



# Northumberland County Council

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Enquiries to:** Karon Hadfield

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**Tel direct:** 01670 622610

**Date:** 24 October 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **COUNTY COUNCIL** to be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL** on **WEDNESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2023** at **2.00 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Dr Helen Paterson  
Chief Executive

**To County Council members as follows:-**

**C Ball, D Bawn, J Beynon, L Bowman, S Bridgett, D Carr, E Cartie, G Castle, T Cessford, E Chicken, T Clark, A Dale, W Daley, L Darwin, S Dickinson, R Dodd, C Dunbar, L Dunn, P Ezhilchelvan, S Fairless-Aitken, D Ferguson, B Flux (Chair), J Foster, B Gallacher, L Grimshaw, C Hardy, G Hill, C Horncastle, C Humphrey, I Hunter, JI Hutchinson, P Jackson, V Jones, D Kennedy, J Lang, S Lee, M Mather, N Morphet, M Murphy, K Nisbet, N Oliver, K Parry, W Pattison, W Ploszaj, M Purvis, J Reid, G Renner-Thompson, M Richardson, J Riddle, M Robinson, G Sanderson, A Scott, C Seymour, A Sharp, E Simpson, G Stewart, M Swinbank, M Swinburn, C Taylor, T Thorne, D Towns, H Waddell, A Wallace, A Watson, J Watson, R Wearmouth and R Wilczek**



**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  
- 12)

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Wednesday 6 September 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record.

### 3. DISCLOSURES 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. 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. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIR, LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, CHAIR OF AN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

To receive questions provided on notice from and to provide answers to the public in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules.

**6. MEMBER QUESTIONS**

To receive questions provided on notice from and to provide answers to Members of the Council in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules.

**7. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR ENVIRONMENT** (Pages 13 - 22)

**Annual Portfolio Report – Looking after our Environment**

This is the Annual Report from the Cabinet Member for Looking after our Environment. The report contains issues that set the context for delivery of the Portfolio. It highlights achievements over the past year and, outlines the areas of focus for the coming year.

**8. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE** (Pages 23 - 30)

**Annual Portfolio Report – Inspiring Young People**

This is the Annual Report from the Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People. The report contains issues that set the context for delivery of the Portfolio. It highlights achievements over the past year and, outlines the areas of focus for the coming year.

**9. FAMILY AND CHILDRENS' SERVICES OSC - INTERIM REPORT TO COUNCIL** (Pages 31 - 34)

To receive a report from the Chair of the Family and Childrens' Services OSC.

**10. HEALTH AND WELLBEING OSC - INTERIM REPORT TO COUNCIL** (Pages 35 - 38)

To receive a report from the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing OSC.

**11. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 39 - 60)

## **Corporate Performance – Quarter 4 2022/23 Outturn 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 4, 2022/23 (Q4).

- 12. REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE** (Pages 61 - 74)

### **Annual Report from the Audit Committee**

The purpose of this report is to present an Annual Report from Audit Committee to Council for 2022/23.

- 13. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 75 - 94)

### **Treasury Management Annual Report for the Financial Year 2022-23**

This report provides details of performance against the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) 2022-23 approved by the County Council on 23 February 2022. The report provides a review of borrowing and investment performance for 2022-23, set in the context of the general economic conditions prevailing during the year. It also reviews specific Treasury Management prudential indicators defined by the (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice and CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code), and approved by the Authority in the TMSS.

- 14. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE STAFF AND APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE** (Pages 95 - 106)

### **Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) - contractual change from fixed term to permanent status**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval that the current postholder in the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) be contracted on a permanent basis.

The Staff and Appointments Committee will meet on 25 October 2023 to consider the proposal and due to the timings of this committee meeting, it is not possible to submit a full report for consideration by Full Council with the agenda papers which are now attached.

The full report received by Staff and Appointments Committee is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

**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.

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# Agenda Item 2

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Northumberland County Council** held on Wednesday 6 September 2023 at County Hall, Morpeth at 3.00 pm.

### PRESENT

Councillor B. Flux (Chairman in the Chair)

### MEMBERS

Ball, C.	Mather, M.
Bawn, D.	Morphet, N.
Beynon, J.	Murphy, M.
Bowman, L.	Nisbet, K.
Carr, D.	Oliver, N.
Castle, G.	Parry, K.
Cessford, T.	Pattison, W.
Chicken, E.	Reid, J.
Dale, P.A.M.	Renner-Thompson, G.
Daley, W.	Richardson, M.
Darwin, L.	Riddle, J.R.
Dickinson, S.	Robinson, M.
Dodd, R.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Dunbar, C.	Scott, A.
Ezhilchelvan, P.	Seymour, C.
Ferguson, D.	Sharp, A.
Foster, J.	Simpson, E.
Gallacher, B.	Stewart, G.
Grimshaw, L.	Swinbank, M.
Hardy, C.R.	Swinburn, M.
Horncastle, C.	Taylor, C.
Humphrey, C.	Thorne, T.N.
Hunter, I.E.	Waddell, H.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Wallace, A.
Jackson, P.A.	Watson, A.
Jones, V.	Watson, J.
Kennedy, D.	Wearmouth, R.W.
Lang, J.A.	Wilczek, R.
Lee, S.	

### OFFICERS

Bradley, N.	Executive Director – Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing
Hadfield, K.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P.	Director of Strategy and Communications
Kingham, A.	Executive Director – Children and Young People

Masson, N.	Deputy Monitoring Officer
McNeil, J.	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Neilson, S.	Executive Director, Place and Regeneration
Paterson, Dr H.	Chief Executive
O'Neill, G.	Executive Director for Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities
Willis, J.	Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)

Six members of the press and public were present.

## 21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Bridgett, Cartie, Clark, Dunn, Fairless-Aitken, Hill, Ploszaj, Purvis and Towns.

## 22. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Wednesday 14 June 2023, be confirmed as a true record.

## 23. ANNOUNCEMENTS by the Chair, Leader, Member of the Cabinet, Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Head of Paid Service.

The Chair reported that a number of people connected with Northumberland had received honours in HM the King's Birthday Honours as follows:-

Professor Derek Alderson, Chair, Centre for Perioperative (PERI – OPERATIVE) Care and lately President, Royal College of Surgeons of England. For services to Surgery (CBE)

Dr Alice Karen Good, Founder, Sunflower Sisters. For services to Ukrainian Refugees (MBE).

Reverend Fiona Jean Sample, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, The Oswin Project. For services to the Rehabilitation of Offenders. (MBE).

Donna Marie Swan, Founder, Calmer Therapy. For services to Children with Special Educational Needs and their families in North East England (MBE).

Vikki Ewen, For services to the community in Coquetdale, Morpeth, Northumberland. (BEM).

He also reported with sadness the recent death of former County Councillor Anne Patterson who had passed away on 12 June 2023. Anne had represented the Morpeth South Ward from 1993 to 2001 and he invited Council to join him in observing a minute's silence in her memory.

The Leader also made some announcements. Firstly, he congratulated all young people across the county for their tremendous exam results during this summer. Nearly 5000 learners had completed Year 11 and 13 studies with external examinations this year.

Overall, the Northumberland provisional results were in line with a return to the pre pandemic outcomes from 2019 (the last year of similar exam procedures) which indicated that Northumberland continued to bounce back.

The quality of education in Northumberland had never been higher according to Ofsted, with 94% of schools now graded good or better. This placed the Authority joint 2nd in the North East, 4% higher than the North East average and 6% higher than the national average, and he praised the efforts of young people, teachers and Headteachers, parents and the Education Team working closely with Councillor Renner Thompson.

He referred to the Government announcement the previous day regarding the postponement of the dualling of the A1. This was very disappointing.

This was also the first meeting of Council since Councillor Veronica Jones re-joined the Council's Cabinet. Councillor Jones would bring a wealth of experience, calmness, and common sense to the Improving Public Health and Wellbeing, and he thanked Councillor Ferguson for his work on the portfolio.

The Leader also welcomed the new Chief Fire Officer, Graeme Binning. Graeme had spent recent months working with Paul Hedley on his handover as Paul approached his well-earned retirement.

A forward programme of policy conferences had been developed for the rest of the year which would be shared with all members. These had proved a real success and a great opportunity to input into policy development. He advised members that there would be a session on corporate parenting before the next meeting of Council in November.

## **24. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

## **25. MEMBER QUESTIONS**

### **Question 1 from Councillor Carr to the Leader**

I would like to express my thanks to the Council after the recent refurbishment of Blyth's Iconic Beach Huts in my ward. The rejuvenation has breathed new life into what I consider to be Blyth's finest asset. But I would like to see the same effort put in to refresh the Beach Promenade as well. It's an incredibly popular spot for tourism in Northumberland and it needs care and attention. So, I would like to ask if the Council can confirm whether there are any investment plans for Blyth's beach promenade? One that would be on par with the private development opposite.

The Leader agreed that Blyth beach was a great asset for the County and the beach huts were of great value, which was why the Administration had invested in their refurbishment. There would be a project starting soon to revitalise the beach area and the Council was also working with Ridley Park volunteers and on the Isabella Heap Country Park. More of these initiatives would come forward when the new Environment policy was launched.

Councillor Carr welcomed this news and looked forward to any progress made with the beach promenade.

### **Question 2 from Councillor Hill to the Leader**

Councillor Hill had submitted apologies so a written response would be made.

### **Question 3 from Councillor Taylor to the Leader (for Councillor Ploszaj)**

With the ongoing development of Bedlington's Town Centre, could you please outline NCC's plans for the next phase once the four shops and 6 apartments are complete?

The Leader replied that the remaining sites were being actively marketed. Work had been continuing with stakeholders on a Place Plan for the town which would be brought forward soon. The Council was also working with Advance Northumberland and partners to support the development of projects which built on current investments underway, including the reopening of the train station as part of the Northumberland Line.

The Council had secured Government Levelling up Funds to provide new and upgraded active travel infrastructure in Bedlington which would enhance the east to west link across the town. This scheme will connect the western extent of Bedlington, key residential and employment areas with the proposed Northumberland Line train station and the eastern coastal area. Additional benefits to this route included a connection towards schools across the town to facilitate active travel. The estimated cost of this scheme was £7,716,000.

There were also several capital investment schemes in development within the Council's Parks Enhancement Programme. These included improvements to the café and seating areas and the provision of a 'bouldering course' to improve the visitor experience and offer at Plessey Woods Country Park. Approval had also been given to the creation of a QEII Memorial rose garden. He confirmed the Administration was committed to Bedlington and focussed on projects which would enhance the town.

Councillor Taylor appreciated the work which was going on behind the scenes. She felt there was a need to get information out to the public about what was happening with Borderlands. The Leader suggested that he could attend a public meeting in Bedlington in furtherance of this if necessary.

### **Question 4 from Councillor Humphrey to Councillor Stewart**

On Newsham Farm Estate there are two blocks of privately owned flats locally known as Holystone Flats. 10 years or so they have been a hub for anti-social behaviour causing disturbance, distress and annoyance to the residents who live in the vicinity of the flats at all times of day and nights. Various efforts have

been made to stop this behaviour which will reduce, then return to a higher level after action has been taken. Would Cllr Stewart assure me that a sustained effort will be put in to stop the perpetrators of the nuisance and take the landlords to task who turn a blind eye to the behaviour being carried out in their properties?

Councillor Stewart responded that the issue was known to the Community Safety Team. They did not receive a high level of complaints from residents on this though it was understood that the Police did receive higher levels.

The Team was currently dealing with individual issues as they arose in partnership with other agencies using the powers available. These included the power to close individual flats should the evidence support such action. At present the team had one 'open case'.

Broader powers did exist, though these required clear data and evidence to support their use. Given the concerns which had been highlighted, he would arrange a multi-agency meeting to review the current situation and report back on proposed next steps and he would update the councillor on that.

Councillor Humphrey asked if Councillor Stewart would meet with him in Newsham so he could see the problem and other issues of concern. Councillor Stewart agreed to this and added that he would shortly be announcing some funding from the Government to combat anti-social behaviour. The Safer Northumberland Partnership was also being revamped to make it more fit for the future. He was running a campaign currently for the larger social housing providers to make them take action where necessary

#### **Question 5 from Councillor A. Watson to Councillor Riddle**

Now that we know there are likely to be several road disruptions in Blyth for the Northumberland line and relief road surveys, can the Leader ensure timely information is shared with members before the public, and can we make sure all options are explored to reduce disruption, including the opening of the old Laverock road with a reduced speed limit and a full assessment of timescales for emergency vehicles to the areas affected?

Councillor Riddle responded that it was great to see the Northumberland Line project being delivered on the ground and also progress on the preparations for the Blyth Relief Road. These projects would ultimately benefit thousands of people, from local residents in Blyth to those who travelled to work or visit the town. They were an investment for current and future generations.

They would require complex construction works which inevitably would affect the highway network in the short term. The Northumberland Line project required the construction of two new roundabouts on the existing A1061 South Newsham Road which would connect to the new bridge over the railway line which replaced the level crossing.

Consideration of the traffic management arrangement for the works were currently ongoing, including whether some elements of the work could best be achieved through the use of temporary traffic lights or through the use of a one

way system. Officers were exploring all options to minimise disruption. Following further discussion with utility companies and contractors about the options, he would update members and the public about the proposed traffic management in advance of any works.

Regarding the suggestion about the opening of the old Laverock Hall Road bus only route to all traffic during the works, this would be considered. However, the use of the bus link by traffic before the camera enforcement was installed had caused real road safety concerns for residents, leading to a major campaign to improve its enforcement as 'bus only'. So, increased road safety risks would need to be carefully considered. He was aware that the length of the traffic order had caused concerns but this was a legal document to cover all eventualities.

Councillor Watson acknowledged that the order had not meant to be issued without the supporting context. She welcomed the Northumberland Line and the benefits it would bring but reminded members that there was still a cost of living crisis and the works would affect some people more than others. She asked that all of the closures were looked at through an inequalities lens so the financial effect of the diversions could be fully appreciated.

Councillor Riddle responded that this would be taken into account. There were lots of options to be considered and local members would be kept updated.

#### **Question 6 from Councillor Ball to Councillor Stewart**

Motorbike, E bikes and E scooters disorder is a complaint many councillors have in their inbox on a weekly basis. What is the plan to tackle the issues many residents are facing?

Councillor Stewart responded that this was a challenge across Northumberland and tackling it was not straightforward. The Police had the power to seize and uplift bikes but they were not permitted to pursue the bikes and scooters.

There had been some successes - the Police used drones to carry out an operation where a number of bikes/scooters were seized in the North of the County, and this could be considered across Northumberland by each Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Other measures were being explored, such as plain clothes Police operations and working with other services within the Council to see how the Council could use design to discourage use of bikes or naturally slow them down making it possible for Police to seize vehicles.

Identifying where bikes/scooters are being stored was also important, therefore Crimestoppers were currently launching a campaign around anonymous reporting in the Hirst area of Ashington. Publicity around this launch would actively encourage the reporting of bike disorder.

Councillor Ball commented that she was seeking clarification on what the County Council's response was, not the Police, as she felt the Council did have a role to play and had some responsibility. She asked what the Community Safety Team were going to do to tackle the issue for residents.

Councillor Stewart agreed this was a major issue in many towns across the county. The Council was working with the Safer Northumberland Partnership and he would raise it at a forthcoming meeting. Communities had a role to play in tackling this issue and more information was needed from the public, which would be treated in confidence.

## **26. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR IMPROVING OUR ROADS AND HIGHWAYS**

### **Annual Portfolio Report – Improving our Roads and Highways**

The Annual Report from the Cabinet Member for Improving our Roads and Highways contained issues that set the context for delivery of the Portfolio. It highlighted achievements over the past year and outlined the areas of focus for the coming year.

The Chair advised members that he would be limited members to ten minutes for questions and one question per member on the report.

Councillor Riddle introduced his report which covered work for the past year. During this year, there had been considerable inflationary pressures but the service had tried to innovate and secure value for money as much as possible. The Local Transport Plan programme totalled £23.4m and there had been some challenges to deal with in the past year. Much of the investment was steered by the Transport Asset Management Plan and that had been refreshed this year. Some new back office systems had also been implemented. He highlighted some of the other key points of the report and thanked all of the staff for their hard work.

Councillor Dickinson welcomed the report. He asked whether future portfolio holder reports would detail some of the challenges which the services had faced as staff had done a tremendous job to deliver what they had with limited resources. He asked whether the economic impact work of dualling the A1 which had been done some time ago needed to be refreshed, bearing in mind the recent Government announcement about a further delay to the dualling of the A1.

The Leader responded that this matter was not in the report but the Council would work together to maintain the campaign and to encourage the DoT to spend as much money as other Government departments had done in Northumberland to ensure the work would begin next year.

Councillor Kennedy felt the A1 needed to feature in the report as part of the strategic vision for the County. There was much to celebrate in the Portfolio Holder's report but he asked if the A1 could feature in a Local Transport Plan because of the significance of this route through the County.

The Leader responded that this was not possible because the A1 was not the responsibility of the County Council. The role for the Council was to remain positive, to work together and to demonstrate to Government that the significant funding coming into the Council should also be spread across the A1.

Councillor Reid asked that future reports include the challenges within the portfolio. Councillor Riddle commented that the report reflected the good work which had gone on in the service and there were other avenues available to raise the challenges. The purpose of the report was to inform members about achievements and he was proud of it.

Councillor Swinburn welcomed the FixMyStreet initiative which provided a direct link for both members and residents to report issues. He asked if there would be some performance data available in the future. Councillor Riddle replied that there would and acknowledged that there had been some teething problems, but the reporting back was getting much better after the initial spike of reports.

Councillor Foster commented on the lack of cycleways in her ward and the designated cyclist/pedestrian routes were leading to some cyclists believing they could cycle on the path. This was causing impacts with pedestrians and sometimes conflict. She asked what would be done to make cyclists aware that they couldn't cycle on every path and how could pedestrians be kept safe.

Councillor Riddle responded that more emphasis would have to be put on cycleways as part of the next budget round. There could be a need for refreshed marking and the Cycling and Walking Board had a role to play in educating the public.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **27. CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OSC – INTERIM REPORT TO COUNCIL**

Council was asked to receive a report from the Chair of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC. The report was presented by Councillor Bawn. This was part of the new reporting arrangements from Scrutiny to Council.

The three main issues which would be the focus of the Committee's attention in the coming months were regeneration, BEST delivery and the capital programme. Regular updates were also now provided from Advance Northumberland.

He highlighted some of the areas of work which the Committee had looked at in detail.

Councillor Dickinson asked whether, given the timetable of meetings for the Committee and the current financial challenges, the Chair felt the Committee



was meeting enough. Councillor Bawn responded that there was an annual budget meeting and regular financial performance reports were received. Additional meetings were called as necessary.

Councillor Kennedy felt more detail was needed on debt recovery to explain the size of the problem. Councillor Bawn responded that the benchmarking on debt recovery showed that the Authority was performing well and that there was not a specific problem. Detailed figures could be provided.

Councillor Reid asked the Scrutiny Chair whether he felt this part of the Scrutiny process served any purpose in terms of the weight given to recommendations by Cabinet. Councillor Bawn responded that the Administration had embarked on a review of Scrutiny to make it work in a more effective way and to get away from the pre-Scrutiny process. The revised way of working allowed Scrutiny to both help frame policy at an earlier stage and to review what decisions had been made and how they had worked.

Councillor Dale felt more work needed to be done to reduce the large number of current vacancies which was affecting service delivery, particularly in council tax. Councillor Bawn replied that work continued to monitor vacancies. If there was a specific issue, this could be raised with the S151 Officer or himself.

Councillor Wallace commented that it was three years ago that the announcement had been made about British Volt coming to Cambois. He asked when he would be informed about work actually coming to the site, so he could answer residents' questions.

Councillor Bawn responded that things were going on but he wasn't able to say when there would be a resolution to everything. He understood it was frustrating, but this was in the hands of others. As soon as there was something to report, this would come to Committee.

Councillor Wilczek asked why £250,000 was not being spent in the parks and green spaces programme. There was a great need for basic investment in play parks and the country park in her ward by the Council so why was £250,000 unspent?

Councillor Bawn replied that the actual parks were an issue for Communities and Place OSC but regarding the finance, there had been delays with contractors which meant that the budget hadn't yet been spent. The position would be monitored and the budget would be used.

