



Northumberland County Council

# CORPORATE PLAN

2023|26



Northumberland  
County Council



# CONTENTS

Our Vision	4
Our Land	6
Our People	8
Our Council	10
Our Plan	12
Our Priorities	14
 <b>ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY</b>	16
 <b>TACKLING INEQUALITIES</b>	24
 <b>DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH</b>	34
Our Delivery	42
Elements of Framework	44
Our Values	48
Our Resources	49



# OUR VISION

## LAND OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

### OUR VISION

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

#### 1. ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY

– recognising we are funded by residents and businesses and are accountable to them for our spending decisions and the quality of services we deliver. We must ensure we are delivering Best Value through efficient, effective and accessible services that respond to and meet the needs and expectations of our residents. And, as one of the largest employers in the county, we can become a leading example for residents, communities and businesses on carbon neutral approaches.

#### 2. TACKLING INEQUALITIES

– ensuring people have fair access to the building blocks for a good life such as a decent income, a good quality job, safe, affordable and warm housing as well as good quality education and training opportunities. By tackling inequalities, we want to reduce the gap in experiences our residents have across health, education, employment and social outcomes.

#### 3. DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

- so that everyone can benefit from a strong and sustainable economy. There are significant opportunities for growth right across our diverse and rich county and harnessing these opportunities will support our communities to thrive. We want Northumberland to be a great place to live with opportunities for all of our residents, whether they live in our vast rural countryside or within one of our busy towns.

In achieving the three Corporate Priorities, we will ensure we pass on a healthy, clean and sustainable environment to future generations. Each of our three Priorities has a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency. Climate Change threatens to disproportionately affect our poorest areas, and climate policies which are too burdensome for the poorest in society could have an unwelcome effect on inequality. Net Zero is the growth opportunity of the 21st Century. Northumberland can get a huge boost from the low carbon economy, and we are already creating the foundations as we work to become carbon neutral.



**Cllr Glen Sanderson**  
Leader



**Dr Helen Paterson**  
Chief Executive

## WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

This is our Corporate Plan. It sets out what the Council – Members and staff – will do, working with partners and communities to deliver on our Vision and Priorities for all of Northumberland's residents in the coming years. And it outlines how we will ensure we are a Best Value Council, delivering value for money services to residents, businesses and visitors to the county. We will build on what we have achieved from the Corporate Plan in the past year. We will use this plan to shape how we deliver all of our services and functions, ensuring service plans and staff appraisals are clear on how they will contribute to achieving our Vision and Priorities. By setting the context for the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Planning process, the Corporate Plan will ensure our spending plans align to our Priorities.



# OUR LAND

Northumberland is England's northernmost county, stretching from the Scottish Border in the north and east to Tyneside and County Durham in the south.

Northumberland is a county of stunning contrasts. From ancient castles to high-tech industry, from pristine beaches to wild countryside - Northumberland has something for everyone.

It's a huge space. The county is the largest unitary authority by geographic coverage with the greatest area of Green Belt of any Local Planning Authority. With an area of 5,013 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 323,820 (2020), Northumberland is the least densely populated of the North-East region's 12 local authority areas and the sixth most sparsely populated in England.

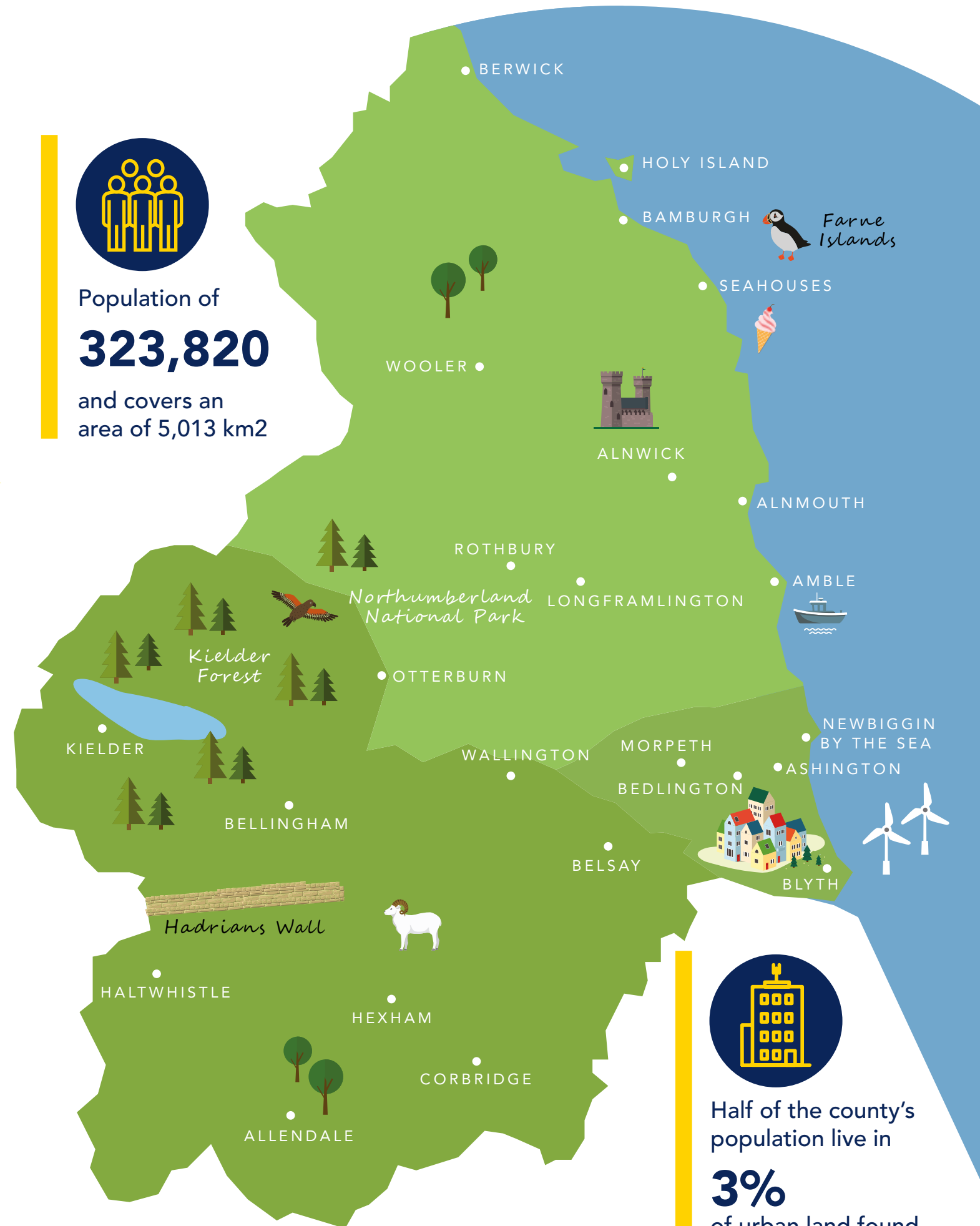
The different parts of the county have distinct characteristics, from urban to rural, coastal to upland and well-connected to remote.

