

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Northumberland County Council** held on Wednesday 23 February 2022 at County Hall, Morpeth at 3.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Flux
(Business Chair of the Council) in the Chair

MEMBERS

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

OFFICERS

Binjal, S.	Monitoring Officer
Denyer, L.	Deputy Monitoring Officer

Dixon, L. Elsdon, A. Hadfield, K.	Democratic Services Assistant Service Head, Finance Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P. Lally, D. Murfin, R.	Interim Senior Service Director Chief Executive Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services
O'Farrell, R.	Interim Executive Director Place and Regeneration
Roll, J.	Head of Democratic and Electoral Services
Taylor, M.	Interim Executive Director for Communities and Business Development
Willis, J.	Interim Executive Director of Finance and S151 Officer

4 members of the press and public were present

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A. Watson.

74. MINUTES

Councillor Dickinson referred to Minute No. 72(iii) on page 32. He did not agree that members had confirmed they were happy to defer the remaining items on the agenda. The meeting had been closed by the Business Chair abruptly and not in a constitutionally correct way. The Business Chair did not agree that this had been the case.

Councillor Grimshaw asked for a named vote on the accuracy of the minutes. This was supported by the required number of members and the votes were cast as follows:-

FOR: 32:-

Bawn, D.	Jackson, P.A.
Beynon, J.	Jones, V.
Carr, D.	Mather, M.
Castle, G.	Oliver, N.
Cessford, T.	Pattison, W.
Daley, W.	Plozsaj, W.
Darwin, L.	Reid, J.
Dodd, R.	Renner-Thompson, G.
Dunbar, C.	Riddle, J.
Ezhilchelvan, P.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Fairless-Aitken, S.	Seymour, C.

Flux, B.	Sharp, A.
Hardy, C.	Stewart, G.
Humphrey, C.	Thorne, T.N.
Hunter, E.I.	Towns, D.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Wearmouth, R.

AGAINST: 23:-

Ball, C.	Murphy, M.
Bowman, L.	Nisbet, K.
Cartie, E.	Parry, K.
Clark, T.	Purvis, M.
Dickinson, S.	Richardson, M.
Dunn, L.	Scott, A.
Foster, J.	Simpson, E.
Gallacher, B.	Swinbank, M.
Grimshaw, L.	Taylor, C.
Hill, G.	Waddell, H.
Lang, J.	Wilczek, R.
Morphet, N.	

ABTENTIONS: 10:-

Bridgett, S.	Lee, S.
Dale, A.	Robinson, M.
Ferguson, D.	Swinburn, M.
Horncastle, C.W.	Wallace, A.
Kennedy, D.	Watson, J.

Councillor Wallace asked that his apologies be added, as they had been submitted for the meeting.

Councillor Hill referred to the ability to move a motion without notice as set out in Part 5 (11) of the Constitution. She then drew members' attention to Part 2 Article 5 and the role and function of the Business Chair, which was to preside impartially over meetings of the Council so that its business could be carried out efficiently. At the last meeting, this had not been the case and it was important that when members were deciding on a multi-million pound budget, that there was proper order and impartiality. She sought assurances from the Business Chair that he would chair the meeting in an impartial way otherwise the meeting would have to elect another chair. The Business Chair replied that he would chair the meeting in an impartial way and would argue that he had always done that.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the minutes be confirmed as a true record, signed by the Business Chair and sealed with the Common Seal of the Council, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Wallace's apologies.

75. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Leader declared an interest in respect of item 10(1) on the agenda as he had a family member who was employed by the Council.

Councillor Jones made the same declaration, which was recorded in her register.

The Chief Executive declared that she had been advised by the Monitoring Officer that she had a personal interest in item 11 on the agenda and would withdraw from the meeting whilst it was discussed.

76. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Business Chair referred to the recent death of Councillor Paul Scott and asked members to stand for a minute's silence in his memory.

Councillor Hutchinson reminded members about his Black Tie Charity Event, for Motor Neurone at Linden Hall on 8 April. Tickets were £35 each, contact Susan Taylor for further information.

The Business Chair advised that he was moving items 6-8 on the agenda to the end.

77. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER

Budget Consultation Report 2022-23

The report provided a summary of results of the budget consultation undertaken between 10th December 2021 and 21st January 2022. The budget consultation helped to inform the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan. This was introduced by Councillor Wearmouth who highlighted the main points of the report.

RESOLVED that summary results of the budget consultation undertaken between 10th December 2021 and 21st January 2022 as well as wider engagement undertaken, be noted.

78. REPORTS OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND S151 OFFICER

(1) Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-26

The report provided the Revenue Budget for 2022-23 and Revenue Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022-26 and the Capital Budget for 2022-23 and Capital MTFP 2022-26, following the Government's Spending Round Announcement 2021 (SR 2021), on 27 October 2021, and the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 16 December 2021.

Before moving onto the report, the Leader advised that devolution discussions were progressing quickly and he hoped to update members further at the 30 March Council meeting. If members wished to raise anything, they should let him know.

In respect of the budget and MTFP, he thanked members of the Finance Team, Cabinet Members and his Group, as well as businesses and those members of the public who had contributed to the consultation. The budget had two clear themes – supporting and encouraging new and existing business and supporting those residents who most needed help. There would be no cuts to front line services and the Administration would continue with investment across an impressive range of initiatives including the Northumberland Line, British Volt and the Blyth Town Deal. Much of the progress which was being made was due to the work of Advance and he thanked them for that. He referred to many other capital investments which were being made throughout the County.

The Leader went on to say that there was a need to ensure that real progress was made in tackling inequality. As a starting point he had invited over 100 key stakeholders to an inequalities summit at the end of March. The aim was to draw together an action plan which had had £50,000 allocated to it.

For anyone that struggled with the 4.1% council rent increase, the Council was to look at two schemes to support those on benefits and just below the housing benefit cut off point. To this end, some amended recommendations had been circulated in the room.

Regarding the saving identified for social care provision, this has been discussed in great detail to ensure that it was deliverable without affecting anyone's care plans, which officers had confirmed.

He moved recommendations 1-55 as per the sheet circulated in the room, which was seconded by Councillor Horncastle. The Business Chair then opened the item up for debate.

