeks the approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Training Kit which is part of development and delivery of the £20.71m Levelling Up Deep Dive (LUDD) funding awarded to Blyth earlier this year. The OBC has been externally appraised with a recommendation to proceed to Full Business Case (FBC).
- 8. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR ENVIRONMENT** (Pages 115 - 134)
- Housing Regeneration Report – Stock Rationalisation**

The report seeks Cabinet approval to:

- To place on hold lettings for empty homes and any homes that become empty in the addresses listed within this report (Appendix 1A);
- To give priority status for re-housing to all customers who currently reside in any of the addresses detailed in this report;
- To approve the award of Home loss & Disturbance payments for any customers relocating from the properties detailed in this report;
- To authorise the progression of any Compulsory Purchase Order process for adjacent properties and Buy backs for any leaseholders if required for the redevelopment proposal;
- To approve the demolition of low demand stock in Blyth detailed in this report.

9. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE

(Pages
135 -
154)

Outcome of the Tenders for the Coquet Partnership

To update Cabinet on the outcomes of the tender process for the construction of extension to the feeder primary schools in Amble and also the refurbishment of South Avenue site for the relocation of Amble First Schools and the creation of a New Special School Barndale by the Sea. The report also seeks approval to award the contracts.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

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

PART II

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

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:

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

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

AND The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure would prejudice the ability for Northumberland County Council to obtain a competitive price through the re-tendering of the design and build contract.

12. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE (Pages 155 - 182)
3 Outcome of the Tenders for the Coquet Partnership

To consider two confidential appendices in respect of item 9 on this agenda.

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

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

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

Registering Interests

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

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

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

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

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

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

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

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

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

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

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

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

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

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

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

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

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

Agenda Item 2

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 12 March 2024 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bradley, N.	Executive Director for Adults, Aging & Wellbeing
Gerrard, S.	Director of Law and Corporate Governance
Hadfield, K.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P.	Assistant Chief Executive
Kingham, A.	Executive Director for Children, Young People and Education
Neilson, S. (remote)	Executive Director for Place and Regeneration
O'Neill, G.	Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities
Paterson, Dr H.	Chief Executive
Willis, J. (remote)	Executive Director for Transformation and Resources (S151)

86. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Wearmouth.

87. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 February 2024, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

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

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

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

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet approve the following:

- the re-profiling to the Capital Programme of £47.326 million from 2023-24 to 2024-25 to reflect estimated expenditure levels in the current financial year. £4.738 million of this has already been factored into the 2024-25 to 2027-28 Medium Term Financial Plan.
- the utilisation of £2.000 million from the Business Recovery Reserve to fund additional financial support for Active Northumberland in recognition of significant inflationary pressures and to allow Active Northumberland to maintain reserves at a sufficient level to facilitate an orderly closure of the business and transition to the new leisure provider. Any funds remaining upon the winding up of the business will transfer back to the Council to support leisure services in Northumberland.

(b) Cabinet note the following:

- the projected overspend on services of £3.527 million and the assumptions outlined in this report.
- the projected net overspend of £0.510 million after the utilisation of the reserves.
- £2.000 million underspend on the Todstead Landslip scheme resulting in only £3.000 million of the £5.000 million allocation from the Severe Weather Reserve being required.
- the supplementary estimates at Appendix A and the required changes to the budgets.
- the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix B.
- the use of the contingency shown at Appendix L.
- the use of reserves shown at Appendix M.

- the virements requested by services shown at Appendix N.
- the details of capital project reprofiling shown at Appendix O.

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

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

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

RESOLVED that:-

(a) A197 Bothal Terrace, Ashington

- 1) Cabinet note the capital grant secured of £0.200 million via Sustrans from the Department for Transport (DfT) 6 National Cycle Network (NCN) Activation Programme.
- 2) Cabinet approve the proposed spend and amend the capital programme in 2024-25 to include the capital grant of £0.200 million.

(b) Wooler Visitor Infrastructure

- 3) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.106 million to carry out the works detailed in section 6.
- 4) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.106 million from the Strategic Regeneration Projects – Wooler Visitor Infrastructure to the Wooler Parking project in 2024-25.

(c) Energising Blyth Strategic Acquisitions

- 5) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.634 million (£0.382 million in 2023-24 and £0.252 million in 2024-25) from the Energising Blyth Acquisitions Project to the Strategic Acquisitions project.

(d) Prudhoe Waterworld Soft Play

- 6) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.060 million to replace the existing soft play area at Prudhoe Waterworld in 2024-25.
- 7) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.060 million from the Prudhoe Waterworld project to the Prudhoe Waterworld Soft Play project in 2024-25.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Q3 Corporate Plan Performance Report

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

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

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

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

2. **Purpose of report**

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 3, 2023/24 (Q3).

3. **Recommendations**

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

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

5. **Background**

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

The Council adopted the Corporate Plan at its Annual General Meeting on 17th May 2023. The Plan establishes three priorities for the Council, underpinned by our approach to tackling Climate Change. The Annual Council Achievements Report (reported to Council in March) sets out overall progress against the three priorities, alongside Annual Cabinet Member reports which provide an opportunity for Members to look further into the work of portfolios.

This report forms part of an updated approach to Corporate Plan performance reporting as follows:

- Regular directorate briefings with Cabinet Members;
- Executive Management Team;
- Strategic Leadership Team;
- Cabinet (quarterly reports);
- Scrutiny Chairs and Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and;
- Quarter 4, outturn report to Full Council in the summer period.

Monitoring our Priorities

The following sections set out performance summaries for each of the three Corporate Plan priorities for 2023/24. These summaries highlight key points on performance, both positive and including where targets have been missed at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24.

It is important to remember that many of our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are influenced by a range of external factors. For example, economic measures are a function of global issues beyond the control of our Economy and Regeneration Service. Equally, Looked After Children rates are impacted by a range of complex and long-term societal factors. Recovery from Covid continues to be an issue in some areas of service performance.

We have commenced work on developing a refreshed set of metrics which will report progress on each of the priorities, we want to be able to show progress towards achieving our outcomes in a holistic way, this will include rich data from Resident's survey, Staff survey and a range of KPI's. This work will involve members and officers to ensure we have fit for purpose measures and will produce a new performance reporting framework for 2024/25. This report presents the current KPI's.

Our Corporate Plan Vision:

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

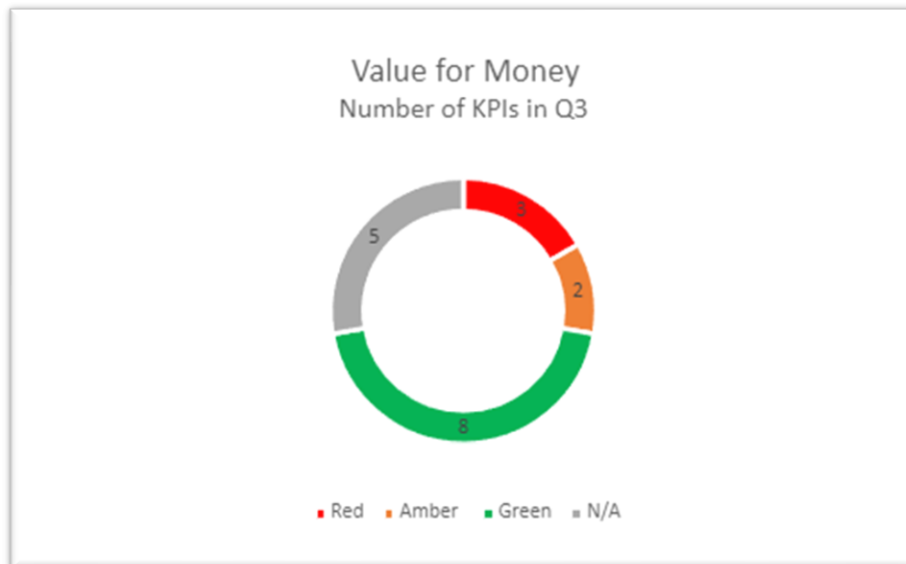
- (i) Achieving Value for Money.**
- (ii) Tackling Inequalities.**
- (iii) Driving Economic Growth.**

PRIORITY 1: Achieving Value for Money

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

Outcomes:

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



Summary of Q3 23/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
1	Complaints answered within timescale (%)	100	74.2	70.8	68.4	76.6	78.8
2	% calls answered	90	97.2	93.4	95.6	95.3	97.6
3	Average time to answer calls (seconds)	180	46	112	73	67	30
4	Local Suppliers (Number)	-	1,361	1,402	1,553	1,632	1,504
5	Value of Local Suppliers (£)	-	£72.7m	£92.3m	£122.6	£101.6	£98.9M
6	Suppliers trading with Council who are local (%)	-	40	38	39	42	39

7	Requisition Processed within 3 days (%)	80	97	97	98	97	99
8	% of the workforce who are apprentices (Annual)	2.3	-	4.1	-	-	-
9	Days lost to sickness (# per FTE / annum)	7.5	11.3	11.4	11.4	11.5	11.7
10	Mandatory Training completed (%)	85	88.2	91.5	90.3	90.8	90.9
11	Corporate Landlord Compliance (%)	98	100	100	100	95	100
12	Property statutory tests completed on time (%)	92	96.7	98.1	98.3	97.8	96.8
13	Council Tax – arrears retrieved (£m)	3.37	3.4	4.3	1.0	2.2	3.2
14	% of Council Tax collected	82	82.0	97.3	28.6	55.1	81.5
15	% of National Non-Domestic Rates collected	78.7	77.3	94.9	28.8	55.3	78.7
16	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	95.4	95.63	95.7	95.7	96.04
17	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	79.1	79.1	78.6	78.3	-

18	Service Desk calls resolved within SLA (%)	96.5	95.7	96.6	93.4	94.6	95.2
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NB: where data is annual, and reported in a previous quarter, the data and RAG will be duplicated in the current quarter's column.

Progress:

We know residents value being able to contact the Council quickly and conveniently to pay bills, ask questions, access services and resolve issues. Our Customer Services are getting more responsive.

In Q3 we delivered impressive performance with the ‘% of calls answered’, achieving an average of 97.6%. Even better, for ‘average time to answer calls’, the Team achieved an average for the year of 30 seconds. The Team continues to focus on enabling as many enquiries as possible to be answered at first point of contact from the customer, using performance monitoring data to drive improvement.

It’s important for small and medium business that orders and payments are processed efficiently when they supply the Council and, we are pleased to report the target for ‘requisitions processed within three days’ was achieved reporting performance of 99%.

For ‘Corporate Landlord Compliance’ – Performance improved in Q3 to 100% with all corporate buildings being fully compliant (21 out of 21 assessments were completed).

Focus on Improvement:

For ‘complaints answered within timescale (%)’, the Council missed its own demanding target of 100%, achieving 78.8%, whilst below target, it is better than the Q2 performance in the last financial year which was 76.6%. It should be noted that cases where an extension to the timescales has been authorised are not included. During Q3, a new case management system was implemented, and the data collected spans across two systems for this period. However, future data will be more robust with greater access to intelligence to assist with theme retrieval and trend analysis.

In ‘days lost to sickness’ we missed the target of 7.5 days per ‘full time equivalent’ (FTE). The target of 3.5% for ‘Percentage days lost to sickness absence (%)’ was also missed. To address this, services are scrutinising data and undertaking a focused approach to reducing absence.

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 9.4 to 11.7 average days per employee. The absences were split 71.5% short term absences and 28.5% long term. Of the days lost to sickness 20,007 (82%) were due to long term sickness and 4,378 (18%) due to short term sickness. This scale of increase is however a national trend and is not unique to the council.

The council currently offers a range of support including Online wellbeing portal for staff, Lead Health & Wellbeing Coordinator, Psychological Wellbeing Coordinator,

Health & Wellbeing Policy and use of Occupational Health. Further proposals to strengthen this offer are currently being considered, improving Occupational Health response times and reporting, internal Cognitive Behavioural Therapist service, Mental Health training and using focus group of specific role jobs to focus response to specific needs.

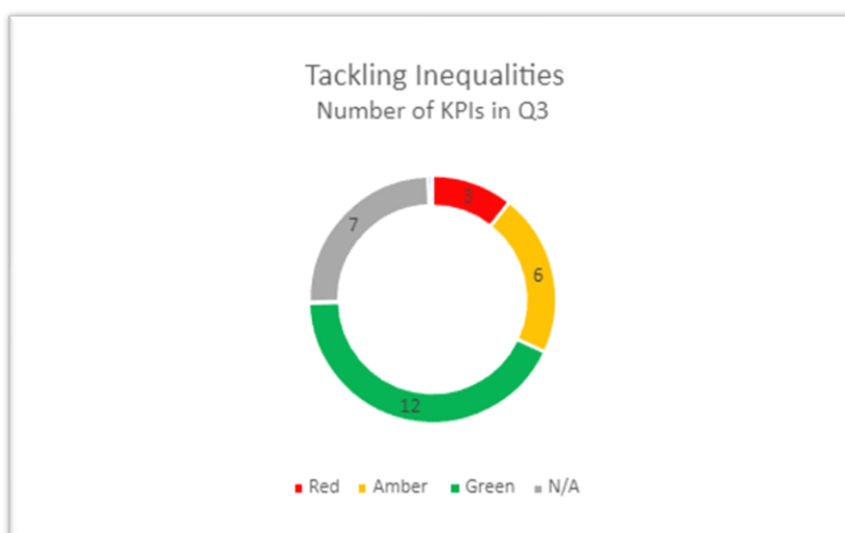
For 'Council Tax – arrears retrieved (£m)' - The arrears of £18.471m have reduced by £3.245m in total since 1 March 23. Overall arrears are £2.716m more than at the same point in time last year. Collections are still recovering following the Covid-19 pandemic and are further impacted by the ongoing cost of living crisis.

PRIORITY 2: Tackling Inequalities

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

Outcomes:

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



Summary of Q3 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
1	Number of referrals into NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	3,044	3,182	2,363	2,276	2,203
2	Grant funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£421,962	£1,101,348	£1,619,03
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	21,609	35,254	12,624	13,693	41,507
4	Number of Grants Awarded to Voluntary and Community organisations (#)	tbc	5	15	6	60	39
5	Total amount of funding provided to VCSE organisations (£)	tbc	£65,600	£200,000	£100,100	£301,167	£200,181
6	Pupils with good level of development at age 5 (%) Annual *	72	-	-	-	68.8	68.8
7	KS4 – average Attainment 8 score (%) Annual *	49	-	-	-	44.7	44.7
8	KS4 - average Progress 8 score (%) Annual *	-0.15	-	-	-	-0.20	-0.20
9	Pupils in good/ outstanding Primary schools (%)	89	88.3	94.2	94.0	95.0	97.9
10	Pupils in good/ outstanding Secondary schools (%)	75	79.2	84.0	83.7	83.9	83.6
11	16-17 yr-olds NEET or Not Known (%)	5.3	5.5	4.9	6.0	Q2 not reported	-
12	Women not smoking at time of delivery (%)	88	91.8 (Q3 latest data)	-	-	-	-
13	Breast feeding prevalence (%)	38	41.4	42.5	40.5	41.6 (Q1 latest data)	-
14	Height and weight recorded Year 6 (%) Annual	95	97.6	-	-	-	97.6
15	Reception age obesity (%) Annual	10	9.2	-	-	-	9.2

16	Year 6 obesity (%) Annual	21	21.8	-	-	-	21.8
17	Social Care related quality of life (score out of 24)	19.1	-	19.7	-	-	19.7
18	Care plans reviewed annually (%)	98.5	94.2	94.6	96.5	96.8	96.7
19	Effectiveness of Reablement/Rehabilitation (%)	88	92.1	90.8	90.6	93.4	91.2
20	Providers rated by CQC as outstanding or good (%)	84.3	84.8	88.2	86.7	89.5	88.0
21	Indicative personal budget (%)	95	92.1	94.1	91.6	92.2	92.1
22	Adults with learning disabilities living at home/with family (%)	83	84.9	86.1	86.3	86.8	86.7
23	Admissions to residential/nursing 18-64 (per 100k population)	12.5	8.7	14.2	12.5	12.0	11.4
24	Admissions to residential/nursing 65+ (per 100k population)	654.9	625.6	677.2	707.9	722.6	701.8
25	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	5	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.4	4.4
26	Successful treatments – alcohol (%)	32	26.6	28.7	29.98	32.7	31.4 (Oct latest data)
27	Successful treatments - non-opiates (%)	21	27.3	29.1	26.8	30.1	28.8 (Oct latest data)
28	Successful treatments – opiates (%)	3	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.1 (Oct latest data)

NB: where data is annual, and reported in a previous quarter, the data and RAG will be duplicated in the current quarter's column.

Progress:

The impressive number of referrals made to Communities Together, which outperformed the target by almost 200 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£1.6m at end of Q3) underlines the Council's firm commitment to support community resilience through challenging times. Beyond direct support to households, the Council is also helping voluntary and community organisations to lead positive change in communities – last quarter the Council gave over £200k to VCSE groups. The

Council is committed, through its Inequalities Plan, to continuing to build community resilience.

We are delighted to see more children and young people attending good or outstanding primary schools. This continues the improving trend over the last 2 years. The figure of 97.9% is 8% better than the national average and 10% more than the previous year. The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes are the highest the county has seen.

For 'pupils in good / outstanding secondary schools' - we have seen a much-improved picture over the past year. Northumberland's latest figure of 83.6% means that 21% more learners are in 'good' or better schools compared to 2017. Inspection outcomes are currently 2% above the national average and 4% better than Q3 in the previous year.

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

Focus on improvement:

'For Key Stage 4 Attainment' - we were pleased external examinations returned in 2022 for the first time since 2019. Teacher and centre assessed grades were used during the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall halfway between 2019 and 2021. Northumberland achieved 44.7, slightly below what was achieved in 2019, and below the national average of 46.2.

The collective score of GCSE performance is starting to recover post COVID- pre COVID Northumberland was beginning to perform much better against peer performance. The volatility of the two years of disrupted education has the potential to impact on performance across formal public examinations for some while. The progress children make from KS2-KS4 - pre Covid was in line with national average and has dropped since Covid, although is now starting to improve. This indicator will be volatile as we see children who performed very well at KS2 work through the academic years to KS4 having been impacted by the two years of disrupted education routine. It should be noted though that the 2023/24 KS2 results showed Northumberland 'bouncing back' the start of improvements that will take time to work through to the KS4 results.

There were 116 permanent care home admissions (65+) in Q3 which pushed this KPI into 'Red' and is improving on Q2 performance where there were 147 admissions. High numbers of admissions were anticipated due to the current pressures in the domiciliary care market where Members will be aware there is increasing difficulty commissioning and providing domiciliary care countywide. This has led to a slightly higher than normal number of admissions to care homes than would have been expected.

For 'Care plans reviewed annually (%)' – national guidance is that all care plans should be reviewed at least every twelve months. The outturn has reduced slightly since the previous quarter. Work continues in this area to assist in improvements in this metric.

For 'Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)' - The outturn is based on 39 out of 896 service users aged 18-64, with a learning disability known to adult social care in paid employment - often complex cases.

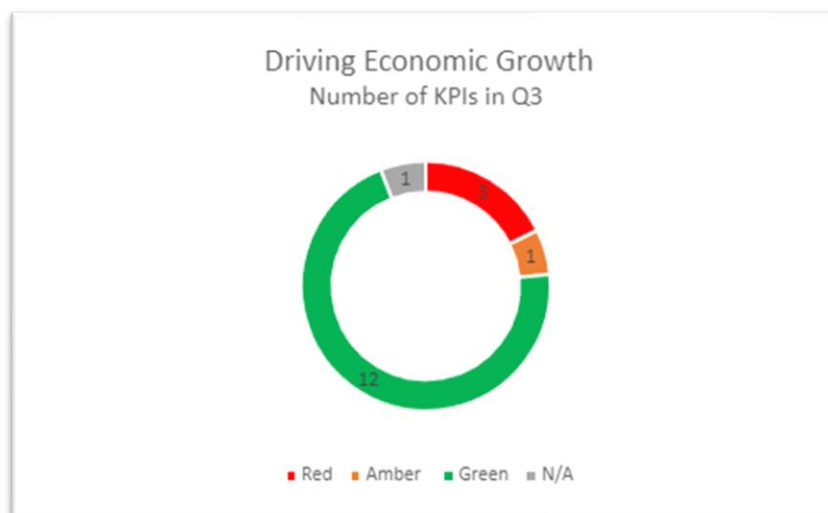
For 'Successful treatments - alcohol (%)' – the target was missed, and marginally down on Q2 performance. The service works with some of our most disadvantaged residents and continues to experience very high demand for alcohol treatment. Public Health continues to work closely with the service to identify ways of improving performance while ensuring patient safety and addressing inequality.

PRIORITY 3: Driving Economic Growth

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

Outcomes:

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



Summary of Q3 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
1	Street cleanliness - Detritus (% of areas surveyed)	8	6.6	-	6.5	-	3.4
2	Street cleanliness - Dog Fouling (% of areas surveyed)	1	0	-	0	-	0
3	Street Cleanliness - Litter (% of areas surveyed)	5	1.7	-	2.4	-	0.4
4	Green Flag status parks (#)	11	-	-	12	-	12
5	Fly tips removed in 3d (%)	95	98	98	98.6	98.3	98.4
6	Net additional homes (#) Annual	614	-	1592	-	-	1592
7	Net affordable homes provided (# pa) Annual	374	-	122	-	-	122
8	Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)	96	97.7	97.7	99.2	92.4	96.4
9	Time taken to answer the 999 call by Fire Control (%)	95	99	96.3	96.7	96.4	98.2
10	Accidental Dwelling Fires (#)	57	34	33	29	26	33
11	Deliberate Primary Fire (#)	66	24	22	38	33	26
12	Rogue Trader complaints and interventions (%)	95	100	100	100	100	100
13	Employment Rate (%)	75.7%	68.8	70.5	70.1	70.1	70.1
14	Weekly Pay – Residents *(£ Annual)	£659.90	-	£601.80	-	-	£652.10
15	Weekly Pay – Workers *(£ Annual)	£648.50	-	£573.30	-	-	£607.80
16	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	95.4	95.63	95.7	95.7	96.04
17	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	79.1	79.1	78.6	78.3	-

NB: where data is annual, and reported in a previous quarter, the data and RAG will be duplicated in the current quarter's column.

Progress:

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

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

We have met our targets on “Availability of Superfast broadband (%)” which shows a positive direction of travel in terms of ensuring our county is digitally connected.

For ‘Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)’ - Inspections are identified in line with the risk-based inspection programme (RBIP), set by the service, targeting premises to identify and improve fire safety management and therefore a low expectation of reasonable standard premises has been set, the theory being that if all premises are at a reasonable standard then the RBIP is targeting the incorrect premises. Performance is being monitored.

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

Currently, our quarterly performance reporting does not contain KPIs on skills and that is something we will put right in future Corporate Plan reporting.

Focus on improvement:

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

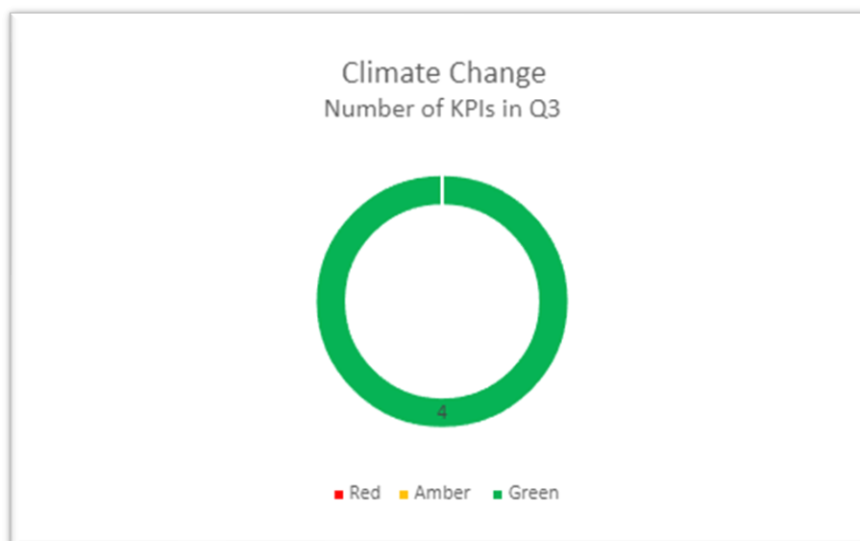
The measure “Net affordable homes provided” records a delivery of 122 new affordable homes against a target of 374. The delay to delivery is an attribute of the construction rate by private sector developers or “lag” and legal triggers. More than 1,400 affordable dwellings have currently been secured via Section 106 agreements that have not been completed. These are awaiting progress on construction sites, and the Council continually monitors progress. The geographic split of these secured, but not completed affordable homes is; South East 632, Central 419, North 263, West 79. These figures will constantly increase as new planning permissions are granted. Affordable Homes delivery from 2016-2023 equated to 16.5% of all housing completions (1,802 affordable homes out of a total 10,914 net additions of all housing), averaging 257 affordable homes pa over the past 7 years.

The employment rate is struggling to bounce back after the pandemic. Around 15k more people were in employment in Northumberland 10 years ago, this is partly explained by our changing population. Our working age population has contracted significantly and moved into the retirement cohort and younger population are not filling the gap. We continue to invest in the regeneration across the county whilst building new infrastructure which will support economic growth and a refresh of the Economic strategy for 2024-26 has been undertaken. This will ensure Northumberland County Council can successfully respond to the County’s priorities in developing partnerships and investment plans which will support growing the business base, supporting inclusive employment and deliver productive places.