These are the contrasts that make Northumberland so special, whether it's a place to live, work or visit. It's easy to see why the county is one of the UK's top tourist destinations.

The south-east of the county is the most densely populated, with the three largest towns, Blyth, Cramlington and Ashington. These act as main employment centres, drawing from a wider area than just south-east Northumberland.

Beyond the south-east, the county's main settlements are located along the Tyne Valley corridor and along the coast. Morpeth, Hexham, Prudhoe, Berwick and Alnwick are the main market towns, all of which have significant rural hinterlands.

Almost 97% of the county's land area is classed as rural, with just under half of the population living in this area and over half of the population living in 3% of the land area, mainly in the south-east of the county.





# OUR PEOPLE

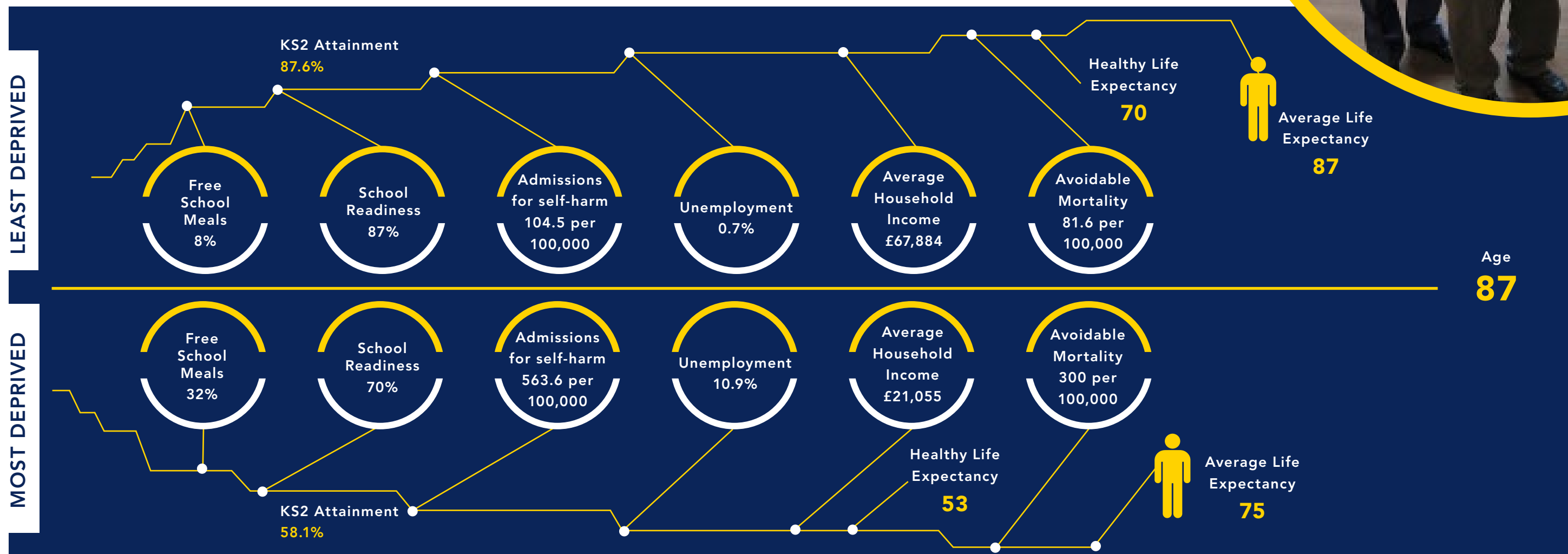
It's the people who make Northumberland really special. In a county steeped in history it's only to be expected that we're home to friendly, proud and passionate residents, proud of where they live and passionate about the county. Northumberland has many famous sons and daughters, from St Cuthbert and Grace Darling to European football champion and 'Lioness' Lucy Bronze.

Thousands more residents will be less well-known but are doing their bit for Northumberland. They're helping their communities, creating opportunities, ensuring the county remains a thriving place, and looking forward but not forgetting the past.

Living in Northumberland is not without its challenges however. Approximately 12% of Northumberland's population live in one of the 10% most deprived areas of England. The county falls into the most deprived 20% of local authorities in the country for employment, ranked 39th overall and for the income scale (the number of people income deprived), ranked 50th. The proportion of children aged 0-15 in relative low income families is over 25%. Residents in the county's most deprived communities have an average life expectancy some 12 years shorter than those in the most affluent areas.

The differences between the most deprived and least deprived areas can be stark, from the number of children receiving free school meals and educational attainment through to unemployment levels.

Projections show there is also likely to be a significant acceleration of ageing in Northumberland's population profile. Between 2020 and 2043 there is projected to be a significant increase in older age groups. The disparities between the least/most deprived that exist in the county have not gone unnoticed. Following a summit in 2022, over 400 stakeholders in Northumberland took part in a series of conversations across the county, to develop an action plan to work differently with our communities and help to tackle inequalities. The Inequalities Plan aims to establish key goals that can be delivered on a large scale over the coming years to level off and start to reduce the gap in healthy life expectancy. It's about changing how we do things, coming up with new and innovative ways to work with our communities, that result in real and positive change.



