

Northumberland County Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 11 February 2025

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

<p>A4</p>	<p>Budget 2025-26 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-2029</p>	<p>RESOLVED that the following recommendations be made to the County Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note that the figures contained within the Budget 2025-26 within Appendix 1 are based on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement of 18 December 2024. 2. Approve the Revenue Budget for 2025-26 including the efficiencies totalling £16.299 million for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1 (detailed in Appendix 11). 3. Note the Revenue MTFP covering the period 2025-29 detailed within Appendix 1 and the requirement to deliver budget balancing measures of £27.764 million in 2026-27, £13.841 million in 2027-28 and £12.080 million in 2028-29. 4. Note the estimated receipt of Revenue Support Grant of £14.829 million for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1. 5. Note the estimated retained Business Rates and the Top-Up Grant funding to be received by the Council for 2025-26 of £106.894 million and £332.095 million over the remaining period of the MTFP contained within Appendix 1. 6. Note the estimated surplus from prior years on Collection Fund Business Rates balance of £3.979 million in 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1. 7. Note the estimated receipt of the New Homes Bonus of £3.261 million (excluding
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		<p>service element of £0.028 million) for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>8. Note the estimated receipt of Local Authority Better Care Grant of £15.416 million for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>9. Note the estimated receipt of Social Care Grant funding of £33.910 million for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>10. Note the estimated receipt of Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund Grant of £6.656 million in 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>11. Note the estimated receipt of the Extended Producer Responsibility Grant of £6.573 million in 2025-26 and £12.162 million over the remaining period of the MTFP contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>12. Note the estimated receipt of National Insurance Funding Grant of £2.799 million in 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>13. Note the estimated receipt of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant of £0.833 million in 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>14. Note the estimated receipt of the Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant of £0.982 million in 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>15. Approve a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax for 2025-26, noting that this is in line with the Government’s assumptions regarding the Council’s Core Spending Power and, within the Government’s referendum limit of 3.00%.</p>

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		<p>16. Note the MTFP 2025-29 includes a 2.99% annual increase in Council Tax for all years of the MTFP and that an estimate of annual tax base growth has also been included.</p> <p>17. Note the non-collection rate for Council Tax purposes remains at 1.00% for 2025-26 (1.00% in 2024-25).</p> <p>18. Note the estimated surplus of £2.305 million from prior years on the Collection Fund Council Tax balance for 2025-26 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>19. Approve a 2.00% increase in Council Tax for 2025-26 for use on Adult Social Care services; raising an additional £6.322 million to support the Budget 2025-26 and note that the assumed increase included in the MTFP is 1.00% for financial years 2026-27 to 2028-29.</p> <p>20. Approve the Reserves Policy 2025-26 detailed in Appendix 2.</p> <p>21. Note the Schedule of Reserves and Provisions contained within Appendix 3.</p> <p>22. Approve:</p> <p>The net contributions from the Strategic Management Reserve of £0.311 million in 2025-26, and note the proposed net contributions from the Strategic Management Reserve of £15.818 million in 2026-27, £4.255 million in 2027-28 and £2.570 million in 2028-29, contained within Appendix 1, comprising:</p> <p>a) non-recurrent pressures of £3.141 million for 2025-26, and note the non-recurrent pressures totalling £3.476 million in 2026-27, £2.065 million in</p>

