



# Northumberland County Council

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Enquiries to:** Karon Hadfield

**Email:** karon.hadfield@northumberland.gov.uk

**Tel direct:**

**Date:** 9 January 2024

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, 17 JANUARY 2024** 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  
- 24)

Minutes of the meeting of County Council held on Wednesday 1 November 2023, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record (see pages 13-36).

### 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 Registerable Interest or Non Registerable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

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

**4. 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 COMMUNITIES** (Pages 25 - 36)

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

This is the Annual Report from the Cabinet Member for Looking after our Communities. 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 (**see pages 37-48**).

**8. COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - INTERIM REPORT TO COUNCIL** (Pages 37 - 42)

To receive a report from the Chair of the Communities and Place OSC (**see pages 49-54**).

**9. REPORT OF THE LEADER** (Pages 43 - 56)

**Introduction of Corporate Safeguarding Policy**

This report outlines the recommendation to introduce a Corporate Safeguarding policy (appendix 1). This policy will be established in addition to the existing policies and procedures operated within the Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing, and the Children, Young People and Education Directorates.

The policy will apply to all officers, volunteers, contractors and Councillors and makes it clear how the Council undertakes its legal commitments in regard to safeguarding to children and adults.

The policy is intended to support, strengthen and provide clarity to the wider organisation in relation to the process for reporting concerns, the support available to everyone and the responsibilities of new Key Officers ('Designated Managers') and Councillor roles across the wider Council

(see pages 55-68).

- 10. REPORT OF THE LEADER** (Pages 57 - 62)
- Corporate Parenting**
- This report is to update and engage members on progress with implementing the Council's statutory responsibilities for corporate parenting of our cared for and care experienced children and young people (see pages 69-74).
- 11. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITIES** (Pages 63 - 66)
- Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Inspection Report**
- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has undertaken a third full inspection of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). The inspection commenced on 29 May 2023, with initial feedback (hot debrief) provided on 9 August 2023. The final report was received by the Service on 27 November 2023 and published on HMICFRS website on 29 November 2023. This report provides an Executive Summary (see pages 75-78).
- 12. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES** (Pages 67 - 228)
- Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25**
- The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024-25 to continue to provide support at a maximum level of 92% of council tax liability (see pages 79-84).
- 13. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE RESOURCES** (Pages 229 - 242)
- Community Governance Review Stamfordham Parish**
- To consider the outcome of a Community Governance Review in the County (see pages 85-98).
- 14. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE RESOURCES** (Pages 243 - 246)
- Independent Chair of Standards Committee**
- To update members on the progress of the recruitment process for a new independent Chair of Standards Committee and to ask for the current Chair to be appointed for a period of one year to enable the recruitment process to be completed ( see pages 99-102).
- 15. MOTION**

## **Motion No. 1**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.1.2.11, Councillor Morphet to move the following motion, received by Democratic Services on 3 January 2024:-

### **To Encourage the Tyne & Wear Pension Fund to Divest From Fossil Fuels**

*The Local Government Pension Scheme is a national pension scheme for those working in local government or for other participating employers. It's administered in England and Wales by 86 local pension funds, one of which is the Tyne & Wear Pension Fund (TWPF) -with which Northumberland Pension Fund merged in 2020. The TWPF is administered by South Tyneside Council. The TWPF Pensions Committee is responsible for the control of the pension fund and meets quarterly. It has eight members from South Tyneside Council, one each from North Tyneside Council, Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council, City of Sunderland Council and Northumberland County Council, three from trades unions and three from local employers.*

#### **This Council notes that:**

- *Climate change poses an existential threat to human civilisation, and the importance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels is widely accepted.*
- *Northumberland County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and has set targets for both the council and the county to be carbon neutral by 2030.*
- *The County Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23 estimates that hitting these targets will generate 11,000 good green jobs.*
- *The County Council's Corporate Plan 2023-26 states that "Everything we now do takes account of the impact it will have on our planet" and goes on to say that "As one of the largest employers in the county, we can become a leading example.. on carbon neutral approaches" and that we can "Provide practical examples of how to become a net zero employer which can be picked up.. by other employers in the county".*
- *The burning of fossil fuels makes by far the largest contribution to climate change, accounting for over 75% of greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Fossil fuel companies have intentionally delayed action on climate change in order to continue "business as usual".*
- *The TWPF currently has at least £461m invested in fossil fuels. This is 5.1% of its total portfolio and well above average for UK local government pension funds.*

- *The TWPF 2022-23 Annual Report says that the County Council paid £32m in Employer Contributions, effectively investing £1.6m of tax payers' money in fossil fuels in just one year.*
- *Investing in fossil fuels is incompatible with the County Council's climate emergency declaration and carbon neutral pledges.*
- *In 2015, the Governor of the Bank of England said that the action needed to keep to even 2 degrees Celsius of warming would "render the vast majority of existing fossil fuel reserves stranded" and "literally unburnable". Fossil fuels are becoming an increasingly risky investment.*
- *It's the TWPF's fiduciary duty to protect its beneficiaries from the effects of climate change by avoiding a) investments that are becoming high risk as a result of climate change and b) investments that exacerbate climate change. Failure to do so will cause a worsening of climate change and an increased investment risk.*
- *The TWPF could invest the County Council's Employer Contributions in local initiatives that benefit both people and planet.*
- *Six pension funds in the Local Government Pension Scheme have already committed to fossil fuel divestment - most recently Wiltshire Pension Fund, which is administered by Wiltshire Council and states that "We do not see a long term place for fossil fuel investments in our portfolios and will work towards being fully divested from these companies by 2030".*
- *Dozens of UK local authorities (including Manchester City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council) have passed motions encouraging their local government pension funds to divest from fossil fuels.*
- *In 2017, UNISON passed a motion to start a campaign for Local Government Pension Scheme fossil fuel divestment.*
- *Gateshead Council has recently passed a motion asking the TWPF to review their investments in fossil fuels and invest in companies that will minimise climate risk.*
- *North Tyneside Council has recently passed a motion urging the TWPF to explore the possibility of shortening the timeframe for total divestment from fossil fuels.*

***This Council resolves to:***

- *Ask its Pensions Committee representative to encourage the TWPF to divest from fossil fuels completely by 2030.*
- *Ask its Pensions Committee representative to encourage the TWPF to engage more closely with its beneficiaries on climate change.*

- *Ask its Pensions Committee representative to provide an annual report on their involvement with the TWPF to the most appropriate County Council committee.*

**IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:**

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

<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.