## **28. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OFFICER**

### **Political Proportionality**

Council was asked to determine the political proportionality of the registered political groups on the Council and to allocate seats on committees in

accordance with that proportionality in accordance with the provisions of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The report's recommendations were proposed by Councillor Wearmouth and seconded by Councillor Reid.

**RESOLVED** that:

(a) Council notes that following the notification by the Labour and Independent Group Leaders of changes to the number in the Labour and Independent groups, the total number of councillors in each political group on the County Council is now Conservative 33, Labour 19, Independent 8, Liberal Democrat 4, Green 2 and 1 un-grouped member;

(b) Council confirms that the political proportionality of the Groups is as follows: Conservative 49.25%, Labour 28.36%, Independent 11.94%, Liberal Democrat 5.97%, Green 2.99% and un-grouped 1.49%;

(c) Council agrees to continue to use the method for determining allocations to Committees as agreed by Full Council at its meeting of 30 March 2022;

(d) Council approves the provisions of Appendix 1 which sets out the proportional allocation of places on committees in accordance with the proportionality approved above;

(e) Council agrees the allocation of seats to Northumberland County principal/decision making Committees set out in Appendix 2 to this report;

(f) Council agrees allocations to working groups set out in Appendix 3 to this report; and

(g) Council authorises the Director of Law and Corporate Governance, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to give effect to the wishes of the Group Leaders to fill the committee places allocated to their respective Groups in accordance with the provisions of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

## **29. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OFFICER**

### **Establishment of the Rights of Way Committee and Other Governance Matters**

Council was asked:

1. To make arrangements for the discharge of the non-executive functions of the County Council through the appointment of the Rights of Way Committee, following the LAC Review undertaken earlier this year and agreed by Council in June, to appoint Members to that committee in accordance with

the proportionality of the Council, including the Chair and Vice Chair, and to agree its terms of reference.

2. To receive the name of the Cabinet Member for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing.

3. To appoint a number of Chair and Vice Chair places on Committees.

4. To nominate members to the outside bodies listed in paragraph 5.3.

Councillor Dale asked a question about whether Councillor Jones should be Chair, or Vice Chair of the Inequalities Working Group, as the report indicated. It was confirmed that Council was being asked to appoint her as **Chair**.

The report's recommendations, as amended above, were moved by Councillor Bawn and seconded by Councillor Dale.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) a Rights of Way Committee be established, with the size and terms of reference as detailed in paragraph 5.1 of the report, and Councillor Hutchinson and Councillor Wallace be elected Chair and Vice Chair respectively;

(b) the appointment of Councillor Jones as Cabinet Member for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing by the Leader be noted;

(c) the following members be elected to the positions detailed below:

Councillor Richard Dodd as Chair of Health and Wellbeing OSC

Councillor Eve Chicken as Vice Chair of FACS OSC

Councillor Catherine Seymour as Vice Chair of Licensing/Licensing and Regulatory Committees

Councillor Anna Watson as Vice Chair of the Local Plan Working Group

Councillor Veronica Jones as Chair of the Inequalities Working Group.

(d) the following nominations to outside bodies be made:-

Rural Services Network – G. Sanderson, J. Riddle (sub)

Northumberland Coast AONB – L. Bowman to replace M. Murphy

North East Combined Authority – L. Grimshaw to replace M. Murphy and A. Wallace to replace L. Grimshaw as the sub; and

(e) the Director of Law and Corporate Governance be authorised, in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader(s), to make any changes to memberships of the main outside bodies/ joint bodies approved by Council, which may become necessary during the course of 2023/24.

**30. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OFFICER**

**Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

Council was asked to consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and to decide if any or all of its recommendations should be adopted.

Councillor Morphet asked about recommendations 10 and 11 in the report which seemed to duplicate other recommendations in the report. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that they were slightly separate and flowed from the report and should be retained.

Councillor Dale referred to paragraph 6.7 of the report regarding the link to the staff pay and asked if the Deputy Monitoring Officer could recommend to the IRP that this be continued. The DMO replied that this was not within his power. The IRP made recommendations to Council, which then made decisions on those recommendations. Councillor Wearmouth added that the IRP would consult on any future changes with all members.

Councillor Dickinson asked whether there was a timescale for a full review. The DMO suggested that it was likely to be time for the next financial year.

The Leader proposed the report’s recommendations, which was seconded by Councillor J. Watson.

Councillor Dickinson commented that he had found the process with the IRP very professional and robust and that it was important that whilst members could not make recommendations to the IRP, they were able to express their views.

Councillor Wearmouth thanked the Chair and the Panel for their work.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel be adopted, and the Panel be commissioned to conduct a Full Review of the Members Allowance Scheme; and
- (b) the Constitution of the Council be updated with a revised Member’s Allowance Scheme to reflect any necessary changes approved by Council.

.....  
Chair of the County Council

.....  
Duly Authorised Officer



## Northumberland County Council

County Council

Wednesday, 1 November 2023

### Annual Portfolio Report – Looking After Our Environment

**Report of Councillor(s)** Councillor 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

- 1.1 **Achieving Value for Money** – The Portfolio contributes to Value for Money by seeking to maximise income and investment into the county, its services and assets. It conducts all commissioning and contracting via the NCC procurement service. All teams constantly review activities in relation to County Council priorities and Central Government/statutory requirements. A significant proportion of activities are funded by self-contained or traded budgets, such as the Housing Revenue Account.
- 1.2 **Tackling Inequalities** – The Portfolio plays a key role in driving delivery of the Council's Inequalities Plan through addressing the underlying causes of spatial patterns of inequality, specifically health inequality via its focus on the wider determinates of health and well-being.
- 1.3 **Driving Economic Growth** - The Portfolio contributes to driving economic growth by planning sufficient housing and infrastructure to support long term economic competitiveness. The Portfolio also helps to create and maintain safe, clean and attractive places in which to live and to do business. The development and adoption of formal, long-term strategies, such as the Northumberland Local Plan, give confidence, and more certainty for both the investment community and local residents about the development of land assets and property.

#### 2. Purpose of report

- 2.1 This is the Annual Portfolio Report from the Portfolio Holder for Looking After our Environment. The Report contains issues that set the context for delivery of the Portfolio. It highlights achievements over the past year and, outlines some of the areas of focus for the coming year.

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 Council is recommended to:

- a) Note the update from the Portfolio Holder for Looking After Our Environment.

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

18<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The report is to note and does not require key decision.

### **5. Background**

5.1 The Annual Portfolio reports from each of the Council's Cabinet Members provide an opportunity for Council to consider an overview of, and comment on the work of each Portfolio. This strengthens the important link and accountability between key decisions taken by the Cabinet and achievement of the three priorities of the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan.

5.2 The County Council adopted the Corporate Plan at its AGM on 17th May 2023. The Plan establishes three priorities for the Council, underpinned by our approach to tackling Climate Change. The Annual Council Achievements Report (reported to Council in March 2023) sets out overall progress against the three priorities whilst this Portfolio report provides an opportunity for Members to drill down further into the work of the Looking After Our Environment Portfolio.

#### **Looking After Our Environment - Context**

5.3 The new Local Plan (adopted March 2022) gives a key spatial context for change, environmental protection, development and growth in the County until 2035.

5.4 In October this year, the Council's Cabinet agreed a new overarching Environmental Policy Statement, demonstrating the high priority given by the Council to environmental matters, such as Climate Change, Nature Recovery & Biodiversity, Heat and Renewable Energy, Sustainable Waste Management, Travel and Transport, Water Quality, Parks & Green Spaces and Safeguarding Public Health. The Policy Statement covers the 4-year period from 2023/24 to 2026/27, after which time it will be reviewed and updated. It identifies and communicates how the diverse range of environmental policy and service delivery activities undertaken by the Council are all part of its commitment to maintain, protect and enhance the environment.

5.5 It is intended that the Environmental Policy Statement will be used to help support improved public awareness, engagement and active participation on these important environmental matters.

5.6 In the past year, the country has experienced high levels of inflation, and this impacts on almost all of the goods and services used by the services within this Portfolio. This places even greater importance on our ability to secure value for money and innovation in everything we do and this will be a core theme for this Portfolio in the coming year.

#### **Achievements – Housing**

5.7 As a responsible and caring landlord, the Council continues to offer additional support to its tenants. For example, the Welfare support team worked with tenants and brought in an extra £572k of income to our most vulnerable tenants through income

maximisation, grants and additional benefit entitlement. Alongside this, the Council also introduced a 'hardship fund' of £350k to help tenants with the rent increase and the cost-of-living increase. Vulnerability Officers secured £65k in grant funding for new vulnerable tenants working with Northumberland Communities Together to source grants, food parcels, white goods and furniture. And, the 'Working Homes Project' saw 70 tenants find employment and 40 into training programmes.

- 5.8 A Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for Northumberland 2022–2026 was completed and approved by Cabinet on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023. And, Armed Forces Outreach Workers dealt with 256 referrals from current or ex-forces personnel, for help and support around their housing.
- 5.9 We provided 41 properties as part of the Asylum Seekers Vulnerable Person scheme, 18 Properties as part of the Afghan resettlement Programme and 5 properties for Childrens Services to house up to 15 unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. The Homes for Ukraine scheme was quickly set up and currently supports 181 households.
- 5.10 Following a submission to the Government, a 2-year revenue grant of £660k was awarded as part of the 'Blyth Deep Dive Levelling Up' funding allocation to establish a dedicated Empty Homes Team for Blyth. This team will form part of the Private Sector Housing Team.
- 5.11 The total number of affordable homes delivered in 2022/23 was 152. A total of 1,579 affordable homes were given planning permission in year, including 52 as new NCC Council Homes. Work continues to bring forward several development sites with 244 new units in the pipeline.
- 5.12 Also, substantial funding from Government was secured in 2022/23 to support a range of housing improvements in Blyth. This funding will support regeneration of some low demand housing and to support new housing developments in Blyth.
- 5.13 Our housing maintenance continues to be effective, with 95% of planned Capital improvements to Council owned homes completed in 2022/23. This includes, kitchen, bathroom, electrical, roofing and heating upgrades.

### **Achievements – Planning**

- 5.14 In March 2022 Council adopted Northumberland's first Local Plan addressing a key area of corporate risk and providing a platform for the delivery of corporate priorities.
- 5.15 Since then, we have met all key Government targets. This has included the Housing Delivery Test (280%) and the 5 year Housing Land Supply test (11.8 years or 236%). This places NCC in the top 5% performing English Local Planning Authorities. An increasing proportion of Local Authorities are not meeting this challenge. Some 39% are unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. All other national statutory planning performance targets have been surpassed during a period of historic high planning application numbers.
- 5.16 The new approach now being taken to s106 reporting was defined as "exemplar" and representing "Best Practice" by DLUHC in 2022, and, the NCC Planning Performance Agreement approach was defined as representing "Best Practice" by DLUHC in 2022. The total amount of money received from planning obligations during the last year was £5,050,707.
- 5.17 The Planning Team continue to support key strategic schemes, providing planning and design input into: the Northumberland Line Stations; Blyth Relief Road;

regeneration Initiatives (including in Blyth and Ashington); the Council's affordable housing delivery programme; the disposal and use of Council assets; site search and analysis for inward investors; and, working closely with Public Health and the Climate Change Team on initiatives.

- 5.18 There are a range of approaches being supported by the County Council aimed at supporting community-led planning initiatives. These complement a range of strategic priorities and, are becoming a key tool for local areas to shape issues such as responses to affordable housing and climate change. Northumberland was a national Neighbourhood Plan pilot authority, and since there has been a high level of interest. As of August 2023, there are now 20 neighbourhood plans formally "made" (adopted) in Northumberland, with half being agreed in the last 3 years.

### **Achievements - Historic Environment and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

- 5.19 The Council is working in partnership to deliver the Hexham High Street Action Zone, with £4,352,254 funding provided to improve the local economy through heritage-led regeneration and public realm improvements.
- 5.20 We have also provided conservation support and advice to major Council and other strategic initiatives, including Union Chain Bridge, Berwick Maltings, Northumberland Line, Berwick Infirmary and Hexham Shambles.
- 5.21 Our 'Coast Care' volunteering initiative continued to grow in 2022. There are now 160 active volunteers undertaking daily tasks in and around the AONB. These include beach cleans, habitat management, wildlife surveys, access improvements and other practical tasks.
- 5.22 We also secured a £355,600 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund which has allowed the previously hidden secrets and insights into the lives of Bamburgh's Anglo Saxon past to be unveiled through new cutting-edge interpretation recreating Northumbria's Golden Age. The interpretive display and digital ossuary at St Aidan's Church and Crypt in Bamburgh tells the story of 110 skeletons dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries unearthed from what is believed to be the burial ground for the royal court of Northumbria.

### **Achievements – Parks and Open Spaces Environment**

- 5.23 Having high-quality local environments for people of all ages is an important part of promoting wellbeing. That's why we are delighted this year, when twelve of Northumberland parks were awarded the Green Flag Awards (increased from 11 last year). This award recognises them as some of the very best in the country.
- 5.24 We are also pleased that performance outturn data for last year show neighbourhoods continue to be clean and tidy, where fly tipping issues are dealt with swiftly. In addition to the work undertaken directly by our Neighbourhood Services teams we support a wide range of individuals and groups who volunteer to do their bit in helping litter pick and keep their local area clean, by providing them with equipment and picking up the litter they collect. Last year we hosted an environmental champions conference to further support and celebrate the work of our fantastic volunteers and we also held our Love Northumberland Awards to recognise and promote the excellent work being undertaken by volunteers and community groups across the county.



- 5.25 The annual 'Love It Like It's Yours' campaign was launched again this year ahead of the summer, led by NCC in collaboration with a broad range of partner organisations, such as Forestry England, Northumberland National Park, HM Coastguard, NFRS, Northumbria Police and Visit Northumberland. This visitor management behaviour change campaign is undertaken as part of the Northumberland Destination Management Plan and has been ran each summer for the past 3 years to promote a warm welcome to visitors to the county whilst also encouraging responsible behaviours that respect local communities and safeguard wildlife and the environment. This year's campaign had a particular focus on prevention of wildfires including use of disposable BBQs, water safety and promoting safe crossing times at Holy Island Causeway.
- 5.26 The Council is also currently delivering its free tree scheme for 2023, the scheme offers every household the opportunity to obtain and plant a tree and is now entering its 4th year of operation.

#### **Achievements – Waste & Recycling**

- 5.27 Waste services reported an 85% overall satisfaction rate from the annual customer survey and in every category satisfaction levels improved in 2022/23, compared to 2021/22 results, demonstrating high levels of satisfaction with all Waste Services.
- 5.28 Our glass and food waste recycling pilot schemes have proven to be very popular with participants and are providing valuable data that is being used to develop effective and efficient plans for rolling out these services when Government new burdens funding is made available (now expected in 2025).
- 5.29 We are currently delivering a full roll out of communal bin areas in the Hirst area of Ashington, which will improve residents access to recycling services, and remove the use of plastic sack refuse collections which will help reduce litter and fly tipping in the area.

#### **Achievements – Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management**

- 5.30 Within the past year the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Team have completed surface water flood alleviation schemes at Bingfield, Seaton Delaval, Wark and Ovingham resulting in 41 properties being better protected from the risk of surface water flooding. These schemes have been largely funded by Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) and Local Levy funding. In their role as Lead Local Flood Authority the team have responded to over 850 planning consultations, ensuring drainage and surface water flood risk has been properly considered through the planning process and have also reviewed 33 Land Drainage Consent Applications for works within ordinary watercourses.

#### **Cemeteries & Crematoria**

- 5.31 Following discussions with representatives of the Muslim community in Blyth, we have developed a dedicated area for Muslim burials in Bedlington to serve people of Muslim faith in the Southeast of the County. We worked with community representatives to ensure the new section and our burial service met their needs. This included ensuring grave spaces are correctly orientated to Mecca and introducing arrangements to ensure burials can take place as quickly as possible, ideally within 24 hours.
- 5.32 During 2022 Badger Proof fencing was installed in Tweedmouth cemetery Berwick, which completed the introduction of several measures designed to deter badgers from damaging the surface of graves in the cemetery. Prior to the introduction of these

measures badger damage was a significant cause for concern to people whose loved ones were buried in the cemetery, the introduction of the fencing and other measures such as landscaping and reducing food sources has significantly improved the situation for visitors to the cemetery without harming or moving the badgers or their setts.

### **Key Areas of Focus for the Coming Year – Housing**

- 5.33 The most significant areas of focus for Housing Teams are related to the impending implications of the **Social Housing Regulation Bill** and the need to provide a more aligned social/affordable housing stock offer to rural and urban communities.
- 5.34 The Bill is intended to create a stronger regulatory framework and drive standards up across the sector to help registered providers of Social Housing deliver a better service to social housing tenants. It introduces ‘Ofsted-like’ inspections of providers, carried out by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), with as little as 48 hours’ notice, while the RSH can now order landlords to carry out emergency remedial work and issue unlimited fines. The County Council has volunteered to be part of a national pilot for Housing Regulation Inspections, one of only four local authorities in England to do so at the stage in the introduction of the new system.
- 5.35 Following the Tier 1 & 2 restructure with Housing and Planning being aligned under the same Directorate, it is timely to look at a revised Housing Delivery Strategy that reflects not only what the Council is able to do in terms of direct delivery and investment, but also captures how NCC is able to enable and facilitate affordable homes across the county, through partnerships and securing external funding. Some £5.5m of Brownfield Housing Funding has already been secured and there is an opportunity to do more with the wider Combined Authority and through One Public Estate and Homes England.
- 5.36 An updated Housing Strategy is now being drafted and will soon be shared for consultation. This strategy will detail the aspirations for Housing in Northumberland and form the basis of the priorities for the Housing Service over the next 5 years, supporting the delivery of the Corporate Priorities.
- 5.37 We will continue to respond to imminent and far-ranging changes in the planning system, proposed through legislation and national policy. The most significant of these is likely to be the wholesale replacement of the current Developer Contributions system, commonly called “Section 106 agreements”.

### **Key Areas of Focus for the Coming Year – Waste & Recycling**

- 5.38 Government has delayed funding by 12 months for the roll-out of kerbside glass recycling originally planned for 2024/25. This year the service will be undertaking the detailed route design work and other logistical planning to enable us to provide kerbside glass collections from April 2025 (subject to Government funding announcements).
- 5.39 Work will continue with our Waste PFI contractor to progress expansion of the range of materials that can be included in household recycling bins to include plastic pots, tubs & trays and tetrapak cartons for 2025/26 (subject to Government funding announcements).
- 5.40 Detailed plans will also be finalised to introduce weekly food waste collections in April 2026 (subject to Government funding announcements).

- 5.41 Clearing roadside litter on fast speed roads is a challenge for all Councils due to the costs involved in ensuring it is safe to do this work, and it can be very detrimental to an area's visual amenity. We are currently reviewing the approach to litter picking on high-speed roads, with proposed changes due to be considered as part of next year's budget setting process.
- 5.42 This year we are also reviewing the deployment and productivity of our mechanical sweeper fleet to identify opportunities to improve this element of our service.

### **Key Areas of Focus for the Coming Year – Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management**

- 5.43 It is the intention of central government to implement Schedule 3 of the “Flood & Water Management Act 2010” in 2024. This will make NCC a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Approval Body (SAB), with a duty to approve, adopt and maintain sustainable drainage systems on all new developments serving more than one property. The enactment of Schedule 3 will make sustainable drainage systems mandatory for new developments in England. This will reduce the risk of surface water flooding, pollution and help alleviate the pressures on our traditional drainage and sewerage systems. Once the role of the SAB is in place, the FCERM team will be looking to carry out a review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, to ensure that all policies and strategies are in alignment.
- 5.44 In our role as the Coast Protection Authority we will also be finalising the refresh of the Shoreline Management Plan and will provide an update to the Council and its members.
- 5.45 In terms of capital flood and coastal projects, we are proposing to undertake a waste recovery scheme in Lynemouth Bay to address a historic colliery spoil and waste tipping site, which has been actively eroding onto the beach and into the marine environment. We are working towards mobilising and establishing the site in January 2024 with all enabling works completed by April, when the process of excavation, separating the contaminated materials and reinstatement would begin. Completion is expected in Autumn 2024.
- 5.46 As part of a six-year Environment Agency funded research project via the 'Innovative Flood and Coastal Resilience Programme' we are leading on a Next Generation Flood Resilience Project with the Environment Agency, Northumbria University, and specialist engineering consultancies. The project will create a novel artificial intelligence system with Smart sensors to provide an enhanced flood warning system. This innovative method will provide a cost effective and more accurate solution for these areas that often lack investment and funding for flood warning systems.
- 5.47 Alongside these two major capital projects, the team will be continuing to progress the remainder of the flood protection capital programme which currently has 49 schemes on it at various stages of development. Within the next year we hope to deliver several smaller FCERM schemes which will hopefully see 47 properties be better protected from flooding or coastal erosion.