PRIORITY: Climate Change

In achieving the three Corporate Priorities, we will ensure we pass a healthy, clean and sustainable environment to future generations. Each of our three Priorities has a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency. Climate Change threatens to disproportionately affect our poorest areas, and climate policies which are too burdensome for the poorest in society could have an unwelcome effect on

inequality. Net Zero is the growth opportunity of the 21st Century. Northumberland can get a huge boost from the low carbon economy, and we are already creating the foundations as we work to become carbon neutral.



Summary of Q3 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	21/22	22/23	23/24
1	Free Tree Planting Scheme (Number of Trees) Annual	15,000	13,578	14,328	15,750
2	Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual	250	300	303	-
3	NCC Carbon Dioxide Emission (tCO ₂) Biannual	15,636	11,405	10,399	11,810
4	NCC EV Fleet Replacement (# eligible vehicles) Annual	11	33	39	-

Progress:

For our 'Free Tree Planting Scheme - of the 15,750 saplings set aside for the scheme, some 7,250 were collected by those who applied (10,558). The 5,192 difference between ordered and applied for are being planted by GNF team, replanting from storm damage.

The difference between applied for and collected (3,308) were either handed out as spares to residents or used by LS.

For 'Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual' – some 302.658 tonnes of glass were collected in the second year of the glass collection recycling trial (November 2022 - October 2023).

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

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

7. Implications

Policy	This report supports delivery of all three priorities of the Corporate Plan.
Finance and value for money	Value for money is a priority for the Council. This Report contains no direct financial implications. The ongoing delivery of the Corporate Plan involves individual actions that may have financial implications which would form separate reports as these arise
Legal	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Corporate Plan may have legal implications, which would form separate reports as these arise.
Procurement	N/A
Human resources	N/A
Property	N/A
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No Whilst this report contains no immediate equality implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Corporate Plan may have equality implications, which would form separate impact assessments as these arise
Risk assessment	None at this stage
Crime and disorder	N/A
Customer considerations	N/A
Carbon reduction	Each of our three Priorities have an important a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency.
Health and wellbeing	N/A
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

N/A

9. Links to other key reports already published

Corporate Plan 2023-26

Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2024

10. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9th April 2024

Hirst Masterplan

Report of Councillor(s)

Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Responsible Officer(s): Simon Neilson, Executive Director - Place and Regeneration

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following priorities in the NCC Corporate Plan 2023-26:

Achieving value for money: Creating conditions for everyone to live their best lives is typically highly cost effective and can yield lifelong costs savings such as increased earnings and productivity and reduced use of health and social care services.

Tackling Inequalities: To create a society where everybody can thrive, our residents need all the building blocks in place: a stable job, good pay, safe, affordable, and warm housing, and good education. For some of our residents these foundations are weak or missing which create inequalities.

Driving Economic Growth: Ensuring that all our residents have access to building blocks of a good life, will help them to remain healthy and independent and pay an important part of the infrastructure contributing to Northumberland's future prosperity.

This report is also relevant to:

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (refresh) - Building Blocks of a Healthy Life
Priority Theme 1 – Healthy Neighbourhoods

Northumberland Inequalities Plan

Living conditions, reducing the gap in communities.

Quality and length of life; Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) & Life Expectancy (LE).

Northumberland Local Plan (2022) Includes policies supporting Health and wellbeing and healthy and sustainable homes.

2. Purpose of report

To introduce the Hirst Masterplan to cabinet and seek authorisation to move forward in developing its contents further.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 3.1 Note the attached Executive Summary of the Hirst Draft Masterplan and outline options for the long-term regeneration of the area.
- 3.2 To support the aspiration to work towards the 'Do Maximum' option, as set out in section 6.1 of this report, during the ongoing development process.
- 3.3 Approve the establishment of a 'Hirst Partnership Board', to be Chaired by the Director of Housing & Planning and to comprise stakeholders, partners, and Senior Officers from Northumberland County Council (NCC).
- 3.4 To approve the recruitment to two collaborative Hirst regeneration posts, to be funded equally by key stakeholders NCC Housing, Advance Northumberland, and Bernicia for three years. The posts will be hosted by the Strategic Housing function within the NCC Housing Service. NCC element will be funded through Housing Reserves.
- 3.5 To note that communications on the Hirst Masterplan will be integrated into the overall communications strategy for the town as linked to the Ashington Town Board.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

30 January 2024

5. Background

5.1 Summary

While the Masterplan should not be regarded as final "blueprint", it is underpinned by a series of aims, developed in extensive conjunction with the community. It will help shape and support funding bids and specific projects.

- A tender brief for the Hirst Masterplan was created in 2022 following feedback from the community in a consultation commissioned by the Ashington Town Board.
- A Place Standard Tool community conversation was conducted in Ashington during the summer of 2022 to inform the basis of the Masterplan analysis. Providing a community voice on the strengths and challenges in the area to be addressed by the masterplan.
- Ryder Architecture were the successful applicant, commissioned in December 2022.
- Ryder worked extensively with the community during 2023 whilst writing the master plan, reflecting a broad range of community aspirations in its development.
- The Hirst Masterplan was first presented to the Hirst partnership group, comprising of senior officers from NCC, Advance Northumberland and Bernicia in November 2023. The group agreed a collaborative approach to the further exploration for delivery routes for the Masterplan.
- The Hirst Partnership group has proposed the following:
 - A governance arrangement
 - A staffing arrangement

- The intention to seek the resources to aspire to deliver the ‘do maximum’ option outlined in the plan.

The executive summary of the Hirst Masterplan is included in appendix 1.

The aims for the Masterplan were developed in conjunction with the community and are included in page 15 of the summary. They include the following:

1. A community approach where everyone that wants to can contribute and anticipate in the shaping of places and spaces, and focuses on ‘what is strong, not what is wrong’.
2. A place that helps people to have opportunities for good physical health, mental health and addresses loneliness.
3. Community spaces to meet, be creative, share ideas and skills, and advice and support.
4. A range of good quality and well managed house types and sizes that are suitable for different needs and good for the planet (energy efficient)
5. A diverse range of shops and things to do for all ages, and all cultures.
6. Creating green spaces that people will want to use and look after.
7. A place where people can hope, learn and achieve their goals through the right skills training and job opportunities.
8. A neighbourhood that is safe, well used, welcoming to all, and keeps the spirit and pride of Ashington alive.
9. Having streets that are clean, having access to internet, being able to get around easily on public transport.
10. Easy to move around with safe, enjoyable travel routes for walking and cycling.

The masterplan includes three phases, as summarised in table 1 below.

Phase One: 2023 - 2027	Phase Two: 2027- 2035	Phase Three: 2035 on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation phase • Creation of a Hirst Strategic Lead and supporting team • Creation of governance structure including community representation • Build on existing projects and initiatives. • Identify immediate/urgent priorities with community and support programme of specific community led initiatives. • Address local specific key challenges raised by residents that require action by NCC services and partner organisations. • Delivery of first new, high quality housing phase via strategic development of former Coulson School site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on Phase 1 community-led projects, capacity building and co-design. • Agree business cases and planning briefs with the community to allow development of programme of sites in locality to support all facets of area improvement aims. • Series of pilot high-quality residential living projects within a focused area • Improving the quality, size, accessibility, and energy efficiency of existing homes • Improving the safety, accessibility and appearance of streets and spaces • Whole study area projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of projects to support longer-term evolution of the Hirst identified in Phases 1 and 2. • Learning from projects and strategies implemented in the earlier phases developed across the rest of the study area. • Initial ‘priority areas’ adapted to each location / context. • Provide a high quality, sustainable living environment for residents with a good mix of homes, businesses, local services and activities, well connected to the town centre and surrounding areas. • Continue an asset-based community development approach, forging strong

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, seek and secure external capital funding streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to existing strategic projects 	bonds in the community, enabling community led projects and spaces for people to flourish
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Table 1 Summary of Hirst Masterplan Phases

5.2 Governance Arrangements

The following governance arrangements, including links to relevant stakeholders within Ashington are shown in figure 1 below. Terms of reference and code of conduct documents are included in Appendices 2 & 3.

Points to note:

- Board Responsibilities:
 - The Hirst Partnership Board is an advisory board to the lead and accountable body, Northumberland County Council
 - Advising on a clear programme of interventions as outlined in the Hirst Masterplan
 - Ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making at each phase of development.
 - Actively engaging deliberately and constructively with residents and the private, public, and voluntary sectors, providing updates and information on plans.
 - Ensuring equality, inclusion, and diversity in all its engagement with local communities and organisations
 - Ensuring that housing decision making strategies are developed with the intention of providing improved housing options for the benefit of existing Hirst residents.
 - Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)
 - Keeping records of meetings and advice given
- The board will be formally established following the recruitment of officers to lead the ongoing resourcing of the Masterplan.

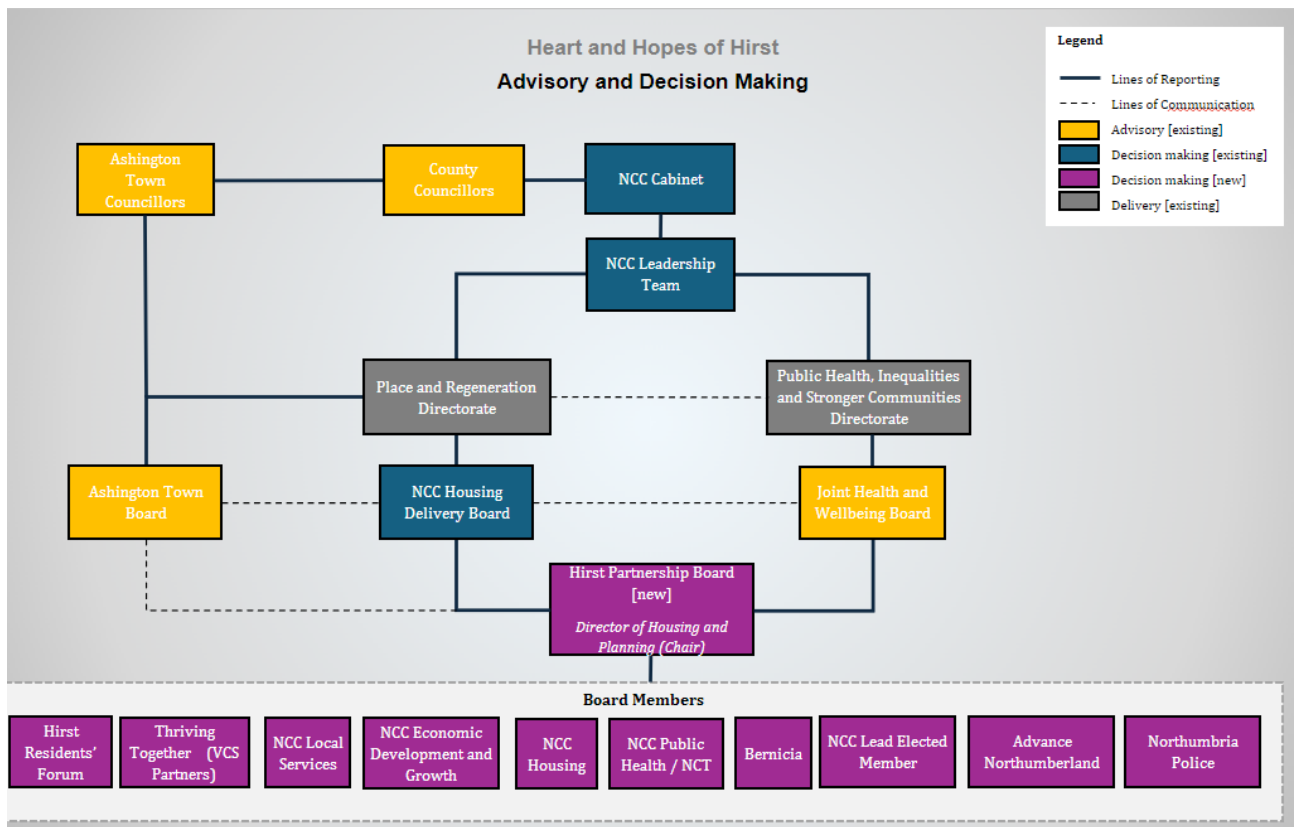


Figure 1 Hirst Masterplan Governance Arrangements

Figure 1 demonstrates the linkages across Ashington with other key stakeholders. The board will also be mindful of all the linked projects in the area where collaborations and cross referencing will be important. A pipeline of projects will be developed in conjunction with the Ashington Investment Plan and will be used to inform programme development and delivery. Updates to this will be provided going forward.

5.3 Initial Staffing Arrangements

Two new roles are proposed for the delivery of phase one of the Masterplan as outlined in table 3 below. The posts will initially be for a three year term.

New Role	Hirst Strategic Lead (Band 10)	Community and Housing Programme Manager (Band 8)
Main Job Responsibilities	Strategic Lead for the Hirst master plan delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capital funding acquisition. ○ Housing delivery and change management. ○ Strategic Partnership working 	Trusted contact point within the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community project support and enablement (ABCD) ○ Housing change management

Main skills and experience requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding Acquisition ○ Strategic community development ○ Strategic housing change and development 	Equally skilled and experienced in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asset based community development. ○ Supporting communities through housing change situations
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Table 3 Summary new role descriptions

Estimated staffing cost of the two posts are shown below in table 4.

Post	Band	2024	2025	2026
Hirst Strategic Lead	10	£63,926	£67,817	£71,667
Community and Housing Programme Manager	8	£50,584	£54,236	£58,000
Total (A)		£114,510	£122,053	£129,667
Expenses, IT and PPE (B)		£3,500	£1,500	£1,500
NCC contribution (A/3 + B)		£41,670	£42,184	£44,722

Table 4 estimated staffing costs (see assumptions below)

Assumptions:

- Includes salary, NI, pension.
- Staff will be appointed on the bottom spine point of each Band, rising by one point annually for five years.
- Pay award equivalent to that paid in 2022-23 will apply annually.
- Years run April – March
- Banding subject to job evaluation

5.4 Communications Plan

A communications plan will be developed in conjunction with the regeneration team to integrate it with plans for communications around other projects in Ashington and the work of the Ashington Town Board.

5.5 Summary Timeline

Details	Q1 24	Q2 24	Q3 24	Q4 24	2025	2026	2027	2028-2035	2035>
Coulson Park development									
Comms with residents and other stakeholders									
Corporate reporting									
Recruitment									
Delivery			Phase 1					Phase 2	Phase 3

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

6.1 Do Maximum, Intermediate and Minimum Option

The Hirst Masterplan (appendix 1) presents three scoping options. This paper seeks cabinet support to work towards the ‘Do Maximum’ option whilst seeking support from external funding agencies. The three options are summarised in table 2 below. Each of the options will require an element of revenue and an increasing degree of external capital funding. The proposal from the partnership group presenting this report is that the plan should be ambitious if it is to make a meaningful positive impact on tackling inequalities and improving the place and lives of the local community.

Do Minimum	Intermediate Option	Do Maximum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofit of properties within the pilot zone • Repairs and maintenance to boundaries, gardens etc • Improve back lanes (parking, green spaces, planting, refuse etc) • Improved routes through north west quadrant • Pocket Park on First Avenue (to include mounds / natural play, planting, seating, renewed community noticeboard) • Infrastructure to enable District Heat Network in 2030 	As Minimum Option, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfigure existing properties into modern, larger homes. • Selective demolition and new build homes • New central, open public space with play, seating, shelter, trees, planting (created by selective demolition of properties in centre of block) • New rain gardens and street greening, opening ends of terraces 	As Intermediate Option, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant redevelopment of Pilot Area with larger scale provision of new, high quality homes, for existing residents and improvement of public spaces. • Significant redevelopment of north west quadrant with retrofit, • reconfiguration, new homes, and spaces. • Redevelopment of Bellway House including community, food, leisure, residential, greening, and public space opportunities, involving the opening of this block to allow views and access

Table 2 Three options for progression

7. Implications

Policy	This paper aligns with the revised ‘Building Blocks of a Good Life’ of the refreshed Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It considers and seeks to align with other organisational strategies including the corporate plan and the inequalities plan.
Finance and value for money	Two new collaborative staff posts will be created to drive forward the delivery of the Hirst Masterplan. They will be equally funded for three years by Northumberland County Council, Advance Northumberland and Bernicia. NCC element will be funded from Housing Reserves.

	<p>There is no capital ask from the council at this time. External funding will be sought by the board and officer team on behalf of the council.</p> <p>It may be that as part of developing implementation plans, NCC will need to consider additional recruitment implications. It is envisaged that delivery posts will be capitalised within externally funded projects.</p>
Legal	<p>The governance arrangements for the board created to oversee the work of the Masterplan involve an advisory group and not a decision-making body. Northumberland County Council will retain accountable body status. As host organisation Northumberland County Council will take all employment responsibilities for the new officer posts.</p>
Procurement	<p>There are no specific requirements for procurement articulated in this report, however the actions will require additional action plans and each organisation will need to consider procurement implications at this point.</p>
Human resources	<p>It may be that as part of developing implementation plans, NCC will need to consider additional recruitment implications. It is envisaged that delivery posts will be capitalised within externally funded projects.</p>
Property	<p>The Masterplan refers to the use of Coulson Park school site as a site of strategic interest in the delivery of the first phase of the masterplan. Plans are being developed with the key partners to deliver this site to support the delivery of the Masterplan</p>
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	<p>No - not required at this point</p> <p>An equalities impact assessment has not been carried out. However, the actions included are specifically aimed at reducing health inequalities which include to people with characteristics protected by the Public Sector Equality Duty.</p>
Risk assessment	<p>Risks to the council may include reputational risk, should endeavours to seek capital funding to deliver the masterplan be unsuccessful.</p>
Crime and disorder	<p>It is the intention of the Hirst Masterplan to include elements that support the 'designing out' of crime, providing a positive impact on crime and disorder in the area. Northumbria Police will be included in the development of the scheme.</p>
Customer considerations	<p>No direct impact on customer services is planned at this time. Updates will be provided as detailed delivery plans are created.</p>

Carbon reduction	The implementation of the masterplan aims to include the potential to link to a district heat network and to include carbon reduction measures in its delivery.
Health and wellbeing	The Hirst Masterplan aims to improve the health outcomes of its residents by the reduction of inequalities in the area.
Wards	Ashington Central;

8. Background papers

Appendix 1 – Hirst Masterplan executive summary
Appendix 2 – Hirst Partnership Board Terms of Reference
Appendix 3 – Hirst Partnership Board Code of Conduct

9. Links to other key reports already published.

[Joint Health and Well-being Strategy Refresh Build Blocks for a Healthy Life \(14th December 2023\)](#)

[Healthy Neighbourhoods Paper \(11th January 2024\)](#)

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Heart and Hopes of Hirst - Towards An Imagined Future
Executive Summary

Ryder Architecture Limited

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Contents

Introduction	4
Headlines	5
Background to the Project	6
The Process	7
Context	8
The Study Area	10
Stakeholder and Community Engagement	13
Approach to the Masterplan	14
Aims for the Hirst	15
Spatial Framework	16
Project Ideas Toolkit	17
Masterplan Overview	19
Pilot Area Options	20
Projects and Phasing	22
Next Steps	23

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Introduction

Northumberland County Council (NCC), Advance Northumberland and Bernicia Homes (the Hirst Project Management Group) commissioned Ryder Architecture and our team to prepare a long term regeneration masterplan and business case for the Hirst area in Ashington. The business case is available as a standalone document, and the masterplan and business case should be read in conjunction with one another.

Community and stakeholder engagement has been central to the preparation of the masterplan, embedding an asset based community development approach and building on the strengths of the Hirst. The team would like to thank everyone in the local community who has given their time, provided insights, and supported events and activities throughout the project.

The final reports will be used by the Council and its partners to progress the recommended plans and roadmap for the regeneration of the Hirst estate, including discussions with Government and potential funders and investors, the submission of funding bids, and further engagement with residents and the local community.



Aerial view of the Hirst estate and Ashington, 1961



Aerial view of the Hirst estate and Ashington, 2023

Headlines

Historically, the Hirst had a really important economic role as housing for workers, which it has lost.

The Ashington Group ('The Pitman Painters') is another important touchstone – showing the huge potential of local people when provided with opportunities for self expression.

The Hirst and the wider town have suffered from the decline of the mines, but successful housing developments on the outskirts of the town show there is demand to live in the area.

Relinking the heart of the town via the forthcoming Northumberland Line railway can create the opportunity to regenerate the town.

Engagement has evidenced the important community work that is ongoing, but there are issues with crime, anti social behaviour, and vacant and poorly managed properties that are preventing the town reaching its potential. The loss of people, especially 16 to 24 year olds, shows that currently the neighbourhood lacks a sense of potential and reasons to stay.

Therefore, the Hirst Masterplan is needed to restore the core of Ashington, which will reinforce the work of the town centre regeneration and help the area thrive again.



Community Engagement Event in the Hirst



Rainy Day - Ashington Co-op by Oliver Kilbourn, c.1951 (Museums Northumberland)



Full Circle Food and Ashington Cycle Hub in Hirst Park



Second Avenue, the Hirst

Background to the Project

Hirst

Located adjacent Ashington town centre, the Hirst estate was developed in the early 1900s to house miners and their families working at the nearby Woodhorn Colliery. It comprises approximately 3,300 dwellings and is characterised by high density **former colliery housing**, formed by long terraced residential streets and cross cutting avenues with little amenity space surrounding them.

The Hirst is the heart of **a strong and long established community** in Ashington, in which many local residents take great pride. There are numerous **active community organisations and assets** in the local area including Hirst Park and Hirst Welfare Centre.

However, the Hirst estate also faces challenges. It is the most deprived area of Ashington and is in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in England. The area faces **a number of social challenges** including anti social behaviour and crime, alongside the challenges faced by households experiencing deprivation and low incomes. The majority of the housing in the Hirst is not suitable for people's needs and is not energy efficient. There are issues with **high levels of long term empty properties** and the appearance and condition of streets and spaces.

Over the last 20 years, Northumberland County Council (NCC), along with other partners, has attempted to address these issues by tackling them as singular problems. However, it is now recognised that none of the issues can be resolved in isolation and the council needs to take **a holistic approach** if it is to improve the area and the way residents feel about it as a place.

Project Management Group

As the Local Planning Authority, **NCC** is responsible for implementing the planning policies within which the regeneration of the Hirst estate will take place. The Council has a wider interest in the successful regeneration of the area, with a focus on **improving the lives of residents**. NCC will also take the lead in discussions with national and regional Government and other funders, aimed at securing the investment needed to regenerate the Hirst.

Advance Northumberland is a development and regeneration company, wholly owned by NCC. Advance is the largest single property owner on the Hirst estate, managing a portfolio of approximately 400 rented homes.

Bernicia is a major independent social landlord responsible for the management of a large portfolio of social housing across north east England, including in Northumberland. Bernicia owns and manages a small number of social homes on the Hirst estate and a more significant number in the locality. It is also an active housing developer, investing in building new social homes across the region.

The three partner organisations have an established track record of working together to develop and improve homes in communities across Northumberland.

NCC, Advance Northumberland and Bernicia have come together as the Hirst Project Management Group to commission the Hirst Masterplan which will provide the basis for **long term investment and renewal of the Hirst estate**.

Masterplan

The masterplan aims to build on the strengths of the Hirst in order to address the challenges in the area and make it **a better place to live and visit**.

Investment will also enable NCC and partners to manage the housing stock and local environment on a more sustainable basis in future.

Although funding for future projects has not yet been secured, the masterplan and accompanying business case will be used to attract investment and will form the basis of funding submissions.

Consultant Team

Ryder Architecture has led the engagement and masterplanning process with support from the rest of the consultant team:

Healthy Happy Places (Academic Health and Science Network) - embedding health and wellbeing and a community-focused approach in the masterplan

Identity Consult - cost planning

Metro Dynamics - business case preparation

The Process

A place based approach has underpinned the masterplan, considering the 'social infrastructure' of the Hirst - the people - alongside the 'built and natural environment' aspects - the place.

The Hirst Project Management Group and the consultant team, took the follow steps to develop the masterplan and business case for the Hirst:

- Understanding the brief with the Hirst Project Management Group
- Initial desk based research and site visits
- Visioning workshop with the Hirst Project Management Group.
- Meetings, presentations and workshops with NCC officers, Town and County Councillors, Town Board, and the voluntary, charity and social enterprise sector (ongoing throughout the masterplan process)
- Design sprint with the Hirst Project Management Group, NCC officers and health leaders to test our analysis, better understand strengths and challenges, and identify initial opportunities collaboratively

- Drop in events with the local community and a workshop with young people to gather views and ideas
- Informed by the engagement findings, the draft masterplan aims, spatial framework and project ideas toolkit were developed
- Service providers workshop and local businesses event to gain feedback on the emerging aims and ideas
- Street event for local residents to gain feedback on the emerging aims and ideas
- Informed by the engagement findings, the masterplan aims, spatial framework and project ideas toolkit were refined
- Development and costing of pilot area options
- Phasing of project actions
- Development of business case.

The Masterplan report collates the work produced during this process. This is organised into the chapters shown on the right, which can be found in the main 'Heart and Hopes of Hirst - Towards An Imagined Future' masterplan report. The Business Case is available as a separate document. The two reports should be read in conjunction with one another.