# OUR COUNCIL

**In Northumberland, as with councils and organisations across the country, recent years have seen unprecedented change in the way we operate. As a result of the Covid pandemic we had no choice but to do things differently. This meant a shift in some parts of the business to a more virtual approach where possible.**

What hasn't changed is the council's commitment to protecting frontline services, investing for the future and looking after the most vulnerable in our communities.

As a constituent member authority, we have a key role in driving forward the success of the **North of Tyne Combined Authority**. Together with our colleagues in North Tyneside and Newcastle Councils we are delivering on our vision for Inclusive Economic Growth across the area, through additional investment, programmes and powers achieved through a devolution deal.

Looking ahead, the Council is working with Government and its neighbouring authorities in the North East to extend the benefits the county has seen through devolution to the rest of the region. This would unlock greater powers and funding for the whole area, in the region of around £4.2bn worth of investment.

If the new devolution deal is progressed a new **Mayoral Combined Authority** would be established covering the local authority areas of Northumberland, County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland to drive long-term inclusive economic growth across the whole area and support the delivery of our ambitious growth plans.

We're also one of the five local authorities in the **Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal**, which was established to unlock the potential for sustainable and inclusive economic growth across the South of Scotland and North of England. Borderlands' funding has supported a range of projects in the county, from the Ad-Gefrin distillery in Wooler, a new arts centre in Berwick and the Lilidorei playscheme in Alnwick. Representing up to £452 million of fresh investment to the Borderlands area, the deal was signed off by Ministers of the UK and

Scottish Governments, plus representatives of the five councils of the Borderlands Partnership.

As a council we have been successful in securing additional funds, ranging from grants for increased road repairs and new active travel routes in the county through to multi-million pound town centre regeneration programmes.

A key part of this is partnership working and on a daily basis we work alongside many partners, including health service providers, third sector organisations, local communities, businesses and education and learning institutions. It's through this joined-up approach we look to be a truly inclusive council, identifying issues and working with those best placed to put in place long-term sustainable solutions.

A good example of this is **Northumberland Communities Together**. Launched in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, it continues to ensure that residents are kept safe and well throughout this crisis and provides coordination to support individual volunteers, voluntary groups and communities across our county.

Climate change is a significant long-term challenge and we're committed to taking action to reduce the impacts climate change will have on all our lives long into the future. We've declared a 'climate emergency', vowing to halve our own carbon footprint by 2025 and **make the county carbon neutral by 2030**. Everything we now do takes account of the impact it will have on our planet.

Over recent years the council has prided itself on a major capital investment programme. This includes building green new school complexes and leisure facilities from Berwick to Hexham, and these are long-term projects which will continue over the coming years. We're also investing in our town centres, looking to regenerate and improve them while improving connectivity, both physically through sustainable travel and also through investment in technology and broadband.

One of our flagship projects is the **Northumberland Line**, a passenger rail service which will connect Ashington and the south east of the county to Newcastle. It is due to open in summer 2024.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW:

The Council has been through a period of rapid change over the past two years. Along with the Covid pandemic, there have been changes at the top of the organisation, with a new Chief Executive joining in early 2023 and new executive directors coming into their roles in a new structure. These changes are providing a clean slate and a fresh start to engage with future challenges and opportunities.

Building on our progress we have been careful to ensure this is a plan for everyone in the county and have taken as many views into account as we can: those who live and work in Northumberland, elected county councillors and the hundreds of town and parish councils which criss-cross the local authority area. As part of the Corporate Plan refresh and to ensure broader engagement and embedding, we have:

- Held two all-Member Policy Conferences (January and April 2023), providing wider and deeper Member engagement in in the Corporate Planning process.
- Facilitated three Town and Parish Council meetings to engage local members and listen to their local priorities.
- Undertaken numerous 'Staff Corporate Plan Task & Finish Group' sessions. The Group has ensured closer, cross-directorate involvement in Corporate Planning.
- Presented our Priorities and outcomes to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board. This builds on the extensive engagement that was undertaken during 2022 to develop the Council's Inequalities Plan.

During Summer 2023, we propose further partner and Member engagement. The aim of this is twofold: firstly, to ensure the Plan is embedded with Members and they are able to hold the organisation to account for delivery and performance; and, secondly to work with partners to evolve our Corporate Plan into a County Plan. In the 2022/23 online budget consultation, which was open to every resident, participants were asked about their priorities. Improved health services emerged as a clear main priority. Other priorities were care and support for older people, affordable decent housing and good public transport.

Our Corporate Plan has also been informed by and developed with our staff. Representatives from across our wide range of Council services have been involved in a regular and ongoing Task and Finish group to ensure the work included in this plan is reflective of actions and outcomes of services over the next three years. There has been significant engagement with staff in developing "Our Values" using staff surveys and workshops.

As we know ourselves well in terms of our strengths and challenges, we have also used our performance monitoring information to inform the priorities of this plan. In the section on "Our Priorities", you will see data and information used throughout to explain why the outcomes and actions have been chosen and developed.





# OUR PLAN

## OUR PRIORITIES

## OUTCOMES FOR NORTHUMBERLAND

### ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY

- Residents receive the best customer experience
- We make the best spending decisions
- Working better, more efficiently
- Making a difference with digital

### TACKLING INEQUALITIES

- Empowered and resilient communities
- Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well
- All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability
- Residents have the building blocks of a good life

### DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Thriving places and culture
- A diverse and resilient economy
- Skilled and aspirational people
- A connected county

## HOW WE WILL MAKE SURE WE WILL ACHIEVE THESE OUTCOMES

### Best Value Approach

Ensuring through good governance and planning we focus on continuous improvement and delivering value for money

### BEST Way of Working

Guiding our strategic decisions to provide the BEST services to residents, being the BEST employer, and delivering value for money to be the BEST we can be for Northumberland

### Good Governance

Oversight and good governance through effective performance reporting and monitoring

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Delivering our Climate Change Action Plan to be carbon neutral by 2030



## OUR VALUES GUIDE HOW WE WORK



# OUR PRIORITIES

**OUR CORPORATE PLAN IS CENTRED AROUND THREE PRIORITIES WHICH DRIVE EVERYTHING THAT WE DO AND ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO BEING A LAND OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES.**

Within each priority we describe four outcomes we are working to achieve and some of the actions we are taking to achieve them. The actions we have included do not represent all our activity. Our core service delivery is our greatest enabler, and we will set out in service plans the role each service plays in delivering our priorities (see "Our Delivery" section for more information).