### **Key Areas of Focus for the Coming Year – Parks and Open Spaces and Environment**

- 5.48 The Parks Enhancement Programme, including QEII Commemoration Schemes is a major programme of work that will deliver improvements to parks and country parks across Northumberland, with additional funding allocated to expand the number of

projects. We will be implementing enhancement schemes at parks and green spaces across the county next year, including provision of a new climbing boulders feature at Plessey Woods Country Park, replanting woodland areas, path improvements and a QEII memorial rose garden at Gallagher Park in Bedlington, improvements to Blyth Promenade and Blyth Beach as well as a major scheme to improve accessibility / paths and the horticulture in the formal entrance to Carlisle Park in Morpeth. In addition to these schemes we will also be looking to improve path networks within green spaces to encourage more people to get out and get active in their local environment.

- 5.49 A review is going to be undertaken this year of the current Grounds Maintenance service, including service standards around amenity grass cutting to consider moving away from a blanket standard of 10-13 cuts per year to a range of different maintenance regimes tailored to be suitable for different areas of grassland to help improve biodiversity and nature recovery whilst maintaining a high-quality local environment and visual amenity. Local communities and stakeholders will be consulted on the priorities for these new maintenance standards which once agreed will be piloted in an agreed locality during 2024/25 before being rolled out further.
- 5.50 A new Tree Management Policy will be developed to provide a balanced and proportionate framework that enables the County Council to effectively manage the risks presented by trees. This will include details of our approach to dealing with the issues caused by diseases such as Ash Dieback. We will also be completing the clear-up and preparation of areas of NCC woodland that were badly damaged by Storm Arwen so that these areas can be replanted and, where appropriate, improved public access arrangements will be provided.

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

- 6.1 This report highlights achievements over the past year and, outlines some of the areas of focus for the coming year. The recommendation to Council is to note the Cabinet Member for Looking After Our Environment.

## 7. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	This report supports delivery of all three priorities of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Value for money is a priority for the Council. This Report contains no direct financial implications. The ongoing delivery of the individual actions within the Portfolio may have financial implications which would form separate reports as these arise.
<b>Legal</b>	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Portfolio may have legal implications, which would form separate reports as these arise.
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human resources</b>	N/A

<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - not required at this point N/A
<b>Risk assessment</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer considerations</b>	N/A
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Each of our three Priorities have an important a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency.
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	An attractive, clean and safe environment and access to high quality green spaces are key determinants of a health and wellbeing for our residents.
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**8. Background papers**

Not applicable.

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

Corporate Plan 2023-26  
 Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2023  
 Northumberland Local Plan 2022

**10. Author and Contact Details**

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## Northumberland County Council

County Council

Wednesday, 1 November 2023

### Annual Portfolio Report - Inspiring Young People

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

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

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

- 1.1 **Achieving Value for Money** – The Portfolio contributes to Value for Money by securing best value in contracting and commissioning. We also aim for innovative approaches and continuous improvement in our services to children, young people and families.
- 1.2 **Tackling Inequalities** – The Portfolio plays a vital role in driving delivery of the Council's Inequalities Plan through giving children the best start in life, supporting families and ensuring young people can fulfil their potential at school and beyond.
- 1.3 **Driving Economic Growth** - The Portfolio contributes to ensuring our young people and adults have the qualifications and skills to participate and benefit from job opportunities and that businesses have access to the skills they need to thrive.

#### 2. **Purpose of report**

- 2.1 This is the Annual Portfolio Report from the Portfolio Holder for Inspiring Young People. The Report contains issues that set the context for delivery of the Portfolio. It highlights achievements over the past year and, outlines the areas of focus for the coming year.

#### 3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Council is recommended to:
  - Note the Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People Annual Portfolio Report.

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

18<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The report is to note and does not require key decision.

#### 5. **Background**

- 5.1 The Annual Portfolio reports from each of the Council's Cabinet Members provide a valuable opportunity for Council to consider and comment on the work of each Portfolio. This strengthens the important link and accountability between key decisions taken by the Cabinet and achievement of the three priorities of the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 5.2 The Council adopted the Corporate Plan at its Annual General Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The Plan establishes three priorities for the Council, underpinned by our approach to tackling Climate Change. The Annual Council Achievements Report (reported to Council in March 2023) sets out overall progress against the three priorities whilst this Portfolio report provides an opportunity for Members to drill down further into the work of the Inspiring Young People Portfolio.
- 5.3 We continue to focus on ensuring children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well. We know inequalities in early years can have lifelong impacts on physical and emotional health, language and social skills, impacting on readiness for school, education, training, skills, employment and healthy relationships. So, we continue to work with schools, partners and families to develop services used by everyone as well services for those that need more help.
- 5.4 As we recover from the period of Covid restrictions, children, young people and families continue to experience medium to long-term impacts. For example, there is evidence indicating development and attainment of children and young people from the poorest neighbourhoods were generally impacted most from the restrictions.
- 5.5 The services within this Portfolio, like all other services the Council provides have experienced challenges from high inflation, pushing up the costs of goods and services across Children's Services and Education. At the same time, additional pressures on families have increased demand for the support we provide. This places even greater importance on our ability to secure value for money and innovation in everything we do.

#### **Achievements – Education**

- 5.6 The most recent 'Northumberland Education and Skills Annual Report' highlighted the achievement and resilience of the county's young people and schools. At the time (March 2023), the Annual Report set out much to celebrate, including:
- 92% of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted;
  - Over 97% of Northumberland parents gaining their first choice of primary school and 95.45% secondary school for their children;
  - More of our young people moving to universities of their first choice and to Russell Group Universities;
  - Being in care having a positive impact on education outcomes for 'care-experienced' young people with more pupils back on track and working within their age-related curriculum and more care leavers staying in further and higher education;



- The Council continuing to fund its major investment programme, to maintain the schools estate, grow school places and deliver projects to support school re-organisation.
- 5.7 These achievements underlined the hard work and dedication of many school leaders, teachers, pupils, school partners, parents and carers, all supported by our School Improvement Team and the wider Children's Services team. It has also shown the resilience of children and young people and our workforce to overcome the challenges of Covid recovery. The Annual Report also set out some of the important work underway to sustain, innovate and adapt services. These include:
- The Council continuing to invest in the School Improvement Team;
  - The Virtual School's role extended to champion the education of care-experienced young people and all children who have or have had a social worker;
  - In Early Years, the Northumberland 'Early Years Passport' is making sure all children are school-ready;
  - Northumberland Skills investing in courses and facilities to widen career opportunities;
  - The SEND Capacity and Place Planning Strategy promoting Northumberland's vision that learners with SEND have the best start in life and are supported, through effective and inclusive educational provision, to attend settings as close to home as possible.
- 5.8 The Council's school investment and improvement programme continues to take shape. The multi-million-pound school investment across the county is part of the Council's largest ever capital programme, with over £100m invested in transforming schools and facilities for young people now and for future generations.
- 5.9 Students are already enjoying new and improved facilities at Haydon Bridge High School, Ponteland High School, Hexham's Queen Elizabeth High School and Emily Wilding Davison School in Ponteland. And projects are now underway to refurbish and rebuild schools in the Coquet, Seaton Valley and Berwick partnerships of schools, to include state-of-the art high schools as well as investment in primary schools, specialist, post-16 skills and post-18 provision.
- 5.10 With schools nationally affected by the issue of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete being used in some older builds, it was reassuring that no issues with concrete have been reported in our maintained schools. The Council spends, on average, over £2m per year addressing maintenance issues across its maintained school estate.
- 5.11 So, the Council is committed to ensuring young people have access to the best school facilities. It is equally focused on working with school leaders to deliver the best standards of learning and development in those schools. We are delighted that Ofsted inspection outcomes for the county are at a record high. For primary schools the latest figures show children and young people attending good or outstanding primary schools to be at 94%. This continues the improving trend over the last 2 years and is 4% better than the national average. For 'pupils in good / outstanding secondary schools', we have also seen very impressive performance at 83.7%, which is 2% above the national average.

- 5.12 We were also pleased to see Construction starting to take shape at Gilbert Ward Academy, a new, special, 'free school' for Northumberland. The state-of-the-art special school will provide education for up to 80 pupils aged 11-16 with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and autism spectrum condition (ASC). The new school will feature fantastic facilities, including specialist spaces to support pupils', small group work areas for focused learning, a life skills kitchen, science studio, food technology room, art and design studio, and a large sports hall. The school is part of the Council's wider strategy to increase special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) support across the county.

### **Achievements – Skills**

- 5.13 As well as our ambitious investment in schools, the Council is also investing in skills for the future. Northumberland's first Specialist Welding and Fabrication Training Centre at Port of Blyth is now open and recruiting for courses (from September 2023). The centre was funded by a £1.38m investment from the Council, with courses delivered by lecturers from Northumberland Skills, the Council's post-16 education provider. With 20 welding bays, a dedicated fabrication training area and state-of-the-art equipment including robotic technology, the Centre is primed to boost local skills and the economy.
- 5.14 The Welding Centre is located alongside the Energy Central Learning Hub, currently under construction and due to open in 2024. Northumberland Skills is also expanding to meet the needs of more young people in Northumberland including a new offer in the West at Prudhoe for post 16-SEND learning at the Fuse in Prudhoe.
- 5.15 The opening of the Welding Centre followed Northumberland Skills' revamped Construction Campus in Seghill which opened and welcomed students in September last year. This is helping more young people in Northumberland to get started in key growth sectors thanks to the Council's investment in vocational training facilities across the county. The revamped Lindisfarne Centre in Alnwick reopened in April this year following a £2m refurbishment, funded by the Council. This brings a range of education and community services together under one roof at the heart of the community. As well as community spaces, courses in maths, English, art, IT, childcare and construction are also being provided.

### **Achievements – Children's Services**

- 5.16 In Children's Social Care, we were delighted when, in May this year, Dame Andrea Leadsom (Government's Early Years Advisor) praised Northumberland's "trailblazing" Family Hubs for their role in giving children the best start in life. Our new Family Hubs are a one-stop-shop for family support - from 'parents-to-be' right through the teenage years to 19 or up to 25 for children with special education needs and disabilities.
- 5.17 Through Family Hubs, Midwives, registrars, health visitors, early years and mental health professionals, young people's support specialists and a host of other services, including relationship and parenting programmes, and financial advice all work together to meet the needs of children, young people and families.
- 5.18 We were also pleased when Northumberland's Youth Justice Service (YJS) was rated 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features earlier in the Summer. The Service is dedicated to supporting young people to turn their lives around. We were pleased that inspectors noted the outstanding work of our staff and volunteers, describing them as passionate, kind, enthusiastic and going the extra mile for the children they work with. Leadership, governance and partnership working in the YJS were all

noted as being effective and the integration of the Service within the Council's wider Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS) works well.

- 5.19 The Council has continued, with partners, to support families in Northumberland during the school summer holidays. In the Summer, the Council provided a packed programme of activities for the six-week break as part of a Government scheme to help ensure our children and young people have a summer of fun, adventure and healthy food. Activities included, holiday camps, activities and trips for families, including tickets to Seaton Delaval Hall, the cinema, activity centres and passes for local leisure centres. There were also some fantastic community days in parks and beaches. Those taking part will also received a healthy meal on the day.
- 5.20 Earlier this year, Cabinet approved a £1.26m investment in six more children's residential homes. This will increase the number of places available in Northumberland's children's homes to 21 and mean more of the county's most vulnerable young people can stay closer to their communities as well as delivering better value for money in Children's Services. The six new properties will all be designed to meet the needs of one child or young person and will be part of a new model of "multi-building" children's homes. The smaller properties will be able to offer more tailored support to children with the most complex needs, or older young people who are preparing for adulthood and independence.
- 5.21 We know Children's Social Work is a challenging and rewarding area and high-quality support is key to creating an environment where staff can carry out their vital role of working with families to keep children safe. That is why the Council launched its "grow our own" Social Worker campaign to develop our own Social Workers and attract the best talent to work here. The Council also teamed up with Sunderland University to be a trailblazer in offering children's Social Work apprenticeships, enabling us to tap into a larger talent pool of caring individuals keen to make a difference to the lives of children and families.
- 5.22 Our schools have also continued to support good mental health in our young people. Earlier in the Spring, schools in Northumberland backed a campaign to transform support for children's social and emotional needs and make sure all pupils feel safe, secure and cared for. The Council teamed up with a leading behaviour expert to launch the Northumberland Schools C.A.R.E campaign, which stands for Caring about Adversity Resilience and Empowerment. The first participating schools receive additional training and support as part of a pilot project that will then help to shape the future roll out of the project and transform practice across the county.
- 5.23 Northumberland County Council was proud to support national LGBTQ+ Adoption and Fostering Week in March 2023. Led by the charity 'New Family Social', the week reminded people that if they want to foster or adopt they can be from any background, gender or sexual orientation. This year's campaign '1,2,3 or More?' highlighted the positive impact LGBTQ+ people can make by adopting or fostering single children or those in sibling groups.
- 5.24 Ofsted undertook a focused visit themed on planning for and achieving permanence for our 'Cared For Children' in July 2022. The outcome of the visit was published September 2022 with positive outcomes reported. In August 2023 Ofsted and CQC undertook a Thematic Review of our Family Hub provision (one of six nationally) to inform the future regulatory practice for Family Hubs with very positive findings about our services, practice and developments in Northumberland.

- 5.25 Kyloe House at Netherton Park is our secure unit as part of the national secure estate and has the only Outstanding Ofsted judgment for secure Residential and the Education provision in England. A reassurance visit by Ofsted in August 2023 confirmed the provision remains at the highest standard.
- 5.26 Stable Homes Built on Love is the response to the 'Josh McAllister Review' of Childrens Social Care. A number of pathfinder projects were core to the recommendations. Northumberland are partners in three pathfinders: 'Childrens Voice' data project; 'Public Law Outline' pathfinder reviewing procedures to carry out their duties in relation to initiating public law proceedings; and, a Fostering pathfinder which involves all of the North East regional Local Authorities.
- 5.27 Finally, a series of conference and summits has focused on the needs of our children in Northumberland post-pandemic and the challenges faced by families, carers and professionals. The first conference focused on a 'trauma informed' workforce, listening carefully to lived experiences. The SENCO and Early Years conferences focused on practice and practitioners and the Inclusion summit focused on Leaders and Governors and their role within an overall systems approach to support the challenges across Children's Services.

### **Key Areas of Focus**

- 5.28 The past year has seen some fantastic achievements in Children Services, Education, SEND and Skills. This is testament to the close and positive working between the Council and all its partners, striving to achieve the very best for children and young people. As we move forward our key areas of focus are:
- Sustaining the high level of performance in our Children's Services, maintaining readiness for the next Ofsted inspection;
  - Continuing to work with schools to maintain the record levels of young people attending good or excellent schools;
  - Sustaining the very high percentage of pupils who get their first choice of school;
  - Continuing our commitment to ensure pupils and families with Special Educational Needs are supported to achieve their full potential;
  - Driving ahead with our ambitious, school building investment programme;
  - Continuing to develop and embed our trailblazing Family Hubs; and innovating and improving services, ensuring value for money in response to rising costs;
  - Supporting the increasing levels of requests for Education Health Care Plans that will continue to challenge our model of operations and the rising costs of SEN transport;
  - Working with schools and the DFE to utilise the SEND funding, High Needs Budget to support our children in schools and settings;
  - Continuing the work to develop our 'placement sufficiency', including placement of children in safe residential settings and manage the increased requirements and associated costs;
  - Continue to promote our workforce opportunities to ensure we have sufficient capacity and expertise to meet the rising demands;
  - Place Corporate Parenting 'front and centre' in all we do in Northumberland.

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

- 6.1 This report provides a valuable opportunity for Council to consider and comment on the work of each Portfolio. The recommendation to Council is to note the Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People Annual Portfolio Report. There are no alternative options in this report for Council to consider.

## 7. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	This report supports delivery of all three priorities of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Value for money is a priority for the Council. This Report contains no direct financial implications. The ongoing delivery of the individual actions within the Portfolio may have financial implications which would form separate reports as they arise.
<b>Legal</b>	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Portfolio may have legal implications, which would form separate reports as these arise.
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human resources</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - no equalities issues identified N/A
<b>Risk assessment</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer considerations</b>	N/A

<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	N/A
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**8. Background papers**

Not applicable.

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

Corporate Plan 2023-26

Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2023

**10. Author and Contact Details**

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## **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OSC**

### **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**1 November 2023**

#### **INTERIM SCRUTINY REPORT**

Three key roles were identified for scrutiny as part of the scrutiny review at the start of the year. These roles are about enhancing scrutiny's role in policy development, investigating matters of concern to the community, and reviewing the Council's performance. Since the adoption of the new ways of working FACS has met three times.

Copies of all the reports and the minutes of our meetings are available on the Council's website here:

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=151>

#### **1. ANNUAL REPORT OF PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER**

In June, the committee received the annual report of the Principal Social Worker, offering a detailed insight into the accomplishments, challenges, and endeavours of the social work sector in 2022. While the report underscored the challenging reduction in social workers at the national level, it also commended Northumberland's proactive stance, notably through the successful Academy initiative. The committee appreciated the proactive approach to encourage students to consider social work as a career from an early age, irrespective of gender. Additionally, the imminent integration of BA Social Work Apprentices into the Academy in September 2023 marks a significant milestone.

#### **2. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT REVIEW**

Home to School Transport is an area FACS has paid particular attention to over the last 18 months. The Committee were pleased to receive the outcomes of a comprehensive review of the Home to School Transport system. The review provided an in-depth analysis of the services and strategies, emphasising the well-being and safety of students. Noteworthy recommendations are actively being implemented, with review points, milestones and checks being built in to ensure that there is no negative impact on pupils.

This item will return to the Committee at a later date when members will examine the impacts of the recommendations once they have been implemented.

### **3. OUTCOMES OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP**

In July, we dedicated our time to scrutinise the outcomes of the statutory consultation concerning the Berwick Partnership. Members sought clarification and assurance on several areas such as:

- The protection and continuation of the ethos and standards inhabited by good and outstanding schools that would be part of the proposed reorganisation.
- The support that would be available during the transition via the implementation group and the school improvement team.
- In relation to the social value guarantees that could be included in the procurement process, including apprenticeships, it was advised that any contract awarded by the Council had social value conditions embedded, and any tendered work conducted would be no different. Officers provided their assurance that contractors would be held accountable for fulfilling these requirements.

FACS felt that the collaboration with headteachers, contingency budgets, and a dedicated Implementation Group underscored the commitment to the smooth transition of educational changes and therefore, supported the recommendations put to Cabinet.

### **4. REPORT OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM 2022 – 2023**

In September, the committee received an extensive update on the School Improvement Team's efforts over the last 12 months. The report highlighted substantial improvements in Ofsted ratings, signalling the commitment of our education professionals. Pupil attendance and attainment remain central, with strategies in place to support learners with high anxiety and those requiring additional interventions.

Members expressed concern at the number of new headteachers but were reassured that they included headteachers moving between schools within Northumberland, acting headteachers covering short-term absences, and others transitioning as part of school reorganisations. The focus on special schools and disadvantaged learners is evident, with dedicated staff focusing on these critical areas.

The strengthened structure and support offered by the School Improvement Team are positive developments, with increasing engagement from schools within and beyond Northumberland.

The Committee strongly supports the continuation of funding for the School Improvement Team and made this an ask of the Cabinet.