Page 37



Context

Ashington

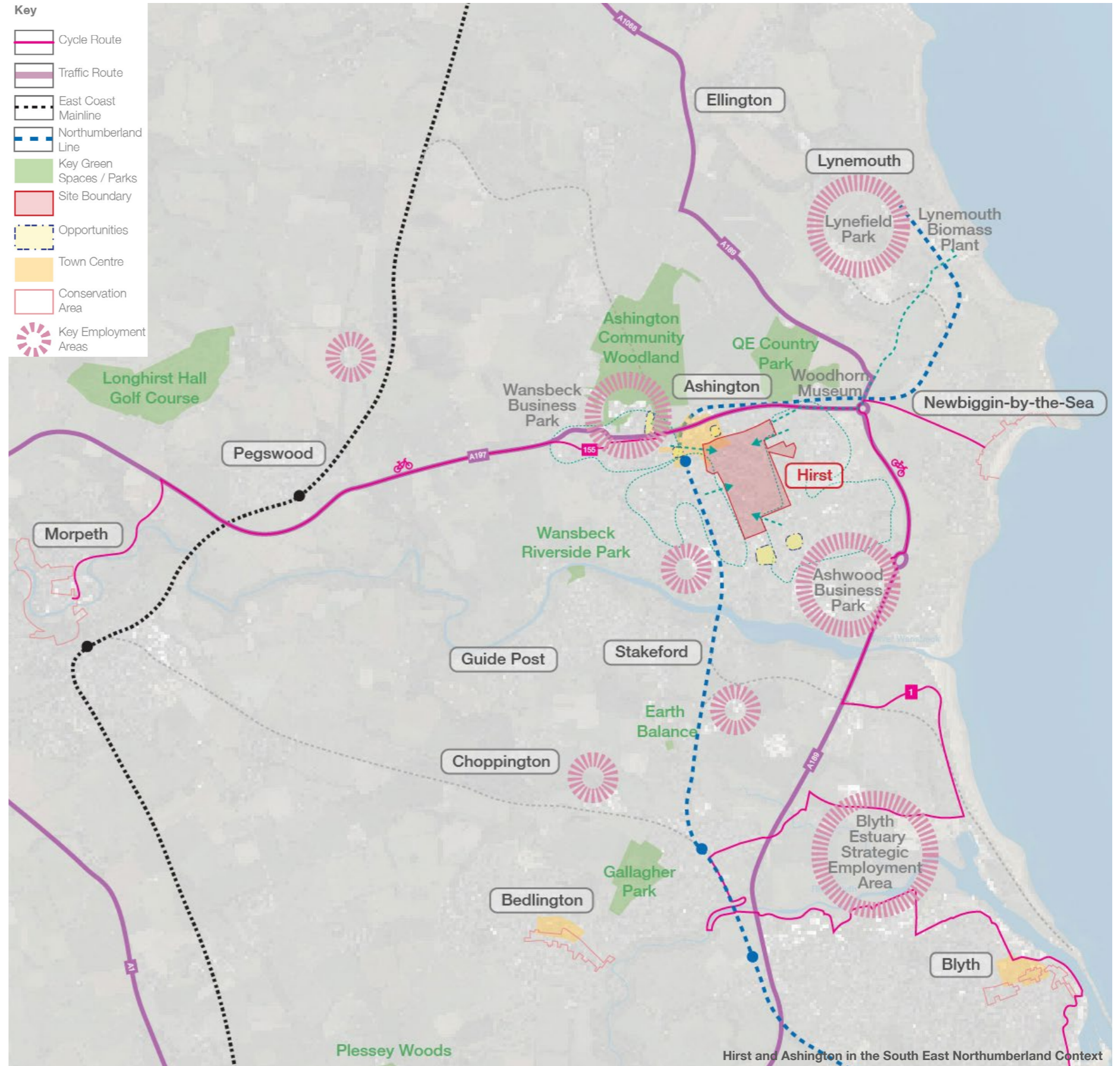
Once a centre of the coal mining industry, considered to be the ‘world’s largest coal mining village’, Ashington is one of the largest towns in Northumberland, with a population of 28,278 (2021 census). The town now plays an important **strategic employment role** in the county and includes the strategically important Ashwood Business Park. Northumberland College and Wansbeck Hospital are also located in the town.

Ashington is part of the **South East Northumberland Delivery Area**. More than half of Northumberland’s population is located in the South East Delivery Area, the only part of the county which could be considered urban in nature. Located close to Tyneside, the area is considered a cost effective alternative location for both industrial development and housing. The A189 ‘Spine Road’ runs through the Delivery Area from north to south.

Key opportunities for future economic growth in south east Northumberland which could support the aims of the Hirst masterplan include the **Blyth estuary area** which is being actively promoted to the renewable and low carbon energy, advanced manufacturing and offshore sectors; **Enterprise Zone** designations in parts of Ashington, such as Ashwood Business Park; and the development of the visitor economy through major attractors, for example, **Woodhorn Museum** near Ashington.

There are also plans to capitalise on the new **Northumberland Line Economic Growth Corridor** opportunity by investing in employment and housing sites along the line, attracting more jobs and residents to Ashington, for example.

In 2019, NCC declared a **Climate Emergency**, whilst also announcing its objective to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. As a result, NCC intend to decarbonise their heating, cooling and power supplies through actioning a Heat Mapping and Energy Masterplanning Feasibility Study for Six Towns within the county, including Ashington.



Investment in the Town

In 2016 the £21m Ashington Leisure Centre opened within the town centre, as well as a £13m retirement complex on the site of the old Ashington Hospital. Station Road benefited from a £1.5m public realm improvement scheme, and in 2017, NCC also successfully secured £2.3m National Lottery funding to rejuvenate Hirst Park. Ashington Football Club moved to a new complex at Woodhorn Lane to enable the development of a large Asda superstore in the town centre and the Hirst Welfare Centre, a multi use sports and community facility, opened providing a range of facilities and activities.

Improving Ashington town centre is a key component of the Northumberland Local Plan. The Hirst Masterplan is part of a much broader plan to regenerate the wider town of Ashington.

A private sector led Town Board has been established which is developing the **Ashington Investment Plan**, setting out ambitious investment proposals in a number of priority areas, including town centre regeneration, business growth, skills and education, connectivity and transport, and housing and placemaking. The investment plan will be used as the basis to attract investment and funding to address the key challenges and opportunities facing Ashington.

Following recent successes in securing major capital funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority and UK Government, there are now some concrete opportunities to deliver transformational regeneration projects in Ashington town centre including: the development of a new **station gateway at Wansbeck Square** bringing the Northumberland line rail passenger service into the heart of town; a new leisure and entertainment destination at **Portland Park**; and initial catalytic investment in regenerating Ashington's **Station Road high street**.

Ashington Town Council is the first tier of local government for the town of Ashington, within the unitary authority of Northumberland. The Council covers six wards of the town: Bothal, Central, College, Haydon, Hirst, and Seaton. The Council is served by 18 elected representatives (Town Councillors), with three Town Councillors for each ward.

Proud Past, Prosperous Future, Clean Growth Leader

“By 2030, Ashington will be a thriving centre for businesses, residents, learners, and young people, providing thousands of quality jobs in advanced manufacturing and low carbon clean growth industries, more and better homes, excellent skills and education opportunities, an attractive leisure and culture offer, and a great quality of life for a growing and prosperous population.”

(Our shared vision for Ashington: Ashington Investment Plan 2023)

Northumberland Corporate Plan

As set out in the **Northumberland Corporate Plan 2023 – 2026**, NCC is committed to supporting economic recovery and growth and tackling inequalities in communities to support residents to be healthier and happier.

Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board

The Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board has produced the **Joint Health And Wellbeing Strategy 2018 - 2028**, a long-term plan to ensure that the needs of Northumberland's population are met and tackle local inequalities in health. Across Northumberland, there is a shared ambition among partners to reduce health, social and economic inequalities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. This has underpinned the development of Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board **Inequalities Plan 2022 – 2032**.

Northumberland Local Plan

The **Northumberland Local Plan 2016 to 2036** was formally adopted by Northumberland County Council on 31 March 2022. Policies in the Northumberland Local Plan support the regeneration of the Hirst through making the best use of existing buildings as part of creating sustainable communities, including supporting and enabling interventions to improve and renovate existing housing stock. This also includes considering options, in consultation with local communities, for demolition and redevelopment schemes in areas of low demand or where the existing stock does not meet and is not capable of meeting local housing needs. Introducing a greater mix of uses within Hirst would be supported by the Local Plan, along with ensuring good access to local green space.



The Study Area

Hirst Masterplan Study Area

The 80ha masterplan study area for the Hirst estate includes areas of the Hirst ward, Ashington Central ward and College ward. Because the Hirst estate straddles three different wards, the ward statistics cannot be directly mapped onto the study area. However, as an indication of population density, the Hirst ward, for example, has an estimated population of 5,500 residents which accounts for 19.5% of the total Ashington population.

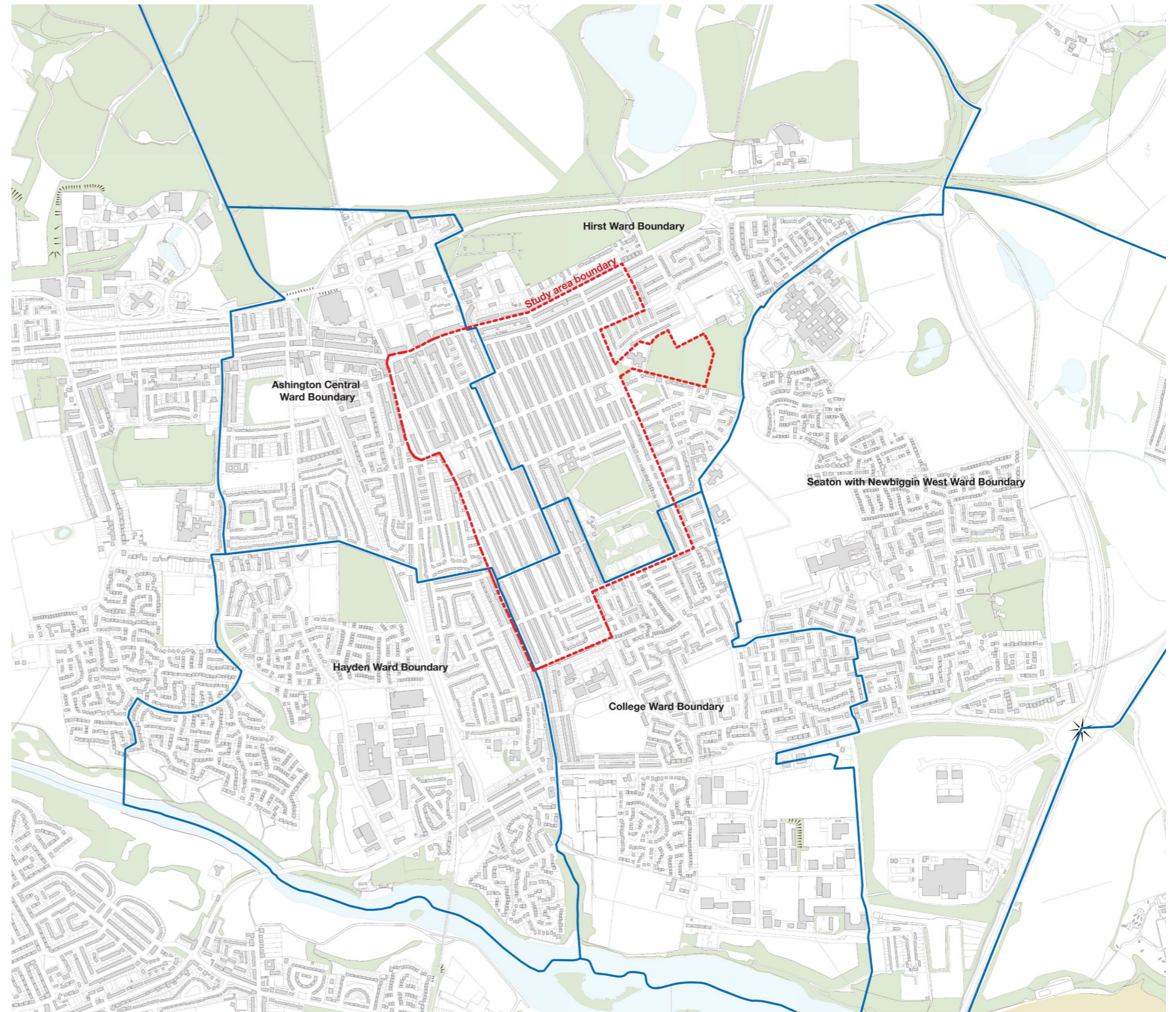
The study boundary encompasses the main area of terraced streets from Woodhorn Road in the north to Seventh Avenue in the south, and stretching from North Seaton Road / Milburn Road in the west to Alexandra Road in the east. This includes the area containing Percy Street, Queen Street and George Street. The study area also includes key assets such as Hirst Park and Hirst Welfare Centre.

The area contains a mix of different ownerships, including a high proportion of Advance Northumberland properties, private landlord and owner-occupied homes, along with a few Bernicia homes. There are many long term vacant properties.

NCC owns some of the key community assets such as Hirst Park and the Family Hub, as well as pockets of grassed areas, car parks and back lanes. In addition to this, NCC owns some larger areas of land to the east and south of the study area, including Dukes C of E Secondary School, the former Coulson School site, and the land behind the Hirst Welfare Centre pitches.

Although the red line shown on the plan opposite is the main focus of the study, the masterplan considers areas beyond the red line including connections to the town centre, education, employment, and other community assets.

The team acknowledge that there are different views locally on what constitutes the Hirst and exactly where the boundaries are. For the purposes of this report, 'Hirst' refers to the Hirst masterplan study area shown on the plan opposite.



Hirst Masterplan Study Area in the context of local ward boundaries

Summary of Strengths in the Hirst

There are several assets and strengths within the Hirst and the masterplan uses these as a starting point:

Community spirit and a strong heritage - reflected in the colliery rows, art, football sculptures, interpretation boards about Hirst Park

Community organisations – several active community groups in Ashington and Hirst, and some key community spaces within the study area, such as Hirst Welfare Centre, Ashington Family Hub and Hirst Park Pavilion

Parks and sports facilities - nearby landscape such as Wansbeck Riverside Park and the coast, with good recreation and sports provision at Hirst Park and Hirst Welfare Centre, amongst others

Proximity of Hirst Ashington town centre – shops, services, and public transport including the forthcoming railway station, plus planned investment at Portland Park, Wansbeck Square, and the college.



Summary of Challenges in the Hirst

However, there are significant, overlapping and complex challenges which need to be addressed:

High levels of deprivation, unemployment and poor health in the Hirst.

Unsuitable homes (size, space, in poor condition, not energy efficient - difficult to heat / higher fuel bills).

Issues with landlords, including some 'absentee landlords' not looking after properties.

Increased long term vacancies – undermines community cohesion.

Poor quality environment (fly tipping, vacant buildings, rubbish in the streets, lack of care and maintenance).

High levels of crime and anti social behaviour, lack of safety and security.

Walking and cycling routes throughout the Hirst, and those linking the area to the town centre and surrounding destinations require improvement.

Further detail can be found in the Context and Analysis section within the main Hirst Masterplan report.



Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Context for Engagement

The process itself, and the emerging vision and aims, have been informed throughout by:

- Existing research and publications such as the Partnerships for People and Place vision report for Hello Hirst
- Place Standard, a toolkit used by NCC
- A community led and inclusive approach

Place Standard Community Conversations

To ensure the voice of residents and the community is at the heart of the Hirst Masterplan, in preparation for the commission NCC completed a series of community conversations with residents during 2022. This engagement used a locally adapted Northumberland version of The Place Standard Tool (Scottish Government - Place Standard).

Having a breadth of consensus of the factors that people value and consider important and understanding where people feel improvement can be made provides a good foundation from which to explore the further development of community centred approaches to address inequalities in the Hirst area.

Hirst Masterplan Engagement

Engagement has been central to the development of the masterplan. Engagement was carried out from **January to July 2023** through a variety of methodologies, including visioning sessions, design sprints, interviews, workshops, online surveys, drop in events and pop ups.

This included core partners at NCC, Advance Northumberland, and Bernicia Homes, local people and Hirst residents, County Councillors, the local MP for Wansbeck, Ashington Town Council, Northumberland Communities Together, Ashington Town Board, Northumbria Police, NCC departments such as planning, transport and education, and a wide range of representatives from service providers, businesses and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Further detail can be found in the Engagement section within the main Hirst Masterplan report.

200+
local residents
attended pop up
events



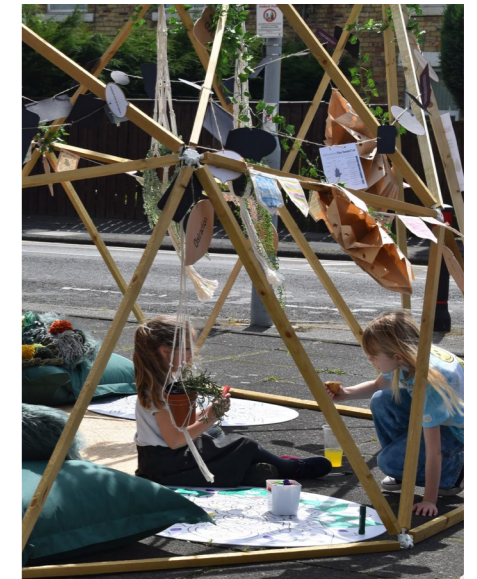
4
workshops



We have spoken
with over
30
young people



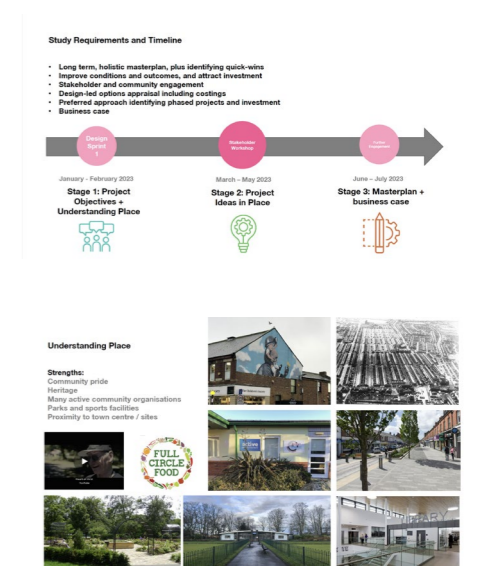
500
flyers and postcards
distributed at local
events



We have engaged
with
28
VSCE organisations,
community groups
and service
providers



5
meetings with local
councillors and town
board



Approach to the Masterplan

This ongoing engagement has shaped the approach to the masterplan and has highlighted the following:

- Build on what is already happening in the Hirst
- The local community want to see change happening in the area quickly
- Actions, even small scale ones, will begin to build trust with the community
- There is a need to 'get the basics right' first
- However, at the same time, the masterplan must be ambitious
- Recognition that this is a long term plan which will require significant investment, including revenue funding
- There should be a clear plan for delivery, and clarity on who is responsible for this

Building on the NCC Inequalities Plan, Place Standard Community Conversations, and the council's ongoing Asset Based Community Development work, the masterplan focuses on 'what is strong, not what is wrong' in the area, whilst recognising that the Hirst faces significant challenges which must be addressed.

The masterplan is the start of the journey, and should be part of an ongoing conversation with the Hirst community and stakeholders. It is therefore intended to be flexible so that it can be adapted based on the outcomes of further community conversations.

Two key themes which have been highlighted throughout the engagement to date are:

Inclusion: Making sure that all individuals have equal access, opportunity and dignity in the use of the built environment.

Community cohesion: A sense of belonging for all communities, with connections and trust between them. Diversity is valued and people of different backgrounds have the opportunity to develop positive relationships with one another.

The Council is a key strategic partner for the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board Inequalities Plan 2022 – 2032. The plan identifies an initial phase of short term culture change enablers (2025 - 2026) which will provide the foundations to achieve long term ambitions based on the evidence based Marmot indicators. These timescales align with the Hirst masterplan proposed phasing, particularly complementing the work in Phase 1. The Inequalities Plan aims to establish key goals that can be delivered at scale over the coming years to level off and start to reduce the gap in healthy life expectancy.

There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the impact of the built environment on the physical and mental health of residents, as well as environmental, social and economic effects. For example, **Homes England** Measuring Social Value, Paper 1: Measuring the placemaking impacts of housing led regeneration (September 2023). The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have identified a set of **Healthy Homes Principles** as a benchmark for what we should be achieving in new homes.

As part of the masterplan team, **Healthy Happy Places** have been instrumental in embedding a health and wellbeing layer within the masterplan.

Informed by this, the masterplan includes:

10 Aims for the Hirst - these have been generated through the engagement process.

Spatial Framework - a 2D plan which maps how the Hirst and its connectivity to the wider area could evolve over time.

Project Ideas Toolkit - a variety of potential approaches which could be taken to the revitalisation of the Hirst. These could be developed further with the community and brought forward when funding is identified.

Opportunities - potential approaches and project opportunities are described in more detail, including how they could address issues raised throughout the engagement and analysis process, and which of the Aims they support. Included in this section are examples of what has worked well elsewhere, illustrated with precedent images. Opportunities are grouped under each of the 10 Aims for the Hirst.

Phasing and Delivery - identifies projects already underway or planned, alongside three phases of project actions for Hirst and the wider area. As part of this, **Phase 1** has been identified as the very first step on the journey. These 'getting the basics right' actions will help to lay strong foundations for the longer term masterplan. This phase also sets in motion a number of community led projects also intended to build capacity and engagement for the future.

Pilot Area - A potential 'Pilot Area' is identified in Phase 2, where a range of project ideas could be considered including the three options included in the report. This area has been identified with the Hirst Project Management Group and a small group of stakeholders. This should be explored further with the community and other stakeholders during Phase 1.











Further detail can be found in the Masterplan sections within the main Hirst Masterplan report (Aims, Spatial Framework, Project Ideas Toolkit, and Opportunities).

Aims for Hirst

The aims below have been generated from the community and stakeholder conversations, and have evolved throughout the masterplan process. **Further detail can be found in the Engagement section within the main Hirst Masterplan report.**

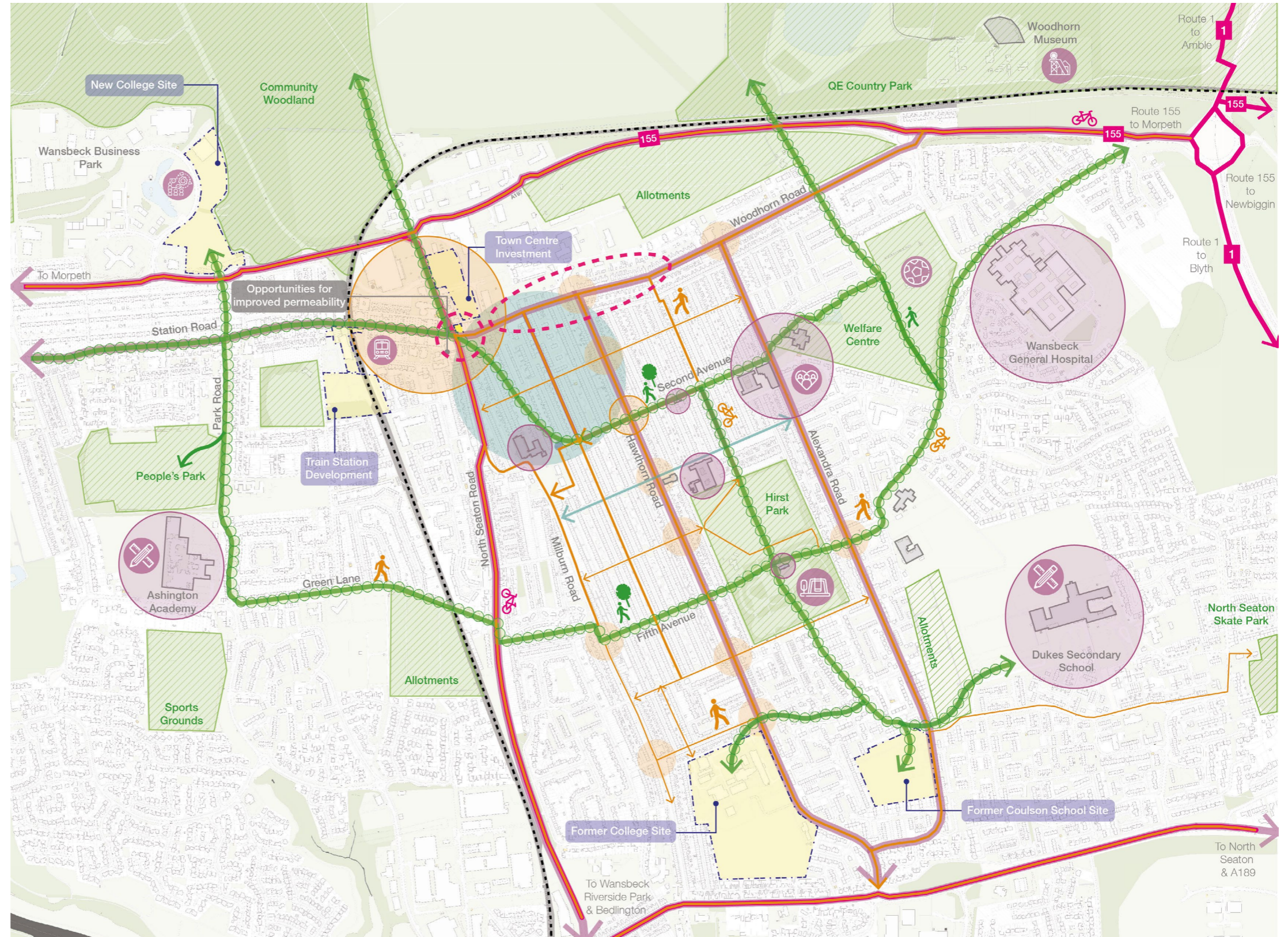
The aims underpin the masterplan, including the Spatial Framework and Project Ideas Toolkit. Within the main masterplan report, the Opportunities section sets out each aim and outlines opportunities within the Hirst to contribute to each aim, along with precedents to show what has worked elsewhere.