Our climate emergency response is of huge importance for our residents and is linked to all three of our priorities. We have included within each section a spotlight on work which is being delivered in support of our pledge to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. The work included in the corporate plan sets the council and the county on the path to Net Zero, but more work is needed if we are to achieve the carbon neutral target and to tackle emissions from other greenhouse gases, including Methane and Nitrous Oxides. Further information will be included in the next version of the Climate Action Plan in early 2024.

Our priorities are interlinked, and all of our actions support the delivery of our vision to be a **LAND OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES**.

"Driving economic growth" enables opportunities for better jobs for our residents ensuring they have the "building blocks of a good life". Children and young people having the best start in life and growing up well supports our priority to have "skilled and aspirational people". Involving our communities will enable us to "make better spending decisions" and enable us to better support our local economy.

Our actions focus on what we can do as a local authority but, in all of our work we work in partnership with other organisations and within a local, regional and national context. Our measures reflect both things that we can do as a Council and those things we need to work in partnership to achieve.



**ACHIEVING  
VALUE FOR  
MONEY**

operating  
efficiently  
and  
effectively



**TACKLING  
INEQUALITIES**

supporting  
everybody  
to live their  
best lives



**DRIVING  
ECONOMIC  
GROWTH**

enabling  
prosperity  
across the  
county



# ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY

Achieving value for money across all our services is a priority for the whole Council. We are funded by residents and businesses and we are accountable to them for our spending decisions and the quality of services we provide. We must ensure we are delivering Best Value through efficient, effective and accessible services that respond to and meet the needs and expectations of our residents.

Operating in a context of rising demand, limited resources and a challenging financial climate for everyone, what we do and how we do it is critical. We need to ensure we are doing the right things, and are continually looking for opportunities to make more impact and create more value from all our decisions. This takes effective planning, making the most of existing resources and assets, and building on the strengths we have within our communities and through our professional networks, partnerships and people.

Delivering best value is about ensuring good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public. To deliver impact in what we do, we must transform how we operate so that we are a more effective, modern public service, and we will do this through our BEST work. This will improve the ways we reach and engage with our residents and customers so that it is equitable and right for them and their needs. We will reduce bureaucracy and duplication, invest in technology, and most importantly design whole system approaches that work for our residents so that they can have the best customer experience. You will find more about our Best Value approach and our BEST work in Our Delivery section.

By adapting and responding to the current and future needs of our residents in co-ordinated and creative ways, we will increase our impact, reduce our spending and achieve best value for money.





## RESIDENTS RECEIVE THE BEST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Doing the best for residents drives all of our work. Residents tell us that dealing with the council could be better. We want residents to know that when they are dealing with us they can expect the best customer service from us every time and trust that we are providing them with the best service possible.

### What we will do:

1. Embed the Best Value approach through a new Planning, Performance and Accountability Framework for the Council. The delivery of our new framework will enable us to embed continuous improvement and ensure that the overall value of everything we do has the best impact it can.
2. Redesign the way our customers access our services to provide a coordinated, consistent and equitable offer of services that makes better use of the data we gather, delivers more pro-active services and makes the best use of digital services. This includes listening to what residents are telling us. In designing improved digital channel access, we will ensure that we do not exclude residents, as we will make better use of telephone and face-to-face contact and utilise proactive outbound calling to support our customers'.
3. Put in place new digital technology that will make council services more available, accessible, and easy to use by our customers. This will be supported by a single customer case management system that brings together in one place our customers' journeys and data.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Channel shift by residents to digital channels
- Residents' Survey outcomes measured
- Reduced complaints about customer services
- Track services' annual value for money assessment against baseline position

## WE MAKE THE BEST SPENDING DECISIONS

We are responsible for providing a vast array of different services to local communities, residents and businesses. With a gross revenue budget for 2023/24 in the region of £850million and a capital budget in the region of £200million we are responsible for significant resources in the delivery of our work. To provide best value it is essential that we maximise our spending power, make good decisions that create the best impact for our residents and better align our spend to the outcomes we want to achieve.

### What we will do:

1. Improve how we use data and performance monitoring to inform and plan our services, deliver improved outcomes and ensure continuous improvement.
2. Involve our residents, communities and partners more in how we design and deliver equitable services to ensure they meet need, deliver the greatest impact and improve the quality of public services in Northumberland.
3. Implement a new Commissioning Framework that will provide a robust and commercially minded focus on delivering good outcomes, value for money and social value in our spending decisions. Transform our fragmented procurement approach to a more strategic one using 'categories' to help us manage our spend and build stronger relationships with the market supported by an improved Contract Management Framework.