## **5. SEND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

The committee was presented with an update on the progress against the Northumberland SEND Strategy 2021-2024. This report went beyond highlighting achievements and exemplified the importance of inclusive education. The Committee wanted to see the SEND employment forum delivered on a greater scale given the value it generated for future employment and training opportunities.

As is often at the forefront of this Committee's mind when considering SEND, members explored the sufficiency of teams in place to match the growing needs of SEND pupils. The Committee will keep a close eye on SEND provisions through a dedicated Task and Finish Group which has been established. This group will report back to the Committee early in 2024.

I would like finish by expressing my gratitude to Cllr Richard Dodd, who has served as Vice Chair of this Committee since November 2021. His insight and support over the last two years has been integral to the Committee's work. I would also like to thank the officers working in the Children, Young People and Education directorate, all the headteachers, teachers and staff at all our educational establishments in Northumberland for their dedication and tenacity.

**COUNCILLOR WAYNE DALEY**  
**CHAIR**

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## Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

### Report to Council

**1 November 2023**

#### **INTERIM SCRUTINY REPORT**

As the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I am pleased to present this interim report to the Council. I would like to extend my gratitude to Cllr Veronica Jones, who chaired this Committee before me, for her dedicated service.

Our committee plays a vital role in overseeing various aspects of health and wellbeing within our region, including health services, adult social care, and public health. Over the past two meetings, we have examined several critical topics within our purview. Copies of all the reports and the minutes of our meetings are available on the Council's website: <https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=156>

#### **1. UPDATE ON PRESSURES IN ADULT HOMECARE SERVICES**

Our Committee received a comprehensive report outlining the challenges faced by adult homecare services in Northumberland. We explored the steps taken to address these issues and the plans to overcome workforce shortages in this sector.

- **Workforce Shortages:** We were informed about the national problem of workforce shortages in social care, particularly in rural areas, including Northumberland. The report highlighted that around 200-220 people assessed as needing homecare services were unable to access them, with numbers occasionally peaking at 270 in 2022.
- **Initiatives:** The Council had taken various initiatives over the past 18 months to alleviate these shortages, such as increasing carer pay rates and supporting providers with recruitment and upskilling efforts.
- **Future Plans:** Additional funds from the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) 2023/24 would be utilised to attract more individuals to work in homecare.

The Committee shared several thoughts, including the need for a more radical approach to address the workforce crisis and ongoing monitoring of the situation. We emphasised the importance of making the caring profession more attractive by improving salaries, incentives, and working conditions.

#### **2. CONTINGENCY PLANS AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMISSIONED ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

We delved into the contingency plans and management arrangements that the Council would activate in case a social care provider ceased operations. These plans aimed to ensure that service users continued to receive essential care.

- Preferred Contingency Plan: The preferred approach was to transfer service users and staff to an alternative provider. The Council was confident that existing care providers could absorb additional business.
- In-House Consideration: The possibility of bringing services 'in-house' was discussed as a last resort if transferring care packages to a new provider was deemed too risky.
- Financial Risks: Members expressed concerns about financial risks associated with bringing services in-house, including staff transfers.
- Focus on Incentives: The Council had primarily focused on incentives to help with fuel and transport costs and increasing carer pay rates to address workforce issues.

### **3. NOTIFICATION OF CLOSURE OF 100-HOUR PHARMACY IN CRAMLINGTON**

We were informed about the closure of a 100-hour pharmacy in Cramlington and the broader issue of pharmacy closures and reduced hours, not only in Northumberland but also nationally.

- Fast-Moving Issue: The pharmacy closures issue was dynamic, with continuous changes since the initial briefing.
- Impact on Patients: Members discussed the implications for patients, especially those with shift patterns, limited access to transportation, or needing urgent prescription medication. HealthWatch Northumberland regularly attend our meetings and their insight and knowledge is always invaluable to our discussions.
- Task and Finish Group: We agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to examine pharmaceutical services in the county, involving Healthwatch, Public Health, and the Northumberland Integrated Care Board.

### **4. HM SENIOR CORONER ANDREW HETHERINGTON'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received the Annual Report from HM Senior Coroner Andrew Hetherington, providing an overview of the current situation and notable trends in the coroner service.

- Coroner's Role: We were reminded of the crucial role of the Coroner in investigating unnatural or violent deaths and deaths in custody or state detention.
- Workload: In 2022, there were 2,023 cases referred to the Coroner, with a slight increase in deaths compared to 2019.
- Suicide Trends: There was an increase in suicide conclusions, which may be attributed to changes in the standard of proof from 'beyond reasonable doubt' to 'on the balance of probability.'
- Ongoing Challenges: Various areas of review, including the Lucy Letby Inquiry, Statutory Medical Examiner Scheme, and safety concerns related to the North East Ambulance Services, were discussed.

We expressed our commitment to further scrutinise these issues, recognising the need to understand the impact on patients and carers. Our committee is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of our residents and addressing critical health and social care issues. We will continue to work diligently and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to make informed recommendations and decisions.

**COUNCILLOR RICHARD DODD  
CHAIR  
HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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## Northumberland County Council

Council

Wednesday, 1 November 2023

### Corporate Performance – Quarter 4 2022/23 Outturn Report

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

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

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

##### 1.1 Link to Corporate Plan

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 4, 2022/23 (Q4).

#### 3. Recommendations

##### 3.1 Council is recommended to:

- (i) Consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report.

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

4.1 Published 2 October 2023.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 Performance reporting to Cabinet and other committees provides a valuable opportunity for Members to consider and comment on the performance of services across the Council, with a particular focus on progress against the three Corporate Plan priorities. This strengthens accountability between key decisions, allocation of resources, service outputs and the overall achievement of the three priorities of the Council.
- 5.2 The Council adopted the Corporate Plan at its Annual General Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The Plan establishes three priorities for the Council, underpinned by our approach to tackling Climate Change. The Annual Council Achievements Report (reported to Council in March 2023) sets out overall progress against the three priorities, alongside Annual Cabinet Member reports which provide an opportunity for Members to look further into the work of portfolios.
- 5.3 Following last year's Independent Governance Review report, the following actions are being taken to strengthen performance monitoring and reporting:
- Performance measures are being aligned to the Council's three priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan; and,
  - A Planning, Performance and Accountability Framework is being developed to support the integration between areas including Corporate Performance, Appraisals, the Corporate Plan and financial reporting.
- 5.4 This is a 'transitional' outturn report. It takes the old way of reporting quarterly monitoring (based on the old service structure) and presents key measures of success through the 'lens' of the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities. During 2022/23, the Council reviewed and updated its Corporate Plan. The agreement of the Corporate Plan by Council in May this year coincided with the end of quarter 4 (Q4) of the Council's performance monitoring cycle. This provides an opportunity to refresh the Council's Performance Outturn report so that it is focused on measuring progress against our three Corporate Plan priorities. This report also helps us to focus discussion with Members on measures of progress for our Corporate Plan priorities.
- 5.5 We propose an updated approach to Corporate Plan performance reporting as follows:
- Regular directorate briefings with Cabinet Members;
  - Executive Management Team;
  - Strategic Leadership Team;
  - Cabinet;
  - Scrutiny Chairs and Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and,
  - A quarter 4, outturn report to Full Council in the summer period.



### **Delivering our Priorities**

- 5.6 The following sections set out performance summaries for each of the three Corporate Plan priorities for 2022/23. These summaries highlight key points on performance, both positive and including where targets have been missed at the end of Quarter four for 2022/23.
- 5.7 It is important to remember that many of our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are influenced by a range of external factors. For example, economic measures are a function of global issues beyond the control of our Economy and Regeneration Service. Equally, Looked After Children rates are impacted by a range of complex and long-term societal factors. Recovery from Covid continues to be an issue in some areas of service performance.
- 5.8 For other targets, in-year shifts in social and economic factors can create spikes in demand for certain services which may not have been anticipated when targets were set at the start of the year. It is important that performance against targets is seen in this wider context.

### **Our Corporate Plan Vision**

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

### **Value for Money Priority**

- 5.10 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.

### **Outcome (i):**

- 5.11 **Residents receive the best customer experience** - doing the best for residents drives all of our work. We want residents to know that when they are dealing with us they can expect the best customer service every time and trust we are providing them with the best service possible.

**Impacts:**

5.12 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Improved resident satisfaction in Council Services;
- Residents choose to transact with us digitally;
- Residents feel delighted and empowered when using digital services;
- Residents receive consistent and timely responses from all our services;
- We look for opportunities to make a difference to customers and residents' lives at every interaction;
- Residents are able to access our services in the right way for them at the right time for their needs.

**Progress:**

5.13 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. Last year we delivered impressive performance with the '% of calls answered', achieving an average of 92% for the year. Even better, for 'average time to answer calls', the Team achieved an average for the year of 136 seconds. This is a big improvement and includes a strong 4<sup>th</sup> quarter where the average was 74 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.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.14 For 'complaints answered within timescale (%)', despite stronger second, third and fourth quarters, the Council missed its own demanding target of 100%. It should be noted that cases where an extension to the timescales has been authorised are not included. The Team is using complaint data to drive innovation and improvement.

**Further development of measures**

5.15 Whilst the Council continues to ensure residents can call us and interact face-to-face, we are increasingly encouraging customers to use digital channels as these are more effective and efficient. In future reporting under this outcome, we propose to develop measures which show the shift of residents to digital channels as well as the effectiveness of digital contacts.

5.16 We are also reviewing the complaint measures so these better represent shifts in how we engage and learn from what we are being told. In future, we will also use new Resident Survey data to measure perceptions, including: resident satisfaction with access to Council services; and, overall satisfaction with the Council.

**Residents receive the best customer experience – summary of outturn 2022/23**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	EOY 22/23
1	Complaints answered within timescale (%)	100	72.9	63.3	70.68	74.2	70.8	69.3
2	% calls answered	90	84	86.2	93.5	97.2	93.4	92
3	Average time to answer calls (seconds)	180	215	292	121	46	74	136

**Outcome (ii):**

5.17 **We make the best spending decisions** - we are responsible for providing a vast array of different services to local communities, residents and businesses. To provide best value it's essential we maximise our spending power, make good decisions that create the best impact for our residents and better align our spend to the outcomes we want to achieve.

**Impacts:**

5.18 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- We use transparent, accurate, and accessible data to improve how we work together, putting the needs and aspirations of Northumberland at the heart of our decision-making;
- Individuals, communities, and Members are involved in designing and delivering services;
- Increased value from our spending decisions;
- Achieve savings through economies of scale, leveraging the Council's combined purchasing power; and,
- Performance is managed better.

**Progress:**

5.19 The Council's year-end financial position improved markedly from a forecast overspend of £4.784m in Q3 to an underspend of £5.833m for the 2022-23 financial year. This reflected swift and sensible budget management actions taken in-year across the Council.

5.20 Also, it benefits Northumberland's economy when the Council spends more of its money on locally supplied goods and services. That's why we are pleased the

Procurement Team has seen improvement in the number of local suppliers (no annual targets were set for this measure). It's also important for small and medium business that orders and payments are processed efficiently when they supply the Council and, we are pleased to report the target for 'requisitions processed within three days' was achieved.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.21 Whilst our direction of travel on measures of working with local suppliers is broadly positive, we will work on developing targets for these and continue to grow the value of local suppliers within the relevant legal and procurement frameworks.

**Further development of measures**

5.22 In future, we will also use new Resident Survey data to measure perceptions including: whether residents agree the council provides value for money; and, residents views on whether they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

**We make the best spending decisions – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Local Suppliers (Number)	-	5,599	1,564	1,506	1,361	1,402	5,833
2	Value of Local Suppliers (£)	-	£364.89m,	£80.7m	£79.7m	£72.7m	£92.3m	£325.3m
3	Suppliers trading with Council who are local (%)	-	41.5	42.1	44	40	38	41
4	Requisition Processed within 3 days (%)	80	99	98.5	99	97	97	98

**Outcome (iii):**

5.23 **Working better, more efficiently** - we are a large and complex organisation with over 5,000 staff working hard to achieve the best outcomes for residents. Our services currently have a significant operational footprint with over 300 properties used to deliver our services. To achieve Best Value, it's essential we have the right structures in place to enable both our people and other assets to have the greatest impact. For our staff, this means the best operating structures and models to enable effective delivery and provide good career development opportunities. It also means establishing a workplace culture focused on learning and continuous improvement. For our property assets it means making best use of our land and

buildings by maximising their impact and running them efficiently to deliver our operational objectives.

**Impacts:**

5.24 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Staff are empowered and supported to do the best work they can for our residents and develop and grow in their careers with us;
- Streamlined administrative functions enable us to operate effectively;
- Land and buildings are used effectively to maximise impact in improving outcomes for our residents;
- Our land and buildings are well maintained and safe for our residents, service users and staff;
- Our estate is smaller, more sustainable, effectively managed, efficiently run and used creatively to maximise impact; and,
- Our estate is fit for purpose to deliver inclusive, quality services, achieve Council priorities and improve outcomes for residents.

**Progress:**

5.25 We are proud to be an organisation that invests in apprenticeships, giving people the opportunity to begin their careers with us and to learn and grow here. That's why we are pleased to report we have significantly exceeded the % of the workforce who are apprentices as well as impressive levels of 'mandatory training' being completed by staff. This tells us our courses are fit for purpose as are the processes for encouraging and requiring uptake of training.

5.26 Our measures for property management also continue to perform well. We continue to complete all fire risk audits on target and critical statutory tests for property have been completed within the required timescales.

5.27 Our performance also shows we are also effective in collecting Council Tax which enables us to provide service to all our residents. For '% National Non-Domestic Rates collected' we missed our collection target. Performance at the end of Q4 was lower than in 2021/22 due to the ongoing recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact on collection and enforcement.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.28 In 'days lost to sickness' we missed the target of 7.5 days per 'full time equivalent' (FTE). To address this, services are scrutinising data and undertaking a focused approach to reducing absence.

**Further development of measures**

5.29 In future, we are looking to develop more measures for this outcome including: the percentage of staff saying they are proud to work for NCC (Staff Survey); staff retention rates; and measures for how effectively we manage our property estate.

**Working better, more efficiently – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 23/23 (EOY)
1	% of the workforce who are apprentices(Annual)	2.3	2.5	-	-	-	4.1
2	Days lost to sickness (# per FTE / annum)	7.5	10	10.9	11.4	11.3	11.4
3	Mandatory Training completed (%)	85	91.8	83	88.2	88.2	91.5
4	Corporate Landlord Compliance (%)	98	100	100	100	100	100
5	Property statutory tests completed on time (%)	92	97.3	94.2	94.2	96.7	98.1
6	Council Tax - arrears retrieved (£m)	4.3	5	2	2.5	3.4	4.3
7	% of Council Tax collected	96.6	97	28.2	55.1	82	97.3
8	% National Non-Domestic Rates collected	98.3	96	28	53.8	77.3	94.9

**Outcome (iv):**

5.30 **Making a difference with digital** - digital technology enables us to work better and has the power to delight residents when it works effectively. Currently, we have a range of systems and platforms across our services which are not fully joined up. To provide Best Value we want to make a difference with digital by enabling quicker access to better data and many more automated processes for our workforce, partners and residents. By strengthening skills, we can develop our own sustainable solutions and ensure our staff have tools and systems to make a difference in everything they do.

**Impacts:**

5.31 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Staff have reliable, secure IT hardware and software enabling them to deliver the best services to our customers;
- Residents choose to transact with us digitally (and they have digital access) because of the systems we create; and,
- With reduced system failures our services are more reliable.

**Progress:**

5.32 We are pleased we met our targets on ‘Availability of Superfast broadband (%)’, ‘Take up of Superfast broadband (%)’ and, were within tolerance with our performance on ‘Service Desk calls resolved within Service Level Agreement (%)’. This is positive as it shows we are giving our own staff the IT support they need to deliver great services and, at the same time, we are supporting the availability of broadband so our residents can access digital services and opportunities.

**Further development of measures**

5.33 In future, we are looking to use new measures for this outcome including: the shift in customers to digital contact (as an alternative to telephone and face-to-face); and, new Resident Survey data on the percentage of residents using Council services digitally.

**Making a difference with digital – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	94.6	95.1	95.4	95.4	95.63	95.63
2	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	80.1	80.1	79.8	79.1	79.1	79.1
3	Service Desk calls resolved within SLA (%)	96.5	95.4	94.1	95.4	95.7	96.6	95.4

**Tackling Inequalities Priority**

5.34 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.

**Outcome (i):**

5.35 **Empowered and resilient communities** - our residents are our greatest asset. They are more than customers or service users. Our communities are full of potential. Everybody has their gifts, skills and passions that can make their communities stronger. Whilst good quality services and institutions are important, they cannot alone bring about the change in our neighbourhoods, villages, high streets and towns that our residents deserve. Community development, based on the assets that are in neighbourhoods, will help us to value, discover, connect and mobilise communities. We call this Asset Based Community Development. This is about encouraging and supporting people to get actively involved in their communities, shaping and even leading local initiatives and looking after each other.

**Impacts:**

5.36 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Communities are more resilient, connected and act together to improve their area;
- Residents will know what assets there are in their area and where to go if they need support; and,
- Shift in culture within the Council - we will have a workforce who are skilled and competent in applying an 'asset-based community development' approach in their day-to-day practice and fully appreciate the four domains of inequalities in all they do (protected characteristics, geographical, socio economic and inclusion groups).

**Progress:**

5.37 The impressive number of referrals made to Communities Together, which outperformed the target by more than 9,000 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£4.8m at year-end) 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 year the Council's Communities Together Team awarded over £600k to VCSE groups.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.38 Building on the impressive performance from our Communities Together Team, the Council is committed, through its Inequalities Plan, to continuing to build community resilience.

**Further development of measures**

5.39 We propose to use new data from our Residents Survey to measure progress on this outcome, including: whether residents believe they can influence decisions affecting their local area; and, levels of resident satisfaction with their local area.

**Empowered and resilient communities – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23 (EOY)
1	Number of referrals in to NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	2,258	3,349	3,044	3,182	11,833
2	Grant funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£1,800,521	£659,453	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£4,798,710
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	15,693	20,293	21,609	35,254	92,849
4	Number of Grants Awarded to Voluntary and Community organisations (#)	tbc	16	21	5	15	57



	Measure	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23 (EOY)
5	Total amount of funding provided to VCSE organisations (£)	tbc	£140,828	£202,500	£65,600	£200,000	£608,928

**Outcome (ii):**

5.40 **Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well -** inequalities in the early years can have lifelong impacts on the development of physical and emotional health, language and social skills. They affect readiness for school, education, training, skills, employment and healthy relationships. Not everyone has the same access to things which children and young people need to be healthy, thrive and feel safe. We will work with partners and families – including children, young people and their families - to develop the services used by everyone as well services for those that need more intensive support.

5.41 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- More of our children, young people and families will reach their potential regardless of their circumstances;
- Northumberland will be a place where our young people feel a sense of belonging and are safe and connected;
- Children and young people will have equity in access to affordable, healthy food to maximise the opportunity of having a healthy weight;
- Children and young people with additional needs receive the right support at the right time;
- Children and young people will have equity in access to an environment that encourages physical activity and active travel; and,
- More of our children will have good mental health and wellbeing.

**Progress:**

5.42 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 94% is 4% better than the national average. The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes are the highest the county has seen.

5.43 For 'pupils in good / outstanding secondary schools' - we have seen a much-improved picture over the past year. Northumberland's latest figure of 84% means that 21% more learners are in 'good' or better schools compared to 2017. Inspection outcomes are currently 2% above the national average.

5.44 For '16-17-year-old NEETs or not known' - the figure of 4.9% is an improvement on the position in March 2022 of 5.5%. Broken down, there were 4.4% NEET and 0.5% Not Known. The combined figure of 4.9% is almost the same as the latest national average for March 2023 (4.8%).

5.45 We are also pleased to see a positive trend on measures of children's development, including: breast feeding prevalence; height and weight recorded Year-6 (%);

reception age and year-6 obesity rates. These positive trends are testament to the hard work of our Public Health professionals working closely with partners and communities across the county.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.46 'For Key Stage 4 Attainment' - we were pleased external examinations returned in 2022 for the first time since 2019. Teacher and centre assessed grades were used during the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall roughly halfway between 2019 and 2021. This data needs to be understood within the context of a disproportionate impact of the pandemic on different students and schools. Pre-pandemic Attainment 8 scores in Northumberland were improving more quickly than nationally.