Within the Phasing section, the aims are attributed to project actions within the project tables for each phase.

Aim		Aim	
	A community approach where everyone that wants to can contribute and participate in the shaping of places and spaces, and focuses on 'what is strong, not what is wrong'		Creating green spaces that people will want to use and look after
	A place that helps people to have opportunities for good physical health, mental health and addresses loneliness		A place where people can hope, learn and achieve their goals through the right skills training and job opportunities
	Community spaces to meet, be creative, share ideas and skills, and advice and support		A neighbourhood that is safe, well used, welcoming to all, and keeps the spirit and pride of Ashington alive
	A range of good quality and well managed house types and sizes that are suitable for different needs and good for the planet (energy efficient)		Having streets that are clean, having access to internet, being able to get around easily on public transport
	A diverse range of shops and things to do for all ages, and all cultures		Easy to move around with safe, enjoyable travel routes for walking and cycling

Spatial Framework

The **Spatial Framework** sets the overall framework for development and change within the Hirst, identifying key areas for improvement including walking and cycling connections, gateways, focal points, green spaces, and community assets, illustrating how these complement existing and forthcoming investment in the town.



- Key**
-  Cycle routes
 -  Pedestrian routes
 -  Main traffic routes
 -  Key green links
 -  Northumberland Line
 -  Improved bus routes
 -  Green and growing spaces
 -  Potential pilot area
 -  Key community assets
 -  Improved gateways and focal points
 -  Planned / Future opportunity sites
 -  Cycle routes
 -  '155' National cycle route
 -  '1' National cycle route

Project Ideas Toolkit

The **Project Ideas Toolkit** shows a variety of potential approaches which could be taken to the revitalisation of the Hirst, and which would sit within the Spatial Framework. These short, medium and long term project ideas should be developed further with the community and brought forward when funding is identified.

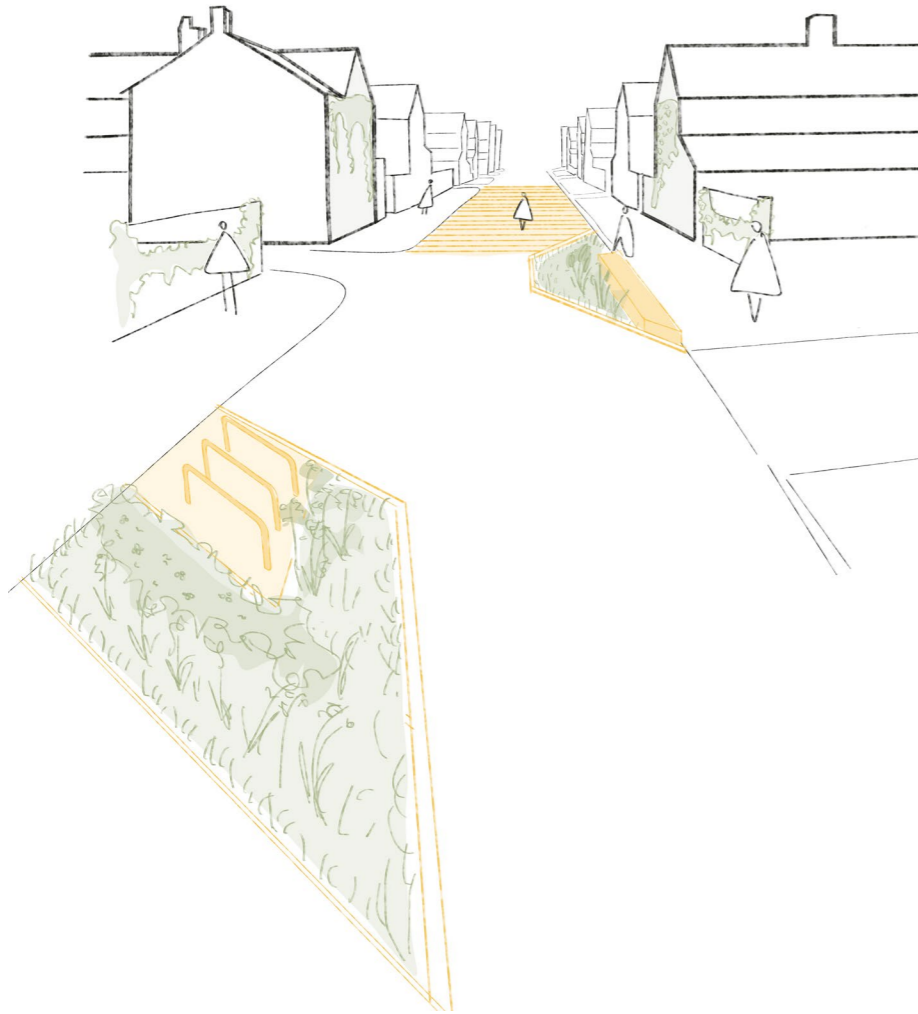


Increase utilisation and develop existing community assets such as Hirst Welfare Centre and Ashington Family Hub.

Improve views and links between Hirst and the town centre, and improve activation of gateway sites.



Green streets, improved for walking and cycling



Squares and event spaces

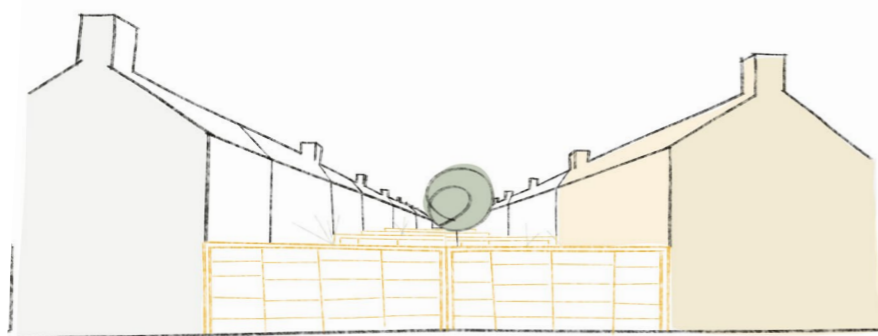


Improve existing gateways - activate vacant buildings, provide seating, planting, lighting and improved links



Page 48

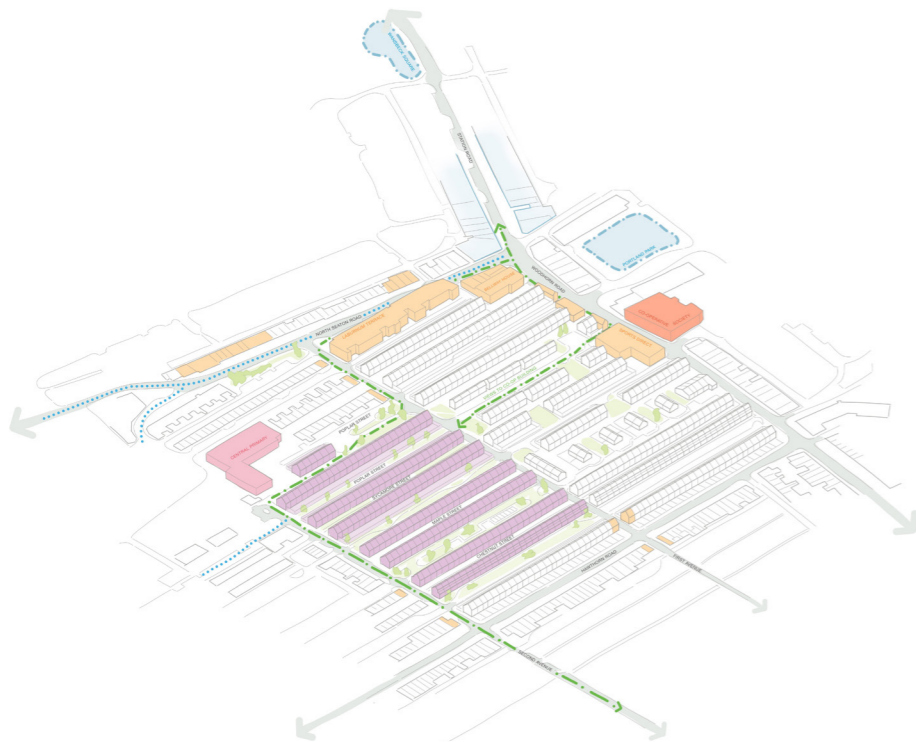
Improve safety, provide larger secure private back gardens, and combine properties to create larger homes



Increase utilisation and develop existing community assets such as Hirst Park, Pavilion, Ashington Cycle Hub and Full Circle Food

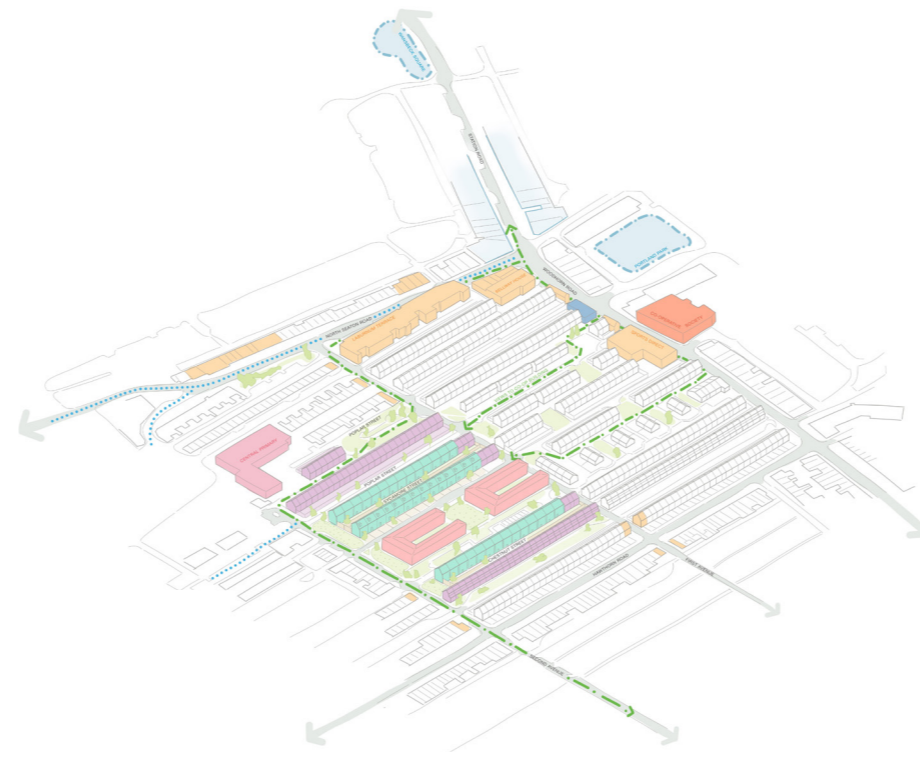
Minimum Option

- Retrofit of properties within the pilot zone
- Repairs and maintenance to boundaries, gardens etc
- Improve back lanes (parking, green spaces, planting, refuse etc)
- Improved routes through north west quadrant
- Pocket Park on First Avenue (to include mounds / natural play, planting, seating, renewed community noticeboard)
- Infrastructure to enable District Heat Network in 2030



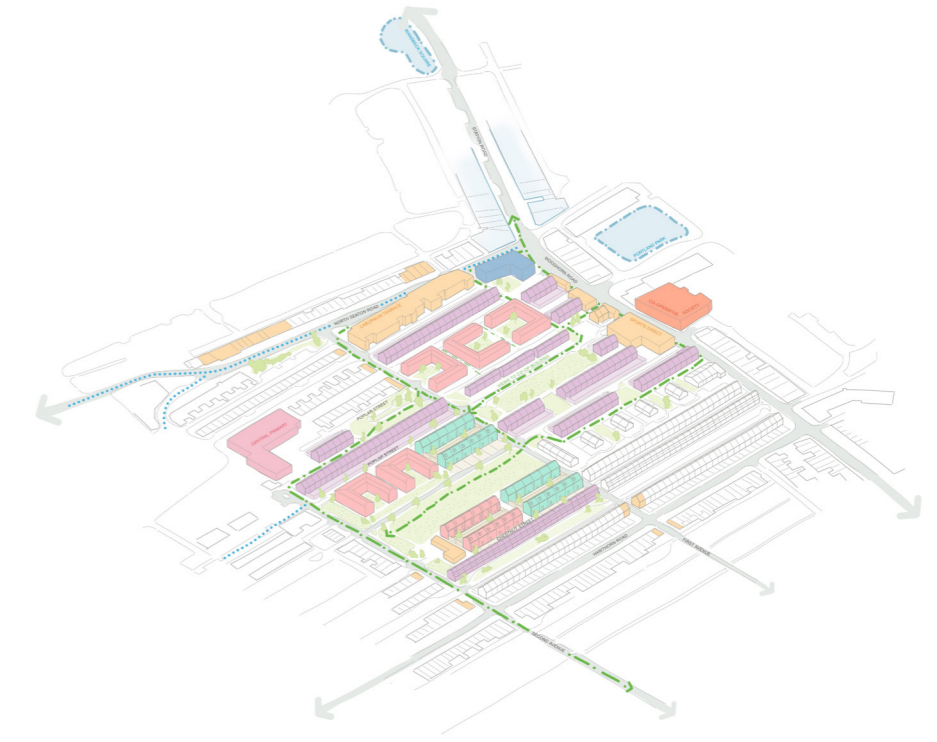
Intermediate Option

- As Minimum Option, plus:
- Reconfigure existing properties into modern, larger homes
- Selective demolition and new build homes
- New central, open public space with play, seating, shelter, trees, planting (created by selective demolition of properties in centre of block)
- New rain gardens and street greening, opening up ends of terraces



Maximum Option

- As Intermediate Option, plus:
- Significant redevelopment of Pilot Area with new homes and spaces enabled through selective demolition of existing properties
- Significant redevelopment of north west quadrant with retrofit, reconfiguration, new homes and spaces.
- Redevelopment of Bellway House including community, food, leisure, residential, greening and public space opportunities, involving the opening up of this block to allow views and access



Projects and Phasing

Overview

The project actions included within the phasing plans and tables are linked to the masterplan aims which were drawn from analysis, engagement and initial ideas / opportunities for the Hirst.

The phasing plans and tables identify projects already underway or planned, alongside three phases of project actions for Hirst and the wider area. As part of this, Phase 1 has been identified as the very first step on the journey. These ‘getting the basics right’ actions will help to lay strong foundations for the longer term masterplan. This phase also sets in motion a number of community led projects also intended to build capacity and engagement for the future.

Further detail, including project tables and phasing plans, can be found in the Phasing section within the main Hirst Masterplan report.

Phase 1: 2023 - 2027

Phase 1 is the foundation for the rest of the masterplan phases. It includes projects and initiatives which are already underway in the Hirst, and the continuation and development of these. The creation of a **Hirst Partnership Board** is key to drive this process forward.

Phase 1 also seeks to address key challenges about the appearance and maintenance of the homes, streets and spaces which have been raised by local people and organisations operating in the area.

A key catalyst for the delivery of Phase 1 will be the creation of a **Hirst Strategic Lead** and supporting team. This will complement the existing community coordinator role in the Hirst to ensure delivery of Phases 1 and 2.

In Phase 1 the **development of the former Coulson School site** is an important catalyst which could facilitate the Pilot Area initial stages of development (Phase 2), enabling homes to be refurbished / redeveloped within the Hirst. It will be important to protect existing residents from widening inequalities by ensuring that housing is affordable and accessible to existing residents.

Phase 2: 2027 - 2035

Building on the community-led projects, capacity building and co-design in Phase 1, the project actions in Phase 2 focus on a series of pilot projects within a focused area. Responding to the brief and community and stakeholder feedback throughout the masterplan process, these projects aim to provide a high quality living environment for residents by improving the quality, size, accessibility and energy efficiency of homes, as well as the safety, accessibility and appearance of streets and spaces.

Phase 2 identifies a potential ‘Pilot Area’ where a range of project ideas could be considered including the three options included in the Pilot Area Options section of the report. This area has been identified with the Hirst Project Management Group and a small group of stakeholders. The location, scale and scope of this should be explored further with the community and other stakeholders during Phase 1.

Alongside the ‘Pilot Area’, projects for the whole study area are proposed as part of Phase 2, including connectivity, infrastructure, community spaces, and community-led shaping the neighbourhood.

By this point, several strategic projects will have been delivered in Ashington, including Wansbeck Square, Portland Park, and the emerging Ashington District Heat Network and Walking and Cycling Improvements. The Phase 2 study area project actions and wider area recommendations have been developed to complement and connect to these planned strategic projects.

Phase 3: 2035+

Phase 3 considers the longer term evolution of the Hirst, whereby the successful projects and strategies implemented in the earlier phases are developed, with the community, across the rest of the Hirst study area. Focusing on initial ‘priority areas’, the proposals - which may include retrofit, reconfiguration, replacement of existing with new homes, and improving streets and spaces – should be adapted to each location / context, and be community led.

Reflecting the community and stakeholder discussions throughout the masterplan process, this aims to provide a high quality, sustainable living environment for residents with a good mix of homes, businesses, local services and activities, well connected to the town centre and surrounding areas. A place which is fit for the future and climate resilient.

Phase 3 must continue an asset based community development approach, forging strong bonds in the community, enabling community led projects and spaces for people to flourish.

Next Steps

The Challenge

Over the last 20 years, Northumberland County Council (NCC), along with other partners, has attempted to address these issues by tackling them as singular problems. However, it is now recognised that none of the issues can be resolved in isolation and the council needs to take a holistic approach if it is to improve the area and the way residents feel about it as a place.

The Opportunity

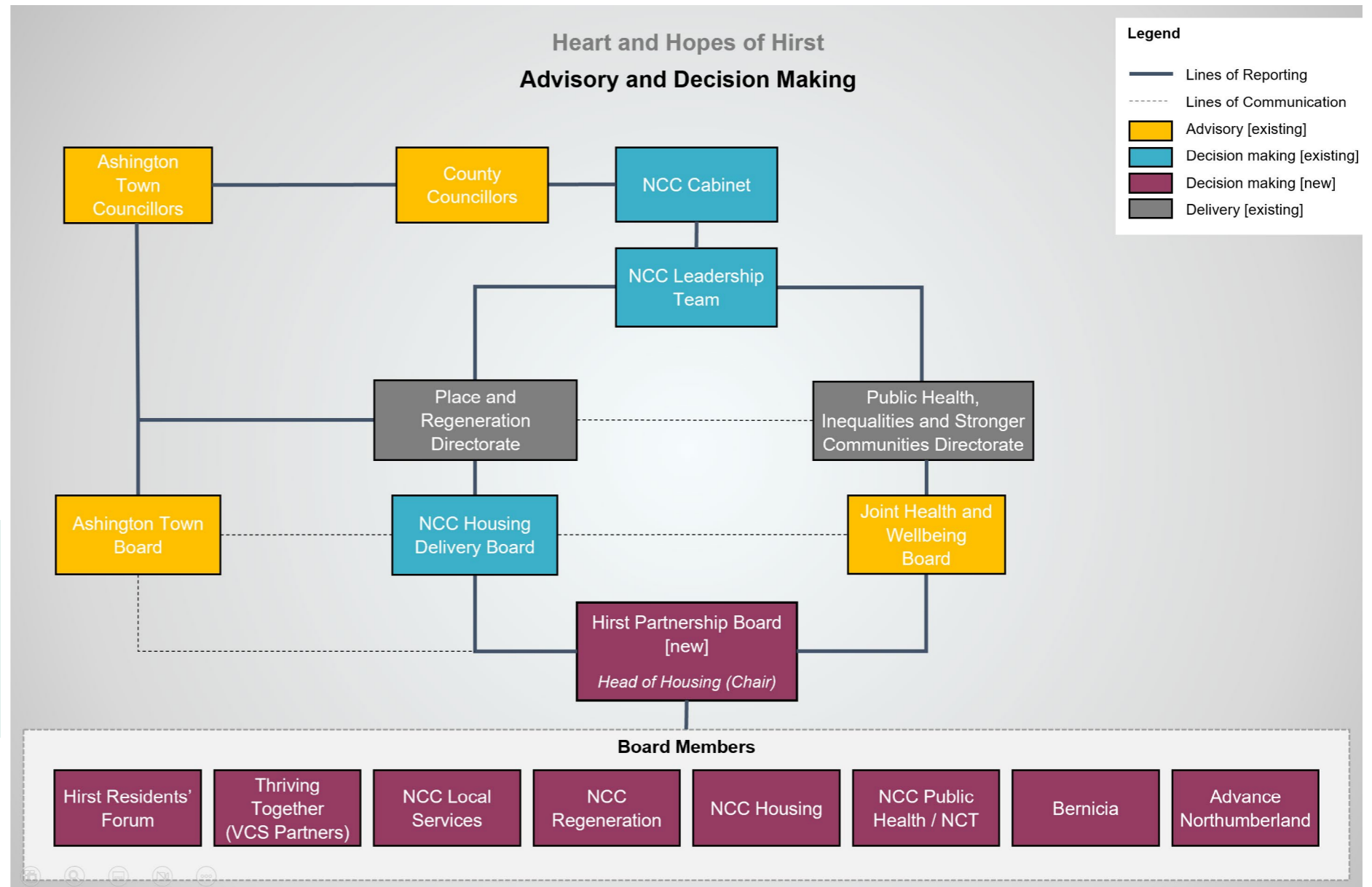
Engagement with local residents, Councillors, businesses, community groups, service providers, and stakeholders, underpins the Hirst Masterplan and provides a clear mandate for action. The masterplan sets out the aims for the Hirst and a series of phased short to long term projects which will achieve these. The Business Case clearly describes the strategic, socio economic, commercial, financial and management benefits of this approach to the Hirst.

Taking this Forward

The support of NCC Leaders will be key in taking the Hirst Masterplan forward and harnessing these benefits for Hirst, Ashington and Northumberland. This will enable a strategic, joined up approach, based on the formation of the Hirst Partnership Board.

The existing NCC governance structure is illustrated in the graphic on this page. Working with the existing advisory, decision making and delivery elements, a new Hirst Partnership Board with decision making powers will be formed consisting of:

Building on the strong track record of working together, NCC, Advance Northumberland and Bernicia will continue to work in partnership for the benefit of the Hirst and will explore opportunities to implement project actions contained within this Masterplan.



Delivery

The **Hirst Partnership Board** will oversee the delivery of Phases 1 and 2 of the Hirst Masterplan, including the Pilot Area within Phase 2.

In terms of immediate next steps, establishing the delivery structure shown in the graphic on this page is key to the successful progression of the Hirst Masterplan.

Project actions detailed in Phase 1 of the masterplan (2023 - 2027) aim to build community capacity, continue community engagement and co-design, and address key challenges with the appearance and maintenance of the homes, streets and spaces which have been raised by local people and organisations operating in the area.