### Our impact

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase the % of suppliers who agree that it's getting easier to do business with the Council
- Reduce spend against commission categories per £
- Increase % value of local suppliers trading with the Council
- Increase the number of suppliers trading with Council who are local (%)
- Increase the % of suppliers who agree that it's getting easier to do business with the council



## WORKING BETTER, MORE EFFICIENTLY

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

### What we will do:

1. Support our staff to succeed by embedding a workplace culture that focuses on learning and continuous improvement underpinned by our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and achieving best value. Through refreshed organisational development plans we will create clearer career pathways for our staff and provide a better employee experience.
2. Strengthen our structures and operating models by creating corporate centres of excellence in key administrative areas that will allow us to make efficiencies through economies of scale, establishing clearer career pathways and better career opportunities for staff. Streamlining our operating framework will make it easier for our staff to get things done. A new Employee Service Centre will provide a single access point for routine requests managed by a new Transactions Hub.
3. Make best use of our land and buildings by strengthening our strategic oversight and governance of the estate and using our estate more efficiently, sustainably and creatively so as to maximise its impact and reduce costs. Creating efficiencies through a strengthened corporate landlord approach will ensure we achieve value for money in the maintenance and development of our estate and that it is fit for purpose to achieve our priorities.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

- Staff are empowered and supported to do the best work they can for our residents and develop and grow in their careers with us
- Streamlined administrative functions enable us to operate effectively
- Land and buildings are used effectively to maximise impact in improving outcomes for our residents

#### How will we measure progress?

- Staff survey outcomes improve - % who think the County Council is a good employer
- Increased uptake of learning opportunities by staff
- Staff sickness rate (%) reduces
- Improved feedback from staff relating to the delivery of internal administrative processes
- Increased occupancy of our corporate buildings

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH DIGITAL

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

### What we will do:

1. Reduce the number and complexity of our ICT systems streamlining our technical architecture into three main platforms making the council's technology estate cheaper, easier to manage and sustainable.
2. Invest in our ability to design and build our own technology solutions so that we can reduce expenditure on ICT licences, support and maintenance costs and design the right sustainable digital solutions for our residents and services.
3. Enable more efficient ways of working for our staff and services by investing, upskilling in and implementing modern work tools that will enable them to meet service delivery needs.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Ensure over 80% of our services to residents are available as online services by 2024
- Reduce IT Incidents by 20% by 2024
- Achieve ISO27001 by 2025
- Improve digital accesibility for residents

# NET ZERO, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

As one of the largest employers in the county, we can become a leading example for residents, communities and businesses on carbon neutral approaches. To achieve this, we will be an 'incubator employer' supporting other business to become carbon neutral.

## What we will do:

1. Reduce the amount of energy (electricity and gas) consumed across the estate through more effective utilisation of the space we have, more efficient use of the energy needed across these spaces and through engagement and communication with our staff and residents.
2. Ensure all new Council owned properties will, as far as possible, be built to net zero in operation as a minimum standard and all future refurbishment work improves properties towards net zero in operation (accepting that the age and architecture of certain properties may make this impossible in some situations).
3. Ensure all existing Council properties meet the regulatory energy performance standards and are ready for low carbon heating solutions like District Heating and Heat Pumps.
4. Ensure our land, buildings and communities are able to withstand the impacts of Climate Change.
5. Increase the amount of energy generated across the Council estate, including through solar car ports.
6. Introducing changes to our salary sacrifice scheme to incentivise take up of low carbon technology.
7. Ensuring any Council owned woodland that is lost to redevelopment will be replaced twofold and managed effectively to provide the maximum carbon and biodiversity net-gains.

## What impacts do we want to see?

- Provide practical examples of how to become a net zero employer, which can be picked up and adapted by other employers in the county.
- Contribution to decarbonisation of the National Power Grid through renewable energy generation across the estate.
- Fulfilling our obligations as a landlord to ensure our buildings meet the regulatory standards for energy efficiency.

## How will we measure progress?

- Amount of electricity and gas consumed across the Council estate.
- Amount of electricity generated by the Council estate.
- Energy rating of building across the Council estate.
- Number of staff completing climate change training.
- Number of electric vehicles in the fleet.
- Reduction in single use plastic and other disposable items.





# TACKLING INEQUALITIES

When people do not have fair access to the building blocks of a good life such as a decent income, a good quality job, safe, affordable and warm housing as well as good quality education and training opportunities, inequalities occur. We know that in the poorest parts of Northumberland, our residents are dying more than a decade earlier than those in the least deprived areas. They are also spending longer periods of their lives in poor health due to the physical and mental impact of these inequalities. The difference of people's experiences during Covid 19 highlighted this gap again with the pandemic hitting the poorest and most disadvantaged communities the hardest.

By tackling inequalities, we want to reduce the gap in experiences our residents have across health, education, employment and social outcomes.

We have two roles to play in tackling inequalities. We often think first of the broad range of services that support residents to live healthy and full lives. It is important that when our residents need them, they have access to the right support and services they need at the right time. But we will not tackle inequalities by simply delivering good-quality services. We must also understand the causes of inequalities and the part we can all play in reducing them, placing this at the forefront of our decision-making processes. We call this having an 'inequalities lens'.

The Council has a huge part to play in tackling inequalities but we cannot achieve this alone. By working with our communities and partners, recognising and mobilising their strengths and assets we will create empowered and resilient communities that are better connected to the assets in their neighbourhoods.





## EMPOWERED AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

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

### What we will do:

1. Deliver a programme with our own staff to implement and embed our Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach so that we consider the strengths of our communities first, what communities might need some help with and what the Council's responsibilities are.
2. Ensure all decisions the Council takes on policy and how we spend money are considered through an 'inequalities lens'. We will do this by strengthening overview and scrutiny processes and using Equality Impact Assessments.
3. Make better use of resident facing services (such as libraries, leisure centres and community hubs) to improve residents' wellbeing. This includes developing roles for people within neighbourhoods who can help inspire and coordinate community-led actions.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase workforce development programme signups
- Improve and increase preventative Wellbeing Interactions

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE BEST START IN LIFE AND GROW UP WELL

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

### What we will do:

1. Further develop and embed our working with partners and families through Family Hubs so that families have access to a range of support from pregnancy through to children turning 18 (or 25 with Special Educational Needs).
2. Help improve the quality of early years' settings, schools and other providers, so that all children and young people, no matter their circumstances or educational need, have access to education as close to their home communities as possible and achieve the best educational outcomes.
3. Protect the health of our children and young people by:
  - Developing a Healthy Weight Alliance which will bring communities and agencies together.
  - Developing a Northumberland Food Strategy.
  - Refreshing our Physical Activity Plan so that we create places that are safer for children.
  - Implementing our Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Children and Young People supporting access to the right help at the right time.
4. Keeping our children safe through early support, assessment and delivering our statutory functions, including being an effective Corporate Parent for those we care for and supporting our Care Leavers.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase breastfeeding rate at 6-8 wks (%)
- Increase the proportion of Children healthy weight (%)
- Increase the proportion of Children physically active (%)
- Increase the proportion of Adults physically active (%)
- Increase the % Children gaining a 'Good Level of Development' at end of Early Years Foundation Stage
- Increase the % Learners achieving English and maths GCSE passes at the end of Key Stage 4
- Increase Family Hub usage and Children's Centre usage time