**Further development of measures**

5.47 We will continue to develop new and better ways to measure how we are progressing on tackling inequalities, including through new questions in our Residents Survey.

**Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Pupils with good level of development at age 5 (%) Annual *	72	74.8	-	67.5	-	-	67.5
2	KS4 – average Attainment 8 score (%) Annual *	44.7	46.7	-	46.6	-	-	46.6
3	KS4 - average Progress 8 score (%) Annual *	-0.15	-0.03	-	-0.23	-	-	-0.23
4	Pupils in good/ outstanding Primary schools (%)	89	87.5	87.4	87.9	88.3	94.2	94.2
5	Pupils in good/ outstanding Secondary schools (%)	75	68.2	73.0	68.9	79.2	84.0	84.0
6	16-17 yr-olds NEET or Not Known (%)	5.3	5.5	4.9	5.0	5.5	4.9	4.9
7	Women not smoking at time of delivery (%)	88	88.4	88.2	88.6	91.8 (Q3 latest data)	-	-
8	Breast feeding prevalence (%)	38	41	38.1	36.3	41.4	42.5	42.5
9	Height and weight recorded Year 6 (%) Annual	95	-	-	-	97.6	-	97.6
10	Reception age obesity (%) Annual	10	13.9	-	-	9.2	-	9.2

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
			(20/21 data as no 21/22 outturn)					
11	Year 6 obesity (%) Annual	21	24.7 (20/21 data as no 21/22 outturn)	-	-	21.8	-	21.8

**Outcome (iii):**

- 5.48 **All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability -** everyone should have the opportunity to have a good life and play a part in creating strong communities. Residents in the county's most deprived communities have an average life expectancy of 75 years compared to 87 years in the least deprived. Around 25% of our residents are aged over 65 years and projections show there is also likely to be a significant acceleration in the ageing of Northumberland's population profile. We must support people to live healthier lives and provide good quality, equitable services for those who need extra support to maintain health, wellbeing and independence.
- 5.49 The Council has a responsibility to ensure Northumberland is a good place to live for people who have a disability or long-term illness, including conditions associated with older age, and both physical and mental issues. Across our services, we look for ways to help people to remain independent and live in the way they want to, whatever their disability or condition. Nobody should have to depend on care and support services if better-designed community facilities would have made that unnecessary. When people do need care and support, it should be easy to access and arranged in a way which keeps them in control of their own lives.
- 5.50 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:
- The healthier choice will be the easiest choice;
  - More of our workforce will be maximising contacts with residents to improve wellbeing;
  - Residents stay healthier for longer;
  - Residents are well connected in the community;
  - Residents live independently for longer;
  - Our residents will be more active; and,
  - Residents have choice and control over the way their services are received.

**Progress:**

- 5.51 We are proud of the strong performance in the measures for this outcome which are the result of hard work across teams in 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 adults.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.52 There were 140 permanent care home admissions (65+) in Q4 which pushed this KPI into 'Amber'. This increase was anticipated due to the current pressures in the domiciliary care market where Members will be aware there is increasing difficulty commissioning and providing domiciliary care countywide. This has led to a slightly higher than normal number of admissions to care homes than would have been expected.

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

**Further development of measures**

5.54 We will continue to develop new and better ways to measure how we are progressing on tackling inequalities, including through new questions in our Residents Survey.

**All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Social Care related quality of life (score out of 24)	19.1	19.4	-	-	-	19.7
2	Care plans reviewed annually (%)	98.5	97.1	96.1	94.8	94.2	94.6
3	Effectiveness of Reablement/Rehabilitation (%)	88	84.6	88.7	91.0	92.1	90.8
4	Providers rated by CQC as outstanding or good (%)	84.3	86.3	84.9	83.6	84.8	88.2
5	Indicative personal budget (%)	95	96.1	91.8	92.1	92.1	94.1
6	Adults with learning disabilities living at home/with family (%)	83	86.1	84.8	84.7	84.9	86.1
7	Admissions to residential/nursing 18-64 (per 100k population)	12.5	10.9	11.4	10.3	8.7	14.2
8	Admissions to residential/nursing 65+ (per 100k population)	654.9	601.0	577.6	538.8	625.6	677.2
9	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	5	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.7
10	Successful treatments – alcohol (%)	32	29.9	26.3	24.4	26.6	28.7

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
11	Successful treatments - non-opiates (%)	21	30	27.8	28.6	27.3	29.1
12	Successful treatments – opiates (%)	3	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.5	3.5

**Outcome (iv):**

5.55 **Residents have the building blocks of a good life** - almost every aspect of our lives impacts on how well and how long we live. This includes our income, jobs, homes, access to education and public transport and whether we experience poverty or discrimination. To create a county where everyone can thrive, we need all of these building blocks in place.

5.56 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- The resident's voice (insights) will be heard;
- Residents are more financially secure; and,
- There are good employment opportunities.

**Progress:**

5.57 The measures of support to households set out in 'Outcome 1' are equally relevant to this outcome. Referrals made to Communities Together outperformed the target by more than 9,000 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£4.8m at year-end). These underline the Council's firm commitment to support community resilience through challenging times.

**Further development of measures**

5.58 We will continue to develop new and better ways to measure how we are progressing on tackling inequalities, including through new questions in our Residents Survey.

**Residents have the building blocks of a good life – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23 (EOY)
1	Number of referrals in to NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	2,258	3,349	3,044	3,182	11,833
2	Grants funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£1,800,521	£659,453	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£4,798,710
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	15,693	20,293	21,609	35,254	92,849

### **Driving Economic Growth Priority**

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

#### **Outcome (i):**

5.60 **Thriving places and culture** - Northumberland has vibrant and distinctive communities, villages and towns that are built upon a rich cultural heritage and an outstanding natural environment. Continuing to support the vibrancy of our county through investment will bring new cultural, leisure, environmental and economic benefits to communities. We know that housing affordability is a challenge in many parts of our county and by continuing to invest in decent, affordable homes we will ensure there is a good mix of housing options to meet the broad needs of our residents. Our residents tell us how important their neighbourhoods are, and we want them to enjoy where they live, with clean, well-maintained and safe neighbourhoods.

#### **Impacts:**

5.61 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- There are more affordable housing options across the county;
- Neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained;
- Regenerated town centres in Blyth and Ashington;
- Plans for Town Investment Plans across the county through the Borderlands Town Programme;
- Improved walking and cycle ways;
- Low carbon heating solutions are available for residents and businesses; and,
- Increased business investment and growth.

#### **Progress:**

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

5.63 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.

#### **Focus on improvement:**

5.64 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.

#### **Further development of measures**

5.65 We propose to use new data from our Residents Survey to measure progress on this outcome, including how satisfied residents are with their local area.

**Thriving places and culture – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Street cleanliness - Detritus (% of areas surveyed)	8	8.35	8.9	7.67	6.6	-	7.8
2	Street cleanliness - Dog Fouling (% of areas surveyed)	1	0.17	0	0.4	0	-	0.2
3	Street Cleanliness - Litter (% of areas surveyed)	5	1.57	3.3	1.2	1.7	-	1.96
4	Green Flag status parks (#)	11	11	-	-	-	-	11
5	Fly tips removed in 3d (%)	95	97.5	98.4	98	98	98	97.6
6	Net additional homes (#) Annual	614	1592	-	-	-	1592	1592
7	Net affordable homes provided (# pa) Annual	374	272	-	-	-	122	122
8	Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)	96	NEW KPI FOR 22/23	95.3	99.3	97.7	97.7	97.3
9	Time taken to answer the 999 call by Fire Control (%)	95	NEW KPI FOR 22/23	96.7	96	99	96.3	96.9
10	Accidental Dwelling Fires (#)	228	123	36	22	34	33	125
11	Deliberate Primary Fire (#)	228	121	33	49	24	22	128
12	Rogue Trader complaints and interventions (%)	95	97.5	100	100	100	100	100

**Outcome (ii):**

5.66 **A diverse and resilient economy** - we will create the right conditions for sustainable, inclusive economic growth. This will involve working hard to support existing businesses to invest and grow, whilst also seeking to attract major investment to create jobs and opportunities for our residents and communities. We are home to over 100,000 employees and over 11,000 active businesses and we want to harness the assets of that employment and business 'base'. We know we have strengths in key sectors, with growth in the professional, scientific and technical sectors as well as strong employment in manufacturing, retail, agricultural, tourism and health. We will build on these strengths and assets to drive growth and maximise the opportunities for our businesses and residents and support a more diverse and resilient economy across the county.

**Impacts:**

5.67 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- A vibrant and diverse economy;
- A range of job opportunities available to residents;
- A strong Combined Authority with a clear and ambitious plan for inclusive economic growth;
- A thriving and sustainable visitor economy; and,
- A strong and sustainable rural economy.

**Progress:**

5.68 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.

**Focus on improvement:**

5.69 We continue to invest in the regeneration across the county whilst building new infrastructure which will support economic growth.

**Further development of measures**

5.70 In future reports, we will introduce more economic measures which will give a better picture of the work of the Council in economic development and regeneration.

**A diverse and vibrant economy – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 2021/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 2022/23 (EOY)
1	Employment Rate (%)	75.8%	72	70.9	69.9	68.8	70.5
2	Weekly Pay – Residents *(£ Annual)	£621.00	£568.60	-	-	-	£601.80
3	Weekly Pay – Workers *(£ Annual)	£609.50	£542.50	-	-	-	£573.30

**Outcome (iii):**

5.71 **Skilled and aspirational people** - the people of Northumberland are our number one asset. Our entrepreneurial, hard-working and friendly communities make the county what it is. We know higher level and new skills are required to drive the growth of key sectors. We also know that post-Covid, we have seen changes to the way people want to work, with higher numbers of people leaving the labour market, meaning workforce pressures for some businesses. Ensuring we have programmes in place to support people and businesses is key in maintaining business stability and growth and helping our residents realise their potential.



**Impacts:**

5.72 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- People have the skills to earn decent incomes;
- Young people are clear on the opportunities available to them; and,
- Businesses have the skilled and aspirational people they need to thrive and grow.

**Progress:**

5.73 In future reports, we plan to include numbers of residents entering employability and skills training. It is important to emphasise the organisation is well-sighted on and able to respond to data and intelligence on skills, including through our Annual Economic Performance Roundup. The last 'Roundup' (Autumn 2022) stated:

- “In 2021, 7.6% of the population in Northumberland (aged 16-64) had no qualifications. This is better than the North of Tyne CA (8.6%), North East LEP (8.7%) and the region (8.2%).”
- The 'UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Employer Skills Survey' provides comprehensive analysis of the skills businesses need and identifies areas of skill deficiency. The last survey reported that 12% of Northumberland's establishments had staff not fully proficient and 4% had a skills shortage vacancy. This was marginally better than the North of Tyne CA average (13% and 6%) and North East Local Enterprise Partnership (14% and 4%). The national average was 13% of establishments without fully proficient staff and 6% had a skills shortage vacancy.

**Further development of measures**

5.74 In future reports, we will introduce, where possible, more up-to-date skills data, including numbers of residents entering employability and skills training.

**Outcome (iv):**

5.75 **A connected county** - the connectivity of Northumberland is key to driving future job growth, reducing carbon emissions and tackling inequalities. This means having well-maintained roads, good transport routes and public transport, broadband and mobile coverage. Responding to growth and the needs of the population, changing patterns of work, as well as ensuring connectivity for businesses, requires upgrades to transport and digital infrastructure.

**Impacts:**

5.76 In this outcome, we are working to achieve the following impacts:

- Northumberland's transport network is well maintained and connects people and business;
- Effective public transport is a viable and green option for residents;
- More residents and visitors use electric vehicles; and,
- Digital connectivity supports wellbeing and growth.

**Progress:**

5.77 We have met our targets on ‘Availability of Superfast broadband (%)’ and ‘Take up of Superfast broadband (%)’ which shows a positive direction of travel in terms of ensuring our county is digitally connected.

**A connected county – summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	Q4 21/22 (EOY)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 22/23 (EOY)
1	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	94.6	95.1	95.4	95.4	95.63	95.63
2	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	80.1	80.1	79.8	79.1	79.1	79.1

**Further development of measures**

5.78 In future reports, we will aim to introduce more measures of connectivity, particularly on public transport access and usage, which will give a better picture of the work of the Council on this outcome.

**Climate Change**

5.79 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.

**Progress:**

5.80 For our ‘Free Tree Planting Scheme - of the 15,000 saplings set aside for the scheme, some 7,269 were collected by those who applied. Around 3,000 saplings were also given away to the public as spares. The remainder were to be used by Local Services for planting in public recreational areas.

5.81 For ‘Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual’ – some 295.812 tonnes of glass were collected in the second year of the glass collection recycling trial (November 2021 - October 2022).

**Climate Change summary of outturn 2022/23:**

	Measure	Target	21/22	22/23
1	Free Tree Planting Scheme (Number of Trees) Annual	15,000	13,578	10,269
2	Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual	250	296	-
3	NCC Carbon Dioxide Emission (tCO <sub>2</sub> ) Biannual	31,272	10,399	15,741
4	NCC EV Fleet Replacement (# eligible vehicles) Annual	11	33	39

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

- 6.1 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 4, 2022/23 (Q4). The recommendation is to consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report. There are no alternative options in this report for Council to consider.

**7. Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	This report supports delivery of all three priorities of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	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.
<b>Legal</b>	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.
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human resources</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - not required at this point N/A

<b>Risk assessment</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer considerations</b>	N/A
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Each of our three Priorities have an important a part to play in responding to Climate Change.
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	N/A
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**8. Background papers**

Not applicable.

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

Corporate Plan 2023-26  
 Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2023

**10. Author and Contact Details**

Philip Hunter, Director of Strategy and Communications  
 Email: Philip.Hunter@northumberland.gov.uk



## Northumberland County Council

Council

1 November 2023

### Annual Report from Audit Committee to Council

**Report of** Audit Committee

**Responsible Officer(s):** Jan Willis, Executive Director of Transformation & Resources

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

The work of Audit Committee contributes to the achievement of all priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan. In particular, it supports the "Achieving Value for Money" priority of the Corporate Plan 2023-26.

#### 2. **Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to present an Annual Report for 2022/23 from Audit Committee to Council, which was agreed by Audit Committee at its meeting on 27 September 2023.

#### 3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Council notes the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2022/23, attached as **Appendix A** to this report.

#### 4. **Background**

- 4.1 The Council's Audit Committee is a politically balanced Committee of full Council, with independent co-opted members, including an independent co-opted Chair. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) views audit committees in local government as a key component of each local authority's governance framework.
- 4.2 CIPFA issues best practice guidance for the operation of Audit Committees in local authorities, and updated guidance was issued by CIPFA in October 2022. CIPFA's best practice guidance includes a requirement to prepare an annual report from the committee to Council. The guidance requires the annual report to detail the work of the committee, demonstrate how the committee has fulfilled its responsibilities, and provide assurance to Council over those areas within its terms of reference.

4.3 An annual report from Audit Committee to Council for 2022/23, in accordance with CIPFA’s best practice guidance, is attached as **Appendix A**.

**5. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations**

5.1 The following decision options are available for consideration by Council:

Option 1

Council agrees to note the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2022/23.

Option 2

Council does not agree to note the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2022/23.

Option 1 is the recommended option. It is good practice recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) that Audit Committee prepare an annual report for presentation to Council, in order that Council is aware of the main governance matters which have been considered by Audit Committee during 2022/23 and the outcomes of the self-assessment and current review of Audit Committee arrangements.

**6. Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	<p>The Audit Committee contributes to the Council’s governance framework, including the review of financial governance as appropriate.</p> <p>The role of Audit Committee is set out in the Council’s Constitution and the Audit Committee’s Terms of Reference.</p>
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	<p>Through its review of a range of audit, accounting and governance related items, the Audit Committee assesses the Council’s use of financial resources and value for money.</p> <p>There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. Financial implications of matters reported to Audit Committee throughout the year are assessed and included as part of individual reports on the Committee’s agenda during the year.</p>
<b>Legal</b>	<p>The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and related Local Government Application Note, presume that local authorities will have an Audit Committee undertaking the purpose identified by CIPFA in its 2022 publication “Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police”. This report details Audit Committee’s compliance with the requirements of CIPFA’s guidance.</p>

<b>Procurement</b>	There are no specific procurement implications within this report.
<b>Human resources</b>	There are no specific human resources implications within this report.
<b>Property</b>	There are no specific property implications within this report.
<b>Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - no equalities issues identified Equality Impact Assessment not required.
<b>Risk assessment</b>	There are no specific risk assessment implications within this report. Risks and opportunities identified in matters reported to Audit Committee are managed in accordance with the Council's established risk management processes.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
<b>Customer considerations</b>	There are no specific customer consideration implications within this report.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	There are no specific carbon reduction implications within this report.
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications within this report.
<b>Wards</b>	All wards.

## 7. Background papers

Not applicable.

## 8. Links to other key reports already published

CIPFA's Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022, and Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2022 Edition, CIPFA, October 2022

Review of Audit Committee Arrangements Report to Audit Committee, Report of Head of Internal Audit & Risk Management, 30 November 2022

## 9. Author and Contact Details

Kevin McDonald, Head of Internal Audit & Risk Management  
Email: Kevin.McDonald@northumberland.gov.uk

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# **Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23**

**September 2023**

## Role of Audit Committee

The role of audit committees in local government has grown and developed extensively in recent years. The main professional body which issues guidance regarding local government audit and financial governance matters is the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). CIPFA has published a Position Statement and accompanying guidance on Audit Committees in Local Authorities. This Position Statement and guidance details how the audit committee is a key component of an organisation's governance arrangements and has the potential to be a valuable resource for the whole authority. Where it operates effectively, an audit committee adds value to its authority by supporting improvement across a range of objectives. CIPFA's guidance sets out the following principal areas where audit committees can exert influence and add value:

- Aiding the achievement of the authority's goals and objectives by helping ensure appropriate governance, risk, control and assurance arrangements
- Promoting the principles of good governance and how they are applied during decision making
- Raising awareness of the need for sound internal control and contributing to the development of an effective control environment
- Supporting arrangements to govern risk and for effective arrangements to manage risk
- Advising on the adequacy of the assurance framework and considering whether assurance is deployed efficiently and effectively across the authority
- Reinforcing the objectivity, importance and independence of both internal and external audit and supporting the effectiveness of the audit functions
- Supporting the development of robust arrangements for ensuring value for money
- Helping the authority to implement the values of ethical governance, including effective arrangements for countering the risks of fraud and corruption
- Promoting measures to improve transparency, accountability and effective public reporting to the authority's stakeholders and the local community.

The Position Statement defines the specific responsibilities of an audit committee as:

### Maintenance of governance, risk management and control arrangements

- Support a comprehensive understanding of governance across the organisation and among all those charged with governance, fulfilling the principles of good governance.
- Consider the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements. It should understand the risk profile of the organisation and seek assurances that active arrangements are in place on risk-related issues, for both the body and its collaborative arrangements.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the system of internal control, including arrangements for financial management, ensuring value for money, supporting standards and ethics and managing the authority's exposure to the risks of fraud and corruption.

### Financial and governance reporting

- Be satisfied that the authority's accountability statements, including the annual governance statement, properly reflect the risk environment, and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the authority's objectives.
- Support the maintenance of effective arrangements for financial reporting and review the statutory statements of account and any reports that accompany them.

### Establishing appropriate and effective arrangements for audit and assurance

- Consider the arrangements in place to secure adequate assurance across the body's full range of operations and collaborations with other entities.
- In relation to the authority's internal audit functions:
  - Oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and conformance to professional standards
  - Support effective arrangements for internal audit
  - Promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework.
- Consider the opinion, reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit.
- Contribute to the operation of efficient and effective external audit arrangements, supporting the independence of auditors and promoting audit quality.
- Support effective relationships between all providers of assurance, audits and inspections, and the organisation, encouraging openness to challenge, review and accountability.

## **Audit Committee Meetings 2022/23**

The Audit Committee met formally on six occasions during 2022/23. All meetings were quorate and took place face to face at County Hall. In addition to Committee Members, the Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management, the Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer (or representative), External Auditor (Mazars) and other officers as appropriate, attended all Audit Committee meetings.