Councillor Dickinson felt the budget was in fact full of front line cuts. The County continued to receive far less funding settlement from the government than other areas, even compared to other Conservative led Councils. The settlement had not been a good one, food and child poverty levels were rising, foodbanks and UC claimants were on the increase, officers were raising concerns about a capital spending programme that would exceed £1billion. He paid tribute to staff who had continued to deliver services well in the face of challenges such as Covid and Storm Arwen with far fewer of them around to deliver those services. His Group could not support this budget because they felt it was targeted in the wrong areas. Young people had particularly suffered because of Covid in many ways and this budget introduced major cuts to their services, which meant they would be severely affected. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services had already confirmed that frontline posts had been deleted. He recognised that tough decisions had to be made and welcomed the initiatives which all members were involved in such as Borderlands, and

progress with Advance. It was important that all of these initiatives did well but he reiterated his Group's view that the budget was targeted to the wrong areas and he would have liked more dialogue with the Administration about it. He thanked Finance officers who had attended his Group meeting to answer questions.

Councillor Reid felt it was time now for a base budget review. He also referred to the proposed Council Tax rise of over 4% which was not justifiable in the current circumstances and the rising cost of living. Regarding the capital programme, the Council was now at the limit of what it could borrow at £307m, and he questioned how this would match up to the levelling up agenda. The adult social care precept was being increased by 2.25% but the government had promised that this would be sorted out nationally. Instead, 150,000 council tax payers in Northumberland would have to pay for this again, and this could not be sustained. Regarding the efficiency savings in Appendix 9, adult social services were bearing the brunt again with £9m coming out of the budget up to 2025-2026. He agreed this was a Conservative budget as the first time he had seen it was at Scrutiny. Group Leaders had not been invited to contribute to it and he could not support it

A number of other members spoke on the budget. The main points which were raised were:-

- There were wide variations in life expectancy and poverty levels across the County. This should not be a postcode lottery and the budget did nothing for those who were already struggling in Northumberland with significant cost of living rises. Cuts to services could not be justified and this budget clearly showed that austerity was not over.
- There was a £110,000 saving for Northumberland Adolescent Service which was mainly through the amalgamation of two management posts and the removal of one youth worker post which had been supported by staff. However, alternative funding for this post had been found so there would be no changes to the front line service.
- There was concern that increases in parking charges at country parks and coastal tourism car parks would exacerbate inequality of access to those areas and wasn't in line with the Council's or Government policy. Assurances were also sought that everything was being done which could be to mitigate the disproportionate effect of the savings on women. There was nothing in the budget about the Council's international business.
- What was the backup plan if the Council got into difficulties on its level of capital borrowing requirement? How much of the borrowing would be spent on new council housing and what formula was being used to assess what was "affordable" housing.
- It was disappointing that the Council was increasing funeral costs, and could a better term be found than "paupers funeral"?
- The investment in Berwick was welcomed and assurances were sought that the figure already in the budget for the schools partnership would remain in the budget and increased if required for whatever model was agreed for the partnership. Young children and those with special educational needs should not be travelling 40-50 miles for school.

- It was difficult to create a budget and no alternatives had been offered by the Opposition. The proposals in front of members were responsible and offered savings without cutting services whilst at the same time offering investment in areas which had been neglected for a long time.
- Why was the adult social care charge being increased by 2.25%, and why had it been included after central government said that the increase in national insurance contributions would sort out the social care provision problem?
- The PCC precept was increasing by 7% and one town council had increased its precept by 28%.
- There needed to be a review of potholes and roads which were not U and C class roads. There should be a review of bulky and trade waste services and increases in charges just resulted in increased fly tipping. Charges should be temporarily suspended at HWRCs after major storm events to allow residents to get their local areas back to order.
- All councillors should be proud of the quality of services delivered by the Council which compared very favourably to other authorities including adult services and childrens' services. The roads were also now in much better condition after a programme of investment. There had been a lot of investment in schools and school standards, in towns around the county and in business. These services had to be paid for.
- Where was the £1.3m investment in public conveniences coming from and would it not be better invested into adult social care?
- The budget had the twin focus of investing in business and tackling inequality and this Administration was doing something about tackling this properly. In the first year of the budget, £129m was identified for regeneration and £94m of this was coming from outside sources. Assurance was sought that the £340,000 included in last year's budget for car parks in Corbridge had not been lost, and were there any costs and revenue for the international business?
- Thanks were expressed to Councillor Renner Thompson and Audrey Kingham on their work on Whittingham Primary School, and to Councillors Riddle and Thorne for their efforts on the Todsteads landslip. The member supported the allocation in the budget for affordable housing but asked how long this would take in his area. He welcomed the Borderlands funding and hoped that in future, some consideration would be given to upgrading the public toilets in Rothbury which badly needed attention. Regarding areas where savings could be made, members' attention was drawn to the spend of over £100,000 in December and January on interim consultants and legal advice. The member asked whether this level of Corporate Services expenditure going to continue because this was where savings should be made.
- The Council's budget was usually the focus of attention at this time of year, however, the main story now was that the Council was dysfunctional and on the brink of special measures and the query was whether it could actually be delivered. The level of debt and borrowing was concerning but no alternative budgets had been put forward. The £40m allocation for Berwick Schools on a specific budget line was welcomed and had the support of the portfolio holder.
- A plea was made for investment in Alnwick Bus Station which would encourage bus use. Barclays Bank was top of the ethical consumer list

of banks to avoid and the member asked if a meeting between the portfolio holder, officers and the Green Group to discuss the Council's banking contract would be possible.