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		<p>2027-28, and £1.664 million in 2028-29 (as detailed within Appendix 10 excluding: the costs of the Council Modernisation programme [£7.103 million in 2025-26 and £1.231 million of the cost in 2026-27], Hirst Welfare Centre transitional support, additional Fire Control Staff to enable succession planning, Leisure Facilities transitional support costs including car parking costs at Concordia, and Extended Producer Responsibility costs);</p> <p>b) delayed investment interest due from Newcastle International Airport as a result of Covid-19 will be repaid to the Strategic Management Reserve. It is anticipated that £0.104 million of the remaining outstanding interest due will be received in 2027-28, and the remainder of £1.084 million in 2028-29.</p> <p>c) revenue contributions to capital (RCCO) for capital investments as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="992 932 2083 1235"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th align="right">2025-26</th> <th align="right">2026-27</th> <th align="right">2027-28</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th align="right">£m</th> <th align="right">£m</th> <th align="right">£m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Schools Development Programme</td> <td align="right">3.766</td> <td align="right">7.334</td> <td align="right">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Blyth Relief Road</td> <td align="right">0.944</td> <td align="right">3.508</td> <td align="right">0.554</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td align="right">4.710</td> <td align="right">10.842</td> <td align="right">0.554</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>d) estimated net costs relating to the restructure of Advance Northumberland of £1.270 million in 2025-26, £1.500 million in 2026-27, £1.740 million in 2027-28, and £1.990 million in 2028-29; and,</p>		2025-26	2026-27	2027-28		£m	£m	£m	Schools Development Programme	3.766	7.334	-	Blyth Relief Road	0.944	3.508	0.554		4.710	10.842	0.554
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		<p>e) contribution to the Strategic Management Reserve of £8.810 million in 2025-26 in order to balance the Budget. This includes £10.000 million reversal of voluntary Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) less £1.190 million needed to balance the 2025-26 Budget.</p> <p>23. Approve the use of the Public Health Revenue Grant Reserve of £0.180 million in 2025-26 and note the proposed contribution from this reserve of £0.100 million in 2026-27 contained within Appendix 1, with regard to transitional support for Hirst Welfare Centre.</p> <p>24. Approve the use of the Council Transformation Fund Reserve of £7.103 million to fund the Council's Modernisation Programme delivery costs in 2025-26 and note the proposed contribution from this reserve of £1.231 million for 2026-27 contained within Appendix 1.</p> <p>25. Approve the use of the Leisure Reserve (once funds have been returned to the Council following the financial closedown of Active Northumberland) to fund £0.250 million in 2025-26 and note the proposed use of this reserve for the following three years totalling £0.334 million to fund leisure facilities transitional costs.</p> <p>26. Approve the use of the Recruitment and Retention Reserve of £0.108 million in 2025-26 and note the proposed contribution from this reserve of £0.108 million in 2026-27 to fund temporary resources to enable succession planning within Fire Control.</p>

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		<p>27. Approve the use of the Extended Producer Responsibility Grant of £4.542 million in 2025-26 to fund the costs associated with the scheme and note the proposed costs for the following three years totalling £10.356 million.</p> <p>28. Note the Schedule of Service Specific Grants of £276.991 million contained within Appendix 4 and note that some are still indicative pending final confirmation.</p> <p>29. Note the Schedule of Fees and Charges 2025-26 contained within Appendix 5.</p> <p>30. Approve the Fees and Charges Policy 2025-26 detailed in Appendix 6.</p> <p>31. Approve the Inflation Schedule for 2025-26 totalling £18.512 million detailed in Appendix 7.</p> <p>32. Approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Recurrent Growth and Pressures Schedules of £28.382 million for 2025-26 and note the Recurrent Growth and Pressures of £8.073 million in 2026-27, £7.042 million in 2027-28 and £5.291 million in 2028-29 included within Appendices 1, 8 and 9; and, b) the additional net revenue costs associated with the Capital Programme of £1.114 million, including £10.000 million reversal of Voluntary MRP and the estimated net revenue costs associated with the Advance Northumberland restructure of £1.270 million for 2025-26 and note the revenue costs associated with the Capital Programme of £29.623 million in 2026-27, £6.554 million in 2027-28 and £6.000 million in 2028-29 included within