The Committee's work programme for 2022/23 was agreed by Audit Committee in March 2022. The work programme was developed in order that Audit Committee agreed the core business of Audit Committee, whilst able to receive additional reports on any ad-hoc items of business during the year. This helps ensure that Audit Committee receives information at the optimum times during the year to properly perform its role as set out in the Constitution and its Terms of Reference, and some additional reports were received and considered by Audit Committee during the year. A total of 48 reports were considered by Audit Committee during the year, details of which are provided in Annex A. At the beginning of each meeting, the Committee's work programme was reviewed and progress against actions required was monitored.

Audit Committee's programme of work during 2022/23 culminated in the agreement of the Council's Annual Governance Statement at its meeting in July 2023.

## **Key Highlights from the Work of Audit Committee**

Key highlights from the Committee's work during the year included:

### **Internal Audit**

Audit Committee received a number of reports from Internal Audit during the year. These reports included:

- the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Opinion on the Framework of Governance, Risk Management and Control for 2021/22, which stated that the Council's systems of internal control and risk management were satisfactory overall but drew attention to specific aspects of governance where weaknesses required strengthening;
- summaries of the outcomes of Internal Audit's reports, detailing the audit objectives of each assignment, the number of high, medium and low priority recommendations made, any areas of good practice identified, and key findings / issues identified from the audit with management comment on action taken in response to audit recommendations;
- the Strategic Audit Plan for 2022/23 and update reports relating to the delivery of the plan during the year, reflecting the evolving nature of risks and subsequent changes in assurance coverage required during the year.

As part of its role in overseeing arrangements for an effective Internal Audit, Audit Committee agreed an updated Internal Audit Charter, a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and a self-assessment of Internal Audit's compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) following the cessation of the shared Internal Audit service with North Tyneside Council, ahead of a scheduled external assessment of compliance, in accordance with the PSIAS.

### **External Audit**

Audit Committee received a number of updates from the Council's external auditor, relating to the progress of audits in relation to the audit of 2020/21 and 2021/22 accounts, and Value for Money opinion for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. External audit's work in relation to the audit of 2020/21 has been paused, pending resolution of an outstanding national issue relating to the reporting of infrastructure within local authorities' accounts. Reports included Mazars' audit approach, highlighted significant audit risks and areas of key judgements from work undertaken. The external auditor's consideration and conclusion on Mazars' independence as auditors was also considered and agreed by Audit Committee.

### **Finance**

The Annual Governance Statement is a significant report considered by Audit Committee each year. During the year, Audit Committee received and considered the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22 which detailed the review of

governance reported. Audit Committee agreed that it properly reflected the risk environment of the Council and supporting assurances, including Internal Audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

A number of reports were also received from Finance, relating to the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2022/23. Reports received and considered by Audit Committee throughout the year included consideration of 'going concern status' for the Council's Statement of Accounts, agreement of a timetable for preparation and publication of the Council's accounts, agreement of updated accounting policies used in the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, and a review of the Council's Group Accounting Boundary.

The Council is required to set out and prepare a Treasury Strategy for borrowing and prepare an Investment Strategy annually. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24 was considered and agreed by Audit Committee, in addition to receiving reports providing a review of Treasury Management activity and performance against the previously agreed Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23.

### **Risk Management**

Reports were received by Audit Committee, providing updates on progress with the development, implementation and embedding of risk management within the County Council. Reports also provided details of the latest position of the Council's corporate risks following review by the Executive Management Team and Cabinet portfolio holders.

### **External Inspections**

Regular reports are received by Audit Committee in relation to external inspection activity and reports regarding Adults Social Care and Children's Services. Reports provide details of inspection outcomes and associated actions taken by the Council, in order that Audit Committee can be aware of external inspection results, receive assurance that appropriate action is being taken as necessary and assess the effectiveness of actions taken by the Council.

### **Counter Fraud**

The Committee receives regular reports on counter-fraud activity, undertaken by the Council's dedicated Corporate Fraud Team. Reports provide an update on instances of suspected fraud identified and investigated, outcomes of counter-fraud activity and steps taken to recover any monies owed to the Council.

### **Group Audit Committee**

The Council's Audit Committee fulfils the role of 'Group Audit Committee' for all entities operating within the County Council's accounting group boundary. In order for Audit Committee to fulfil its responsibilities as Group Audit Committee, an update is provided at every meeting of Audit Committee summarising details of the Internal Audit Plan and any internal audits completed within each non-dormant entity,

allowing governance oversight of all entities within the accounting group boundary. In addition, the Chair of Audit Committee has attended meetings of Advance Northumberland Audit Committee as an observer during 2022/23.

## **Governance**

A number of additional reports were received by Audit Committee, in relation to governance matters identified and reported to the Council early in the 2022/23 year.

The Council's Section 151 Officer issued a report under s114 and s114A of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, on 23 May 2022. The report explained the Section 151 Officer's view that the Council had incurred items of unlawful expenditure and recommended further action be taken by the Council.

Prior to this, during 2021/22, the Leader of the Council had commissioned an Independent Governance Review which was undertaken by Solace in Business, led by Max Caller CBE. The findings from this review were reported to the County Council meeting on 8 June 2022. A number of governance issues were identified, and an independent Challenge Board subsequently supported the Council following the review.

Throughout 2022/23 and into 2023/24, the Council has implemented a number of actions in response to the recommendations arising from both the Independent Governance Review and the Section 151 Officer's s114 Report. Progress on the implementation of recommendations, and the associated impact of the framework of governance, risk management and control, have been reported to Audit Committee, with reports from the independent Challenge Board also considered.

## **Audit Committee Arrangements and Effectiveness**

It is good practice to undertake an annual review of our Audit Committee arrangements and to review effectiveness. Using CIPFA's updated Position Statement and guidance, a self-assessment of our existing arrangements was considered by Audit Committee at its meeting in November 2022. The self-assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit Committee and demonstrated that our Audit Committee arrangements already reflected a number of the good practice areas recommended by CIPFA.

Some areas were highlighted in the self-assessment where further development was needed to ensure that the good practice recommended by CIPFA was fully reflected. These included ensuring that the Terms of Reference fully reflected the updated CIPFA guidance, preparation of an annual report from Audit Committee to Council and evaluating the required knowledge, skills and associated training and support for Audit Committee members. Some minor amendments to Audit Committee's Terms of Reference were included as part of the updated Constitution agreed by Council in May 2023, to ensure that the Terms of Reference fully met the requirements of the updated Position Statement and accompanying guidance. A wider review of Audit Committee arrangements is currently in the process of being undertaken with Audit Committee members and Chair of Audit Committee, to develop a plan of actions which may be needed to ensure that CIPFA's latest good practice is fully reflected. This includes the knowledge and skills required by Audit Committee and our

arrangements in place to ensure that Audit Committee receives an appropriately structured programme of training and support.

In addition, the independent co-opted Chair of Audit Committee has attended all meetings of a regional North East Audit Committee Chairs' Forum, supported by the Local Government Association (LGA), during 2022/23.

Assessments of Audit Committee arrangements will continue to be undertaken on an annual basis, in accordance with CIPFA's good practice guidance. The outcomes of the next self-assessment and review will be reported to Council in the next annual report.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past year the Audit Committee has undertaken a structured programme of work to gain assurance that governance, risk management and control systems are in place across the Council and are reliable and secure.

This report provides a summary of the range of work undertaken by Audit Committee, which has enabled it to fulfil its Terms of Reference and comply with the requirements of CIPFA's Position Statement for Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022. The Committee looks forward to developing its work programme and further developing its effectiveness to assure and support Council as the current year progresses.

The Audit Committee would like to extend its appreciation to all officers who have contributed reports and responded to questions raised by Audit Committee members.

## Summary of Reports considered by Audit Committee in 2022/23

Meeting Date	Governance Matters Considered
25 May 2022	2021/22 Internal Audit Opinion on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of the Framework of Governance, Risk Management and Control Key Outcomes from Internal Audit Reports Issued between November 2021 and May 2022 External Audit Progress Report Strategic Audit Plan 2021-22 – Final Monitoring Statement Risk Management Update Group Audit Committee – Advance Northumberland Internal Audit Update
27 July 2022	KPMG Forensic Independent Review of Advance Northumberland Group S114 Report by S151 Officer Review of External Inspection Reports – Adult & Children’s Services Internal Audit Charter External Audit Update on Audit of 2020-21 Statement of Accounts Group Audit Committee – Advance Northumberland Internal Audit Update Risk Management Update
28 September 2022	Consideration of ‘Going Concern Status’ for Statement of Accounts for year ended 31 March 2022 Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021-22 Annual Governance Review and Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 Annual Report of Firefighters’ Pension Scheme Local Pension Board 2021-22 External Audit Progress Report Group Audit Committee – Advance Northumberland Internal Audit Update
30 November 2022	International Investigation Update Audit Committee Arrangements Key Outcomes from Internal Audit Reports Issued between May 2022 and October 2022 Strategic Audit Plan 2022/23 – Interim Monitoring Statement Treasury Management Mid-Year Review – 1 April to 30 September 2022 Corporate Fraud Team Annual Report 2021/22 External Auditor’s Audit Strategy Memorandum – year ending 31 March 2022



External Audit update on Audit of 2021/22 Statement of Accounts  
Group Audit Committee – Advance Northumberland Internal Audit Update

25 January 2023

Response to the Challenge Board Interim Report 1 to Member Oversight Group  
Changes to the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the UK for 2022/23  
Treasury Management Strategy Statement for Financial Year 2023/24  
Statement of Accounts 2022/23: Timetable for publication and update on Accounting Policies to be applied in preparation of 2022/23 Statement of Accounts  
Annual Governance Review and Draft Annual Governance Statement 2021/22  
Review of Exit Packages  
Preparation of Strategic Audit Plan 2023/24  
Public Sector Internal Audit Standards  
External Audit Progress Report  
Advance Northumberland Executive Management Response to 2021 KPMG Report  
Group Audit Committee – Advance Northumberland Internal Audit Update

29 March 2023

Audit Committee Work Programme 2023/24  
Review of External Inspection Reports – Adult Social Care & Children's Services  
Corporate Fraud Interim Report  
Statement of Accounts – Group Boundary Review  
Statement of Accounts 2020/21  
External Audit Completion Report 2020/21  
Group Audit Committee Update  
Corporate Risk Management  
Strategic Audit Plan 2023/24

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## Northumberland County Council

### COUNCIL

1 NOVEMBER 2023

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#### Treasury Management Annual Report for the Financial Year 2022-23

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

**Lead Officer:** Jan Willis, Executive Director of Transformation and Resources (Section 151 Officer)

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#### Purpose of the Report

This report provides details of performance against the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) 2022-23 approved by the County Council on 23 February 2022. The report provides a review of borrowing and investment performance for 2022-23, set in the context of the general economic conditions prevailing during the year. It also reviews specific Treasury Management prudential indicators defined by the (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice and CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code), and approved by the Authority in the TMSS.

#### Recommendations

**It is recommended that Council receive the report and note the performance of the Treasury Management function for 2022-23.**

#### Link to the Corporate Plan

This report is aligned to the priorities outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26, specifically the priority "Achieving Value for Money".

#### Key Issues

The Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) and supporting Regulations require the Council to produce an annual review of treasury management activities and present the actual performance against prudential and treasury indicators. This report meets the requirements of both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

The report provides a review of the Treasury Management activities for 2022-23; and sets out performance against the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022-23.

# TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

This Treasury Management Annual Report provides a review of the activities of the Treasury Management function for the period 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and shows performance against the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2022-23. Its production and submission to Council is a requirement of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Treasury management is defined as:

“The management of the local authority’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

### 1.2. Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

The Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) and supporting Regulations require the Council to produce an annual review of treasury management activities and the actual performance against prudential and treasury indicators. This report meets the requirements of both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is therefore, important as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council’s policies previously approved by members.

### 1.3. Basis and Content of Treasury Management Annual Report for 2022-23

The report covers:

- Overview of and compliance with the Treasury Management Strategy for the financial year 2022-23;
- Economic conditions and interest rates during 2022-23;
- Overview of the treasury position at 31 March 2023;
- Borrowing activity for 2022-23;
- Investment activity for 2022-23;
- Performance against budget; and,
- Treasury management limits and prudential indicators position.

## **2. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR 2022-23**

### **2.1. Overview of the 2022-23 Strategy**

The 2022-23 Treasury Management Strategy Statement was approved on 23 February 2022. At the time the expectation for interest rates within the TMSS for 2022-23 was for the UK Bank Rate (often referred to as Base Rate) to rise to 0.75% by Quarter 4 2023, and for longer term borrowing rates to rise steadily, in line with expected increases in inflation.

With investment returns anticipated to remain low (at least in the short term), the proposed strategy for 2022-23 was to continue to operate with an under borrowing position - i.e. use investments in lieu of external borrowing – and to meet the remaining external borrowing requirement for the year (estimated at that time at £185 million net of maturing loans) primarily from shorter term / temporary borrowing, but with the caveat that medium to longer term borrowing may also be considered, particularly if rate increases materialise earlier than projected (due to increased optimism in the economy etc.).

### **2.2. Compliance**

All treasury activities met the Treasury indicators set out in the TMSS, and borrowing was within the borrowing limits set by the Council. Throughout the period, all treasury activities have been conducted within the parameters of the TMSS 2022-23, alongside best practice suggested by the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and Central Government.

## **3. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND INTEREST RATES DURING 2022-23**

### **3.1. Economy**

The UK economy has been volatile throughout 2022-23 due to the easing of Covid restrictions in most developed economies, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and a range of different UK Government policies.

CPI inflation increased rapidly over 2022-23 and rose to a peak reading of 11.1% in October 2022. The main factors were the rising cost pressures from shortages of energy, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, and shortages of some food categories.

In an attempt to slow down inflation the Bank of England increased the Bank Rate throughout 2022-23 starting at 0.75% and finishing at 4.25%.

As of February 2023 CPI was 10.4%, most commentators expect inflation to drop towards 4.0% by the end of 2023. However, the Bank of England is faced with a difficult challenge due to wage inflation caused by a low UK unemployment rate and average wage increases at over 6.0%.

### **3.2. Borrowing Rates**

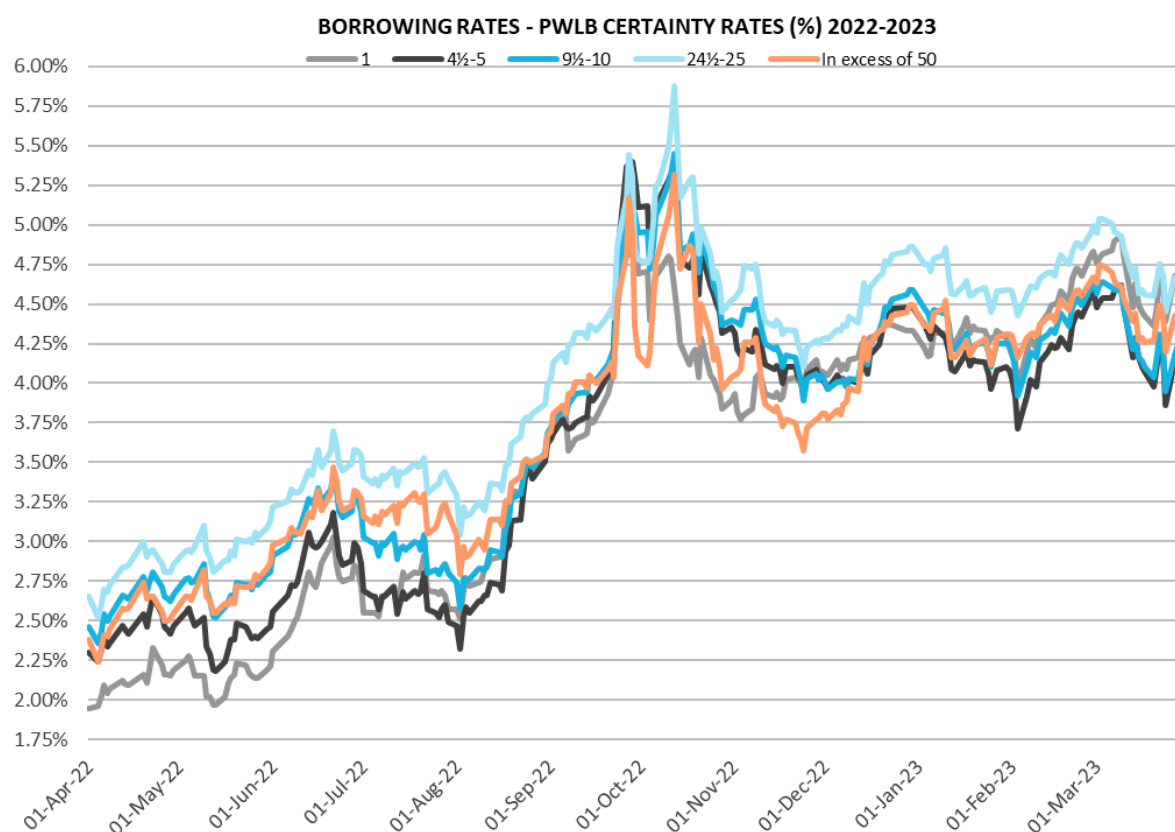
PWLB borrowing rates are based on gilt yields (the interest rate of government debt), and in turn the inverse relationship between gilt prices and gilt yields – when demand increases, prices rise and yields fall. And because gilts are generally regarded as a

'safe-haven', demand typically strengthens when worries grow about the outlook for the economy; and vice versa.

Gilt yields have risen dramatically as a result of economies opening up post-covid and rapid rises in inflation. At present the Bank of England is being challenged by persistent inflation that is exacerbated by very tight labour markets and high wage increases.

At the close of the day on 31 March 2023, all gilt yields from 1 to 50 years were between 3.64% and 4.18%, with the 1 year being the highest and 6-7.5 years being the lowest yield.

The following graph shows PWLB (borrowing) rate movements during the year, for a selection of maturity periods.



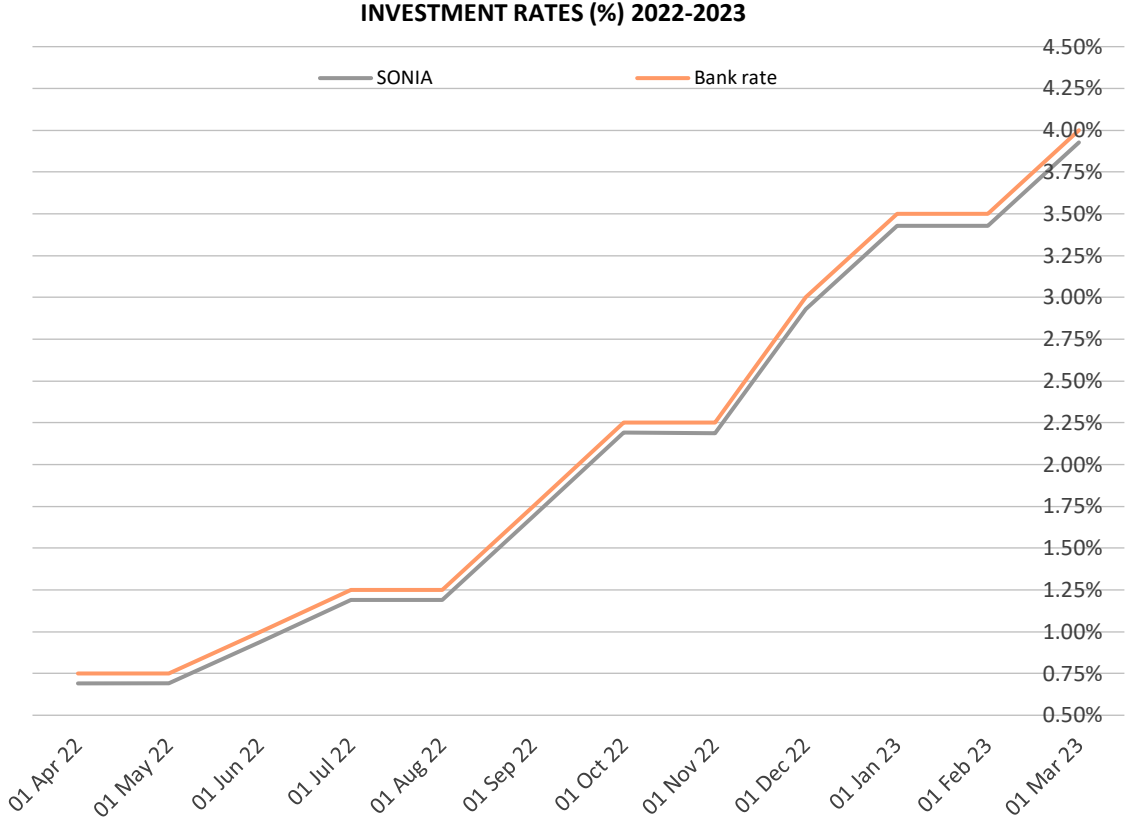
### 3.3. Investment Rates

The expectation for interest rates within the treasury management strategy for 2022-23 was that the UK Bank Rate would rise to 0.75% by Quarter 4 2023

Investment returns picked up throughout the course of 2022-23 as central banks, including the Bank of England, realised that inflationary pressures were not transitory, and that tighter monetary policy was called for.