- The amendment on the 4.1% council rent increase was welcomed, but this was as a result of pressure from Scrutiny members and residents who lived in other forms of social housing could still be hit with the 4.1%. Small parish councils were not doing well out of this budget. The hardship payment for council tax claimants was welcomed but the covid funding would not last for ever and the Council should consider reinstating the 100% Council Tax support scheme. Was there a robust plan in place for Active Northumberland to deliver on the financial issues they had and would they be able to deliver on the quality healthy lives options for people across the County at an affordable rate? Assurances were sought that there would be no cuts to the mobile library service and what this service would look like going forward. Finally, why was there no income accounted for from the energy from waste plant after next year?
- Investment in public toilets was vital for tourism in Northumberland.
- Capital investment in Hexham was welcomed. Recycling rates in Northumberland needed to be much better. The report did not make it very clear how much Council tax would rise by, but it was in the region of £75 per year and that's what members had to decide on. £35m over four years to fund borrowing was a lot of money and the member queried why it would rise to £16m in 2024.
- The Administration's budget followed the line of national government policy of 12 years of austerity and it could not be supported.
- The Conservative Administration should be proud of its commitment to youth services and educational improvement, which had been demonstrated by the last Ofsted report and fantastic leadership had been shown by the senior officer team. Addressing Inequality through partnership working was also a focus for the Administration. The Northumberland Communities Together initiative demonstrated actions taken to protect the most vulnerable. The budget showed that the Administration was still investing in the core work and was building on the good work which had been done in order to deliver more.
- The budget was fair and balanced and addressed a lot of the current issues. The Administration had listened to the issue raised by Scrutiny members and responded to address it.
- Why was £1.4m being taken from the Children's Services budget when the budget consultation responses had placed a high importance on this service? Small Parish Councils were picking up the bill for areas where the County Council was not spending, and this was not partnership working.
- The Administration was committed to providing a modern and forward thinking youth service, which was not a statutory service. The work being undertaken with partners was something to be proud of.
- Reductions to the neighbourhood plans budget should be reconsidered so the excellent partnership working with town and parish councils could continue.

- Much of the youth service work was delivered by the voluntary sector and they should be thanked for the youth service which currently existed.

In response to some of the points which had been raised, Councillor Horncastle acknowledged that the cost of living was rising but it was not the Council's responsibility to cover the shortfall. Services still had to be delivered and putting the budget together had taken a lot of effort. He detailed some of the efficiencies from his portfolio, and regarding the reduction in the neighbourhood plan budget, this was the deletion of a vacant post which was not needed.

Regarding the 4.1% rent increase, if this had been set at 2% the difference would have been lost for ever. Projected over 30 years, this equated to a £67m loss to the housing revenue account. Between 2015 and 2022 the rents had only increased in real terms by 4.23% and all social housing providers were now in the same position of having to raise rents. A way had been identified to provide support to everyone by providing a week's rent amnesty which equated to an increase of £1.67 per week. He explained that it was important to keep money coming into the HRA because this funded the repairs and maintenance programme to keep houses up to standard.

Councillor Riddle acknowledged the work which had been done by Councillor Daley when he had been portfolio holder for Children's Services. He agreed with the comments made about the need for a base budget review. Regarding the comments made about income from coastal tourism car parks, he advised that the initial free periods would remain, and the short stay period increases would vary from 30p to 50p, and £1 for an all day stay and he did not feel this would stop people using them. He confirmed that the Corbridge car park would be done and regarding the reduction in funding for adult social care, Cabinet members had been assured that this would have no effect on individual care packages. He supported the investment in public toilets and the investment in U and C roads. Regarding the increase in funeral costs, the Council wasn't the most expensive and utility costs were increasing for the Council as well.

The Leader urged members to support the budget because it contained measures to further the Administration's two key priorities of supporting business and helping the most vulnerable. This was evidenced by free town centre parking, skills training, investment in the climate change action plan, £48m of investment in affordable housing and £2.3m in U and C class roads, new schools across the County, plans for jobs and investment and funding from the Borderlands deal.

Councillor Wearmouth responded to some of the comments which had been made as follows:-

- It was hoped that the Council would receive better funding from the Government next year from the funding review.
- It had not been felt that a full base budget review was possible, but the Adults and Children's Services budgets would be looked at in the first instance to drill into the detail.

- Regarding the question about where the money came from, the Council tax bands could not be compartmentalised.
- He would get a response on the equalities impact assessment issue raised about the disproportionate effect of the savings on women.
- Staff working on the International business were core staff within NCC so would be working on other things if not that.
- Regarding capital borrowing and interest rates, a session was being run on treasury management for members.
- A written answer could be provided by Councillor Horncastle on which were council homes and which weren't.
- He could share some of the data on performance indicators.
- There was something in the capital programme for Ashington for fly tipping.
- There was something in the LTP for Alnwick Bus Station.
- He was happy to meet with Councillors regarding Barclays Bank.
- With regard to Councillor Robinson's submitted question, he provided the following response:-

The National Insurance increase was primarily intended to cover the costs of eliminating the backlog in the NHS following the pandemic and the costs of a specific reform to the way in which people paid for their social care -- the introduction of the "cap" on what people will have to pay for adult social care services. This reform was designed primarily to address concerns about the impact of social care charges on older people who needed expensive care services in the last years of their lives, particularly older people who needed to move into a care home. Under the current system, older people who moved into a care home may be required to pay the fees from the value of the house they lived in, and of their savings. Older people with assets of more than £23,250 were usually also expected to contract privately with care homes, and it was common for care homes to charge higher fees to private residents than to residents funded by the local authority. The Government saw it as unfair that older people who needed a high level of care became unable to pass on to their heirs as much of their assets as they had expected, and the plans announced in September 2021 were designed to limit what people would be required to pay in total towards the cost of their care to a lifetime limit of £86,000. When they reached this "cap" they would no longer have to pay charges for care (though they would still have to pay for the accommodation and non-care costs of living in a care home). The full answer could be sent on to Councillor Robinson.

Councillor Robinson asked if the Authority would be reimbursing the ratepayers once funding was received back from Government. Councillor Wearmouth responded that hopefully in future there would not be so much pressure from the adult social care budget on the precept because some of that money could come from the Government.

At this point, the Business Chair sought agreement from members to suspend Standing Orders as the time had reached 5.45pm. Council **RESOLVED** to continue.

In response to a query from Councillor Dickinson, the S151 Officer confirmed that there were some additional recommendations which had been consolidated onto one page with the existing recommendations and the update which had been sent out, and these had been circulated in the room. Recommendations 51-52 related to the update and recommendations 53-55 related to the rent free week for Council tenants.

Councillor Dickinson reiterated that recommendations 51-55 were effectively an amendment and should be treated as such. The Leader then proposed this amendment which was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth. Council **RESOLVED** by show of hands to accept the amendment.