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		<p align="center">Appendix 1.</p> <p>33. Approve the Non-Recurrent Pressures of £15.324 million for 2025-26 and note the Non-Recurrent Pressures of £8.617 million for 2026-27, £5.559 million for 2027-28, and £5.158 million in 2028-29 included within Appendix 10.</p> <p>34. Approve the Non-Recurrent Income of £0.816 million for 2025-26 and note the Non-Recurrent Income of £0.283 million for 2026-27, £0.269 million for 2027-28 and £0.221 million for 2028-29 included within Appendix 10.</p> <p>35. Approve the identified budget balancing measures contained within Appendix 11 of £16.299 million for 2025-26 (the majority of which, £13.985 million, were approved by full Council in February 2024) and note those budget balancing measures totalling £15.647 million already identified for 2026-27 to 2028-29.</p> <p>36. Note the Integrated Impact Assessment at Appendix 12.</p> <p>37. Note the Budget by Service Area 2025-26 detailed in Appendix 13.</p> <p>38. Note the receipt of Dedicated Schools Grant of £189.037 million in 2025-26 and note the revised allocation of £167.572 million for 2024-25. This is following the conversion of two schools to academy status during 2024-25.</p> <p>39. Approve the Capital Strategy 2025-26 to 2028-29 contained within Appendix 14.</p>

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		<p>40. Approve the revised Capital Programme detailed within Appendix 15 and note the increase in the Capital Programme 2025-29 of £370.140 million detailed in Appendix 16.</p> <p>41. Approve the delegation of the detail of the final Local Transport Programme and any subsequent in-year amendments to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for improving our roads and highways.</p> <p>42. Approve the delegation of the detail of the capital allocation for the Highway Maintenance and Pothole Repair Fund to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for improving our roads and highways.</p> <p>43. Approve the Capital Prudential Indicators 2025-26 to 2028-29 based on the proposed Capital Programme detailed within Appendix 17.</p> <p>44. Approve the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy detailed in Appendix 18.</p> <p>45. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025-26 detailed in Appendix 19.</p>

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		<p>46. Approve a delegation to amend the Budget 2025-26 and MTFP in light of any changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement to the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources (the Council's Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services if the final Settlement is received after the 19 February 2025 Cabinet meeting. If the final Local Government Finance Settlement is received prior to the Cabinet or 19 February 2025 Council meeting, then a supplementary report will be provided to Members advising of any changes necessary.</p>
A5	Revenues and Benefits Policies 2025-26	<p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>Cabinet recommend County Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the Revenues and Benefits Policies attached as Appendix 1 to Appendix 6 and the associated amendments; and • Approve removing the 100% class D discount in respect of uninhabitable properties for Council Tax.
A6	Corporate Fraud Policies for 2025-26	<p>RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report.</p>
A7	Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p>

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		<p>(a) Cramlington Youth Zone</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £0.498 million (£0.144 million in 2024-25 and £0.354 million in 2025-26) to build a purpose-built youth facility in Cramlington. This spend will be funded from the existing Cramlington budget in the capital programme. Note that this project will be delivered by Cramlington Town Council via a grant funding agreement with the Council.</p> <p>Cabinet approve the amendment to the capital programme to reallocate £0.498 million (£0.144 million in 2024-25 and £0.354 million in 2025-26) from the Cramlington project to the Cramlington Youth Zone project.</p> <p>(b) Coronation Park Dementia Garden</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £0.255 million (£0.046 million in 2024-25 and £0.209 million in 2025-26) to deliver the Coronation Park Dementia Garden. This spend will be funded from the existing Cramlington budget in the capital programme. Note that this project will be delivered by Cramlington Town Council via a grant funding agreement with the Council.</p> <p>Cabinet approve the amendment to the capital programme to reallocate £0.255 million (£0.046 million in 2024-25 and £0.209 million in 2025-26) from the Cramlington project to the Coronation Park Dementia Garden project.</p> <p>(c) Northumberland Line Update</p>