## ALL ADULTS LIVING WELL, REGARDLESS OF AGE, BACKGROUND, ILLNESS OR DISABILITY

Everyone should have the opportunity to have a good life and play a part in creating strong communities. Residents in the county's most deprived communities have an average life expectancy of 75 years compared to 87 years in the least deprived. 25% of our residents are aged over 65 years and projections show there is also likely to be a significant acceleration in the ageing of Northumberland's population profile.

The Council has a special responsibility to ensure Northumberland is a good place to live for people who have a disability or long-term illness, including conditions associated with older age, and both physical and mental issues. Across our services, we need to look for ways to help people to remain independent and live in the way they want to, whatever their disability or condition.

We must support people to live healthier lives and provide good quality, equitable services for those who need extra support to maintain health, wellbeing and independence.

### What we will do:

#### Preventing ill health and disability

1. Encourage adults to be active and healthy by:
  - Limiting the influence of the tobacco industry to prevent people from starting to smoke and supporting those who do smoke to quit.
  - Developing a comprehensive food strategy considering access to sustainable, affordable, healthy food.
  - Creating places that support active travel and access to physical activities throughout our communities and redevelopment of leisure services.
  - Delivering a "making every contact count" (MECC) approach so Council staff can have conversations with residents about their wellbeing; and be able to offer brief advice and signpost into appropriate health, social and financial support.

#### Supporting ill or disabled people to live well

2. Across all of the Council's services, listen to what people with a disability or illness and their carers and tell us about how we can best support them to live the life they choose.
3. When people need care and support services, make it easy for them to take as much control as they wish over how those services are provided.
4. Work in partnership with local NHS bodies to ensure that when people have needs for healthcare and for care and support, all of the professionals supporting them in the community work together as a single team with a shared understanding of each person's needs and choices.
5. Coordinate the Council's resources to address the key long-term strategic challenges facing adult social care, including the sufficiency of the care workforce, and the need for attractive and accessible housing options for the county's growing population of older people.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

- The healthier choice is the easiest choice
- More of our workforce maximise contacts with residents to improve wellbeing
- Residents stay healthier for longer
- Residents are well connected in the community
- Residents live independently for longer
- Residents are more active
- Residents have choice and control over the way their services are received

#### How will we measure progress?

- Reduce the % of population: overweight; smokers; drinking harmfully; who are drug users.
- Improved perceptions of control over daily life (as measured by annual national Adult Social Care User (ASC survey))
- Improved perceptions of how social care and NHS professionals communicate well with each other (as measured by annual national Adult Social Care User (ASC survey))
- Reduce the number of people who have been assessed as needing care in their own homes, but who are currently waiting for that service to become available
- Increase the number of new housing units for older people with potential care needs completed in past year (across all sectors).

## RESIDENTS HAVE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GOOD LIFE

Almost every aspect of our lives impacts on how well and how long we live. This includes our income, jobs, homes, access to education and public transport and whether we experience poverty or discrimination. To create a county where everyone can thrive we need all of these building blocks in place, but right now in some of our neighbourhoods these blocks are missing. In addition to our commitments here, more can be found on how we are improving the building blocks of a good life in the sections on Economic Growth, Climate Change and Value for Money.

### What we will do:

1. Work with key partners to close the gap in good employment opportunities for the most disadvantaged through the development of a Work and Health Strategy and through our work on a Commissioning Framework to deliver social value.
2. Through the actions being taken in our Poverty and Hardship Action Plan we will:
  - Effectively target prevention support for food and fuel poverty.
  - Support children and young people in an education setting with hardship support and remove barriers to opportunity.
  - Try a 'test and learn' approach to warm homes support for people with chronic conditions adversely affected by cold homes.
  - Build community resilience with access to good information, advice, and networks.
3. Listen to residents so their voice is equal to data and to understand what they feel is strong in their communities, what could be improved, what could be done by the community, what they need some help with and what is the role of the Council. Use this to support community cohesion where our communities feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