On the substantive motion being put to the vote the votes were cast as follows:-

FOR: 35:-

Bawn, D.	Kennedy, D.
Beynon, J.	Mather, M.
Carr, D.	Oliver, N.
Castle, G.	Pattison, W.
Cessford, T.	Plozsaj, W.
Daley, W.	Renner-Thompson, G.
Darwin, L.	Riddle, J.
Dodd, R.	Robinson, M.
Dunbar, C.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Ferguson, D.	Seymour, C.
Flux, B.	Sharp, A.
Hardy, C.	Stewart, G.
Hill, G.	Swinburn, M.
Horncastle, C.	Thorne, T.N.
Humphrey, C.	Towns, D.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Watson, J.G.
Jackson, P.A.	Wearmouth, R.
Jones, V.	

AGAINST: 22:-

Ball, C.	Murphy, M.
Bowman, L.	Nisbet, K.
Cartie, E.	Parry, K.
Clark, T.	Purvis, M.
Dickinson, S.	Richardson, M.
Dunn, L.	Scott, A.
Foster, J.	Simpson, E.
Gallacher, B.	Taylor, C.
Grimshaw, L.	Waddell, H.
Lang, J.	Wallace, A.
Lee, S.	Wilczek, R.

ABTENTIONS: 7:-

Bridgett, S.	Morphet, N.
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Dale, A.	Reid, J.
Fairless-Aitken, S.	Swinbank, M.
Hunter, E.I.	

Council therefore **RESOLVED:-**

1. To note that the figures contained within the Budget 2022-23 within Appendix 1 are based on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement of 16 December 2021;
2. To approve the revenue budget for 2022-23 including, the budget balancing target totalling £9.704 million contained within Appendix 1;
3. To note the Revenue MTFP covering the period 2022-26 detailed within Appendix 1 and the requirement to deliver budget balancing measures in both 2023-24 and 2024-25 of £14.000 million and £12.732 million in 2025-26;
4. To note the estimated receipt of Revenue Support Grant of £10.838 million for 2022-23 contained within Appendix 1;
5. To note the estimated retained Business Rates and the Top-Up grant funding to be received by the Council for 2022-23 of £86.801 million and £278.304 million over the remaining period of the MTFP;
6. To note the estimated deficit from prior years on Collection Fund Business Rates balances of £12.547 million in 2022-23 and £0.342 million in 2023-24;
7. To note the estimated receipt of Rural Services Delivery Grant of £2.456 million for 2022-23;
8. To note the estimated receipt of the New Homes Bonus of £3.983 million for 2022-23;
9. To note the total estimated receipt of Improved Better Care Funding grant of £12.495 million for 2022-23;
10. To note the estimated receipt of Social Care grant funding of £13.287 million for 2022-23;
11. To note the estimated receipt of non-recurrent Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Grant of £1.027 million in 2022-23;
12. To note the estimated receipt of non-recurrent Lower Tier Services Grant of £0.461 million in 2022-23;
13. To note the estimated receipt of the non-recurrent Services Grant of £4.751 million in 2022-23;
14. To approve a 1.99% increase in Council Tax for 2022-23, 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 2.00%;
15. To note that the MTFP 2022-26 includes a 1.99% annual increase in Council Tax for the remaining years of the MTFP and, that an estimate of annual tax base growth has been included;
16. To note the non-collection rate for Council Tax purposes remains at 1.00% for 2022-23 (1.00% in 2021-22);
17. To note the estimated surplus and deficit from prior years on the Collection Fund Council Tax balance, comprising a surplus of £4.215 million for 2022-23 and a deficit of £0.554 million for 2023-24;
18. To approve a 1.00% increase in Council Tax for 2022-23 for use on Adult Social Care services; raising an additional £2.118 million to support the Budget 2022-23, and note the assumed increase included in the MTFP of 1.00% for 2023-24 and 2024-25;

19. To approve the remainder of the 3.00% allowed by Government in 2021-22, an increase of 1.25% in Council Tax in 2022-23 for use on Adult Social Care services; raising an additional £2.648 million to support the budget in 2022-23;
20. To approve the Reserves Policy for 2022-23 detailed in Appendix 2;
21. To note the Schedule of Reserves and Provisions contained within Appendix 3;
22. To approve:
 - (a) the net contributions to the Strategic Management Reserve of £1.596 million in 2022-23 and note the proposed contributions from reserves of £10.217 million in 2023-24, £15.496 million in 2024-25 and £2.954 million in 2025-26, comprising:
 - non-recurrent pressures of £3.338 million for 2022-23, and note the non-recurrent pressures totalling £2.834 million in 2023-24; £0.409 million in 2024-25 and £0.909 million in 2025-26 (as detailed within Appendix 8 excluding the Transformation Programme),
 - the Active Northumberland Management fee of up to £1.000 million in 2022-23, and note the Active Northumberland Management fee of up to £1.000 million in 2023-24,
 - delayed receipt of investment income of £1.025 million in 2022-23; and note that delayed receipt of investment income of £0.513 million is forecast for 2023-24 and that interest of £0.398 million will be repaid into the reserve in 2024-25 and 2025-26 in this respect,
 - revenue contribution to capital (RCCO) of £12.231 million in 2024-25 and £2.442 million in 2025-26 for the Schools' Development Programme,
 - contribution to the reserve of £6.959 million in 2022-23 and note the subsequent proposed use of £5.870 million in 2023-24, £3.254 million in 2024-25, and £0.001 million in 2025-26 in order to balance the budget.
 - (b) the use of the Severe Weather Reserve of £2.500 million in 2022-23, to fund the RCCO for the Todstead Landslip project, and,
 - (c) the use of the Contain Outbreak Management Reserve of £0.132 million in 2022-23, to fund the RCCO for the Multi Use Vehicles;
23. To approve the use of the General Fund Reserve: £25.000 million in 2022-23 to be set aside as a voluntary minimum revenue provision (MRP) to enable the Council to repay debt at an appropriate time in the future and note the proposal to use a further £7.850 million in 2024-25 for the same purpose;
24. To approve the use of the Regeneration Additional Capacity Reserve of £0.190 million in 2022-23, to contribute to the funding of Regeneration staffing costs;
25. To approve the use of the Council Transformation Fund Reserve of £3.000 million in 2022-23 and note the use of £3.000 million from this reserve in financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25;
26. To approve the use of the Collection Fund Smoothing reserve of £10.129 million in 2022-23, to part fund the 2021-22 forecast deficit of the Business Rates element of the Collection Fund, and prior year deficits on Business Rates and Council Tax; and note the proposed use of this reserve in