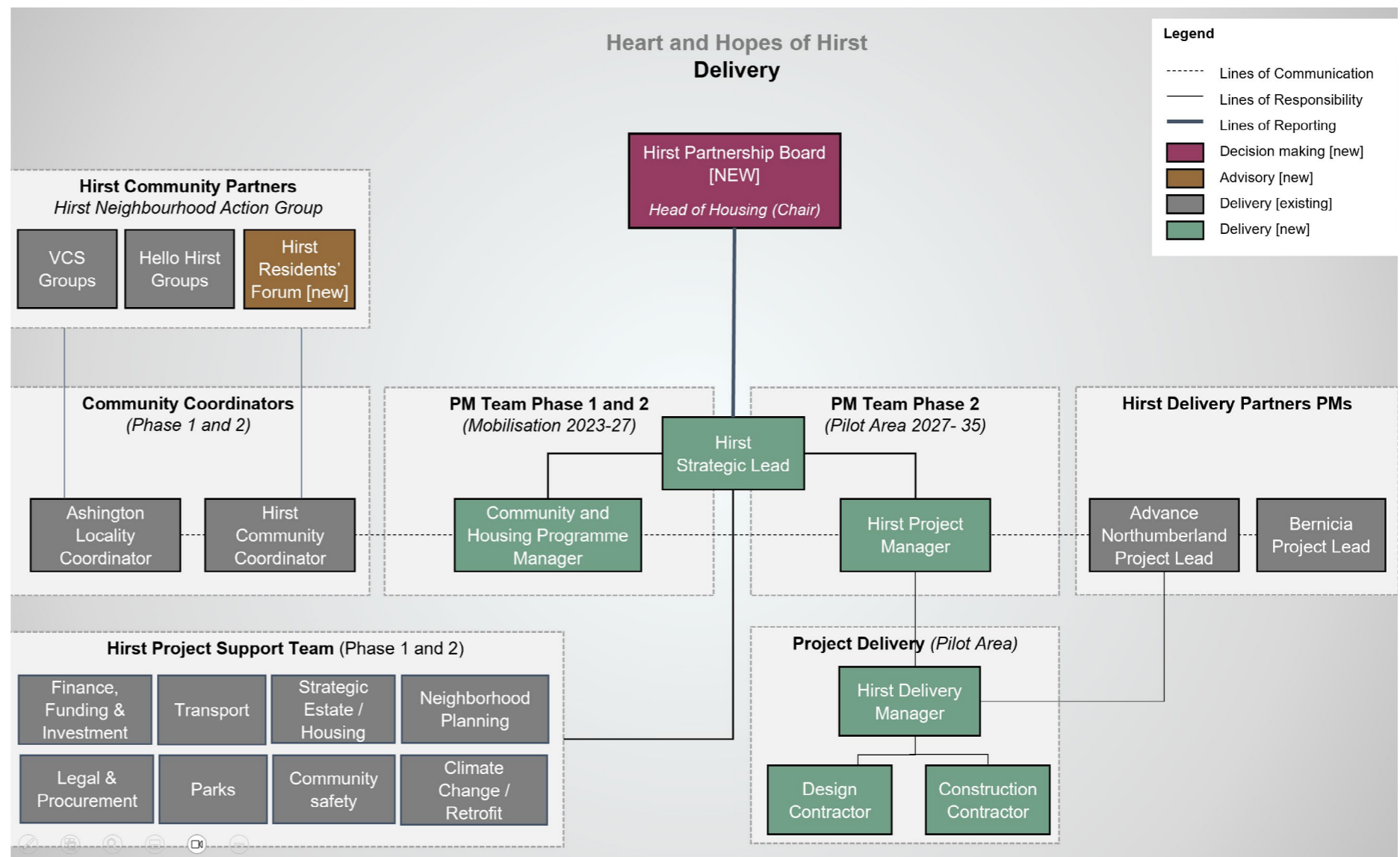
A key catalyst for the delivery of Phase 1 will be the appointment of a new **Hirst Strategic Lead** supported by a new **Community and Housing Programme Manager**.

In Phase 1 the **development of the former Coulson School site** is an important catalyst which could facilitate the Pilot Area initial stages of development (Phase 2), enabling homes to be refurbished / redeveloped within the Hirst. It will be important to protect existing residents from widening inequalities by ensuring that housing is affordable and accessible to existing residents.

Phase 2 (2027 - 2035) focuses on the delivery of the Pilot Area within Hirst, alongside improvements in the wider study area. A new **Hirst Project Manager** role will be created to lead the delivery of this project, supported by a new **Hirst Delivery Manager** role to manage the input of design and construction contractors.

These new roles will work closely with the existing Hirst Community Partners, Community Coordinators, Hirst Delivery Partners and Hirst Project Support Team throughout Phases 1 and 2.

The championing of the Hirst Masterplan by NCC Leaders will ensure that we build on the ongoing activity and strength of the community within the Hirst, the momentum of the masterplan process in bringing these issues and opportunities to the fore, and the imminent investment within Ashington town centre, maximising opportunities for inclusive growth.



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Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference



Hirst Partnership Board

DRAFT Terms of Reference v2

20th March 2024

1. Background.....	3
1.1 Board Responsibilities	3
1.2 Hirst Masterplan Geographical Area.....	4
2. Northumberland County Council (the Lead Authority)	4
2.1 Role of Northumberland County Council.....	4
2.2 Responsibilities of the Lead Council	4
2.3 Northumberland County Council Policy Alignment.....	4
2.4 Advisory Working Group.....	5
2.5 Support and admin arrangements	5
3. Membership	5
3.1 Membership of the Hirst Partnership Board	5
3.2 Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest.....	5

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of

Reference

3.3 Period of Membership	5
3.4 Amendments to Board Membership.....	6
3.5 Attendance of meetings	6
4. Chair and Vice Chair.....	6
4.1 Nomination and election	6
4.2 Term of Office.....	6
4.3 Casting Vote.....	6
4.4 Responsibilities of the Hirst Partnership Board Chair.....	7
5. Committees and Subcommittees.....	7
6. Meetings	7
6.1 Frequency of meetings	7
6.2 Non-member attendance of meetings.....	7
6.3 Meeting Papers	7
6.4 Quorum	8
6.5 Chairing the Meeting	8
6.6 Decision Making	8
7. Engagement with the Community.....	9
Appendix 1 – Hirst Masterplan area map	10
Appendix 2 - Summary of Organisational Representation on the Hirst Partnership Board	12
Revision Log	13

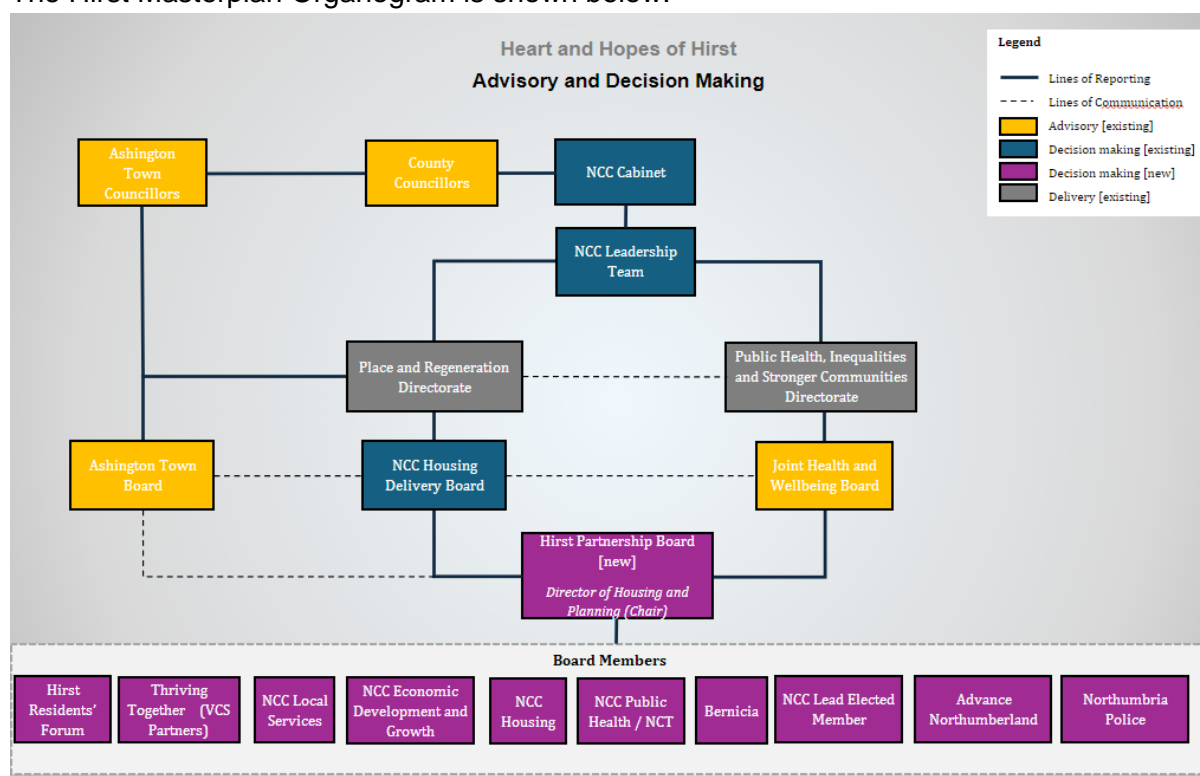
Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

1. Background

The Hirst Partnership Board has been established to oversee and advise on the delivery of the Hirst Masterplan for Ashington. This paper is intended to reflect the **Governance** requirements and to act as **Terms of Reference** for the board. This document should be read alongside the Hirst Partnership Board **Code of Conduct**.

This document will be reviewed, refreshed and signed off annually by the Board, or more frequently, if necessary, to respond to any relevant government funding guidance and the requirements of the projects it is set up to oversee. The governance policy will be updated within one calendar month of a change being required.

The Hirst Masterplan Organogram is shown below:



1.1 Board Responsibilities

- *The Hirst Partnership Board is an advisory board to the lead and accountable body; Northumberland County Council*
- *Advising on a clear programme of interventions as outlined in the Hirst Masterplan*
- *Ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making at each phase of development*
- *Actively engaging deliberately and constructively with residents and the private, public and voluntary sectors, providing updates and information on future plans.*
- *Ensuring equality, inclusion and diversity in all its engagement with local communities and organisations*

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of

Reference

- *Ensuring that housing decision making strategies are developed with the intention of providing improved housing options for the benefit of existing Hirst residents*
- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life ([the Nolan Principles](#))*
- *Keeping records of meetings and advice given*

1.2 Hirst Masterplan Geographical Area

See area map and how it was developed during the development of the Masterplan in Appendix 1. Map will be used as a guide.

2. Northumberland County Council (the Lead Authority)

2.1 Role of Northumberland County Council

The Hirst Partnership Board will act in an advisory capacity to the Lead Council (Northumberland County Council)

2.2 Responsibilities of the Lead Council

- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)*
- *Developing a delivery team, delivery arrangements and agreements*
- *The development of detailed business cases*
- *Undertaking any required Health Impact Assessments, Carbon Impact Assessments or Public Sector Equalities Duties*
- *Acquisition, management and coordination of funding*
- *Monitoring and evaluating the delivery of individual Master Plan projects*

2.3 Northumberland County Council Policy Alignment

The Hirst Partnership Board will be aligned with the governance standards and policies of Northumberland County Council, including those around whistle blowing, conflicts of interest, complaints and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- *Complaints Policy*

Complaints received from stakeholders and members of the public will be considered and responded to, in line with the Northumberland County Council's complaints procedure.

- *Whistleblowing*

Where it is alleged that the Board is acting in breach of the law or failing to safeguard public funds the whistleblowing procedure of Northumberland County Council will be applied.

- *Data Protection*

To ensure the highest standards when collecting and using personal information the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy and procedure of Northumberland County Council will be applied in all cases.

- *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

The Board is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its work. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out, as appropriate, when developing plans, policies and projects.

- *Freedom of Information (FOI)*

All Freedom of Information requests will be dealt with in accordance with the Lead Council's policy and procedure.

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

- *Gifts and hospitality*

A register of gifts and/or hospitality provided to individual Hirst Partnership Board members, or the Hirst Partnership Board will be maintained by the Lead Council. Board members have a responsibility for reporting gifts or hospitality received whilst delivering their role so that they can be recorded on the register held by the council.

2.4 Advisory Working Group

The Hirst Partnership Board will have an officer working group who will attend from Northumberland County Council and who will provide the capacity to develop and deliver the Hirst Masterplan.

2.5 Support and admin arrangements

Support will be provided to The Hirst Partnership Board by the Lead Authority, Northumberland County Council.

As the Accountable Body, it will provide a secretariat function which will involve organising meetings, preparing and circulating agendas and producing minutes.

Agendas and accompanying reports shall be published at least 5 clear working days in advance of a meeting and sent to all members of the Board.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership of the Hirst Partnership Board

Membership of the Partnership Board has been developed by the accountable body, Northumberland County Council, in agreement with partners Advance Northumberland and Bernicia.

A full list of those organisations and departments represented on the Board are listed in Appendix 2.

Membership is by invitation only and may be changed by the accountable body at any time.

3.2 Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

Conduct of the board shall be by the usual conventions of public authorities. All members must adhere to the Hirst Partnership Board Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles of public life.

Conflicts of interest may arise where an individual's personal, family, business or organisations interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the group or meeting that Board members are attending. All Members will declare interests as set out in the Hirst Partnership Board Code of Conduct.

3.3 Period of Membership

Membership of the Board will be for an initial two-year period from 1 February 2024.

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

Members are eligible for reappointment in subsequent terms.

All members of the Board will be appointed or re-appointed at the next meeting after two years and subsequently every one year.

3.4 Amendments to Board Membership

The accountable body may propose amendments to board membership at any time

- to ensure that representation is maintained in line with Master Plan objectives.
- to best support the evolving nature of the Hirst Master Plan delivery.
- The decision to appoint or alter the membership of the Board rests with the Chief Executive of the Lead Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Lead Council.

3.5 Attendance of meetings

Only named Board Members may attend the meetings as a 'board member' unless a replacement is previously agreed in writing with the accountable body's board administrator and chair.

Board members may not attend a board meeting, nor vote on board matters unless they have first completed and submitted a declaration of interest form.

The accountable body may remove a board member who is deemed not to have declared a registrable interest.

External Advisors from Northumberland County Council, Advance Northumberland, Bernicia and elsewhere as required will be invited to meetings but will not have a vote.

4. Chair and Vice Chair

4.1 Nomination and election

The Lead authority will nominate a chair for the Hirst Partnership Board from the lead authority, unless otherwise agreed, this will be the Director of Housing and Planning.

The board will nominate and elect two vice chairs from its board membership: one from the public sector and one who is not from the public sector.

4.2 Term of Office

All posts will be reviewed every two years or at the request of the post holder.

A post holder is eligible for re-election in subsequent terms.

4.3 Casting Vote

The Chair has a casting vote in the instance of a hung vote of the board.

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

If the Chair of the meeting has a conflict of interest in a matter to be voted on in the meeting, the vice chair(s) in attendance will take on the role of determining the casting vote.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Hirst Partnership Board Chair

- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)*
- *Leading the Board in achieving its objectives, maintaining an overview of activity, and championing and supporting partnership working*
- *Ensuring that advisory decisions are made by the Board in accordance with good governance principles*

5. Committees and Subcommittees

The Hirst Partnership Board may establish committees and subcommittees in the course of its work.

Each committee and subcommittee must adhere to all the same principles as the main board. All committees and subcommittees must report in full to the main board at its next meeting.

6. Meetings

6.1 Frequency of meetings

The Board shall meet at least quarterly

A forward programme of scheduled meetings will be established which will be supplemented, as necessary, with meetings convened with the agreement of the Chair of the Board.

An extraordinary meeting can be called at no less than 14 days' notice if a minimum of five members wish to do so.

6.2 Non-member attendance of meetings

In consultation with the chair, members of the Board may nominate substitutes if they are not able to attend a meeting.

Board members may invite colleagues to Board meetings to observe and provide technical support, as required. Colleagues and observers will not have voting rights.

Officers, representatives and external consultants may be required to attend to provide updates on projects but will not have a vote.

6.3 Meeting Papers

All agendas, minutes, and supporting documentation will be circulated, electronically, to Board members 5 days before a meeting.

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

6.4 Quorum

The quorum for any meeting of the Board shall be 50% of its membership or six members, whichever is the greatest, including the Chair.

The quorum must include at least one board member representative from the accountable body.

6.5 Chairing the Meeting

Meetings will be chaired by the accountable body nominated Chair.

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting will be chaired by one of the two Vice Chairs, on rotation.

In the absence of a Vice Chair, members of the meeting will elect a meeting chair from their number.

6.6 Decision Making

The Hirst Partnership Board acts in an advisory capacity to Northumberland County Council which is the lead and accountable body for the Hirst Masterplan.

Within the context of determining this advice to the Accountable Body (NCC), the Board members may from time to time be called upon to make decisions.

Decisions may be made by consensus.

Where a consensus view cannot be reached, decisions will be made on a 'one member, one vote' premise. Voting shall be by a show of hands of Board members and shall be by simple majority.

All board members will be required to adhere to the Code of Conduct Policy including its Conflict-of-Interest clauses whilst voting.

All decisions, whether consensus or voted, will be minuted.

If a member is unable to attend the meeting, they may send a named representative by prior agreement with the chair, who may vote in their stead.

In the situation of a hung vote, the chair of the meeting will have a casting vote.

If the chair has a declared interest in the vote, then the vice chair(s) in attendance will take on the role of determining the casting vote.

The Board may take decisions offline as appropriate, as agreed by the chair of the Board.

The rulings of the Chair shall be final.

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

7. Engagement with the Community

It is intended that the broad membership of the Hirst Partnership Board will affect strong engagement with the business, community and public sectors of the Hirst area and its wider stakeholders.

Several successful pre-existing and emerging partnerships exist in the town. It is intended that the Hirst Partnership Board will work in close partnership with existing networks through its diverse board membership. However, it will be required on occasion to consult or engage more widely with the community. This will be delivered by the officer working group supporting the Hirst Partnership Board.

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

Appendix 1 – Hirst Masterplan area map

The original masterplan brief defined a study boundary encompassing the main area of terraced streets from Woodhorn Road in the north to Seventh Avenue in the south and stretching from North Seaton Road / Milburn Road in the west to Alexandra Road in the east. This area included the majority of Advance Northumberland and some Bernicia homes, as well as long-term vacant properties. The study area also includes private landlord and owner-occupied homes. Stakeholders highlighted that the area containing Percy Street, Queen Street and George Street is also in need of appraisal; therefore, this area has also been included within the study area boundary. During the engagement process with local people and stakeholders, the importance of key assets such as Hirst Park and Hirst Welfare Centre emerged, and these areas have also been included in the study area. Although the red line shown on the plan opposite is the focus of the study, the masterplan considers areas beyond the red line including connections to the town centre, education, employment, and other community assets.

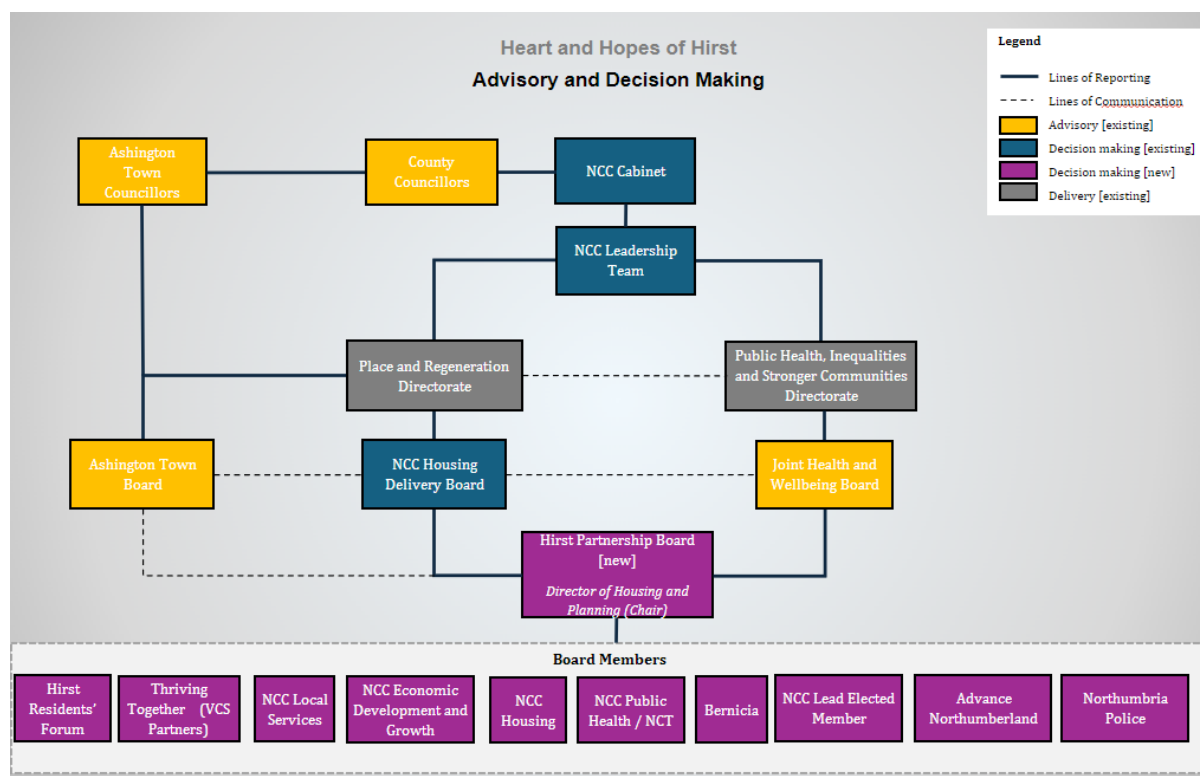
The board acknowledge that there are different views locally on what constitutes the Hirst and exactly where the boundaries are. For the purposes of the Master Plan delivery, 'Hirst' refers to the Hirst masterplan study area shown on the plan below.



Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 - Summary of Organisational Representation on the Hirst Partnership Board



	Organisation	Team / Position
1	Northumberland County Council	Director of Housing and Planning (Chair)
2	Bernicia	Chief Executive
3	Advance Northumberland	Chief Executive
4	Hirst Residents Forum	Chair
5	Thriving Together (VCS Partnership)	Chief Executive
6	Northumberland County Council	Local Services
7	Northumberland County Council	Economic Development and Growth
8	Northumberland County Council	Public Health
9	Northumberland County Council	Housing
10	Northumberland County Council	Lead Member
11	Northumbria Police	Senior Officer

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

Revision Log

Draft	Date	Reason	Author
1	9 th January 2024	First draft for team review	AL
2	20 th March 2024	Amends following SLT, amend quorum to 50% or six members and add NCC Lead Member and Northumbria Police to board membership	AL
3			

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Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

Purpose

The Hirst Partnership Board has been established to oversee the delivery of the Hirst Master Plan. This paper is intended to reflect the **conduct** requirements for board members. This document should be read alongside the **Hirst Partnership Board Terms of Reference and Governance Policy**.

The Board is Responsible for:

- *The Hirst Partnership Board is an advisory board to the lead and accountable body; Northumberland County Council*
- *Advising on a clear programme of interventions as outlined in the Hirst Masterplan*
- *Ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making at each phase of development*
- *Actively engaging deliberately and constructively with residents and the private, public and voluntary sectors, providing updates and information on future plans.*
- *Ensuring equality, inclusion and diversity in all its engagement with local communities and organisations*
- *Ensuring that housing decision making strategies are developed with the intention of providing improved housing options for the benefit of existing Hirst residents*
- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life ([the Nolan Principles](#))*
- *Keeping records of meetings and advice given*

This policy is derived from the Northumberland County Council policy that took effect from 4 July 2012 setting out the conduct that is expected of elected and co-opted members of the Council when they are acting in that capacity.

The same principles of conduct apply to those acting on behalf of or as members of the Hirst Partnership Board.

The Hirst Partnership Board has adopted this code setting out the expected behaviours required of its Board Members, acknowledging that they each have a responsibility to represent the ambition of the Hirst Masterplan for the town and work constructively with the Hirst Masterplan Delivery Team and partner organisations to develop and deliver the Hirst Masterplan.

The code applies whenever a board member

- a) conduct the business of the Hirst Partnership Board or
- b) act, claim to act or give the impression you are acting as a representative of the Hirst Partnership Board.

'Co-opted member' means any person who is a member of any committee or sub-committee or working group of the Hirst Partnership Board-

The code is intended to be consistent with Nolan's "Seven Principles of Public Life" and should be read in the light of those principles, namely that Board Members will act with selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. Those principles are set out in full at Appendix 1 for information.

Part 1 - General Conduct

1. You must treat others with respect, including Council officers, elected members, members of the public and other Hirst Partnership Board Members.

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

2. You must not bully any person and you must not intimidate or improperly influence, or attempt to intimidate or improperly influence, any person who is involved in any complaint about any alleged breach of this code of conduct.
3. You must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of anyone who works for or on behalf of the Council or the Hirst Partnership Board.
4. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing the Council, or your office as a member of the Board, into disrepute.
5. You must not use or attempt to use your position as a member of the Hirst Partnership Board improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person any advantage or disadvantage.
6. You must comply with any Protocol adopted by the Council or the Hirst Partnership Board which seeks to regulate the conduct of its members or co-opted members and which the Council has specifically declared should fall within the provisions of this code of conduct.
7. When using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Council, you must act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements (as set out in such protocol as it may adopt from time to time for these purposes) and must ensure they are not used for party political purposes.
8. You must not prevent, or attempt to prevent, another person from gaining access to information to which they are entitled by law.
9. You must not disclose information which is given to you in confidence, or information which you believe or ought reasonably to be aware is of a confidential nature, unless:
 - a. You have the consent of a person authorised to give it; or
 - b. You are required by law to do so; or
 - c. The disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice, provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - d. The disclosure is reasonable and in the public interest and made in good faith.
10. Where you have been involved in making any decision by the Hirst Partnership Board which is subsequently subject to scrutiny by an overview and scrutiny committee, you must not take part in that scrutiny process except to the extent you may be invited by the committee to give evidence to, or otherwise assist, it. In this paragraph, 'scrutiny' means the formal examination of a policy or decision previously approved or taken by or on behalf of the Hirst Partnership Board in order to reach a view as to its merits or effectiveness.

Part 2 - Registration of interests

11. You must register in the Council's Register of Hirst Partnership Board Member Interests, information about your registerable personal interests. In this code of conduct 'your registerable personal interests' means:
 - a. any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest as set out in Appendix 2; or
 - b. any other interest held by you as set out in Appendix 3.

You must register information about your registerable personal interests by giving written notice to the Monitoring Officer, who maintains the Register, within 28 days of:

- your appointment as a member of the Hirst Partnership Board; and

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

- any change taking place in your registerable personal interests.
12. Where you think that disclosure of the details of any of your registerable personal interests could lead to you, or a person connected with you, being subject to violence or intimidation, the Monitoring Officer may at your request make a note on the Register that you have a personal interest, details of which are withheld.