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		<p>Cabinet approve the following capital spend and amendments to the capital programme in line with cost increases and increased funding from the Department for Transport (DfT):</p> <p>Reallocate £4.500 million of Council funding from the Northumberland Line project to the Newsham Road Bridge project in 2024-25.</p> <p>Add an additional £67.801 million (£63.040 million in 2024-25 and £4.761 million in 2025-26) of external funding to the Northumberland Line project. This funding is from the Department for Transport to support the delivery of the Northumberland Line Programme.</p> <p>Reallocate £4.982 million of Council funding from the Capital Contract Inflation budget to the Northumberland Line project in 2024-25.</p> <p>Add an additional £3.120 million to the Newsham Road Bridge project in 2024-25. This spend will be funded from the Strategic Management Reserve.</p> <p>(d) Whitton View, Rothbury</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £0.272 million (£0.027 million in 2024-25 and £0.245 million in 2025-26) for the purchase of two 3-bed houses on the Cussins development site – Land East of Whitton View, Rothbury. The spend will be</p>

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		<p>funded by £0.136 million HRA capital receipts and £0.136 million retained treasury receipts.</p> <p>Cabinet approve the amendment to the capital programme to add the Whitton View, Rothbury project of £0.272 million (£0.027 million in 2024-25 and £0.245 million in 2025-26).</p> <p>(e) Richard Stannard House Conversion</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £3.374 million (£0.371 million in 2024-25 and £3.003 million in 2025-26) to convert Richard Stannard House, a three-storey commercial building of 1164m2 on Bridge Street in Blyth, into 16 apartments. This spend will be funded from the existing Levelling Up Deep Dive Housing Renewal and Town Centre Living project in the capital programme. Note this project will be delivered by Advance Commercial Limited via a grant funding agreement with the Council.</p> <p>Cabinet approve the amendment to the capital programme to reallocate £3.374 million (£0.371 million in 2024-25 and £3.003 million in 2025-26) from the Levelling Up Deep Dive Housing Renewal and Town Centre Living project to the Richard Stannard House Conversion.</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £0.371 million in advance of the business case approval in order to develop the project.</p> <p>Cabinet approve the award of a grant to Advance Commercial Limited of £3.374</p>

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		million (£0.371 million in 2024-25 and £3.003 million in 2025-26) and grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration to enter into the grant funding agreement totalling £3.374 million.
A8	Energy Central Campus Phase 2: Energy Central Institute	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>Where NCC is a member of Energy Central Campus Limited (ECC Ltd) and is acting as guarantor to the Grant Funding Agreements enabling the delivery of the Energy Central Campus Phase 2 project, Cabinet agrees and approves the following:</p> <p>3.1 NCC to act as guarantor for the purposes of the Town Deal Grant Funding and NECA funding Agreements, as required to meet due diligence requirements of both NCC as the Accountable Body and NECA and for NCC to cashflow the project and recharge ECC Ltd as Grant Funding Recipient.</p> <p>3.2 To vary the existing Members and Framework Agreement to include reimbursement of NCC by ECC Ltd for the costs incurred; for NCC to be responsible for delivering the capital build of the Energy Central Institute on behalf of ECC Ltd including award of contracts as the contracting authority.</p> <p>3.3 To delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place & Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources and the Portfolio Holder to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between Northumberland County Council as the project guarantor and Northumberland County Council as NCCAB.</p>

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		<p>3.4 Subject to 3.2 above, to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place & Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources and the Portfolio Holder, to enter into any contracts relating to the project subject to confirmation of associated funding being in place and the appropriate/compliant procurement processes being followed.</p> <p>In relation to NCC as the Accountable Body for the Town Deal funding Cabinet agrees and approves the following:</p> <p>3.5 To endorse the principles of the Outline Business Case for Energy Central Campus Phase 2 – Energy Central Institute, as set out in this report, and delegate approval of the Outline Business Case to the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration following consideration of the detail at Programme Board.</p> <p>3.6 To approve the updating of the capital programme as set out in table 5.</p> <p>3.7 To delegate authority in accordance with the Energising Blyth Local Assurance Framework, to the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources following consideration and recommendation by the Programme Board to approve the Full Business Case and report any subsequent capital implications to Cabinet via the Capital Strategy Group, for inclusion in the Capital Programme.</p> <p>3.8 Subject to written confirmation that ECC Ltd have accepted the award of £5,499,951 North East Combined Authority capital and revenue funding to be</p>