2023-24 to fund £0.896 million Collection Fund deficit; being the final year of the 2020-21 Council Tax and Business Rates deficits spread over 3 years;

27. To note:

a. the Schedule of Service Specific grants of £238.825 million contained within Appendix 4.

b. the 2022-23 Public Health grant allocation of £16.891 million contained within Appendix 4, and it's proposed usage;

28. To approve the Inflation Schedule for 2022-23 totalling £19.767 million detailed in Appendix 5;

29. To approve the Recurrent Growth and Pressures Schedule of £8.746 million and the additional revenue costs associated with the Capital Programme of £6.081 million for 2022-23; and note the growth and pressures of £2.609 million in 2023-24; £3.261 million in 2024-25; and, £0.906 million in 2025-26 and the additional revenue costs associated with the capital programme of £5.907 million in 2023-24; £16.878 million in 2024-25; and £5.783 million in 2025-26 included within Appendices 1, 6 and 7;

30. To approve the Non-Recurrent Pressures of £6.338 million for 2022-23 and note the non-recurrent pressures of £5.834 million for 2023-24; £3.409 million for 2024-25 and £0.909 million for 2025-26 included within Appendix 8;

31. To approve the Non-Recurrent Income of £2.770 million for 2022-23 and note the non-recurrent income of £0.466 million for 2023-24 included within Appendix 8;

32. To approve the identified budget balancing measures contained within Appendix 9 of £9.704 million for 2022-23; and note those budget balancing measures totalling £10.466 million already identified for 2023-24 to 2025-26;

33. To note the Corporate Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 10;

34. To note the Budgets by Service Area 2022-23 detailed in Appendix 11;

35. To note the receipt of Dedicated Schools Grant of £152.123 million in 2022-23; and note the revised allocation of £146.729 million for 2021-22. This is following the conversion of one school to academy status during 2021-22;

36. To agree the Housing Revenue Account 2022-23 budget as detailed within Appendix 12, which will reduce the balance on the HRA reserve from £29.596 million at 31 March 2022, to £22.011 million at 31 March 2023; and note the indicative budgets to 2025-26 which will reduce the balance on the HRA reserve to £16.637 million;

37. To note that from 1 April 2022 in line with the Rent Standard for rent setting for Council tenants, the budget detailed in Appendix 12 assumes that rents and service charges will rise by the Consumer Price Index of 3.10% plus 1.00% for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023;

38. To approve the increase of 4.10% for Housing rents from 1 April 2022;

39. To note the indicative 30-year Housing Revenue Account business plan as detailed within Appendix 12;

40. To note that £48.221 million has been set aside over the 4-year period 2022-23 to 2025-26 in the HRA Capital Programme to invest in Affordable Housing. Details are set out in Appendix 12;

41. To approve the Capital Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26 contained within Appendix 13;

42. To approve the revised Capital Programme as detailed within Appendix 14; and the projects highlighted within the main body of the report which will complete after 2025-26; and note the changes in the Capital Programme 2022-26 of £118.380 million detailed in Appendix 1;

43. To approve the delegation of the detail of the final Local Transport Programme and any subsequent in-year amendments to the Executive Director responsible for Local Services and the Cabinet Member for Environmental and Local Services;
44. To approve the delegation of the detail of the capital allocation for highways maintenance investment in U and C roads and footpaths to the Executive Director responsible for Local Services and the Cabinet Member for Environmental and Local Services;
45. To agree delegation to Cabinet to approve individual projects which propose to utilise the flexibilities of capital receipts;
46. To agree a delegation which enables the Cabinet to approve expenditure and funding for projects (revenue and capital) to be added to the budget which are 100.00% grant funded;
47. To approve the Prudential Indicators based on the proposed Capital Programme detailed within Appendix 16;
48. To approve the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy detailed in Appendix 17;
49. To approve the proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022-23 detailed in Appendix 18;
50. To approve a delegation to amend the Budget 2022-23 and MTFP in light of any changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement to the Council's Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services;
51. To agree that the Council will match the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) grant allocation from the DW;
52. To agree that there will be a recommendation included in the Provisional Outturn Report setting aside funding equivalent to the 2022-23 DHP grant allocation (once known) from the DWP in an earmarked reserve from the 2021-22 revenue budget underspend;
53. To note that a report on scheme progress will be made to Cabinet after the scheme has been in operation for six months;
54. To approve a one off, in-year credit, equivalent to the weekly rent amount to be applied to all rent accounts; and
55. To agree that this will be funded using existing HRA reserves and is intended to complement the existing proposal set out in the "Update to the Budget 2022-23 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022-26 Report" in respect of Discretionary Housing Payments and ensure that all tenants are treated equitably. This will have the net effect across the full year of reducing the proposed average rent for 2022-23, assuming a 4.10% increase, from £83.31

The Business Chair then adjourned the meeting at 6.02 pm for a comfort break and the meeting reconvened at 6.10 pm.

(2) Approval of Revenues and Benefits Policies for 2022-23

The report updated members on the policies governing the administration of Revenues and Benefits and sought approval for the updates and amendments highlighted.

The S151 Officer drew members' attention to the proposal to roll forward the grant received from Government to provide hardship payments for those liable for council tax in order to extend the scheme for a year, taking just over 14,000 households out of council tax liability.

Councillor Reid moved the report's recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Jackson.

RESOLVED that the Revenues and Benefits Policies attached as Appendix 1 to Appendix 9 to the report be approved.

(3) Council Tax 2022-23

The report provided members with the financial information to enable the Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2022-23.