Part 3 – Non-registerable interests

13. You will have a non-registerable personal interest when you attend a meeting of the Hirst Partnership Board, or one of their committees or subcommittees, and you are, or ought reasonably to be, aware that a decision in relation to an item of business which is to be transacted might reasonably be regarded as affecting your wellbeing or financial position, or the wellbeing or financial position of a person described in paragraph 14 to a greater extent than most inhabitants of the area affected by the decision.
14. The persons referred to in paragraph 13 are:
- a. a member of your family;
 - b. any person with whom you have a close association;
 - c. in relation to persons described in (a) and (b), their employer, any firm in which they are a partner, or company of which they are a director or shareholder.

(Note:

- a. “A member of your family” means: your partner (i.e. your spouse, civil partner or anyone with whom you live in a similar capacity); your parent or parent-in-law; any child, stepchild or sibling of you or your partner; your grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, nephew or niece; and the partners of any of those people.
 - b. You have a “close association” with someone if your relationship is such that a reasonable member of the public might think you would be prepared to favour or disadvantage that person when deciding a matter which affects them).
15. When you attend a meeting of the Hirst Partnership Board, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are aware that you have a non-registerable interest in an item of business (as defined in paragraph 13) you must disclose that interest to the meeting before consideration of that item begins or (if later) when you become aware of the interest.

Part 4 - Non-Participation in Hirst Partnership Board business

16. When you attend a meeting of the Hirst Partnership Board, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are aware that the criteria set out in paragraph 17 are satisfied in relation to any matter to be considered, or being considered at that meeting, you must:
- a. Declare that fact to the meeting;
 - b. Not participate (or further participate) in any discussion of the matter at the meeting; and
 - c. Not participate in any vote (or further vote) taken on the matter at the meeting;
 - d. Leave the meeting whilst the matter is being discussed.
17. The criteria for the purposes of paragraph 16 are that:

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

- a. You have a registerable or non-registerable personal interest in the matter which is such that a member of the public knowing the relevant 4 facts would reasonably think it so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest; and either
 - b. The matter will affect the financial position of yourself or one of the persons or bodies referred to in paragraph 14 or in any of your register entries; or
 - c. The matter concerns a request for any permission, licence, consent or registration sought by yourself or any of the persons referred to in paragraph 14 or in any of your register entries.
18. If a Hirst Partnership Board function can be discharged by you as a member acting alone and you are aware you have a registerable or non-registerable personal interest in any matter to be dealt with by in that way which meets the criteria set out in paragraph 17, you shall not deal with that matter in any way (except to enable it to be dealt with by someone else).

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

Appendix 1 to Code of Conduct

Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

Appendix 2 to Code of Conduct

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (as defined by Regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 30 Localism Act 2011)

Note:

The following interests are Disclosable Pecuniary Interests if they are an interest of either (a) **yourself**, or (b) **your spouse or civil partner**, or (c) **a person with whom you are living as husband and wife**, or (d) **a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners** (all of whom are referred to as “relevant persons”):

Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

Sponsorship

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a member, or towards your 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 which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) 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

Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the Council.

Licences

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 your knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the Council; and (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.

Securities

Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where;

1. that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council; and
2. either
 - a. the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - b. 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 relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Note: In the above descriptions, the following words have the following meanings

“**body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest**” means a firm in which the relevant person is a partner or a body corporate of which the relevant person is a director, or in the securities of which the relevant person has a beneficial interest;

“b” includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society;

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

“**land**” excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for the relevant person (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income;

“**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.

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

Appendix 3 to Code of Conduct

Other Registerable Personal Interests

The other interests which you must register under paragraph 11(b) of the code are:

1. Any body of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management) to which you are appointed or nominated;
2. Any body which
 - a. exercises functions of a public nature or
 - b. has charitable purposes or
 - c. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management);
3. Any person from whom you have received within the previous three years a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of more than £50 which is attributable to your position as an elected or co-opted member of the Council.

Note: These mean only your interests and not those of your spouse or civil partner.

Hirst Partnership Board - Code of Conduct

Revisions

Draft	Date	Reason	Author
1	9 th January 2024	First draft for team review	AL
2			
3			



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

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

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

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

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

2. Purpose of report

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

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

3.2 Berwick Culture and Creative Zone

- a) Accept capital grant funding of £0.330 million for the Berwick Culture and Creative Zone (CCZ) and approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include the capital grant funding in 2024-25.
- b) Note the reallocation of grant funding from revenue to capital of £0.110 million and approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include the capital grant funding in 2025-26.
- c) Approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reprofile £0.100 for the CCZ project from 2024-25 to 2025-26.

3.3 Northumberland Playzones

- a) Note the 75% grant contribution of £1.396 million from the Football Foundation for the 6 sites within Portfolio 1 and approve the amendment to the capital programme to include the grant funding in 2024-25.
- b) Note the Section 106 funding of £0.284 million and approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include the funding in 2024-25.
- c) Note the other external funding of £0.050 million detailed in the report and approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to including the funding in 2024-25.
- d) Note the £0.020 million contribution from Cllr Stewart and Cllr Scott and approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.020 million from the Member's Local Improvement Schemes budget to the Northumberland Playzones Project in 2024-25 .
- e) Approve the proposed spend of £0.111 million which will be funded using the existing Northumberland Playzones project in the Capital Programme, which has a current budget of £0.300 million in 2024-25.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The date this report was added to the forward plan was 27 February 2024.

5. Background

- 5.1 This paper summarises reports considered by the Officer Capital Strategy Group on the allocation of funding within the Medium-Term Financial Plan to specific projects. The amendments to the Programme were considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group (CSG) on 27 February 2024.

Summary of New Capital Proposals Considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group on 27 February 2024

6. Berwick Culture and Creative Zone

- 6.1 CSG was asked to consider a capital spend of £0.440 million for the Berwick Culture and Creative Zone. This spend is externally funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA)
- 6.2 In October 2021, Cabinet welcomed the NTCA intent to co-develop a Culture and Creative Zone (CCZ) pilot within each of the constituent local authority areas and agreed that the initial pilot Zone for the County should focus on the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed. In October 2022 Cabinet agreed to establish the Berwick Culture and Creative Zone Project (CCZ) in the Capital Programme at a cost of £0.100 million and accept a grant from NTCA of £0.100 million into the Council's budget to fully cover this project cost.
- 6.3 Create Berwick is one of three pilot projects forming the Culture and Creative Zone and funded by North of Tyne Combined Authority. The Council secured £1.500 million over 5 years until 2026-27 to invest in creative led regeneration of Berwick, helping creative, cultural and community led organisations to innovate and strengthen the local economy. Taking inspiration from Berwick's rich coastal and borderlands

heritage, traditions and landscapes the CCZ will help create new contemporary cultural experiences and support a thriving creative businesses.

- 6.4 The CCZ for Berwick is an opportunity to co-ordinate and scale up the town’s many cultural and creative assets and activities, creating significant impact and meaningful growth of the sector. It also offers the opportunity to build on and amplify the impacts of planned strategic investments in the town, including the developments of The Maltings Theatre, Cinema and Arts Centre and Berwick Barracks.
- 6.5 Create Berwick will deliver:
- a) A focal point for strategic co-ordination and collaboration, bringing together the wide range of existing and planned cultural and creative projects and activities.
 - b) Increased access to existing and planned creative and cultural activities and support.
 - c) Improved visibility of Berwick’s cultural and creative sector and offer.
 - d) A 2027 Cultural Vision for Berwick, delivering transformational change.
- 6.6 The first year of the project was largely developmental, with a focus on establishing awareness and building a strong foundation for the CCZ. Create Berwick is being delivered through partnerships to deliver the following Work Programmes:
- a) Skills & Enterprise
 - b) Profile
 - c) Engaging Communities
 - d) Places & Spaces

The capital and revenue funding profile for the initiative is detailed in the table below. As part of this, an additional capital provision of £0.330 million and a reallocation of revenue funding of £0.110 million to support the provision of the Places and Spaces programme has been agreed by the North of Tyne Combined Authority, which alongside the £0.100 million originally secured results in total capital funding of £0.540 million. This funding will bring vacant buildings into use for creatives, artists, and others thereby building initial momentum behind collaborative workspaces in the town. Costs would include improvement and refurbishment works to make meanwhile spaces attractive and safe, and purchase of small items of equipment (e.g., digital displays, lighting).

	TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE BY FUNDING SOURCE					
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	Total
	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million
NTCA UKSPF Capital	-	-	0.330	-	-	0.330
NTCA Investment Fund Capital	-	-	-	0.210	-	0.210
NTCA UKSPF Revenue	-	-	-	-	-	-

	TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE BY FUNDING SOURCE					
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	Total
NTCA Investment Fund Revenue	0.006	0.127	0.454	0.391	0.312	1.290
Total NTCA	0.006	0.127	0.784	0.601	0.312	1.830
NCC Capital	-	-	-	-	-	-
NCC Revenue	0.001	0.009	0.041	0.036	0.029	0.116
Total Match	0.001	0.009	0.041	0.036	0.029	0.116
Total Capital	-	-	0.330	0.210	-	0.540
Total Revenue	0.007	0.136	0.495	0.427	0.341	1.406
Project Total	0.007	0.136	0.825	0.637	0.341	1.946

6.7 The development and delivery of the CCZ is overseen by a CCZ Project Manager, who is responsible for leading the development of CCZ programmes.

7. Northumberland Playzones

7.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £1.861 million for the creation of 8 Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) in Northumberland. £1.446 million will be funded externally (either from the Football Foundation or other sources), £0.284 million will be funded from S.106 contributions and the remaining £0.131 million will be funded from existing budgets in the Capital Programme.

7.2 Northumberland is part of a national programme to refurbish or create new facilities to provide opportunities for people in Low Social Economic Groups access to sport and physical activity.

7.3 There is 75% funding available for each MUGA from The Football Foundation and the other 25% is a minimum partnership funding contribution agreed by the Council towards the total capital cost of each individual site.

7.4 Across Northumberland 16 sites were selected where they fit the profile of the programme with the intention for each site to be led and managed by community organisations rather than The Council, where possible. Sites were allocated into portfolios based on ability to progress in terms of site identification, lead organisation and match funding availability.

7.5 Community Engagement has been conducted on all portfolio 1 and 2 sites to determine the most appropriate locations. The response to Community Engagement identified football, fitness, basketball and netball as key sports to be included.

7.6 The Council was invited as part of a select few to apply for the funding in advance of the Programme opening nationally and formal Offer Letters for the 75% funding for 6 sites have been received from The Football Foundation and were accepted by The Council in July 2023.

7.7 The Council's ambition is to be one of the fore runners nationally for which the Council needs to ensure that all conditions have been met. Planning permission, compliance with NCC Health and Safety and Procurement are being finalised. There are no anticipated issues and conditions are expected to be met.

- 7.8 The Football Foundation want to progress the Northumberland sites at the next available opportunity. The 16 sites are split into 3 Portfolios. Portfolio 1 includes the 6 sites that have received formal Letter Offers.
- 7.9 Sites with formal offer letters are Alnwick, Amble, Hirst (Ashington), Newbiggin, West Wylam and West Lea (Bedlington). The budget in the offer letter is based on site surveys and designs, the final confirmed costs are still outstanding. Work is anticipated to commence in April 2024.
- 7.10 The sites at Cleasewell Hill (Choppington) and Hexham are included in Portfolio 1 but the final offer letter is outstanding. It is anticipated that work will commence in July 2024 on these sites.
- 7.11 Portfolio 2 is made up of the sites at Berwick, Cramlington, Blyth, Haltwhistle and Lynemouth. These sites do not have indicative costs at present. Once site surveys and forecasts have been finalised by the Football Foundation an additional CSG report will be submitted.
- 7.12 Portfolio 3 is made up of the sites at Wooler, Seaton Valley and East Bedlington. These sites do not have indicative costs at present. Once site surveys and forecasts have been finalised by the Football Foundation an additional CSG report will be submitted.
- 7.13 The key output of this project is providing exciting, modern, and attractive facilities which will be embedded in some of Northumberland's most deprived areas. The Programme will:
- a) address the Inequalities Plan by increasing access to facilities;
 - b) help residents to become more physically active;
 - c) it will improve community cohesion and help address some anti-social behaviours;
 - d) it will refurbish run down and tired facilities;
 - e) empower local communities who will run and manage the site;
 - f) allow the Council to take advantage of this unique opportunity to access 75% funding towards capital development; and,
 - g) put Northumberland on the map nationally as a leading player in this programme with more Playzone sites planned than any other.
- 7.14 The capital spend for Portfolio 1 is set out in the table below, all of the below spend will occur in 2024-25:

Site	Total cost £ million	75% Football Foundation funding £ million	25% Match funding required £ million
Portfolio 1 – Phase 1			
Alnwick	0.172	0.129	0.043
Amble	0.315	0.236	0.079
Newbiggin	0.241	0.181	0.060
Hirst	0.203	0.152	0.051

Site	Total cost £ million	75% Football Foundation funding £ million	25% Match funding required £ million
West Lea	0.272	0.204	0.068
West Wylam	0.211	0.159	0.052
Portfolio 1 phase 1	1.414	1.061	0.353
Portfolio 1 – Phase 2			
Hexham	0.247	0.185	0.062
Choppington	0.200	0.150	0.050
Portfolio 1 phase 2	0.447	0.335	0.112
Total	1.861	1.396	0.465

7.15 The funding of the £0.465 million match contribution is shown in the table below:

Site	Section 106 £ million	Playzone funding agreed by Cabinet £ million	Member contributions £ million	Other external funding £ million	Total £ million
Portfolio 1 – Phase 1					
Alnwick	0.043	-	-	-	0.043
Amble	0.075	0.004	-	-	0.079
Newbiggin	0.025	0.035	-	-	0.060
Hirst	0.015	0.036	-	-	0.051
West Lea	0.064	0.004	-	-	0.068
West Wylam	-	0.002	0.020	0.030	0.052
Portfolio 1 phase 1	0.222	0.081	0.020	0.030	0.353
Portfolio 1 – Phase 2					
Hexham	0.062	-	-	-	0.062
Choppington	-	0.030	-	0.020	0.050
Portfolio 1 Phase 2	0.062	0.030	-	0.020	0.112
Total	0.284	0.111	0.020	0.050	0.465

7.16 The funding for the Member contributions of £0.020 million will be reallocated from the budget already included in the Capital Programme. The contributions are as follows:

- a) Cllr Stewart £0.010 million
- b) Cllr Scott £0.010 million

7.17 The other external funding of £0.050 million is made up of the following:

- a) National lottery funding of £0.015 million
- b) Funding from Northumberland Estates of £0.03 million
- c) Funding from Prudhoe Town Council of £0.005 million
- d) Funding from Friends of Eastwood Park of £0.008 million

- e) Funding from Choppington Parish Council of £0.020 million
- 7.18 All of the funding apart from Choppington Parish Council of £0.020 million has been agreed and appropriate documentation signed. The funding from Choppington Parish Council has been verbally agreed.
- 7.19 The Alnwick and Hexham sites both have a S.106 funding allocation of £0.075 million available so additional S.106 funding can be drawn if required.
- 7.20 Included within the match funding for the Amble site in the table above is £22,500 in unclaimable VAT. This is because Amble Development Trust are not VAT registered and since the Trust is the landowner VAT cannot be reclaimed. This cost is being negotiated with the Football Foundation and the expectation is that the Football Foundation will cover 75% of the VAT cost, equating to £16,875. Once this is confirmed the match funding required would reduce by £16,875, the reduction would be taken from the NCC funding first and any remaining reduction would reduce the S.106 contributions.
- 7.21 Each Playzone has a dedicated lead organisation responsible for running and managing each Playzone. A suite of management agreements has also been created to formalise the responsibilities for each Playzone to comply with the conditions set in the offer letter which include management agreements, lease or Community Asset Transfers bespoke to each site. Terms of reference and Pricing Policies have been approved by the Football Foundation
- 7.22 Each PlayZone will have a local multi agency Steering group who will monitor and review the conditions of the funding including financial monitoring. All Playzone income will be ringfenced for that Playzone
- 7.23 As part of the funding application and development of a sustainable facility, a business case was created for each site, matching potential income in an area of deprivation against a break- even income target, set by the Football Foundation of £5,000 pa which included sinking fund contribution. In all areas this income target was achievable based on the interest expressed during the Community Engagement.
- 7.24 Sport England have announced that revenue funding for Playzones will be available for application in April 2024, with Northumberland sites being targeted first to progress. This is revenue funding of £10,000 pa per Playzone, available to be applied for annually for 3 years, to support the development of the programme of use on site. This application will be made by the lead organisation.
- 7.25 The Playzone in Hirst in Ashington will be ran by the Council. It is anticipated that the income generated from the facility will cover any revenue costs. This facility has been progressed with approval from Neighbourhood services. Sports Development will actively support this site and it will form part of the Hirst development Plan with Northumberland Communities Together.
- 7.26 One of the key risks of the project is the 25% match funding. If the 25% cannot be met by a combination of external funding and existing Council funding, sites will need to be prioritised with the risk that not all sites will be developed. This is mitigated by applying for external funding and working in partnership with community organisations. Robust budget monitoring and forecasting is in place.
- 7.27 There is a risk that Planning permission is not in place in which case no building work can start. The Football Foundation have submitted and are managing all Planning Applications.

7.28 There is some potential reputational damage to the Council if the commencement of this project is delayed. Although The Football Foundation have delayed start dates, mainly due to the inclement weather over the winter, the Council would like to reduce any further risk of delays by ensuring the funding is in place when building work is ready to start.

8. Implications

Policy	The schemes identified in the report support all of the priorities within the Corporate Plan 2023-26.
Finance and value for money	The report outlines proposed project allocations and amendments to the approved Capital programme 2024-25 and 2025-26. The financial implications of these proposals are outlined in the main body of the report. The projects and the proposals identified in the report will be funded from either external funding or existing funding in the Capital Programme.
Legal	Subject to any contractual implications arising from the receipt of grant funding, there are no direct legal implications. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council.
Procurement	Procurement will follow the Council's standard procedures and financial rules. The Corporate Procurement team will be consulted as appropriate.
Human resources	Not applicable
Property	Not applicable
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point EIA is not applicable to the subject of this report.
Risk assessment	The risks associated with the proposals are regarded as acceptable, but these risks will continue to be reviewed up to and during implementation of the proposals.
Crime and disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
Customer considerations	The proposals will carefully consider the impact upon both customers and residents of Northumberland.

Carbon reduction	Carbon Reduction measures have been considered within the proposals.
Health and wellbeing	The Council's Capital budget is founded on the principle of promotion inclusivity.
Wards	(All Wards);

9. Background papers

Not applicable.

10. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable.

11. Author and Contact Details

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

ENERGY CENTRAL CAMPUS PHASE 1 – TECHNICAL TRAINING KIT: OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

Report of Councillor(s) Councillor Wojciech Ploszaj, Portfolio holder for Supporting Business and Opportunities

Responsible Officer(s): Simon Neilson, Executive Director of Place & Regeneration

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This project is part of the £110m Energising Blyth Programme supported by UK Government, Northumberland County Council and North of Tyne Combined Authority. This is a placemaking 'whole town' programme which contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities but particularly to the 'Achieving Value for Money', 'Tackling Inequalities and 'Driving Economic Growth' strategic priorities.

2. Purpose of report

In accordance with the Energising Blyth Programme - Local Assurance Framework, the report seeks the approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Training Kit which is part of development and delivery of the £20.71m Levelling Up Deep Dive (LUDD) funding awarded to Blyth earlier this year. The OBC has been externally appraised with a recommendation to proceed to Full Business Case (FBC).

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve the Outline Business Case for the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Training Kit to enable progression to Full Business Case.
- Delegate authority, in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework, to the Council's s151 Officer following consideration of the recommendation of the Energising Blyth Programme Board to approve the Full Business Case.

- Delegate authority to the Council's s151 Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between the Northumberland County Council as the fund Accountable Body and Energy Central Campus Ltd.
- Delegate approval to the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration to enter into any contracts relating to the project up to the value of £1.45m, subject to confirmation of associated funding being in place and the appropriate procurement processes being followed.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The report first appeared on the Forward Plan on 14th February 2024.

5. Background

- 5.1 Northumberland County Council and its partners have been successful in attracting Future High Streets Fund, Town Deal and Levelling Up Deep Dive funding to transform Blyth town centre. This substantial funding will stimulate confidence and further investment, create new jobs, bolster economic growth and transform the town ensuring it realises its full potential. This significant programme of renewal is underpinned by creative engagement with the community of Blyth demonstrating demand and support for positive change.
- 5.2 The Energy Central Campus (ECC) is a transformational, business led skills, education and innovation development supporting growth in the low carbon energy sector in Blyth and the wider North East.
- 5.3 The project will equip young people and adults with the skills needed to take up careers in the sector and enable local companies to grow through access to a skilled workforce and support to adopt the latest innovations in clean growth technology. It will demonstrate to businesses and potential investors that Blyth is ready to meet their growth needs and will be delivered in two phases, at different sites:
- ECC Phase 1 - Energy Central Learning Hub (ECLH) - A new STEM education and vocational training facility, developing energy sector skills and aspirations among young people at school and college, and adults re-training for new roles. Based at the Port of Blyth, learners will develop skills in a real-world energy port setting.
 - ECC Phase 2 - Energy Central Institute - A new higher-level skills and innovation facility, developing energy sector expertise at degree and PhD levels. Creating a focal point for collaboration between energy businesses, OREC, and North East universities, it will develop higher-level skills and technological innovations to keep Blyth at the forefront of energy sector growth. Located at a prominent town centre gateway site, it will attract footfall and enliven the town centre.
- 5.4 A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to develop the Full Business Case (FBC) for Energy Central Campus Phase 1 - Learning Hub and following approval, the main construction contract commenced in June 2023. Following the confirmation of an additional £20.71m funding awarded to Blyth through the Levelling Up Deep Dive (LUDD) process, this has enabled additional investment in

technical training kit which compliments the existing Energy Central Campus Phase 1 - Learning Hub project.

Key Issues

- 5.5 In July 2023, Cabinet accepted the award of £20.71m Levelling Up Deep Dive capital and revenue funding, adding this to the Capital Programme. This included several new initiatives including ‘Energy Central Campus Technical Training Kit’.
- 5.6 An Outline Business Case for Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Training Kit has now been developed and externally appraised. Following this, a Report was submitted to Capital Strategy Group (CSG) for consideration at its meeting on 28th November 2023. The report asked CSG to note the contents of the report and recommend to Cabinet the following:
- To establish the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Training Kit as a defined project in the Capital Programme with a total budget of £1,450,000 as profiled in the body of the report.
 - Delegate authority, 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 the capital implications to Capital Strategy Group for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

Both recommendations were approved by Cabinet on 16th January 2024.

5.7 The key milestones of the project are as follows:

Project milestone	Target date
FBC for the ECC Phase 1 (ECLH) submitted	July 2022
Award of construction contract	May 2023
Construction starts on site	June 2023
OBC submission for Technical Training Kit	31 st October 2023
Procure high capacity fibre (EAD) connections	November – December 2023
Complete delivery and installation of EAD connectivity	May - June 2024
Procure digital hardware and software for digital twinning, AR, VR and Immersive learning	January – April 2024
Procure technical training equipment	January – April 2024
ECLH Manager and Deputy Manager appointed	April 2024
Construction works completed	July 2024
Internal fit out of the ECLH	July – August 2024
New facility opens	September 2024
First employers and learners supported at the ECLH	September 2024

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

The key risks linked to a delay in securing Outline Business Case/Full Business Case approval include:

- A delay to instructing the installation of additional digital infrastructure (eg broadband) could mean that this work does not align with the building construction Programme. This could lead to abortive work and/or increased costs to install the broadband ductwork so the building can be connected to the network. Installation of specialist equipment is dependent on the building providing the appropriate ventilation, cooling and electrical infrastructure needs. A delay in securing Business Case approval could lead to missed opportunities to adapt the mechanical and electrical design for the building which will require an instruction to the Galliford Try. Alternatively, this could lead to abortive costs in order to deliver the mechanical and electrical services required.
- Lead in times for specialist equipment are still to be confirmed and can't be identified with confidence until orders are placed. Installation is required by August 2024 so there are no delays to the opening of the facility in time for the academic year which commences in September 2024.

7. Implications

Policy	The project fully supports the NCC Corporate Plan, the Northumberland Economic Strategy and the Blyth Town Investment Plan.
Finance and value for money	£1.450m funding has been awarded to this project from the Government's Levelling Up Deep Dive fund subject to the completion of a locally assured Green Book Business Case. The Council has received the full Levelling Up Deep Dive funding of £20.71m via a Section 31 Grant. An economic appraisal was carried out as part of the Outline Business Case submission in November 2023. External advice was received on VAT for the construction of ECLH which was taken on board in the delivery model, the same delivery model is expected to be in place to deliver the Technical Training Kit project.
Legal	A representative of Legal Services is invited to the Energising Blyth NCC Programme Board. Subsidy control advice has been commissioned for the project in addition to the advice provided to date for this project via NCC Legal team. The Accountable Body will also seek Legal advice.