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		<p>used as set out in the report;</p> <p>3.8.1 To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between Northumberland County Council as the fund Accountable Body and Energy Central Campus Ltd as the applicant/funding recipient and NCC as the project guarantor, following appraisal including subsidy control consideration.</p> <p>3.8.2 To authorise the expenditure of up to £1,000,000 by ECC Ltd prior to entering into the Grant Funding Agreement (to be retrospectively covered by the Grant Funding Agreement), to allow enabling works to commence prior to final determinations in relation to the Full Business Case and main contract through entering into a pre-construction services agreement (PCSA) once the preferred contractor is confirmed.</p> <p>In relation to NCC’s role as landowner of the development site for the Energy Central Campus Phase 2, project Cabinet agrees and approves the following:</p> <p>3.9 That NCC offer ECC Ltd a long lease arrangement on the site at nil consideration subject to compliance with the Local Government Act 1972 and Subsidy Control advice.</p>
A9	Northumberland Food Strategy	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>1. Cabinet endorse the Northumberland Food Strategy objectives and high-level delivery priorities as a framework for better integrating and realising the</p>

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		<p>value of the county’s food system;</p> <p>2. Cabinet agree to collaborate with Food and Drink North East to develop a Northumberland food brand and standard to promote Northumberland’s food story by summer 2025. This will support growth of the food and drink sector and the visitor economy and enable closer supply chain links; and</p> <p>3. Cabinet agree to the creation of a task and finish internal officer working group to define, by autumn 2025, the subsequent delivery phases and proposed partnership governance within the context of the emerging regional food infrastructure and local partnership arrangements.</p>
A10	Care Quality Commission assessment of adult social care	<p>RESOLVED that Cabinet note the report for information, and in particular, it be noted that:</p> <p>(a) CQC’s assessment of the Council’s delivery of its adult social care duties is among the most positive assessments that they have so far published. The report makes particularly encouraging comments on the Council’s partnership arrangements with other organisations;</p> <p>(b) The report assesses the Council’s performance as “good” in seven of the nine domains which it covers. The two domains in which it says that the evidence considered by CQC “shows some shortfalls” were both identified as priorities for improvement in a position statement that was published by the Council earlier this year as the starting point for a broad conversation with service users, carers, staff and partner organisations about priorities for adult social care over the next three years; and</p> <p>(c) Consolidated action plans are being developed to address priorities for improvement identified through the CQC report and through the local</p>

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		conversation which the position statement initiated.
A11	School Admission Arrangements	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet note the outcomes of the six-week consultation undertaken in relation to the Council’s proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2026/27 and the Council’s School Transport Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age that took place between 4th November 2024 and 16th December 2024;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet approve the proposed co-ordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies, as provided in Appendix 1 of this report;</p> <p>(c) Cabinet approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria (please note the removal of greater catchment criterion) and proposed admission numbers for First and Primary community and voluntary and controlled schools, as provided in Appendix 2 of the report;</p> <p>(d) Cabinet approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria (please note the removal of greater catchment criterion) and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and Secondary community and voluntary controlled schools, including sixth forms, as provided in Appendix 3 of this report;</p>

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		<p>(e) Cabinet approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at The Sele First School from 84 to 60 with effect from September 2026, in view of current and future pupil numbers; and</p> <p>(f) Cabinet approve the Council’s School Transport Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age provided in Appendix 5 of the report, and agree that the School Transport Policy continue to be reviewed and reported back to Cabinet in due course.</p>