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

On the required number of members calling for a named vote on this matter, the votes were cast as follows:-

FOR: 40:-

Bawn, D.	Jones, V.
Beynon, J.	Kennedy, D.
Bridgett, S.	Lee, S.
Carr, D.	Mather, M.
Castle, G.	Oliver, N.
Cessford, T.	Pattison, W.
Daley, W.	Ploszaj, W.
Darwin, L.	Reid, J.
Dodd, R.	Renner-Thompson, G.
Dunbar, C.	Riddle, J.
Fairless-Aitken, S.	Robinson, M.
Ferguson, D.	Sanderson, H.G.H.
Flux, B.	Seymour, C.
Hardy, C.	Stewart, G.
Hill, G.	Swinburn, M.
Horncastle, C.	Taylor, C.
Humphrey, C.	Thorne, T.N.
Hunter, E.I.	Towns, D.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Watson, J.G.
Jackson, P.A.	Wearmouth, R.

AGAINST: 20:-

Ball, C.	Murphy, M.
Bowman, L.	Nisbet, K.
Cartie, E.	Parry, K.
Clark, T.	Purvis, M.
Dickinson, S.	Richardson, M.

Dunn, L.	Scott, A.
Foster, J.	Simpson, E.
Gallacher, B.	Waddell, H.
Grimshaw, L.	Wallace, A.
Lang, J.	Wilczek, R.

ABTENTIONS: 3:-

Dale, A.	Swinbank. M.
Morphet, N.	

1. County Council RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council Tax Requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2022-23 (excluding parish precepts) is £206,070,229.
- (b) That the following amounts be calculated for 2022-23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
- i) Being the aggregate amount of gross expenditure which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31 A (2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils: £849,684,966.
 - ii) Being the aggregate of the gross income which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31 A (3) of the Act: £633,745,168.
 - iii) Being the amount by which the aggregate at (b) i) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) ii) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31 A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act) (including parish precepts): £215,939,798.
 - iv) Being the amount at (b) iii) above (Item R), all divided by Item T, above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax at Band D for the year (including parish precepts): £1,988.30.
 - v) Being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (total all parish precepts): £9,872,920.
 - vi) Being the amount at (b) iv) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (b) v) above by Item T, above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax at Band D for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates: £1,897.39.
- (c) That the Council Tax for 2022-23, excluding the Police precept, will be increased by 4.24% (including the Adult Social Care Precept of 2.25%), equating to a charge per Band D household of £1,897.39 (excluding special expenses). For other bands different proportions will apply. For example, Band A properties will be charged 6/9 (two thirds) of a Band D

property and Band H properties will be charged 18/9 (double) of a Band D property.

The relevant valuation bands are as follows:

Valuation Band	Northumberland County Council £ : p	Adult Social Care Precept £ : p	Total £ : p
A	1,114.03	150.90	1,264.93
B	1,299.70	176.05	1,475.75
C	1,485.37	201.20	1,686.57
D	1,671.04	226.35	1,897.39
E	2,042.38	276.65	2,319.03
F	2,413.72	326.95	2,740.67
G	2,785.07	377.25	3,162.32
H	3,342.08	452.70	3,794.78

- (d) Under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2022-23 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZC(1) of the Act.

(i.e. the proposed Council Tax increase for 2022-23 means that the Council does not need to hold a referendum on its proposed Council Tax. The regulations set out in Section 52ZC of the Act requires all billing authorities (Council and precept authorities (i.e. Fire and Police authorities)) to hold a referendum on their proposed level of basic Council Tax each year if they exceed government guidelines which are set out annually. For 2022-23 the guideline increase for Northumberland is 4.25% (including the Adult Social Care Precept).

As the Council is proposing a Council Tax increase of 4.24% (including Adult Social Care and special expenses) for 2022-23 then the above regulations have no impact for 2022-23.

2. County Council APPROVED:

- (a) That the matters listed in section 3 (c) of this report are identified as special expenses and that all other matters which might otherwise be considered to be special expenses under the prevailing legislation are deemed to be general expenses.
- (b) That the Council Tax Leaflet continues to be made available via the Council's website, rather than enclosed with Council Tax bills, and that the final document is delegated to and finalised by the Section 151 Officer.

3. County Council NOTED:

- (a) The Police and Crime Commissioner has agreed the recommended level of precept of £16,707,869 for 2022-23. This represents an increase of 6.95%, equating to an additional £10.00 on a Band D property; the resulting valuation bands will be as follows:

Northumbria Police Authority	
Valuation Band	Authority £: p
A	102.56
B	119.65
C	136.75
D	153.84
E	188.03
F	222.21
G	256.40
H	307.68

- (b) The Aggregate of Council Tax requirements, including that of Northumbria Police Authority, the Council's own requirement and that for Adult Social Care purposes (excluding Parish Precepts), are as follows:

Valuation Band	Northumberland County Council £ : p	Adult Social Care Precept £ : p	Northumbria Police Authority £ : p	Total £ : p
A	1,114.03	150.90	102.56	1,367.49
B	1,299.70	176.05	119.65	1,595.40
C	1,485.37	201.20	136.75	1,823.32
D	1,671.04	226.35	153.84	2,051.23
E	2,042.38	276.65	188.03	2,507.06
F	2,413.72	326.95	222.21	2,962.88
G	2,785.07	377.25	256.40	3,418.72
H	3,342.08	452.70	307.68	4,102.46

- (c) The total amount of parish precepts requested is £9,869,569 and is detailed in Appendix 1. This represents an increase of £478,212 when compared to 2021-22.
- (d) Plenmeller and Whitfield Parish Council has not yet set its precept. The Parish Clerk has indicated that this should be done at the parish meeting on 14 February 2022. However, the Clerk has verbally indicated that the precept will most likely be set at £2,750. If the precept changes a report updating the position will be tabled at the County Council meeting on 23 February 2022.

- (e) Special expenses of £3,351 are applied to North Sunderland Parish only in relation to play area inspection and maintenance. This has increased from £3,216 in 2021-22.

4. County Council also NOTED:

- (a) The basic Council Tax valuation bands are shown in paragraph 3 (b).
- (b) The detailed Council Tax calculations are set out in Appendices 2 and 3. Analysis of the Council Tax by parish is provided at Appendix 2 excluding Northumbria Police precept. Appendix 3 shows the total Council Tax charge by parish (including the Council only element and Adult Social Care Precept, Northumbria Police Precept, Special Expenses and Parish Precepts).