### Our impact:

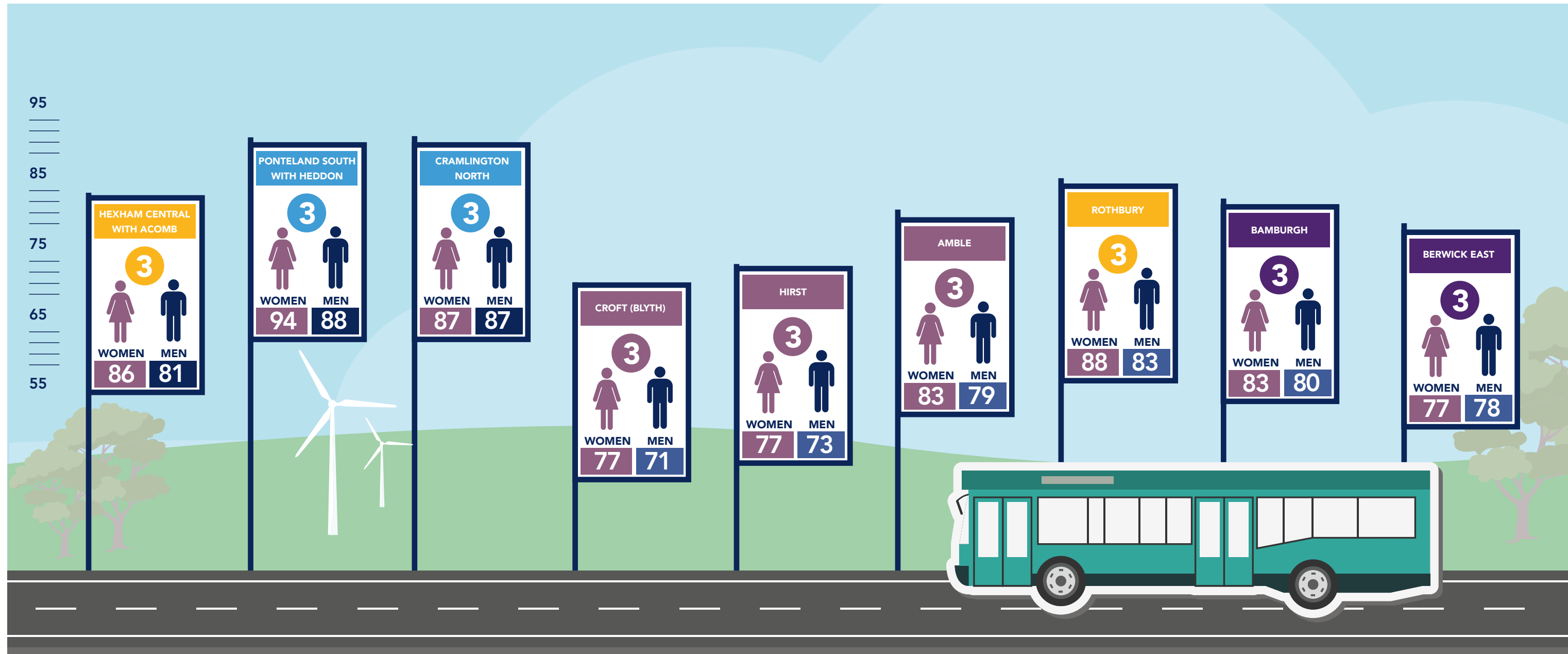
#### What impacts do we want to see?

- The resident's voice (insights) will be heard as equal to data
- Residents are more financially secure
- There are good employment opportunities

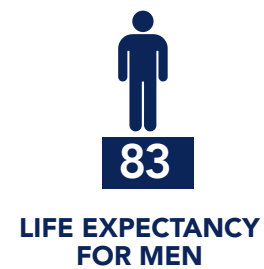
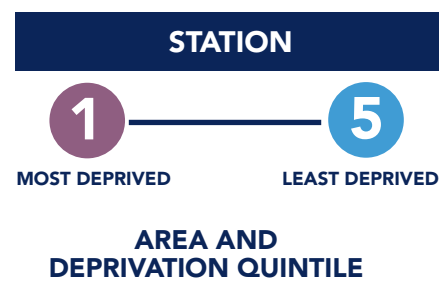
#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase the take-up of benefits (% eligible)
- Increase employers signed up to Good Work Pledge by the North of Tyne Combined Authority
- Increase employers signed up to Better Health at Work Award
- Increase residents in warm homes
- Narrow the employment gap

# A BUS JOURNEY THROUGH NORTHUMBERLAND - LIFE EXPECTANCY



## KEY:



The smallest changes can make the biggest difference



# NET ZERO, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change threatens to disproportionately affect our poorest areas, and climate policies which are too burdensome for the poorest in society could have an unwelcome effect on inequality. Mitigating and adapting to climate change is a necessary condition for sustainably improving living standards. In planning, development, and implementation, the effort to reduce emissions must also be at the service of broader objectives of reducing levels of poverty and inequality, the creation of decent jobs, improvement of air quality, and improvement of public health.

## What we will do:

1. Engage with communities, through schools and education and the Climate Change Community Fund, working with them to identify and deliver solutions that reduce carbon emissions and adaptations that reduce the impact of changes to our climate on how we live.
2. Help residents with the greatest need to reduce energy and heating costs through retrofit and home improvements. Our new Home Improvement and Retrofit Service will deliver solutions for residents living in the most energy inefficient homes.
3. We will prioritise residents who are eligible for grants through national programmes like the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG), Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) schemes and, in time, residents who want to fund their own home improvements.
6. Introducing changes to our salary sacrifice scheme to incentivise take up of low carbon technology.
7. Ensuring any Council owned woodland that is lost to redevelopment will be replaced twofold and managed effectively to provide the maximum carbon and biodiversity net-gains.

## What impacts do we want to see?

- Improved energy performance of social housing stock.
- Improved energy performance of privately owned housing stock, including privately rented properties.
- Access to affordable low carbon heating solutions.

## How will we measure progress?

- Improvement in average Energy Performance ratings for domestic properties.
- Number of home upgrades and retrofits completed.
- Number of homes using a low carbon heat source.





# DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Driving economic growth that everyone can benefit from is at the core of our ambition for Northumberland. There are significant opportunities for growth right across our diverse and rich county and harnessing these opportunities will support our communities to thrive. We want Northumberland to be a great place to live with opportunities for all of our residents, whether they live in our vast rural countryside or within one of our busy towns. To do this we must create the conditions for a growing and thriving economy.

Building on the significant investment going into our county we will continue our ambitious town and rural regeneration programmes using our wonderful heritage and natural and cultural assets to bring increased vibrancy back to our communities. Improving our county's connectivity, both transport and digitally, will support growth opportunities and better link residents to jobs and learning opportunities.

As well as investing in our places, we will also invest in our people. We want skilled and aspirational people to be part of, and to benefit from, our growing and thriving economy. We will create opportunities for our children and young people to develop the skills and experiences to become the future leaders and contributors to our economy, in those sectors we know will power growth and drive our future prosperity. We will also support people back into work, those who want to change careers and those who want to progress in work, through support programmes, skills and training. Young people with SEND will be supported to achieve their potential with a preparation for adulthood plan and pathways to education, training and employment.

Ultimately our actions will enable us to attract new investment, support our existing businesses to innovate, thrive and grow and create a county people want to live in, do business in and visit.