The sea-change in investment rates meant local authorities were faced with the challenge of pro-active investment of surplus cash for the first time in over a decade, and this emphasised the need for a detailed working knowledge of cashflow projections so that the appropriate balance between maintaining cash for liquidity purposes, and "laddering" deposits on a rolling basis to lock in the increase in investment rates as the duration was extended, became an on-going feature of the investment landscape.

The following graph shows a comparison of investment rate movements during the year, please note that the council has changed from using LIBID (London Interbank Bid Rate) to SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average).



#### 4. THE PORTFOLIO POSITION AT 31 MARCH 2023

##### 4.1. Current Borrowing

The Council’s debt at 01 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 is shown below:

TABLE 1: BORROWING	Total Principal 31 March 2022 £m	Weighted Average Rate %	Total Principal 31 March 2023 £m	Weighted Average Rate %
Public Works Loan Board Loans	451.281	2.66	449.745	2.66
LOBOs	176.500	3.95	176.500	3.95
Market / Local Authority (>1yr)*	129.10	2.62	79.100	3.69
Market / Local Authority (<1yr)*	0.000	-	40.000	4.00
Salix	0.049	-	0.033	-
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL BORROWING</b>	<b>756.930</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>745.378</b>	<b>3.14</b>

\* Note: above figures are based on the term of loans at their inception.

##### 4.2. Current Investments

The table below summarises the investment position at 01 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:



TABLE 2: INVESTMENTS	Total Outstanding 31 March 2022 £m	Weighted Average Rate %	Total Outstanding 31 March 2023 £m	Weighted Average Rate %
Fixed Term Investments – Long Term (>1yr)*	25.000	3.23	-	-
Fixed Term Investments – Short Term (<1yr)*	65.000	0.42	35.000	4.32
Money Market Funds	98.100	0.53	79.450	4.09
<b>TOTAL INVESTMENTS (excl. Cash)</b>	<b>188.100</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>114.450</b>	<b>4.16</b>

\* Note: above figures are based on the term of investments at their inception.

## 5. BORROWING ACTIVITY 2022-23

### 5.1. Introduction

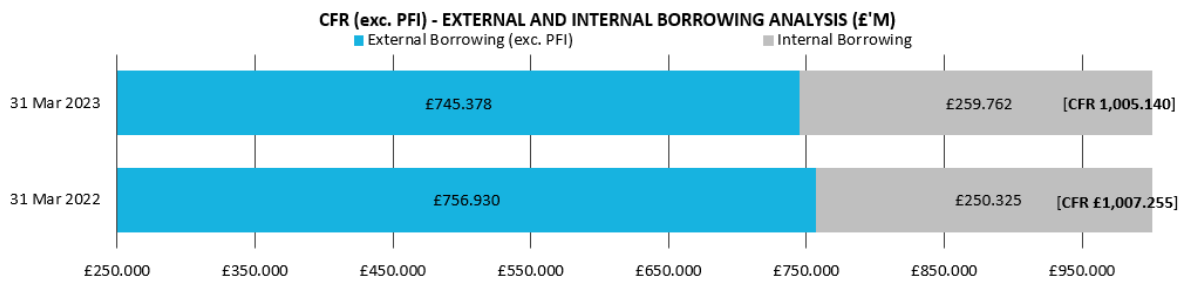
The Council borrows to fund the Capital programme, as well as to fund loans to third parties for policy reasons.

### 5.2. Borrowing Need – Capital Financing Requirement

The Council's long-term borrowing requirement or need to borrow is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement ("CFR"). The CFR represents total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or cash-backed capital resources (such as grants and capital receipts). The CFR is repaid over time by an annual charge to revenue, known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This charge, which is equivalent to depreciation, effectively spreads the cost of debt associated with capital expenditure over the useful economic life of the underlying assets.

At the same time the Council has significant levels of 'cash-backed' balances that are available for investment. Accordingly, the capital financing requirement (or borrowing requirement) need not always be met or funded externally from physical loans. At least in the short term, investment balances can be 'used' in lieu of borrowing externally; by withdrawing investments (in turn foregoing investment income) and instead using the cash to fund part of the borrowing requirement. This is often referred to as 'internal' or 'under' borrowing.

The following graph summarises the CFR (excluding PFIs) and external borrowing movements during the year:



The inter-relationship (and reconciliation between the CFR, external borrowing and investments) is further analysed in the 'Balance Sheet Review' attached at Appendix 1.

The CFR (excluding Public Finance Initiatives (PFIs)) decreased by £2.115 million during the year, and was lower than originally budgeted at 31 March 2023 at £1,005.140 million against an original budget of £1,114.755 million. This was due to significant underspends and re-profiling within the 2022-23 capital programme.

£51.552 million of loans matured and were repaid in year. Combined with new Local Authority loans of £40.000 million which resulted in total external borrowing decreasing from £756.930 million at the start of the year to £745.378 million at 31 March 2023. The weighted average maturity (WAM) of the portfolio decreased slightly from 32.91 to 32.45 years.

The new Local Authority loans of £40.000 million are all short-term loans. The uncertainty around interest rates alongside the market opinion that the interest rates will fall in 2024 resulted in a preference for short-term borrowing to avoid locking into a higher interest rate unnecessarily.

The decrease in borrowing led to an increase in 'internal borrowing' (i.e. the difference between the CFR and actual external borrowing) of £9.437 million, from £250.325 million at the start of year to £259.762 million at 31 March 2023, which is shown in the graph above.

The following graph shows the maturity of the loan portfolio at 31 March 2023 by monetary value (£745.378 million in total). LOBOs are shown as held to maturity. Despite recent increases in interest rates, current market forecasts indicate that the rates will return to lower levels, and it is considered that there is a low risk of those LOBO loans with call dates within the next 12 months being called. All LOBO loans have therefore been classified as long term.



### 5.3. Borrowing Performance / Benchmarking

The weighted average rate of interest paid on all borrowing during the year was 3.00%, and the average rate on loans at 31 March 2023 was 3.14%, an increase of 0.18% compared to the start of the year figure of 2.96% (due to the maturing short-term, lower rate, borrowing).

Overall borrowing levels were lower than originally budgeted, due to the re-profiling of the capital programme, and therefore the reduced need to borrow.

Interest paid on external borrowing was £1.144 million below budget at £22.383 million (original budget of £23.527 million). This was largely attributable to the reduced capital spend and the reduced need to borrow. Weighted average borrowing for the year totalled £746.028 million compared to an original estimate of £853,615 million. However, as a result of interest rate increases being higher than anticipated, the overall average rate of interest paid was higher than budgeted – at 3.00% compared to an original estimate of 2.76%.

## 6. INVESTMENT ACTIVITY 2022-23

### 6.1. Introduction

The Council has significant levels of ‘cash-backed’ balances that are available for investment; in the form of General Fund and HRA balances, and the numerous earmarked reserves and provisions.

The Council's investment policy (as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022-23) is governed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance") and the revised CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes ("the CIPFA TM Code"). This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by two of the main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc).

All investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.

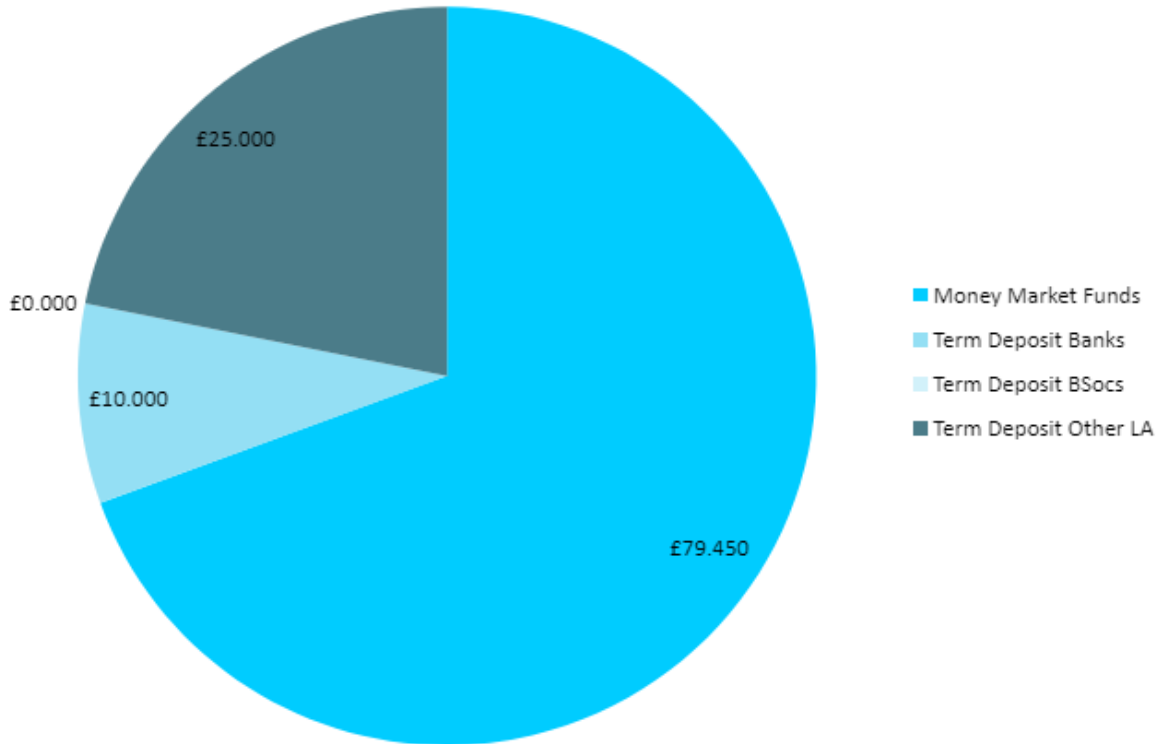
As identified in section 5 above, a significant proportion of available investment balances were used as 'internal borrowing' to support the financing of the CFR. This totalled £259.762 million at 31 March 2023 - an increase of £9.437 million compared to 31 March 2022. At the same time, the level of balances available for investment decreased during the year by £10.410 million, and the net difference between outstanding creditors and debtors (referred to as working capital) decreased by £53.748 million. (See Balance Sheet Review at Appendix 1).

As a result, overall external investments (excluding cash and accrued interest) decreased during the year from £188.100 million to £114.450 million, and the Council maintained an average balance of £169.880 million of internally managed funds.

The weighted average maturity (WAM) of the £114.450 million of investments held at the year-end was 0.04 years (0.14 years at 31 March 2022).

An analysis of the year-end investment balance (excluding cash) by counterparty category is shown in the following chart:

INVESTMENT COUNTERPARTY ANALYSIS 31 MAR 2023(£'M)



## 6.2. Investment Performance / Benchmarking

As covered in section 3.3 above, investment rates increased throughout 2022-23.

Budgeted investment returns for 2022-23 were based on a weighted average rate of return of 1.10% and an average daily balance of £66.708 million. Actual average investment balances were significantly higher than anticipated at £169.880 million - largely due to underspend in the capital programme and reserves not being utilised as quickly as originally anticipated. These 'additional' sums were invested short term (for liquidity reasons), and due to interest rates increasing further than anticipated, this increased the overall weighted rate of return for the year compared to budget at 2.11%.

Overall, income from core treasury management investments exceeded the budget for the year by £2.856 million, totalling £3.589 million against an original estimate of £0.733 million.

The weighted rate of return is slightly lower than the comparable average Sterling Overnight Interbank Average (SONIA) of 2.26%. It should be noted that 2022-23 is the first year that the SONIA rate has been used as the benchmark.

Data from Link Asset Services' investment benchmarking club shows Northumberland compares very favourably. Looking at the weighted average rate on investments held at 31 March 2023, Northumberland's rate of 4.16% was higher than the average for its benchmarking group (3.97%), as well as English Unitary Authorities (3.76%) and overall Link benchmarking group population (3.62%).

Note: the above figures are exclusive of interest received on loans to third parties. These loans are made for policy reasons; and not day-to-day treasury undertakings in relation to the investment of cash flows etc.; and, as a result are not classed as core treasury management activities. Actual returns on these facilities totalled £19.500 million, which was slightly lower than the original budget by £0.349 million.

**7. OVERALL TREASURY MANAGEMENT BUDGET PERFORMANCE**

Overall net Treasury Management costs (including Minimum Revenue Provision, amortisation of premiums and discounts and PFI contracts etc.) were £6.590 million lower than budgeted, at £62.468 million when compared to the budget of £69.058 million. The key variances are summarised in the following table:

	<b>Additional Cost/(Saving)</b>
	<b>£m</b>
Interest Payable – External Borrowing.....	(1.144)
Interest Payable – PFI .....	(2.512)
Interest Receivable – Treasury Management Activity.....	(2.856)
Interest Receivable – Loans to Third Parties .....	0.349
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) .....	(0.570)
Other .....	0.143
<b>TOTAL NET UNDERSPEND</b>	<b>(6.590)</b>

Notes:

- Contrary to section 6.2, the above figures DO include interest received from loans to third parties; on the basis that the underlying borrowing (and therefore interest payable) in respect of these loans is reflected in the above costs and cannot be separately identified and excluded.
- The under budget PFI charges are largely due to reduced waste volume, a large credit as a result of the electricity sold from the recycling process and a change in the Contingent Rental Charge.
- MRP charges for the year were lower than budgeted due a lower opening CFR at the beginning of year (due to capital underspends in 2021-22).
- The above figures include MRP set aside for the loans to Advance Northumberland and Newcastle Airport but exclude the MRP payments made in respect of other third-party loans, which are funded from the principal repayments made by the borrower and therefore have a neutral impact on Council budgets.

**8. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY LIMITS 2022-23**

The Prudential Code has been developed by CIPFA. The Code has a central role in capital finance decision making, including borrowing for capital investment. Its key objectives are to provide a framework for local authority finance that will ensure individual authorities’ capital expenditure plans are affordable; all external borrowing is

within prudent and sustainable levels; and, that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice.

To ensure compliance with the Code, councils are required to approve a set of Prudential Indicators for the financial year and adhere to these indicators during the course of that year. Details of the Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Limits for 2022-23 are provided in Appendix 2.

**Implications**

**Policy** The report provides a review of the Treasury Management activities for 2022-23 and sets out performance against the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022-23. It is consistent with “Achieving Value for Money” priority included in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2023-26.

**Finance and value for money** The financial implications of the 2022-23 investment and borrowing transactions have been taken into account within the revenue budget and outturn for 2022-23.

Northumberland County Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving best value in treasury management within the context of effective risk management, and to employing suitable performance measurement techniques, for example comparison with other members of the CIPFA and Capita benchmarking clubs.

**Legal** Under Section 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) the Council may borrow money for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment, or for the purpose of the prudent management of its financial affairs.

The Act and supporting regulations also require the Council to ‘have regard to’ the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice (which were adopted by Northumberland County Council in February 2010).

**Procurement** There are no direct procurement implications for the County Council.

**Human Resources** There are no direct staffing implications for the County Council.

**Property** There are no direct property implications for the County Council.

**Equalities** Not applicable for the County Council.

(Impact Assessment attached)

Yes  No   
N/A



<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The report highlights the principal financial risks within the Treasury Management function. The identification, monitoring and control of risk are the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of the County Council's Treasury Management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of Treasury Management activities will focus on their risk implications for the Council. The investment priority is security and liquidity rather than yield, which is a secondary aim.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	There are no Crime and Disorder implications for the County Council.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	There are no Customer Considerations for the County Council.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	There are no Carbon Reduction implications for the County Council.
<b>Wards</b>	All.

### Background Papers:

Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022-23. Approved by Council on 23 February 2022.

CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance notes (revised 2011).

CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

Guidance on Local Government Investments; The Local Government Act 2003.

Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations 2012 (S.I.2012/265).

### Report sign off:

Monitoring Officer	Stephen Gerrard
Executive Director of Transformation and Resources & Section 151 Officer	Jan Willis
Chief Executive	Helen Paterson
Portfolio Holder	Richard Wearmouth

### Author and Contact Details

Gemma Simpson – Technical Accountant  
Gemma.simpson@northumberland.gov.uk

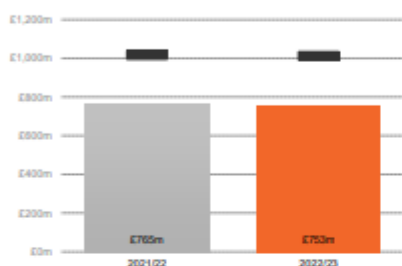
## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

2022/23 Desktop Balance Sheet Review



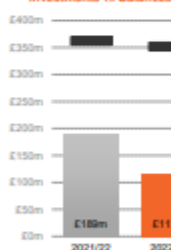
CAPITAL FINANCING AND BORROWING (£'000)			2021/22 (£'000)	2022/23 (£'000)	Change (£'000)
	2021/22	2022/23			
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	1,072,159	1,067,600	1,431,137	1,470,289	
Underlying Borrowing Requirement	1,015,953	1,013,147	7,951	7,951	
External Borrowing	765,143	753,338	2,268	2,265	
Internal Borrowing	250,810	259,809	1,237	888	
Net Borrowing (exc TFR debt)	576,296	637,985	4,088	3,914	
			18,128	16,977	
			403,873	401,687	
			(204,229)	(216,505)	
			(579,099)	(608,671)	
			(13,195)	(13,195)	
			1,072,159	1,067,600	(4,559)
CFR per Statement of Accounts	1,072,134	1,067,699	5,108	4,859	
			(61,314)	(59,312)	
			1,015,953	1,013,147	(2,806)
			(51,552)	(51,552)	
			(713,591)	(701,796)	
			(765,143)	(753,338)	11,805
			250,810	259,809	8,999

External Borrowing vs Underlying Borrowing Requirement

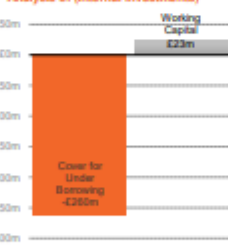


RESERVES / BALANCES AND INVESTMENTS (£'000)			2021/22 (£'000)	2022/23 (£'000)	Change (£'000)
	2021/22	2022/23			
Balances Available for Investment	362,235	351,825	(70,079)	(50,955)	
External Investments	188,847	115,353	(40,085)	(39,002)	
(Internal Investments)	173,388	236,472	9,168	(3,401)	
			(185,325)	(179,915)	
			(4,951)	(6,330)	
			(9,656)	(6,744)	
			(61,306)	(63,478)	
			(362,235)	(351,825)	10,410
			89,971	34,680	
			96,876	80,673	
			188,847	115,353	(73,494)
			(173,388)	(236,472)	(63,084)

Investments vs Balances

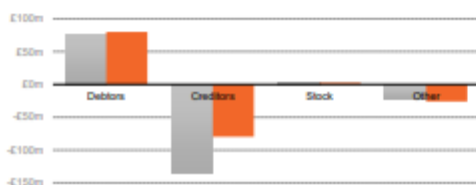


Analysis of (Internal Investments)



WORKING CAPITAL (£'000)			2021/22 (£'000)	2022/23 (£'000)	Change (£'000)
	2021/22	2022/23			
TOTAL Working Capital (Surplus)	(77,422)	(23,337)	75,555	79,934	4,379
			(134,494)	(79,752)	54,742
			(16,870)	(20,476)	
			(11,988)	(13,907)	
			2,255	2,407	
			(85,942)	(31,794)	53,748
			(300)	(124)	
			59,312	57,053	
			16,426	15,920	
			(67,318)	(64,392)	
			8,120	8,457	337
			(77,422)	(23,337)	54,085

Analysis of Working Capital



Please note some of the figures in Appendix 1 may not exactly match to some of the figures quoted in the report. This is due to the way financial instruments, primarily the premiums and discounts relating to loans, are recorded within the balance sheet review.