The Business Chair then advised members that, following consultation with Councillors Dickinson and Bridgett, the motions which related to the extraordinary meeting of Council had been withdrawn.

In accordance with Minute No.75 above, the Chief Executive left the meeting at this point.

79. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Executive Management Structure Review

The report sought approval to the implementation of the revised Executive management arrangements for Council.

The Business Chair then advised members that he had received advice from the S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer which he would circulate and members would be given time to read. Councillor Hill sought assurance that members would receive the full advice and instructions in the interests of transparency, or were members just to receive the opinion? The Business Chair replied that there were two documents to circulate and asked members to read them first.

Councillor Dickinson commented that this report had now been in front of members three times and the Leader had confirmed he had been happy with it in September. He did not understand why members were now receiving new advice and felt it was procedurally incorrect to do that. The Monitoring Officer suggested that members read the two documents which were to be circulated and then questions would be taken. One was the legal opinion, the other was the Statutory Officers' advice.

Councillor Oliver commented that he had understood that the Leader, Portfolio Holder and Business Chair had not wanted this report to be on the agenda. He queried why in that case, it was on the agenda.

Councillor Jackson queried whether the documents to be circulated were confidential and subject to legal privilege, and therefore to be handed back after the meeting. The MO confirmed this was the case. The Leader suggested

that this matter should be considered in closed session, and in response, Councillor Dickinson referred to the procedure which had been followed at a Staff and Appointments Committee recently to maintain confidentiality. If the advice to come to members was legally privileged, then the same procedures should be adopted and the matter considered at the end of the meeting following exclusion of press and public. However, the Business Chair was minded to deal with the matter now. The Leader moved that the appropriate resolution be passed, which was seconded by Councillor Reid. The MO suggested to members that they read the advice first, then make a decision on exclusion afterwards. The Business Chair adjourned the meeting and it was reconvened at 7.10 pm.

Councillor Horncastle expressed concern at the amount of information members were being asked to take in in a short space of time. He was also concerned that, in order to understand the advice given, members needed to know what had been asked. He asked the MO how long she had been in possession of the information just circulated to members. She replied that she had circulated the QC's advice to the Chief Executive and the S151 Officer on Saturday and had asked the Chief Executive whether, in light of it, she still wanted the report presented given the advice that there were flaws in the report and that she had a pecuniary interest. The Statutory Officers' advice had been circulated the day before to the Chief Executive, again offering discussion on whether the matter should be considered by Council today. There had been no response to that other than a comment about the Staff and Appointments Committee.

Councillor Hill sought clarity on whether there was anything in the Constitution to permit the withdrawal of the report by the Business Chair without notice as she could not find that, and it would be a decision for Council on whether they wished to proceed. She urged the Business Chair to follow proper procedure.

Councillor Nisbet asked why the MO had not had to declare a similar interest to that declared by the Chief Executive as she was involved as well.

The Business Chair sought views from members as to whether they wished to have the report presented. Councillor J. Watson moved, seconded by Councillor Jones, that the report be withdrawn.

On the required number of members calling for a named vote on this matter, the votes were cast as follows:-

FOR: 32:-

Bawn, D.	Morphet, N.
Beynon, J.	Oliver, N.
Carr, D.	Pattison, W.
Castle, G.	Ploszaj, W.
Cessford, T.	Reid, J.
Darwin, L.	Renner Thompson, G.
Fairless-Aitken, S.	Riddle, J.
Ferguson, D.	Robinson, M.
Flux, B.	Sanderson, H.G.H.

Hardy, C.	Seymour, C.
Humphrey, C.	Stewart, G.
Hunter, E.I.	Swinbank, M.
Hutchinson, J.I.	Thorne, T.N.
Jackson, P.A.	Towns, D.
Jones, V.	Watson, J.G.
Mather, M.	Wearmouth, R.

AGAINST: 29:-

Ball, C.	Lang, J.
Bowman, L.	Les, S.
Bridgett, S.	Murphy, M.
Cartie, E.	Nisbet, K.
Clark, T.	Parry, K.
Dale, P.A.M.	Purvis, M.
Daley, W.	Richardson, M.
Dickinson, S.	Scott, A.
Dunbar, C.	Simpson, E.
Dunn, L.	Swinburn, M.
Foster, J.	Taylor, C.
Gallacher, B.	Waddell, H.
Grimshaw, L.	Wallace, A.
Hill, G.	Wilczek, R.
Kennedy, D.	

ABTENTIONS: 2:-

Dodd, R.	Horncastle, C.
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It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the matter be withdrawn. The Business Chair asked for a short recess whilst the material which had been circulated was collected back in and the Chief Executive returned to the meeting.

On the meeting reconvening, Councillor Dunn expressed concern that it was becoming the norm for important material to be dropped on members at the last minute during meetings. It was too much to take in. Councillor Dickinson agreed and referred to inaccuracies in the reports which had been circulated.

80. JOINT REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER AND THE INTERIM SENIOR SERVICE DIRECTOR

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.

Councillor Wearmouth introduced the report. Discussion with Group Leaders had indicated a preference for Method 1 detailed in the report. Finalisation of the appointments and the pool places would be done in consultation with

Group Leaders. If agreement could not be reached on any particular issues then Council would have to decide. The recommendations were moved by the Leader, including the adoption of Method 1 for the allocation of places to Committees, which was seconded by Councillor Reid.

Councillor Hill referred to the pool positions and the need to identify a way of resolving a dispute. Democratic Services had advised that in such cases it would be the largest Group which would take priority. Councillor Wearmouth disagreed that this had been the advice, which had in fact said that hopefully the Groups would be able to reach an agreement. However, ultimately, it was for full Council to decide the places if the Groups could not reach agreement. Councillor Reid commented that he was sure Group Leaders between them could reach consensus. Councillor Kennedy concurred with this and sought assurance that this was the method to be used going forward as the framework for calculating any future changes. Councillor Wearmouth replied that this could not be agreed as it would be binding a future Council.

