



# Northumberland

## County Council

### REPORT TO COUNCIL

DATE: 21 June 2022

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### REPORT OF GOVERNANCE REVIEW - TASK AND FINISH CROSS-PARTY STEERING GROUP

Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive

Cabinet Members: Cllr Glen Sanderson and Cllr Richard Wearmouth

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#### **Purpose of report**

At its meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022, Council considered a report by the Leader and Deputy Leader on the Solace Independent Governance Review (The 'Caller Review'). Following this, Council agreed to form a Cross-Party Steering Group on a task and finish basis, to consider the Council's response to the 'Caller Review' and its recommendations. It was further agreed that the Task and Finish Steering Group would meet within seven days of 8<sup>th</sup> June and report back to the County Council on 21st June 2022.

#### **Recommendations**

The County Council is recommended by the Governance Review Cross-Party Task and finish Steering Group to:

1. Accept the findings of the Caller Review Report.
2. Accept the Caller Review Report's Recommendations.
3. Consider and agree the Task and Finish Steering Group's initial, proposed Plan of Action in response to the Caller Review and its recommendations.
4. Agree to receive a further report from the Task and Finish Steering Group on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2022, the next ordinary meeting of Full Council, setting out a more detailed timetable and assessment of resources required to implement the Caller Review recommendations.

#### **Key Issues**

The Independent Governance Review ('Caller Review') was reported to Council at its Extraordinary meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The Caller Review and the Council's response to its recommendations represents a critical opportunity to revise the ways in which we work, improving and strengthening our structures, governance, culture and values.

#### **Background**

At the meeting of the County Council on 8th June 2022, Members received a presentation on the Independent Governance Review, known as the 'Caller Review'. Following this, County Council considered a report by the Leader and Deputy Leader on the Caller

Review and agreed to establish a Steering Group on a ‘task and finish’ basis to consider the recommendations and report back to a further, Extraordinary meeting of the County Council on 21st June 2022, with a considered view on:

1. Whether to accept the findings of the report;
2. Whether to accept the recommendations of the report; and
3. If so, an action plan for implementation, identifying financial resources, human resources and a timeline for implementation and review.

The Steering Group is non-decision making and includes:

- All the Group Leaders (Leader of Council to Chair) - Cllrs Sanderson, Dickinson, Kennedy, Reid and Morphet
- Deputy Leader of the Council – Cllr Wearmouth
- Business Chair of the Council – Cllr Flux
- Vice Chair of Audit Committee – Cllr Towns;
- A second member of the Labour Group – to be confirmed.

The Group is supported at an officer level by the Acting Deputy Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer, the S151 Officer and the Interim Senior Service Director (with responsibility for Democratic Services).

The Steering Group met on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to commence its work. The Group accepted the findings and recommendations of the Caller Review and has developed an initial Plan of Action to implement the recommendations of the Review. This is set out at Appendix A. The Plan sets out:

- Proposed actions to implement the Caller Review recommendations;
- Proposed workstreams to take forward the actions; and,
- Proposed resources and milestones (these are currently ‘To be confirmed’ pending further scoping work).

In the coming weeks, the action plan will be further developed. The proposed actions will be refined with potential further actions added. Detail on resources required and milestones will be added. It is proposed to bring an updated and more detailed action plan to the next ordinary meeting of Full Council on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	The corporate governance arrangements are key to all that the Council does.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Value for money, transparency and accountability are key aims of the Council. Whilst this Report contains no direct financial implications, the delivery of the individual actions in the Plan of Action will have financial implications. Any financial implications will be subject of separate reports in relation to specific actions

	at the appropriate time.
<b>Legal</b>	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the delivery of the individual actions in the Plan of Action may have legal implications. Any legal implications arising from the delivery of specific actions will be brought forward in future reports.
<b>Procurement</b>	NCC Procurement policy and guidance will be applied appropriately in the delivery of the Plan of Action.
<b>Human Resources</b>	Grievances, dignity at work, sickness absences and claims can all be affected by the prevailing culture and policies of the Council
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities</b>	N/A
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Failure to develop and implement an action plan in response to the Caller Review recommendations could impact negatively on the Council's Strategic Risks.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	N/A
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	N/A
<b>Wards</b>	N/A

**Report sign off.**

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

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	N/A
Deputy Chief Executive (OBO Chief Executive)	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllrs Sanderson and Wearmouth

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Appendix A Initial Plan of Action Plan