	<p>Legal Services have worked with the ECC Ltd company Directors to ensure an appropriate Shareholder Agreement is in place.</p> <p>It has been confirmed by the Executive Director of Transformation & Resources that she has no conflict of interest in relation to this project.</p>
Procurement	In line with all other capital expenditure, project spend will be subject to the Council's recognised procurement procedures.
Human resources	The project is being developed with support from NCC's Energising Blyth Programme Team in conjunction with the partner lead (ECC Ltd) and the appointed external Project Manager. Advance Northumberland have provided Project Management Services via a Project Initiation Document (PID).
Property	NCC is one of 3 founding shareholders of ECC Ltd. ECC Ltd is lessee to the land on which the ECLH development is located. Provision has been made within a Shareholder Agreement to protect the financial interests of the Council should ECC Ltd fail.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	Yes - required and attached
Risk assessment	A risk register is in place for the project which will manage and monitor risk.
Crime and disorder	This project is part of the proposals in the Energising Blyth Programme which in totality include various measures intended to reduce crime and disorder in Blyth through positive regeneration measures. DLUHC have confirmed a £200,000 funding package through 'Deep Dive' to create a Safe and Welcoming Town Centre which will be delivered later in the Programme.
Customer considerations	There has been extensive partner and community consultation as part of the Town Deal development and the proposals respond to the feedback received. Further engagement is planned as the business case and detailed proposals develop.
Carbon reduction	The Energy Central Campus will support the county's contribution to carbon reduction and clean growth objectives. This will provide new research, development and education

	facilities supporting industry needs in the offshore wind and energy industry.
Health and wellbeing	The Town Deal proposals include an underpinning objective to support the development of an 'Inclusive Town' supporting positive health and wellbeing outcomes through successful town centre regeneration.
Wards	All wards in the town of Blyth, with learners and businesses from the wider County and North East benefiting from the skills and training provision.

8. Background papers

Energising Blyth Programme (Future High Street Fund and Town Deal) Cabinet Report - July 2021

Energising Blyth Programme: Levelling Up Deep Dive Cabinet Report – July 2023

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group - January 2024

9. Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable.

10. Author and Contact Details

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MEETING THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

INTRODUCTION TO THE NOTE

This note outlines the role of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) within the Towns Fund and provides some material to support its discharge.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY AND PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The Equality Act 2010¹ set out measures to protect people from discrimination. The 'axes' on which this is defined and measured cover the nine protected characteristics:

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender reassignment**
- **Marriage and civil partnership** (note, this is a protected characteristic only in regard to eliminating discrimination)
- **Pregnancy and maternity**
- **Race**
- **Region or belief**
- **Sex**
- **Sexual orientation**

The Equality Act also sets the PSED, requiring public bodies (as defined in the Act, but for the purposes of the Towns Fund, covering all local authorities) to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.

The standard set is to ensure local authorities 'have due regard' to the need to '*eliminate discrimination ... advance quality of opportunity, and ... foster good relations between different people*'. As such, it is a positive or affirmative duty, in that equality should be promoted, as opposed to a 'do not harm' duty to not worsen a situation. To support this, positive discrimination is possible.

Additionally, in 2014 Government introduced a requirement for government departments to explicitly consider the family perspective in decision making – the 'Family Test'². Whilst the Family Test only applies to government departments and not local authorities, Towns may choose to consider alongside the protected characteristics.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

² Government has published guidance on the Family Test. Although this is not required from local authorities, the same considerations are often part of local authority decision making and policy targeting. It is not a statutory requirement, but there is an expectation that government departments will undertake it where it is relevant and proportionate to do so. Although Government Departments are expected to document the Family Test, they are not obliged to publish them.

DISCHARGING THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

PSED is discharged in different manners, depending on whether a specific project/programme is being assessed or it is a wider programme/strategy.

- For a specific project or programme (such as a local plan, development proposal that might require planning permission or is a particular thing in a particular place) the PSED is normally demonstrated and discharged through an equalities impact assessment (EqIA). There is no mandatory or statutory requirement to complete an EqIA, nor for a record to be kept of how equalities considerations have been taken into account. However, both are considered good practice and provide a trail for audit, challenge and defence.
- For a programme, strategy or something that covers a wider area (even nation-wide) or wider array of projects it would be more usual to wrap the PSED into a regulatory impact assessment (RIA), considered alongside other strategic considerations. (It should be noted that government RIA guidance³ does talk about the impact on places, businesses and people but does not refer explicitly to protected characteristics, and as such does not fulfil the PSED.)

Towns Fund bids are likely to comprise a range of projects and may cover a substantial geographic area. They therefore 'fall between' an EqIA and an RIA, and it is suggested that both these scales/types of assessment are required.

To support Towns in discharging the PSED, a set of two inter-related templates are provided which together provide a simple framework for considering impact on the protected characteristics as well as the Family Test (if chosen to include in the assessment):

- a project-level assessment template; and
- a programme-level assessment template.

The templates reflect the principles of EqIA and RIA and provide an integrated method for assessment and recording. Notwithstanding the templates, local authorities are responsible for the proportionality and robustness of their assessment, and may need to go beyond the templates to reflect local circumstances and/or to undertake a more detailed assessment of projects of a higher intensity or complexity.

As well as simply discharging the PSED for its own sake, assessing how projects and the wider programme impact on different groups of people is a valuable exercise in making sure that the Towns Fund investment benefits all and is as successful as possible. Following the assessment, there may be a need for further actions, including changing aspects of the projects or even re-prioritising projects. The TFDP have developed a Project Re-Prioritisation Tool for Stage 2 of the Towns Fund, which nudges you to ensure you have considered relevant PSED implications on your projects during project confirmation stage. You can download that tool and watch a tutorial for how to use it by clicking this link:

<https://townsfund.org.uk/resources-collection/project-re-prioritisation-tool>.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/impact-assessments-guidance-for-government-departments>

TERMS & CONDITIONS



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SAMPLE PROJECT-LEVEL ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

A sample project-level assessment table is provided below, which follows EqIA principles to help to provide assurance that the duty has been appropriately discharged (and the outcomes recorded). Each box should be limited to around 250 words, and some may not be relevant (e.g. where there is no negative or mixed effect). The template can be completed for each project and submitted alongside the business case, as well as included in the summary document. Towns may make amendments to the template to reflect local circumstances or needs.

(Note, there is an alternative, long-form layout to this template in Appendix A, which you may find easier to complete. You might choose to use this version as a summary / comparison version.)

Name of project:	Energy Central Learning Hub (ECLH)
Project objectives: (describe the project's aim as it relates to protected characteristics)	N/A

Consideration	Protected Characteristics (Part 1)				
	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnerships	Pregnancy and maternity
Baseline situation (describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)	CONTEXT STATEMENT The Energy Central Learning Hub (ECLH) will not be a direct provider of programmes in most circumstances. Almost all accredited learning in the post-16 phase will be delivered by school, FE or HE partners. All of those partners are subject to statutory and/or funding conditions associated with the promotion of equality of opportunity. All will be subject to OFSTED inspection as far as their organisational commitment in this area is concerned. In relation to the STEM programme, the ECLH will be working directly with learning organisations who have the same statutory duty placed on them in respect of promoting equality of opportunity and addressing and removing discrimination in any form for the learners and staff within them.				
Assessment text (summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)	There are some minimum age requirements for the public funding of FE and WBL programmes	Reasonable adjustment for disability will be applied across all programmes but the physical demands of some work environments mean that some may not be accessible to all.	Can engage without disadvantage	Can engage without disadvantage	Individualised work based risk assessment may be required on a programme by programme basis.
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? (add an explanation)	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE
	Positive. Age restrictions relate to national policy for FE. STEM provision from the centre will encompass all ages from Y4-Y13	Mixed. The Centre will be specified for disabled access at all levels. There will be specialist changing areas for learners with significant additional needs. Some activities will be inaccessible to learners with severe learning difficulties or disabilities	Positive – there are no structural impediments to participation for this protected characteristic	Positive – there are no structural impediments to participation for this protected characteristic	Positive - no disadvantage is anticipated over that experienced by any other participant who may be pregnant or on maternity.
If the effect is negative or mixed:					
Is the effect significant? (add an explanation)	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?		Negotiation with the partner organisation will ensure that all possible risk mitigations are in place and as broad a range of activity as possible is maintained.			
What residual significant effects remain?		A small number of physical activities (e.g. climbing a turbine) may not be possible			
Is there an in-combination effect across multiple protected characteristics (across both Part 1 and Part 2 of the assessment table)?					

Consideration	Protected Characteristics (Part 1)				
	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnerships	Pregnancy and maternity
<i>(e.g. the proposed project has minor effects across several protected characteristics which, when considered together, have a more significant impact)</i>					
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>					

Consideration	Protected Characteristics (Part 2)				
	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	'Family Test' (if used)
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	CONTEXT STATEMENT The Energy Central Learning Hub (ECLH) will not be a direct provider of programmes in most circumstances. Almost all accredited learning in the post-16 phase will be delivered by school, FE or HE partners. All of those partners are subject to statutory and/or funding conditions associated with the promotion of equality of opportunity. All will be subject to OFSTED inspection as far as their organisational commitment in this area is concerned. In relation to the STEM programme, the ECLH will be working directly with learning organisations who have the same statutory duty placed on them in respect of promoting equality of opportunity and addressing and removing discrimination in any form for the learners and staff within them.				
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	Can engage without disadvantage	Can engage without disadvantage	Can engage without disadvantage	Can engage without disadvantage	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE	+VE / M / -VE
	Positive - It is recognised that the sector is under-represented in terms of minority ethnic employees and strategies to engage and support progression of BAME learners into STEM subjects generally, and sector employment in particular, will be employed in ECLH operations. Care will be taken in all digital and physical communications to reflect a diverse population in the images used to promote the centre.	Positive – there are no structural impediments to participation for this protected characteristic	Positive - It is recognised that the sector is under-represented in terms of female employees and strategies to engage and support progression of girls and women into STEM subjects generally, and sector employment in particular, will be employed in ECLH operations. Care will be taken in all digital and physical communications to reflect a diverse population in the images used to promote the centre.	Positive – there are no structural impediments to participation for this protected characteristic	
If the effect is negative or mixed:					
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?					
What residual significant effects remain?					

Consideration	Protected Characteristics (Part 2)				
	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	'Family Test' (if used)
Is there an in-combination effect across multiple protected characteristics (across both Part 1 and Part 2 of the assessment table)? <i>(e.g. the proposed project has minor effects across several protected characteristics which, when considered together, have a more significant impact)</i>					
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>					

SAMPLE PROGRAMME-LEVEL ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Following project-level assessment, a programme-level assessment should be undertaken which considers effects on the protected characteristics across the whole portfolio of projects. A sample programme-level assessment table is provided below, to be submitted alongside the business case and included in the summary document. It is suggested that the overall assessment should be around 500 words across the assessment, although this will depend on the issues arising. As above, Towns may make amendments to the template to reflect local circumstances etc.

[Town name] Programme Level Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Assessment	
Consideration	Response
Summary of the main findings of project-level assessments undertaken:	
Is there an additional cumulative impact at the programme level? <i>(e.g. whether the combined impact of more than one project on protected characteristic(s) has a different or more significant effect than when considered on a project-by-project basis)</i>	

[Town name] Programme Level Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Assessment

Consideration

Response

Are there any other impacts of the Towns Fund programme which are not included elsewhere in the PSED assessment?

What actions (if any) have arisen from the assessment?

FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

- [Quick Start Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty](#)⁴
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission Guide to Meeting the PSED in Policy and Decision-Making](#)⁵
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission Technical Guidance on Assessment](#)⁶.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-quick-start-guide-to-the-public-sector-equality-duty>

⁵ https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/meeting_the_duty_in_policy_and_decision-making.pdf

⁶ https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/technical_guidance_on_the_psed_england.pdf

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PROJECT-LEVEL ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE – LONG FORM

This is an alternative, longer-form version of the project-level assessment template provided above. Each response should be limited to around 250 words, and some may not be relevant (e.g. where there is no negative or mixed effect).

The template can be completed for each project and submitted alongside the business case, as well as included in the summary document. Towns may make amendments to the template to reflect local circumstances or needs.

Name of project:	
Project objectives: (describe the project's aim as it relates to protected characteristics)	<i>[Note: N/A if no protected characteristics are directly targeted.]</i>

Age

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Disability

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Gender reassignment

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
	Y / N

Consideration	Response
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Marriage and civil partnership (note, this is a protected characteristic only in regard to eliminating discrimination)

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Pregnancy and maternity

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Race

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
	Y / N

Consideration	Response
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Region or belief

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Sex

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Sexual orientation

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
	Y / N

Consideration	Response
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

Family Test (if used)

Consideration	Response
Baseline situation <i>(describe only where different to the national average, or where otherwise relevant)</i>	
Assessment text <i>(summary of how the proposed project affects the protected characteristic)</i>	
Is the effect positive/negative/mixed? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	+VE / M / -VE
If the effect is negative or mixed:	
Is the effect significant? <i>(add an explanation)</i>	Y / N
What embedded mitigation does the project contain?	
What residual significant effects remain?	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

In-combination effects

Consideration	Response
Is there an in-combination effect across multiple protected characteristics? <i>(e.g. the proposed project has minor effects across several protected characteristics which, when considered together, have a more significant impact)</i>	
What action is required? Who will be accountable for it? <i>(this could include further mitigation measures or re-prioritisation of projects)</i>	

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Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Housing Regeneration Report – Stock Rationalisation

Report of Councillor(s) Cllr Colin Horncastle, Cabinet Member for Looking After our Environment

Responsible Officer(s): Simon Neilson, Executive Director - Place and Regeneration

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

The implications detailed within this report and the need to provide homes and neighbourhoods that are safe, modern and fit for purpose are aligned to the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26 “Northumberland: Land of Great Opportunities”.

1. Achieving Value for Money – by redeveloping NCC owned sites that currently accommodate low demand stock with housing stock that will be in demand and will generate revenue income
2. Tackling Inequalities - Residents have the building blocks of a good life – by providing safe and appropriate eco friendly housing that will be affordable to rent and heat
3. Driving Economic Growth section specifically under Thriving Places and Culture – by regenerating these areas to create places that people aspire to live in

2. Purpose of report

The report seeks Cabinet approval to:

- To place on hold lettings for empty homes and any homes that become empty in the addresses listed within this report (Appendix 1A);
- To give priority status for re-housing to all customers who currently reside in any of the addresses detailed in this report;
- To approve the award of Home loss & Disturbance payments for any customers relocating from the properties detailed in this report;
- To authorise the progression of any Compulsory Purchase Order process for adjacent properties and Buy backs for any leaseholders if required for the redevelopment proposal;
- To approve the demolition of low demand stock in Blyth detailed in this report.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are requested to:

1. Approve placing lettings on hold within these low demand blocks.
2. Approve the prioritisation of customers for rehousing; the issuing of Homeloss and disturbance payments as appropriate.
3. Approval to remove the existing void properties from the Housing Revenue Account rent roll.
4. Authorise the Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities to commence negotiations to acquire the two residential leasehold properties and develop a suitable compensation package. Should negotiations not be successful to compulsorily acquire the properties using compulsory purchase powers as a last resort.
5. Approve Compulsory Purchase Order process for adjacent properties if required.
6. Approve the demolition of low demand stock in Blyth as detailed in this report.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

09.02.24

5. Background

- 5.1 Following a review of management performance and investment requirements across a number of low to mid rise blocks in Blyth, Cabinet approval is sought for the demolition of blocks of flats and maisonettes at Delaval Terrace, Windmill Grove, Marlow St, Harper St and Tynedale Drive 1a-1l in Blyth. This demolition phase forms part of the work to support a statutorily compliant Business Plan that can fund a compliant, well maintained and sustainable housing portfolio in line with the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 5.2 Cabinet agreed a new HRA budget and Capital programme in January 2024, which is underpinned by expectations that the housing stock will remain sustainable, with homes meeting the decent homes standard and being maintained as safe and affordable as per the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Bill. The MTFP includes assumptions about the average void rate across the portfolio being 4.87% However, it has become increasingly clear that there are a number of low to mid rise blocks where there is little or no demand for the homes when advertised.
- 5.3 There are a number of maisonette style accommodations within the blocks that are not desirable to families with young children. Access to maisonettes is on the first floor, there is no lift, no secure private garden that children can run out to and no in curtilage parking. The flats are only attractive to single people and couples who are not successful in bidding for higher demand stock. This arrangement has created disengaged communities with large communal outside areas (former open air drying areas and coal sheds) that only attract Anti Social Behaviour and fly tipping.

- 5.4 Despite there currently being 14,000 applicants registered on Homefinder, there has been little demand from applicants for this low to mid rise block accommodation. There are approximately 572 flats and 60 maisonettes of this house type across the Blyth area and recent bidding patterns over the last 12 months on vacancies has consistently shown little demand exists as applicants are reluctant to live in this type of accommodation. The overwhelming priority for housing appears to be for a typical family home 2, 3 & 4 bed houses that are accessed by their own front door rather than a communal hallway and have their own defendable outdoor space be it either a yard or a garden.
- 5.5 Void rates at the low and mid rise blocks identified are 32% broken down as follows:
- Windmill Grove at 61%
 - Delaval Terrace at 59%
 - Marlow & Harper St at 33%
 - Tynedale Drive 1a-1l at 8%
- 5.6 These void rates create considerable rent loss and if allowed to go unchecked will have considerable impact on the MTFP. Furthermore, despite continued investment in the flats, they continue to be blighted by Anti Social Behavior, fly tipping and criminal damage. Communal areas and windows are being broken and repaired on a regular basis making it a very poor living environment for the remaining residents and the surrounding properties.
- 5.7 The maisonette blocks in Blyth have been surveyed to determine the condition of the concrete detailing which is showing signs of spalling concrete and exposed steel reinforcement. Record drawings show the concrete architectural detailing used above the window openings to be reinforced concrete boot lintels and the visual survey confirms this. The condition of the exposed reinforced edges of all projecting boot lintels and concrete surround details vary in severity but they generally show signs of the same defects. The steel reinforcement in the concrete has corroded causing the steel to expand which has cracked the concrete. The cause of the defect is due to carbonation and the projection on the concrete detail has allowed the concrete to become saturated and retain moisture longer than if it was flush with the brickwork. Some of the concrete detailing has spalled and is in danger of breaking away and falling to the ground which could be dangerous to anyone below outside. Internal property damage occurs by water ingress through the cracks in the concrete which can sometimes be localised where the cracks can be seen on the outside and the dampness is visible in similar locations internally. The dampness can also occur in other areas of the walls or on the ceilings in the properties below where the rainwater travels down the cavity. The concrete boot lintels create cold bridging from the outer leaf to the inner leaf and we are receiving more complaints related to mould occurring on the inside walls in these maisonettes.
- 5.8 There are temporary and permanent solutions that can be employed to deal with these defects but they are labour intensive, costly and may still not address all the physical problems created by the spalling and cold bridging. Further detail on these defects is detailed in the attached Appendix 1B
- 5.9 Regardless of whether budget can be allocated to carry out these works it has been assessed that such a costly outlay would be false economy as it still does not affect

or improve the fundamental layout of the maisonettes in that they are not conducive to a modern family lifestyle for our residents.

- 5.10 Whilst options have been considered to look at conversion of the units into larger family homes and to improve the public realm this would be limited by structure that is past its lifespan and is restrictive in its layout on the sites. A more efficient use of HRA funding would be to seek authority to demolish the blocks and deliver up development sites that will provide an opportunity to meet the identified local need in different styles of accommodation that will attract a higher demand from Homefinder applicants.
- 5.11 Financial modelling has been undertaken to consider what the comparison would be in retaining these blocks against demolition to make way for new, modern, energy efficient housing. Whilst on paper the blocks continue to provide a positive net present value, in practice the low demand indicates that they will continue to be a drain on revenue and capital resource in the short to medium term and are unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term.
- 5.12 The decision to rationalise the housing offer in Blyth aligns to the Corporate Plan and Homes England's new strategy supporting Regeneration and Housing Renewal. Previous funding rounds have been focused more on net increase of new homes however, the revised strategy from Homes England supports improvements to Place and the creation on new Sustainable Homes and Neighbourhoods.
- 5.13 In 2012 Consumer Standards were introduced and reviewed in 2023, that Registered Providers of social housing needed to comply with. One of those is the Neighbourhood and Community Standard which places a duty on Northumberland County Council to ensure that it keeps the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with their homes clean and safe, promotes the wellbeing of the local area and helps to prevent and tackle antisocial behaviour. The standard also states that a Registered Provider should appoint a Health & Safety lead to monitor compliance; to assess risks of failure; to notify any risks of actual failure to comply with Health & Safety requirements; and to provide advice on addressing risks and failures. The demolition of these blocks would ensure that this duty and risks identified are addressed.
- 5.14 Over the past few years, several significant and tragic events (Grenfell Tower Fire and the death of Awaab Ishak) have highlighted the need for change within the social housing sector. The Social Housing Regulatory Bill 2023 has the aim of improving how social housing is regulated, including strengthening tenants' rights, and ensuring better quality and safer homes for residents. The demolition of these blocks meets with the ambition of the social housing regulatory requirements.
- 5.15 Further cabinet reports will be presented once alternate proposals for the sites have been confirmed but it is expected that sites will remain in Council ownership and used to support the direct delivery of new affordable homes to meet identified local need.

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

- 6.1 Maintain the status quo, continue to carry voids and incur loss of rent and have residents that are living in poor living conditions.
- 6.2 Invest resources in remedying the window concrete detailing issue causing disruption to residents but not addressing the underlying issue of outdated stock.

Or the preferred recommendations are to:

- 6.3 Approve the prioritisation of customers for rehousing; the issuing of Homeloss and disturbance payments as appropriate.
- 6.4 Approve the removal the existing void properties from the Housing Revenue Account rent roll.
- 6.5 Authorise the Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities to commence negotiations to acquire the two residential leasehold properties and develop a suitable compensation package. Should negotiations not be successful to compulsorily acquire the properties using compulsory purchase powers as a last resort.
- 6.4 Approve progressing to demolition of the blocks once they are all in a void state.

The recommendations are being made for the following reasons:

- To set a Housing Revenue Account that is not in debit as required under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Part VI) and is able to meet its short and long-term investment requirements.
- To assist in the delivery of the Council’s vision for Northumberland as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- To ensure that council housing stock meets with the core values of health and wellbeing and provides a basis for a thriving community.

7. Implications

Policy	The HRA Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan which are impacted by these proposals are aligned to the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2023-26 – Northumberland: Land of Great Opportunities.
Finance and value for money	The financial implications of not progressing with these options will result in void properties remaining unoccupied and incurring rent loss, repair and maintenance costs for the Council. Decommissioning the properties will result in financial costs for disturbance and Home loss but will provide VFM in the longer term by allowing development of much needed new affordable homes on the cleared sites that better meet identified local housing need.
Legal	Consultation with legal colleagues will be carried out throughout the process.

Procurement	There are no specific Procurement implications within this report.
Human resources	The proposals outlined in this report may lead to a request for extra staffing resource to carry out tenant liaison.
Property	All of the assets listed in this report are included within the HRA property and assets portfolio although Strategic Estates may be engaged to acquire any leasehold properties.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No The nature of the main HRA Budget proposal aims to ensure that the Council is able to provide services to all tenants, maintain existing homes to the decent home standard, and develop new housing to meet the needs of current and future tenants. The proposal does not therefore adversely impact on any member of staff, or public due to individual or multiple protected characteristics.
Risk assessment	The risks of doing nothing with these homes will be a detrimental impact on communities and on those residents who are living in poor quality accommodation which is blighted by ASB.
Crime and disorder	It is anticipated that removal of empty homes that have become a magnet for ASB and crime will address this and the sites once cleared will be secured ahead of demolition and redevelopment..
Customer considerations	The individual proposals will carefully consider the impact upon customers impacted by these proposals and any temporary negative impacts will be closely managed.
Carbon reduction	The Council continues to develop proposals concerning the management of energy which are supported by the budget and will look to employ practices and technologies that will minimise harm to the environment.
Health and wellbeing	The proposals should improve the health and wellbeing of customers currently living in low demand failing stock and ensure new housing provision improves health and wellbeing.
Wards	Cowpen; Isabella; Kitty Brewster;

8. Background papers

Appendix 1A and 1B

9. Links to other key reports already published

Energising Blyth report

Blyth Deep Dive application and approval for DLUHC funding

Links can be made available if required

10. Author and Contact Details

Rebecca Fenwick, Strategic Housing Manager
Email: rebecca.fenwick@northumberland.gov.uk

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Appendix 1A

Low demand stock in Blyth

Block	Total units	Flats	Maisonettes	
Delaval Terrace		32	12	20
Harper Street		18	6	12
Marlow Street		9	3	6
Windmill Grove		32	32	0
Tyndale Drive 1a - 1l		12	12	0
Total units in all blocks		103	65	38

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Survey of Reinforced Concrete Details and Lintels at the
Maisonette Blocks in Blyth



Introduction

A survey was requested on the maisonette blocks in Blyth to determine the condition of the concrete detailing which is showing signs of spalling concrete and exposed steel reinforcement.

All the maisonette blocks in Blyth of the same construction type with the same concrete details were inspected.

The maisonette blocks were built circa 1960s. The walls are cavity construction with facing brickwork outer leaf or render finished. They are 3 storey and have timber constructed tiled pitched roofs and the floors are Bison beam and block.

Record drawings show the concrete architectural detailing used above the window openings to be reinforced concrete boot lintels and the visual survey confirms this.

Concrete boot lintels are designed so that the lintel bearing surface only rests on the inner structural leaf of masonry acting like a cantilever. The outer face of the lintel is shorter and has no bearing on the external brickwork. The top of the lintel supports the brickwork above.

The boot lintels on the maisonettes consist of two types. The first type has the outer face of the lintel built in flush with the external brickwork. The second type has the outer face of the lintel projecting past the external brickwork.