Councillor Hill asked for an update on the proposed Grievance Committee. The MO advised that this had not been set up yet. The Constitution Working Group had asked officers to look at a couple of issues in more detail and an update would be provided to them at the next meeting due to take place soon. Then recommendations would come to Council to agree.

On this point, Councillor Dickinson commented that some of the issues which had been raised, such as around staff consultation, were urgent and he did not feel it was appropriate for members to still be waiting for a response over a month later.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Council notes that immediately following the Hexham East By-election and notified changes to the Independent Group, the total number of councillors in each political group on the County Council is Conservative 33, Labour 21, Independent 6, Liberal Democrat 4, Green 2 and 1 un-grouped independent member;
- (b) Council confirms that the political proportionality of the Groups is as follows: Conservative 49.25%, Labour 31.34%, Independent 8.96%, Liberal Democrat 5.97%, Green 2.99% and un-grouped 1.49%;
- (c) Council approves the provisions of Appendix 1 which sets out the proportional allocation of places on committees in accordance with the proportionality approved above;
- (d) Council agrees Method 1 for allocation of seats to Northumberland County principal/decision making Committees attached as Appendix 2 to the report;
- (e) Council notes Appendix 4 attached to the report which shows group allocations to advisory/non-decision-making committees (based on both methods) and agrees Method 1 for the allocation of seats to these bodies; and

- (f) Council agrees that Group Leaders will appoint members to fill the committee places allocated to their respective Groups, and that Group Leaders will provide a finalised list of members for each committee (in line with their respective allocations) to the Head of Democratic Services to fill the allocated positions.

81. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND S151 OFFICER

Arrangements for the Appointment of the Local Auditor (External Auditor)

The report sought Council approval to opt-in to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Limited arrangements from 1 April 2023 for the five financial years commencing 2023-24 to 2027-28.

The report was introduced by the S151 Officer who detailed the key points. She recommended that the Authority did opt into the PSAA arrangements and then the Council did not have to undertake its own procurement process and would not be responsible for the ongoing contract management arrangements. Very few authorities directly appointed their auditors these days.

Councillor Dickinson asked if this was usual practice. The Chief Executive confirmed that this had been adopted last time around.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Council agrees to:
 - (i) accept the invitation to become an opted-in authority to the national scheme for the appointment of local auditors, which is managed by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd; and,
 - (ii) agrees that the Section 151 Officer (or Deputy Section 151 Officer) completes the required paperwork in order to make the necessary arrangements; and
- (b) Council notes that the length of the compulsory appointing period covers the audits of the five consecutive financial years commencing 1 April 2023 (2023-24 to 2027-28).

82. REPORT OF THE INTERIM SENIOR SERVICE DIRECTOR

Corporate Plan Refresh 2021-24

The report presented the Council's Corporate Plan for 2021-2024, agreed by Cabinet on 18th November 2021. The Plan built on the progress from the

previous Corporate Plan and presented a refreshed vision, aims and priorities. The refresh took account of the changing social and economic context as a result of the Covid Pandemic and the Council's priorities for leading recovery across the County in the coming months and years. The priorities in the Corporate Plan would be delivered through the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, Service Planning and Performance Frameworks.

RESOLVED that Council note the refreshed Corporate Plan 2021-24 as agreed by Cabinet on 18th November 2021 to set strategic policy direction across the Council's Services and functions.

83. JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Councillor Flux was nominated as Chair by Councillor Daley and seconded by Councillor Reid.

Members were advised that a Trade Union representative, Mr Peter Judd had been nominated as Vice Chair, which members accepted.

The Business Chair advised members that Councillor Purvis had expressed an interest in attending meetings as an observer, which members also accepted.

RESOLVED that Councillor Flux be elected Chair, Mr Judd be elected Vice Chair and Councillor Purvis be invited to attend meetings of the JCC as an observer.

84. VICE CHAIR TYNEDALE LAC

Councillor Kennedy was proposed by Councillor Reid and seconded by Councillor Dickinson.

Councillor Cessford commented that it had been his understanding that the Vice Chair position would not be filled pending the ongoing LAC review. The Business Chair replied that it was an existing vacancy and if a decision was made in future to do something else, then that was not precluded by a decision today.

Councillor Cessford then nominated Councillor Oliver. Councillor Kennedy informed members that the position was one for either the Labour or Independent Group based on the proportionality of that LAC.

RESOLVED that Councillor Kennedy be elected Vice Chair of Tynedale LAC.

85. CABINET MINUTES

(1) Tuesday 11 January 2022

(2) Tuesday 8 February 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

86. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(1) Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC

These were presented by Councillors Dunn and Bawn.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

(2) Family and Children's Services OSC

These were presented by Councillor Daley.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

(3) Communities and Place OSC

These were presented by Councillor Reid.

Councillor Dale asked if the complaints improvement framework could be a future agenda item.

Councillor Gallacher urged progress on the Council's report into Storm Arwen.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

(4) Health and Wellbeing OSC

These were presented by Councillor Jones.

Councillor Bowman asked whether the commitment to pay every care worker the living wage would apply across the County. Councillor Jones replied that it would be paid where the care home agreed but they could not be forced to do so.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

(5) Health and Wellbeing Board

These were presented by Councillor Flux.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

(6) Audit Committee

These were presented by Councillor Towns. He advised that the KPMG report could now be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

87. MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Business Chair sought member views on how this matter be dealt with given the time which had been reached. It was proposed by Councillor Dale that the questions be taken to the next meeting, which was seconded by Councillor Wearmouth.

Councillor Swinburn commented that he did not want simply to receive a written answer to his questions which were of concern to his residents, and was disappointed that members could not stay until the end of meetings. This was not representing constituents properly.

Councillor Gallacher commented that the size of the agenda and the way in which the meeting was conducted had to be addressed by the Business Chair as members were tired and could not properly concentrate after such a prolonged meeting.

Members voted by show of hands on the motion as follows:

FOR: 23; AGAINST: 21; ABSTENTIONS: 3

It was therefore **RESOLVED** to defer this matter to the next meeting.

The Leader informed all members that if they wished to receive a response before then to contact him.

The Common Seal of the County Council
of Northumberland was hereunto affixed
in the presence of:-

.....
Chair of the County Council

.....
Duly Authorised Officer