**PERFORMANCE AGAINST CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**

**Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt**

These are important indicators and are part of the Local Government Act 2003 requirements.

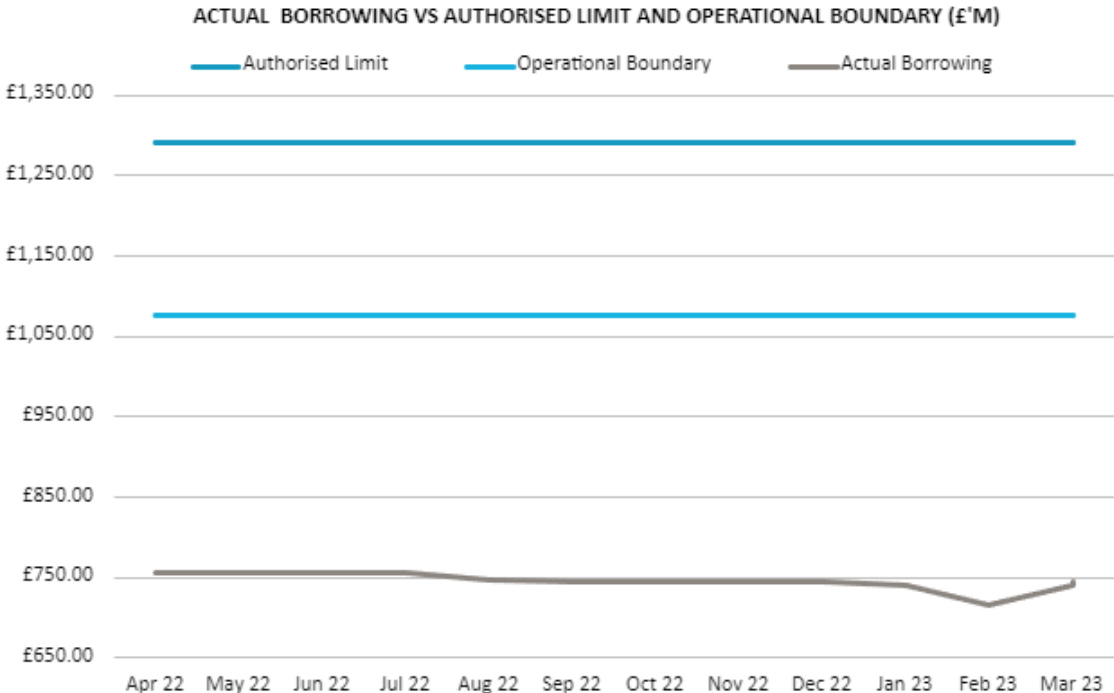
The authorised limit - is the “affordable borrowing limit” required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level.

The operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary is acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

The table below demonstrates that during 2022-23 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.

	Authorised Limit for External Debt £m	Operational Boundary £m	Actual 31 March 2023 £m
External Borrowing	1,252.818	1,044.015	745.378
Other Long Term Liabilities (PFI)	76.603	63.836	54.453
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL DEBT</b>	<b>1,329.421</b>	<b>1,107.851</b>	<b>799.831</b>

The following graph shows the external borrowing limits and actual borrowing over the



**Treasury Management Limits on Activity**

The purpose of this is to restrain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of any adverse movement in interest rates.

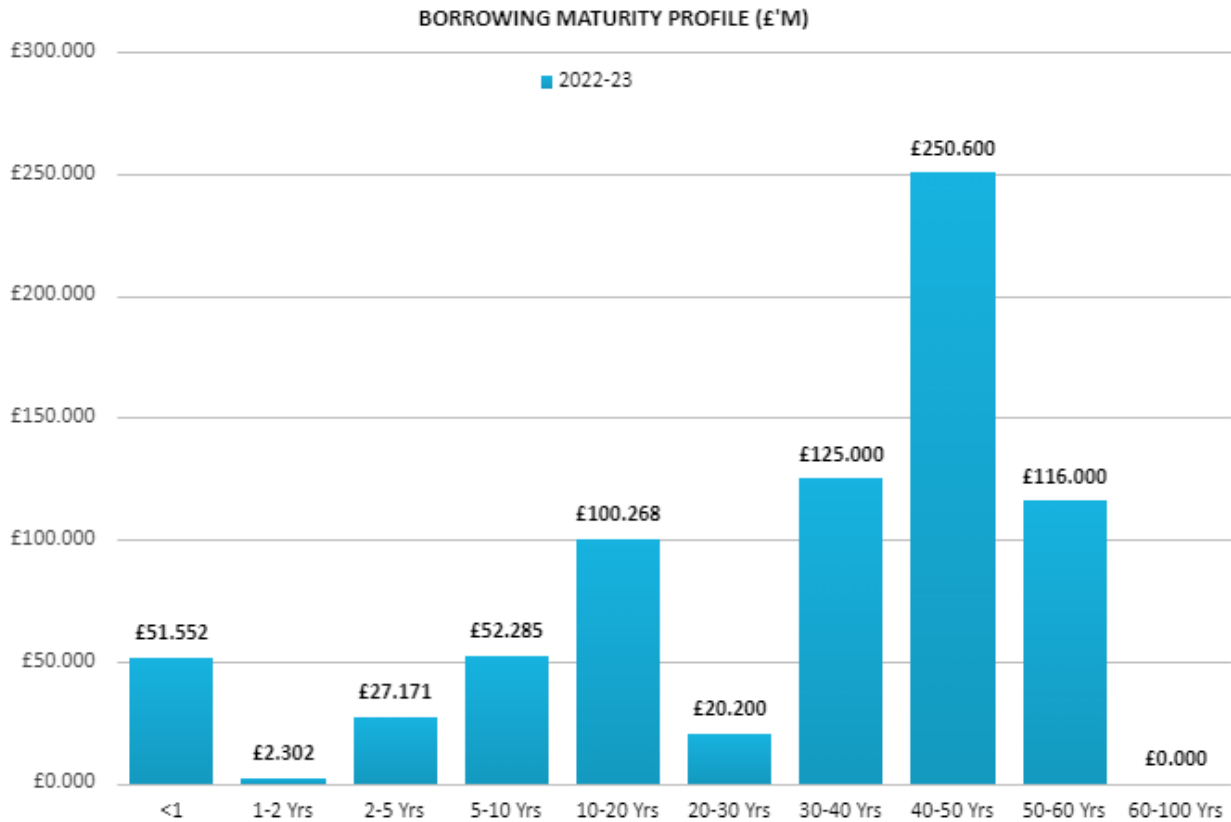
Lender option, borrower option loans (LOBOs) callable within 12 months are classed as variable; and if the rate is fixed for a longer period they are classed as fixed. At 31 March 2023 the total of variable rate loans was £121.000 million and is within the set limit.

	Limit for 2022-23	Actual 31 March 2023
Fixed Rate Exposure	0% - 100%	83.77%
Variable Rate Exposure	0% - 50%	16.23%

**Maturity Structure of Borrowing**

Measuring maturity structure of borrowing ensures a reasonable spread of maturing debt as a safety mechanism to ensure significant amounts of debt do not mature at a time when interest rates for refinancing the debt may be high.

The following graph shows maturity of loans by monetary value. LOBOs are shown as held to maturity. In the current climate it is not envisaged that loans would be called for repayment within the next 12 months as markets predict rates will come down.



### Investments for periods longer than 365 days

These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end.

	Limit 2022-23 £m	Actual Highest £m	Actual 31 March 2023 £m
Principal sums invested > 364 days	120.000	25.000	0.000

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## Northumberland County Council

### COUNTY COUNCIL

1 November 2023

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#### **Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) - contractual change from fixed term to permanent status**

Report of the Chair of the Staff and Appointments Committee

Lead officer – the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

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#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval that the current postholder in the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) be contracted on a permanent basis.
- 1.2 The Staff and Appointments Committee will meet on 25 October 2023 to consider the proposal and due to the timings of this committee meeting, it is not possible to submit a full report for consideration by Full Council with the agenda papers which are now attached.
- 1.3 The full report received by Staff and Appointments Committee is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To approve the recommendations from the Staff and Appointments Committee which is due to be held on 25 October 2023.

#### **3. Links to the Corporate Plan**

- 3.1 This report is relevant to all areas of the Corporate Plan as it relates to ensuring that the Council is compliant with the constitution and fulfilling its legal duties and requirements to ensure that there is an effective and fit for purpose staffing establishment.

**Implications:**

<b>Policy</b>	Oversight of HR Policies and Procedure
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	<p>A permanent appointment is deemed to be appropriate in relation to finance and value for money and it is a statutory requirement that the Council has a Monitoring Officer in post.</p> <p>All terms and conditions are to remain the same therefore there are no financial implications</p>
<b>Legal</b>	<p>Section 5 of the Local Government &amp; Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to designate one of its Officers as Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Staff and Appointments Committee (StAC), discharges the Council's functions of the employer in relation to Chief and Deputy Chief Officers.</p> <p>Chief Officer is defined as the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and any officer as defined in S2 (1) (b) (c) and (d) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. StAC also determines the terms and conditions relating to employees of the Council including the remuneration and terms of employment for the Head of Paid Service and Chief and Deputy Chief Officers.</p> <p>All other legal implications have been addressed within the body of the StAC report.</p>
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human Resources</b>	All changes be made in line with appropriate employment processes. Relevant legal implications have been set out in the body of the appended StAC report.
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)	This process will be conducted in line with best practice in relation to promoting equality and diversity within the Council's employment processes.
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Consistent with Independent Corporate Governance Review (Caller Report)
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	n/a
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	n/a
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	n/a
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	The recommendations will support the health and wellbeing of Council Employees at varying levels within the organisation
<b>Wards</b>	The recommendations not related to any particular ward but cover the whole of Northumberland.





## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Staff and Appointments Committee Report of the 25 October 2023 - Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) - Contractual Change

### **Background papers:**

N/A

### **Report sign off.**

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	<b>Full Name of Officer</b>
Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Neil Masson on behalf of Stephen Gerrard
Executive Director of Transformation & Resources (s151)	Jan Willis
Chief Executive (HoPS)	Dr Helen Paterson

### **Author and Contact Details**

This report has been prepared by:  
Sarah Farrell – Director of Workforce and OD  
07770 971 861



# Northumberland County Council

## STAFF & APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

25 October 2023

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### Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) - Contractual Change

Report of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

---

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval that the current postholder in the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) be contracted on a permanent basis.
- 1.2 The Committee will recall at its meeting on 9 March 2023, and subsequently at a meeting of Full Council on 22 March 2023, the fixed term appointment of Stephen Gerrard to the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) was approved.

#### 2. Recommendations

To agree the following recommendations:

- 2.1 To approve that the current postholder be offered a permanent contract in the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer).
- 2.2 Subject to the approval of this committee, to recommend to full Council on 1 November 2023 that the offer of a permanent contract be made.
- 2.3 To agree that, subject to approval of recommendation 2.1 above, and approval by full Council on 1 November 2023, permanent contractual status be offered from 2 November 2023.

2.4 To note that all other terms and conditions of employment, including salary of £139,366 per annum, will remain unchanged.

### **3. Background**

3.1 As detailed in a supplementary report to this committee dated 30 January 2023, a selection exercise to recruit a permanent Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) took place on 27 January 2023 and a preferred candidate was identified. A conditional job offer was made to this candidate but was subsequently declined.

3.2 A commitment was made at the meeting of 30 January 2023 that alternative arrangements for filling the vacancy would be explored and outcomes would be reported at a future meeting.

3.3 During February 2023, our strategic recruitment partners, Penna, were able to offer candidates available for interim work only and through thorough and robust consideration of the candidates put forward by Penna, the current postholder was identified as being significantly high calibre and worthy of appointment.

3.4 On 9 March 2023, a report was considered by this committee for the approval of the appointment of the preferred candidate, Stephen Gerrard. Approval was given and subsequently approved at a meeting of Full Council on 22 March 2023.

3.5 Whilst a fixed term appointment was not the council's preferred outcome, it reflected the availability of candidates at that time. The 2-year fixed term appointment however did provide the council with the prospect of a period of stability and the opportunity to consider an appropriate medium term succession plan.

3.6 Stephen Gerrard commenced employment on 5 June 2023 and has successfully completed the 4-month progress review outlined in the council's Probationary policy.

### **4. Proposal**

4.1 Suitably qualified and experienced Monitoring Officers continue to be in scarce supply.

4.2 Since joining, Stephen Gerrard has consistently contributed to the effectiveness of the Executive Management team and has established himself as integral to ensuring the council can deliver our commitment to improve and strengthen our approach to governance.

4.3 It is proposed that Stephen Gerrard be offered a permanent contract in place of his current 2-year fixed term contract.

4.4 Offering a permanent contract will provide greater assurance of stability and continuity, essential for continued progress and growth.

4.5 Provisional discussions between the Chief Executive and the postholder regarding the proposal have resulted in Stephen Gerrard indicating that he would accept an offer of a permanent contract.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	Oversight of HR policies and procedures
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Permanent appointments to this role is deemed to be appropriate and the cost of appointment will be met from within the Council's revenue budget.
<b>Legal</b>	<p>Whilst the appointment of the Monitoring Officer must be approved by Full Council, authority has been delegated to StAC to discharge the Council's functions of the employer in relation to Chief Officers, including the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>StAC also has delegated authority to determine the terms and conditions relating to employees of the Council including the remuneration and terms of employment for the Head of Paid Service and Chief and Deputy Chief Officers. The proposal contained within this report is a proposed change to terms and conditions and can, therefore, be authorised by StAC.</p>
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human Resources</b>	All processes referenced in this report will be made in line with appropriate employment policies and relevant legal advice has been sought as required.
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This process has been conducted in line with best practice in relation to promoting equality and diversity within the Council's employment processes.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	N/A
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	N/A

<b>Wards</b>	Not related to any ward but cover the whole of Northumberland
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**Appendices**

N/A

**Background papers:**

N/A

**Linked Reports**

[StAC supplementary report](#) and minutes – 30 January 2023  
[StAC report ‘Preferred candidate appointment – Director of Law and Corporate Governance \(Monitoring Officer\)’](#) - 9 March 2023  
[Full Council report ‘Appointment of the Council’s Monitoring Officer’](#) - 22 March 2023

**Report sign off.**

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	<b>Full Name of Officer</b>
Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Neil Masson (on behalf of Stephen Gerrard)
Executive Director of Transformation & Resources (s151)	Jan Willis
Chief Executive (HoPS)	Dr Helen Paterson

**Authors and Contact Details**

This report has been prepared by:  
 Sarah Farrell – Director of Workforce and OD  
 07770 971 861



# Northumberland County Council

## COUNTY COUNCIL

1 November 2023

### **Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) - contractual change from fixed term to permanent status. Recommendation of Staff and Appointments Committee held on 25 October 2023.**

Report of Councillor(s): Glen Sanderson, Chair of the Staff and Appointments Committee

Responsible Officer(s): Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

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

This report is relevant to all areas of the Corporate Plan as it relates to ensuring that the Council is compliant with the constitution and fulfilling its legal duties and requirements to ensure that there is an effective and fit for purpose staffing establishment.

#### **2. Purpose of report**

- 2.1 This report asks Council to receive and consider the report and the recommendations of the Staff and Appointments Committee, in respect of the proposal that the current postholder in the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) be contracted on a permanent basis.
- 2.2 The Staff and Appointments Committee met on 25 October 2023 and due to the timings of the committee it was not possible to submit a full report for consideration by Full Council.
- 2.3 The full report received by Staff and Appointments Committee was attached as appendix 1 to the bridging report issued with council papers (link at point 7 below 'Key reports already published')

#### **3. Recommendations**

Full Council is asked the following;

- 3.1 To approve the recommendations from the Staff and Appointments Committee held on 25 October 2023 which are as follows;
  - 3.1.1 To approve that the current postholder be offered a permanent contract in the role of Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer).
  - 3.1.2 To agree that, subject to approval of recommendation 3.1.1 above, permanent contractual status be offered from 2 November 2023.
  - 3.1.3 To note that all other terms and conditions of employment, including salary of £139,366 per annum, will remain unchanged.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 A selection exercise to recruit a permanent Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) took place on 27 January 2023 and a preferred candidate was identified. A conditional job offer was made to this candidate but was subsequently declined.
- 4.2 A commitment was made at the meeting of 30 January 2023 that alternative arrangements for filling the vacancy would be explored and outcomes would be reported at a future meeting.
- 4.3 During February 2023, our strategic recruitment partners, Penna, were able to offer candidates available for interim work only and through thorough and robust consideration of the candidates put forward by Penna, the current postholder was identified as being significantly high calibre and worthy of appointment.
- 4.4 On 9 March 2023, a report was considered by the Staff and Appointments committee for the approval of the appointment of the preferred candidate, Stephen Gerrard. Approval was given and subsequently approved at a meeting of Full Council on 22 March 2023.
- 4.5 Whilst a fixed term appointment was not the council's preferred outcome, it reflected the availability of candidates at that time. The 2-year fixed term appointment however did provide the council with the prospect of a period of stability and the opportunity to consider an appropriate medium term succession plan.
- 4.6 Stephen Gerrard commenced employment on 5 June 2023 and has successfully completed all progress reviews outlined in the council's Probationary policy to date.

#### **5. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations**

- 5.1 Suitably qualified and experienced Monitoring Officers continue to be in scarce supply.
- 5.2 Since joining, Stephen Gerrard has consistently contributed to the effectiveness of the Executive Management team and has established himself as integral to ensuring



the council can deliver our commitment to improve and strengthen our approach to governance.

- 5.3 It is proposed that Stephen Gerrard be offered a permanent contract in place of his current 2-year fixed term contract.
- 5.4 Offering a permanent contract will provide greater assurance of stability and continuity, essential for continued progress and growth.
- 5.5 Provisional discussions between the Chief Executive and the postholder regarding the proposal have resulted in Stephen Gerrard indicating that he would accept an offer of a permanent contract.

## 6. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Oversight of HR Policies and Procedure
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	<p>A permanent appointment is deemed to be appropriate in relation to finance and value for money and it is a statutory requirement that the Council has a Monitoring Officer in post.</p> <p>All terms and conditions are to remain the same therefore there are no financial implications</p>
<b>Legal</b>	<p>Section 5 of the Local Government &amp; Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to designate one of its Officers as Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Staff and Appointments Committee (StAC), discharges the Council's functions of the employer in relation to Chief and Deputy Chief Officers.</p> <p>Chief Officers is defined as the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and any officer as defined in S2 (1) (b) (c) and (d) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.</p> <p>StAC also determines the terms and conditions relating to employees of the Council including the remuneration and terms of employment for the Head of Paid Service and Chief and Deputy Chief Officers.</p> <p>However, the appointment and designation of the Monitoring Officer is a matter reserved to full Council.</p>
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human resources</b>	The contractual change be made in line with appropriate employment processes. Relevant legal implications have been set out in the body of the appended StAC report.

<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	Not required The proposal that the Monitoring Officer be made permanent does not carry any equality implications and directly impacts only one individual
<b>Risk assessment</b>	N/A
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer considerations</b>	N/A
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	N/A
<b>Wards</b>	N/A

## 7. Links to other key reports already published

[StAC report Director of Law and Corporate Governance \(Monitoring Officer\) - Contractual Change](#)  
– 25 October 2023

[Full Council bridging report 'Director of Law and Corporate Governance \(Monitoring Officer\) - contractual change from fixed term to permanent status'](#) – 1 November 2023 (agenda item 14)

[StAC supplementary report](#) and minutes – 30 January 2023

[StAC report 'Preferred candidate appointment – Director of Law and Corporate Governance \(Monitoring Officer\)](#) - 9 March 2023

[Full Council report 'Appointment of the Council's Monitoring Officer'](#) - 22 March 2023

## 8. Author and Contact Details

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