The appearance of the projecting boot lintel has been replicated in selected locations on the front elevations as a feature to surround windows or to surround and link windows together. It has not been used on all window openings.

The concrete detailing used below the windows are reinforced concrete cills and they match the projecting profile of the boot lintels. There are further projecting concrete details to the sides of the windows which is a window cill laid vertically.

In between the projecting boot lintels and projecting cills linking windows together with a rendered panel in between is a reinforced concrete detail which is unlikely to be a boot lintel but matches the lintel and cill detail appearance.

The projecting details have only been used on the front of the blocks in selected locations to achieve a desired architectural effect.

The flush boot lintels and projecting boot lintels and concrete architectural surround detailing was a popular feature used by architects in the 1950s and 1960s.

Projecting boot lintels and projecting concrete surround detailing - The condition of the exposed reinforced edges of all projecting boot lintels and concrete surround details vary in severity but they generally show signs of the same defects. The steel reinforcement in the concrete has corroded causing the steel to expand which has cracked the concrete. *The cause of the defect is due to carbonation* and the projection on the concrete detail has allowed the concrete to become saturated and retain moisture longer than if it was flush with the brickwork.

The photo below taken on the front elevation shows missing concrete on the projecting concrete cills and cracks on the boot lintels and side details.



Flush boot lintels - The condition of the flush boot lintels are generally better due to being protected more from the rain. However, as can be seen from the photo below taken on the rear elevation some of the flush lintels also share the same defect as the projecting details.



Carbonation - Cause

Concrete is a highly alkaline material. If concrete is uncarbonated it will have a pH in the region of 12.6.

Carbonation starts on the concrete surface and can ultimately reach the depth of the steel reinforcement within the concrete.

Steel reinforcement bars are required as concrete is strong in compression but weak in tension, therefore steel reinforcement is added to provide tensile strength. The alkaline state of the concrete provides a protective layer to the steel reinforcement and prevents corrosion/rusting.

When concrete comes into contact with carbon dioxide and other pollutants within the air a reaction can occur. Carbon dioxide can form carbonic acid with the water in the cement that then neutralizes the alkaline state of the concrete. Then carbonation moves through the concrete that gradually reduces the pH value to where corrosion in the reinforcement can occur. The pH value gradually reduces to 8pH; neutral is 7pH. However, corrosion to the reinforcement can occur if the pH value falls below 11pH.

Different factors determine the timeframe of carbonation, such as the quality of the concrete. For example, if the cement is very porous or has low cement content then the timeframe for carbonation to occur will be significantly quicker.

In modern construction we would expect to have at least 50mm of concrete cover protecting the steel reinforcement, yet many buildings built in the 1950s and 1960's had less than 10mm of concrete cover in places.

This minimal concrete cover for the steel reinforcement is typical for the concrete details in the maisonette blocks in Blyth.

If the concrete cover surrounding the steel reinforced bar is insufficient, then the steel will be susceptible to corrosion as the carbonation process does not have far to travel. Once the resistive layer is lost then the embedded steel starts to corrode. Corrosion is an expansive reaction which causes cracking and spalling of the concrete. Cracks allow direct water ingress which can further accelerate the deterioration of the concrete.

Carbonation - Solutions

Slowing down carbonation in concrete can be achieved by applying anti-carbonation coatings to the cleaned surface of the concrete to prevent the ingress of carbon dioxide and other pollutants. This method can provide protection from carbonation for approximately 10 years.

However, if carbonation has already taken place, which it has in the maisonette blocks, then the repair methods are not as straight forward.

A permanent solution will involve erecting scaffolding, removing loose concrete, descaling and cleaning the steel reinforcement to a shiny surface finish, applying anti-corrosion paint to the steel to protect it from water and chemicals, installing stainless steel fixings, adding temporary shuttering to the areas and applying a specialist repair mortar. All the existing concrete details will then need the surfaces cleaned of all existing paint and an anti-carbonation coating applied to reduce and slow down the carbonation process in the areas both repaired and not repaired. The paint will also be needed for aesthetic reasons if the building is not rendered on completion of the works.

If no action is taken

Some of the concrete detailing has spalled and is in danger of breaking away and falling to the ground. Fortunately, the concrete falls close to the building and someone would need to be leaning against the building or working on the perimeter to get hit by loose falling concrete.

The cheapest solution is a temporary measure which will involve hiring a Cherry Picker to remove the loose concrete to prevent it from falling off. The steel reinforcement could be painted with a specialist paint to reduce further corrosion and minor mortar repairs done to shed the rainwater whilst a permanent solution is agreed upon.

Internal property damage occurs by water ingress through the cracks in the concrete which can sometimes be localised where the cracks can be seen on the outside and the dampness is visible in similar locations internally. The dampness can also occur in other areas of the walls or on the ceilings in the properties below where the rainwater travels down the cavity.

If the boot lintels are left without remedial and carbonation prevention works, they will lose their structural strength and will require costly replacements or retrofit masonry reinforcement above the existing boot lintels.

Leaving the concrete surround details as they are is also an aesthetic matter and the exposed steel and spalling concrete causes residents to be concerned.

Concrete boot lintels are not used in modern construction. They create cold bridging from the outer leaf to the inner leaf and we are receiving more complaints related to mould occurring on the inside walls.

Conclusion

The concrete boot lintels and concrete window surround details have exposed steel reinforcement and spalling/loose concrete.

Rainwater has penetrated the concrete and caused the steel to corrode and expand which has made the concrete crack and become loose.

The reason is that in the 1960's when the maisonette blocks were built the steel reinforcement was only covered by a thin layer of protective concrete which was common at that time and is a known defect to surveyors.

The defect is called Carbonation and although this can still occur in modern construction the Carbonation process is much slower due to the increased thickness of the protective layer of concrete covering the steel reinforcement.

The building defects will need fixing and there are different solution depending on the extent of the corrosion and amount of spalled concrete.

A permanent solution will be costly but necessary to prevent further deterioration.

A temporary solution may be required to remove any loose concrete if a permanent solution is not likely to take place in the next year.

Date: 29 February 2024

Photos of the Maisonette Blocks in Blyth











Northumberland County Council

This report is on the public agenda, but the committee will be advised to consider a resolution excluding the public from the meeting while they are considering some additional information about the issue.

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Outcomes of the tenders for the Coquet Partnership.

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

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

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

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

2. **Purpose of report**

To update cabinet on the outcomes of the tender process for the construction of extension to the feeder primary schools in Amble and also the refurbishment of South Avenue site for the relocation of Amble First Schools and the creation of a New Special School Barndale by The Sea. The report also seeks approval to award the contracts.

An outline capital allocation for investment in Education has already been made within the Council's medium term capital programme of £42,931,672 (£1,007,031 expenditure incurred in 2022-23). Remaining budget of £41,924,641 from April 2023 to March 2028. The outcome of the tender exercises for extension works on the feeder first schools and the refurbishment of the South Avenue site now seeks to confirm the capital required for the construction and management of these proposed schemes, being £14,582,208.95 Noting the New build works at James Calvert Spence College is subject to an ongoing tender exercise with the outcomes being reported to Cabinet later in the year.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to

Note the outcomes of the tender process and approve the delegation to award the contract to Robertsons Construction for the refurbishment works on the South Avenue Site and to Portakabin for the extensions required at the feeder first schools, to the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Education.

Note in order to complete the works within the implementation timescales approved by Cabinet on 17th November 2022, a Letter of Intent was issued for works up to a capped value of £989,194.87 prior to the final award of contract. This was undertaken to prevent any increase in cost or delays in programme until the award of contract is complete in April 2024

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

The previous Cabinet's decision to reorganise the Coquet schools didn't make specific reference to awarding contracts to carry out the works associated with the reorganisation.

Only way the contracts can be awarded, in time to fulfil the statutory decisions already made by Cabinet, is to seek approval at the 9th April Cabinet meeting.

5. Key Issues

5.1 On 17th November 2022 Cabinet approved the implementation of school reorganisation in the Coquet Partnership, in making their decision Cabinet also approved a capital funding allocation of £39.06m to carry out works to schools to support the implementation of the statutory proposals.

5.2 Since this time officers have working with schools to develop designs, gain the appropriate planning approvals, and tendering the works for extensions at Grange View CE, Red Row, Broomhill, and Amble Links First Schools due to the nature and scales of these projects they have been tendered as one package. A second tendered process has also been undertaken for the refurbishment works required at the South Avenue Site (former site of Amble Middle School). These works are to enable the relocation of Amble First School together with the creation of new specialist provision for Barndale by The Sea.

5.3 Following a competitive tendering exercise for the works in the feeder first schools officers were carrying out final contract negotiations when the preferred bidder went into liquidation. This then resulted in officers having to propose a direct award for these works in order to maintain the implementation timeline as agreed by Cabinet. The results of these direct negotiations are contained within the final tender report contained within the commercially confidential "Tender Outcomes Report" APPENDIX ONE.

5.4 The current market conditions faced throughout the UK are dictating difficult competitive tendering, as well as soaring prices, therefore officers sought a direct negotiation for the works at South Avenue. However, despite approaching the top number 1 ranked contractor on the NEPO 207 construction works lot 5 framework, these direct negotiations did not meet officer expectations in terms of both length of programme and competitive price. An alternative contractor that had previously

worked with the education team on a similar refurbishment project was approached to enter a direct negotiation. In order to maintain the timeline, a Letter of Intent was entered into to start on site whilst the final contract terms and negotiations were completed. The results of these direct negotiations are contained within the commercially confidential final tender report APPENDIX TWO.

6. Outcomes of the Tendering Process

- 6.1 Over the previous nine months, a full market test of the projects has been undertaken together with a full design review in order to achieve value engineering/optimisations to provide the most cost-effective solution.
- 6.2 Our Technical adviser team (AtkinsRéalis) have been reviewing the full cost breakdown from both Robertson Construction (for the South Avenue project) and Portakabin for the extension works to the feeder first schools to ensure the costs are justified and it is a fair and reasonable representation of the market. The outcome of this exercise is provided in detail within the commercially confidential "Tender Outcome Reports" contained in Appendices 1 & 2.

7. Background

- 7.1 To support the reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership Cabinet has already approved £39.06m based on indicative cost which were subjected to change following the tender exercises. This budget was increased and approved by full council when agreeing the MTFP in February 2024. The revised budget is now £42,931,672.

Reorganisation of schools in the Coquet Partnership and timeline.

- 7.2 Amble First, Amble Links First, Broomhill First, and Red Row First Schools and Grange View Church of England Voluntary Controlled School would extend their age ranges and reorganise to become primary schools with effect from 1 September 2024, in a phased way. The schools would retain Year 5 in September 2024 and would then retain Year 6 in September 2025.
- 7.3 JCSC would reduce its age range in a phased way with effect from September 2024. The school would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2024 at which point it would have an interim age range of 10-18 years, and then from September 2025 and subsequent years the school would have a final age range of 11 to 18 years, with transition into Year 7 only from that point.
- 7.4 Barndale House School would increase its pupil numbers through expansion onto the satellite site within the former JCSC middle school building at South Avenue, Amble with effect from 1 September 2024. Under this proposal, the school would admit up to 50 additional pupils onto the school roll to be based at the satellite school at South Avenue in Amble in a phased way from 1 September 2024.

Sport and Recreation

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

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

- 8.1 Note the outcomes of the tender process and agree to delegate the final award of contracts to the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Education.
- 8.2 Any other option would involve a reversal of the previous cabinet decision to proceed with the implementation of the school reorganisation project so the reason the above options are recommended are to ensure that the aims of the previous cabinet decision are achieved.

9. Implications

Policy	The consultation has been consistent with the Council's policy to review changes to schools in accordance with local wishes and needs.
Finance and value for money	Refer to Appendix 1 – Outcomes of tender report for feeder first schools and Appendix 2 -The outcomes of the tender report for the refurbishment of South Avenue
Legal	The procurement process has been carried out in accordance with the Council's finance and Procurement rules
Procurement	Advice has been obtained from Procurement within Northumberland County Council and external legal advisors to understand its obligations regarding the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
Human resources	Staff employed at Amble First School will need to relocate to the new buildings on South Avenue site. It is not envisaged that this would have a detrimental impact on the staff involved in the change.
Property	The proposed investment will address backlog maintenance issues on the South Avenue site and potentially allow for an alternative use or capital receipt for the existing site of Amble First.
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	Yes - required and attached. Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is contained in Appendix 3 of the report.
Risk assessment	A full risk assessment has been carried for the projects and is contained in the Appendix 4.
Crime and disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.

Customer considerations	The proposals set out in this report are based upon a desire to act in the best educational interests of current and future children and young people in Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	NCC's approach to Carbon Reduction is set out in its draft Northumberland Local Plan. The projects' considerations for carbon reduction include; improved insulation, LED lighting throughout the buildings and more energy efficient heating solutions. In addition to new solar panels to all 4 feeder school extensions.
Health and wellbeing	This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.
Wards	Amble; Amble West with Warkworth; Druridge Bay; Shilbottle;

10. Background papers

None.

11. Links to other key reports already published

Cabinet report 17th November 2022 – The Outcomes of the Statutory Consultation on Proposals for the Coquet Partnership.

12. Author and Contact Details

Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources
Email: sue.aviston@northumberland.gov.uk

DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

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

Specifically:

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

The Council has set out how it deals with information received as part of consultation in the Council's Privacy Notice, at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#privacynotices>.

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Equality Impact Assessment

Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will help the County Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties (Equality Act 2010).

The duties which need to be considered when making decisions are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Failure to assess the equality impact may increase the risk of making an unfair decision which could potentially be discriminatory. It also prevents us from identifying opportunities to promote equality and therefore leaves the County Council open to potential legal challenge.

Using this EIA template will help to ensure that a decision is made in a fair way, based on evidence. It provides a clear and structured method to assess the potential impact on protected groups.

Title of policy or proposal	Coquet partnership reorganisation – feeder schools and South Avenue capital projects.
Briefly describe the aims of the policy change, decision or proposal, the likely outcomes and the rationale for it	To assess the impact of the construction of extensions to the feeder primary schools in Amble and also the refurbishment of South Avenue site for the relocation of Amble First Schools and the creation of a New Special School Barndale by The Sea.

Consider the potential impact on any member of staff or member of the public with the following protected characteristics:

Age, Disability, Gender identity/Gender reassignment, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation, Women who are pregnant or have recently had a baby.

Also, for issues affecting staff, consider employees who are married or in a civil partnership.

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

<p>Using the information you have, give details of any potential positive and negative impacts on protected groups likely to be affected by the policy change, decision or proposal</p> <p>(For each protected characteristic where there could be a potential impact, consider the following:</p> <p>Could people from any protected groups be positively or negatively affected? Could anyone's ability to take part in public life be affected? Could this policy change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards any protected group? Could any groups become more or less likely to be at risk of harassment or victimisation as a result of this policy change, decision or proposal? Are there opportunities to create positive impacts?)</p> <p><i>(remember that the law permits disabled people to be treated equally or better than other groups this is to enable reasonable adjustments to be made).</i></p>	<p>During construction phase:</p> <p>The projects are all being built within secure construction sites which removes school staff and students from the proximity of the construction team. Public access to the construction site will be restricted as required by law.</p> <p>Our main contractors Robertson Construction and Portakabin provide inclusion training to support their staff to manage learning around diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>The project team comply with : The Equality Act 2010</p> <p>BS 8300-2:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. Buildings - code of practice.</p> <p>UK Government Statutory guidance - Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - Building regulation in England to ensure that people are able to access and use buildings and their facilities.</p> <p>In operation:</p> <p>New school buildings are built to comply with equality law (The Equality Act 2010) and UK government guidelines (Building Bulletin 103/104). This legislation ensures that the fundamentals of accessibility are followed and any new buildings cater for the needs of protected groups.</p> <p>Should the new capital builds proceed as recommended the existing (and new student applications) would have the opportunity to attend a school within or close to their home communities. They would then remain on the roll of the school as per the admissions policy of the school.</p> <p>Parents are also able to exercise their parental preference for another school subject to places being available in the selected alternative schools.</p> <p>Existing HR policies covering organisational change would apply to staff employed at the School. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met.</p> <p>There is no reason to believe that any protected groups will be negatively affected by these capital projects.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 143</p>
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<p>Give details of any Human Rights implications and actions that may be needed to safeguard Human Rights.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Give details of any actions that can be taken to promote equality or to lessen any potential adverse impact on protected groups.</p>	<p>During the design stage of this project the school and the wider design team liaised with staff and student representatives to consider the impact of design proposals. There is no evidence to suggest that there are any risks of disproportionately disadvantaging any pupils or members of staff in any of the new school facilities.</p>
<p>What plans are there to monitor and review the actual impact of the policy change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity?</p>	<p>A review should take place prior to the occupation of the new facilities at each location. Ongoing monitoring will take place during the construction phase of the projects.</p>
<p>When will follow up review be done?</p>	<p>If approved, the projects will be nearing completion in August, 2024. A review will take place then.</p>
<p>Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, mark one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:</p>	

	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
Explain how the judgement above was reached and summarise steps which will be taken to reduce any negative or to enhance any positive impacts on equality	N/A
Name(s) and job title(s) of person (people involved in) carrying out this assessment	Mark Elliott - Capital Project Manager
Authorising director or head of service	Sue Aviston
Date authorised	25/03/24
The completed equality impact assessment must be attached to the report that will be considered by the decision maker or decision makers to enable them to give due regard to the impact of the policy, decision or proposal on protected groups	
Please send a copy to keith.thompson@northumberland.gov.uk and irene.fisher@northumberland.gov.uk	

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APPENDIX 4

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR: Coquet Partnership (South Avenue/Feeder Schools)

Project Director: Sue Aviston

Project Manager: Mark Elliott

Risk Workshop

DATE Present:
 15.09.22 Mark Elliott
 Ross Downey
 Ben Allan
 Lynne Brown
 27.09.22 Mark Elliott
 Robyn Marley
 Ben Allan
 Lynne Brown

Risk Workshop

DATE Present:
 05.03.24 Mark Elliott
 Ross Downey
 Robyn Marley

Objectives: Invest to improve the quality of educational experience and outcomes for Northumberland Communities.

Successfully build, refurbish and colocate schools to deliver more financially viable sites / buildings and educational provision.

Deliver project within the overall budget of £41,924,640 (includes South Avenue Project, Feeder School Project and JCSC new build project)

Deliver project on time by September 2024

Risk	Impacts	Like-likelihood	Impact	Current Risk Score	Action Plan					Like-likelihood	Impact	Target Risk Score	Reasons / Updates
					Controls	Control Owner	By When	Status	Assurance Source				
1. There is a risk that failure to get into contract could lead to abortive costs of £989,194.87 for early works undertaken under the LOI. Risk Owner: Sue Aviston	Project objectives not met.	B	1	B2	Contract Management to monitor performance, preventative measures, exit strategies.					D	2	D2	
	Additional resource to rectify remedial works in current school and new site / complete contracts / contract works.				Regular meetings with contractors.								
	Reduced reputation.				Oversight by Project Board.								
	Political dissatisfaction.				Project Governance.								
	Dissatisfied stakeholders.				Formal contract proposals and contract agreed prior to early works starting on site (pre-January 2024)								
	Dissatisfied parents.												
	Criticism by external bodies												
	Potential negative publicity.												
	Abortive costs												
2. There is a risk	Budget overspend.				Budget monitoring.	Mark Elliott	Ongoing	Planned					

Risk	Impacts	Like-likelihood	Impact	Current Risk Score	Action Plan					Like-likelihood	Impact	Target Risk Score	Reasons / Updates
					Controls	Control Owner	By When	Status	Assurance Source				
that the project may not be delivered within the allocated budget of £41,924,640 Risk Owner:	Project objective not met.	C	2	C2	Project governance.	Sue Aviston/ Mark Elliott	Ongoing			D	2	D2	
	Political dissatisfaction.				Oversight by Project Board.	Sue Aviston	Ongoing						
	Negative publicity.				Robust project management.	Mark Elliott	Ongoing						
	Reduced reputation.				Monitor project programme.	Mark Elliott	Ongoing						
	Inability to deliver the Council's key priorities.				Allocated in MTFP.	Sue Aviston	Ongoing						
	Sue Aviston												
3. There is a risk that unprecedented external factors such as construction price inflation, Ukraine Crisis, shortage of HGV drivers, may impact the supply chains resulting in disruption to the project. Risk Owner:	Project overspend.	C	2	C2	Procurement process.	Mark Elliott				D	2	D2	
	Project delayed.				Exit clause to be included in contract.								
	Possible inferior quality of materials.				Reprofile budget to take into account market conditions.	Sue Aviston / Mark Elliott							
	Contractor folds.				Carry out market engagement exercise.	Mark Elliott							
	Inflated costs.												
	Contractor												
4. There is a risk that building on existing occupied operational school sites may bring additional complexities to the project.	Additional costs incurred.	D	2	D2	Outline Business Case.	Sue Aviston				E	2	E2	
	Delays to project.				Clear programme of delivery.	Mark Elliott / Sue Aviston							
	Project objectives not met.				Weekly meetings between the Contractors site teams and School teams.	Mark Elliott							
	Inability to maintain teaching facilities.												
	Dissatisfied staff.												

Risk	Impacts	Like-likelihood	Impact	Current Risk Score	Action Plan					Like-likelihood	Impact	Target Risk Score	Reasons / Updates
					Controls	Control Owner	By When	Status	Assurance Source				
Risk Owner: Contractor	Disgruntled students and parents.	D	2	D2						E	2	E2	
	Possible negative publicity.												
	Loss of income to individual schools.												
5. There is a risk that the new Barndale House satellite building located on the JCSC South Avenue site may not have the potential to meet future demand for SEND school places. Risk Owner: NCC	Changes in Education within the whole County.	D	2	D2	S106 Infrastructure Policy to draw down funding for any required expansion to school buildings.	Lorraine Fife				E	2	E2	
	Children not attending schools within the local catchment area.				SEND Places Strategic Document.	Lorraine Fife		In progress					
					Include option to extend satellite building at a later date.	Sue Aviston / Mark Elliott							
					Gilbert Ward Academy to be opened in Blyth.			In progress					
6. There is a risk that due to the age / condition of the buildings there could be project unknowns.e.g. ground conditions, water ingress, requirement to remove asbestos / reinforced concrete frame and protected species which could result in substantial delays to the project	Increase in costs.	C	2	C2	Asbestos Condition Survey.	Chris Lisle				E	2	E2	
	Delays to project.				Backlog Maintenance survey (may be out of date).	Chris Lisle							
	Contractor may withdraw due to the increase in costs.				Structural Survey.	Chris Lisle							
	Costs run away resulting in less being spent on remainder of the project.				Contingencies.	Sue Aviston / Mark Elliott							
	Project objectives not met.				Procurement process.	Mark Elliott							
					Cost contract accordingly to cover any unknowns.	Chris Lisle							
					Contract terms and conditions.	Chris Lisle							

Risk	Impacts	Like-likelihood	Impact	Current Risk Score	Action Plan					Like-likelihood	Impact	Target Risk Score	Reasons / Updates
					Controls	Control Owner	By When	Status	Assurance Source				
Risk Owner:	Contractor												
7. There is a risk that employees become increasingly concerned about potential implications of the proposed changes.	Reduced staff morale.	B	4	B4	Stakeholder mapping.	Mark Elliott / Ross Downey				C	4	C4	
	Anxiety possibly resulting in increased sickness absence.				Due diligence work in respect of liaison with HR.	Sue Aviston / Mark Elliott							
					Health & Wellbeing Policy.	Headteachers							
					Early identification of staff most likely to be affected.	Headteachers							
					Early communication to manage employee expectations.	Mark Elliott / Headteachers							
					Consult with relevant Trade Unions.	Sue Aviston							
Risk Owner:	NCC/School												
8. There is a risk that any required decants may not be adequately planned or coordinated.	Loss of statutory education provision.	C	3	C3	Outline business case.	Mark Elliott / Ross Downey				D	3	D3	
	Poor educational experience.				Clear programme of delivery.	Mark Elliott							
	Disruption to exams.				Schedule handover of buildings around holiday periods.	Mark Elliott							
	Cost of prelims may be higher depending on the decant programmes.				Regular meetings with contractors and schools.	Mark Elliott							
Risk Owner:	NCC												
9. There is a risk that there may be an inability to meet deadlines agreed	Failure to implement the statutory proposal				Clear programme of delivery.	Mark Elliott / Chris Lisle							

Risk	Impacts	Like-likelihood	Impact	Current Risk Score	Action Plan					Like-likelihood	Impact	Target Risk Score	Reasons / Updates	
					Controls	Control Owner	By When	Status	Assurance Source					
<p>as part of the statutory decisions made by Cabinet.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Sue Aviston</p>	<p>Reconsultation and cabinet decision would be required to amend the timeline for implementation.</p>	A	2	A2	Project governance.	Sue Aviston / Mark Elliott					D	2	D2	
<p>10. There is a risk that the S278 work may not be determined prior to commencement of the project.</p> <p>Risk Owner: NCC</p>	<p>Scope creep.</p> <p>Increase in costs.</p> <p>Inability to meet programme deadlines.</p> <p>Project objectives not met.</p>	C	3	C3	<p>Early engagement with Highways Development Team.</p> <p>Discussions with Planning Officer.</p> <p>Learn from previous projects.e.g. Ponteland School & Leisure.</p>	<p>Mark Elliott</p> <p>Mark Elliott</p> <p>Mark Elliott / Ross Downey</p>		In progress			E	3	E3	

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