



# Northumberland County Council

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Enquiries to:** Andrea Todd

**Email:** andrea.todd@northumberland.gov.uk

**Tel direct:** 01670 622606

**Date:** Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **AUDIT COMMITTEE** to be held on  
**WEDNESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2024 at 10.15 AM in THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY  
HALL, MORPETH, NE61 2EF.**

Yours faithfully

Dr Helen Paterson  
Chief Executive

**To Members of the Audit Committee**



**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  
- 10)

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 29 November 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

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

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

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

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

e. Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registrable Interest or Non Registrable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact [monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto: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. MONITORING REPORT / ACTION LOG 2023-24** (Pages 11 - 16)
- The Audit Committee operates under an agreed programme of core business, in accordance with its Terms of Reference as set out in the Council's Constitution. The Committee is asked to review and note its monitoring report/action log for the 2023/24 council year.
- 5. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 17 - 26)
- Best Value for Money Workstream Progress Report**
- The purpose of the report is to update the Audit Committee on work undertaken to date as part of the Best Value for Money Workstream, covering the period 1st April 2023 – 15th January 2024.
- 6. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE** (Pages 27 - 54)
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Policy**
- To advise members of the requirements of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and to ask Audit Committee to adopt a revised policy under this legislation.
- 7. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 55 - 60)
- Changes to the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the UK for 2023-24**
- The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit Committee with a summary of the key accounting changes in the latest edition of the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the UK which will apply to the 2023-24 Statement of Accounts.
- 8. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 61 - 92)
- Northumberland County Council - Statement of Accounts 2023-24**
- The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit Committee with:
- an overview of the timetable for publishing the 2023-24 Statement of Accounts
  - an update on the Accounting Policies to be applied in the preparation of the 2023-24 Statement of Accounts.
- 9. EXTERNAL AUDIT** (Pages 93 - 116)

## **Audit Progress Report**

This report provides the Audit Committee with an update on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors. It updates members on the current position with the 2019/20 audit and the national delays in completing the 2020/21 and 2021/22 audits, how they impact the Council and the timing of the 2022/23 audit. It also includes, at Section 2, a summary of recent national reports and publications for information.

- 10. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 117 - 186)

### **Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024-25**

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy, which sets out the policies for managing investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. The Council nominates the Audit Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and Policy.

This report sets out the Treasury Management Strategy, Treasury Management Policy Statement, the Annual Investment Strategy for the Financial Year 2024-25, Prudential Indicators 2024-25 to 2027-28 and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2024-25.

- 11. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES AND S151 OFFICER** (Pages 187 - 198)

### **International Lessons Learned Review – Update**

To update the Committee on progress in implementing the recommendations of the international lessons learned review commissioned following the issue of the S151 Officer's S114 report in May 2022.

- 12. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT** (Pages 199 - 226)

### **Outcomes from the External Quality Assessment of the Internal Audit Service**

The purpose of the report is to advise Audit Committee of the findings / outcomes from the external quality assessment of the Internal Audit Service, undertaken in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

- 13. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT** (Pages 227 - 232)

### **Preparation of the Strategic Audit Plan 2024/25**

The purpose of this report is to outline the approach to preparing the 2024/25 Strategic Audit Plan, for consideration and endorsement by the Audit Committee. The report also ensures the Audit Committee, as a key stakeholder of Internal Audit's work, is engaged at an early stage in the planning process.

**14. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 233 - 250)

**Corporate Risk Management Update**

The purpose of this report is to provide Audit Committee with an update on the latest position of the corporate risk register following review by Executive Management Team and Cabinet.

**15. URGENT BUSINESS**

**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 27 March 2024 at 10.15 am.

**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".

**17. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Audit Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:

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

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

**Agenda Items**

18, 19

Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).

Disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person/organisation, and could adversely

affect commercial revenue.

- 18. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 251 - 316)

**Corporate Risk Management Update**

To consider a confidential appendix in relation to item 14 on this agenda.

- 19. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT** (Pages 317 - 328)

**Group Audit Committee: Update on Internal Audit work in relation to active group entities**

The purpose of this report is to update Group Audit Committee on progress against planned internal audit activity in relation to Advance Northumberland, including a summary of work finalised since the previous update to Group Audit Committee in September 2023. This report was presented to Advance Northumberland Audit Committee on 30 November 2023.

**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.

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Date of meeting:</b>	
<b>Meeting:</b>			
<b>Item to which your interest relates:</b>			
<b>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):</b>			
<b>Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?</b>		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
<b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b>	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
<b>Sponsorship</b>	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.
<b>Contracts</b>	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.
<b>Land and Property</b>	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.
<b>Licenses</b>	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
<b>Corporate tenancies</b>	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.
<b>Securities</b>	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"> <li>i. the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
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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)