## THRIVING PLACES AND CULTURE

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

### What we will do:

1. Deliver an ambitious regeneration programme across the county. This will include: transformative investments in Blyth and Ashington; improved walking and cycling routes; investment in our 'economic corridors' and employment sites; district heating solutions; town investment plans and heritage; investing in natural and cultural assets to create places where people feel proud to live, work and visit.
2. Continue to maintain the standard of our own housing stock, support our residents and meet the challenges arising from the Social Housing White Paper. We will deliver a mix of quality housing across the county to meet the needs of the community and our changing population. Through both direct delivery and working with partners we will develop needs-based accommodation through the 'homes for life models' and affordable homes schemes and engage with the private rented sector to improve quality of housing (through our selective licensing policy).
3. Maintain the high standards of vital local services ensuring the natural and physical environments our residents live in, are active in and visit, are accessible, clean, tidy and safe.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- More affordable housing Net additional affordable housing completions
- Reduce Crime and maintain/improve cleanliness of neighbourhoods
- Major Capital investment in Blyth via the £70m Energising Blyth programme and £16m Levelling-Up Deep Dive fund delivered by 2027
- Place Plans developed and agreed for each of the seven towns (Alnwick, Bedlington, Bellingham, Haltwhistle, Newbiggin, Prudhoe and Rothbury) by early of 2024
- Ashington investment plan agreed by summer 2023
- Berwick Theatre open by Autumn 2025

## A DIVERSE AND RESILIENT ECONOMY

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

### What we will do:

1. Support a vibrant and diverse economy, bringing investment and driving job growth, opportunities and greater prosperity in our communities.
2. Achieve a successful Mayoral Combined Authority and strong regional partnerships which support and invests in the county's economic growth ambitions.
3. Deliver the Rural Stewardship and Growth Investment Plan, working with partners, including the National Park as well as Government to harness the economic potential of natural assets and landscapes, whilst protecting our unique and valuable environment.
4. Deliver our Destination Management Plan with Visit Northumberland to create an environment for tourism and the visitor economy to develop and flourish sustainably for the benefit of local communities, businesses, visitors and the natural environment.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase annual tourism visitors to the county
- With partners secure skilled jobs and employment on Northumberland Energy Park by summer 2025
- Northumberland Small Business Service begins delivering to the county's businesses by summer 2023
- Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Delivery Plan agreed by summer 2023
- Mayoral Combined Authority Investment Plan for devolved funds agreed by summer 2025
- Rural Growth and Stewardship Investment Plan makes its first investments in the County by end of 2023

## SKILLED AND ASPIRATIONAL PEOPLE

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

### What we will do:

1. Develop the vocational education offer to provide clear pathways into apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and employment for all our young people and adults. We will do this by producing clear guidance for schools and settings on what good careers advice looks like; developing a curriculum and facilities which both support the ambition of learners and link to the workforce requirements for Northumberland. This will ensure all young people are supported to achieve their aspirations.
2. Deliver skills and training for residents that meets their ambitions and supports the economy through greater links between learning pathways and opportunities in the economy, building on key relationships between education & industry, for example:
  - Energy Central Campus;
  - Education and Skills providers to upskill and reskill for the future low carbon economy;
  - Working with the private sector to build skills development.
3. Through providing accessible programmes to engage residents and support them to move closer to training or work to tackle inequalities, improve individuals' life chances and support the economy.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase in skills qualifications
- Energy Central Learning Hub begins construction - Spring 2023
- Employment Partnership and VSC-led employability support delivering by autumn 2023

## A CONNECTED COUNTY

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

### What we will do:

1. Introduce measures which make sustainable travel a more attractive, greener, and easy alternative to getting around including the delivery of the Northumberland Line, cycling and walking and electric vehicle infrastructure and bus improvements.
2. Update our existing digital infrastructure, addressing areas of need in rural areas and delivering the Wide Area Network replacement project.
3. Continue to make the case for investment in the strategic road network where this will improve safety, ease congestion, and support economic growth and continue to maintain existing networks.

### Our impact:

#### What impacts do we want to see?

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

#### How will we measure progress?

- Increase active travel (%)
- Increase public transport use (bus and train) (%)
- 97% of properties can access Gigabit fibre by 2027
- Increase digital connectivity



# NET ZERO, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Net Zero is the growth opportunity of the 21st Century. Northumberland can get a huge boost from the low carbon economy, and we are already creating the foundations as we work to become carbon neutral. We are uniquely placed to lead the way for the UK, as a rural county with an industrial heritage and emerging low carbon economy. We have made a good start but there is more to do.

## What we will do:

1. Deliver district heating solutions for our eight major towns through a private sector partnership, helping to secure investment from the established Northumberland business community, especially those focused on manufacturing and power generation.
2. Create a new wave of low carbon employment needed to design, build, operate and maintain our district heating infrastructure.
3. Build community partnerships that are empowered to 'design, build, operate and maintain' community owned district heating solutions, specifically targeting rural communities that are most vulnerable to getting left behind as they are not on the UK gas grid.
4. Continue to build accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
5. Support improvements to the county's infrastructure as we adapt to changes in the climate.

## What impacts do we want to see?

- Providing additional opportunities for economic growth and stability for the county's largest employers.
- Providing access to the low carbon economy for new entrants to the county and to existing Small/Medium Enterprises who will need to pivot in the low carbon economy.
- Providing accessible low carbon heating solutions for businesses and residents as fossil fuel heating solutions are phased out by central government.
- Encouraging residents and visitors to make the switch to electric vehicles, helping to reduce tail pipe emissions and facilitate access to the rural economy.

## How will we measure progress?

- Number of large employers engaged in district heating schemes.
- Number of off gas grid communities engaged in district heating schemes.
- Number of households and businesses that will be in scope for district heating solutions as they are rolled out.
- Carbon Dioxide savings that can be targeted through district heating schemes.
- Electric vehicle charger usage.





# OUR DELIVERY

## BEST VALUE APPROACH

Delivering best value for our residents is fundamental to everything we do. Best Value is a holistic approach to delivering our Council services and is a golden thread that runs through all of our work to ensure the overall value of everything we do has the best impact it can. Our best value approach is made up of seven best value characteristics (see information on pages 44 - 47), and it is through focusing on continuous improvement in these areas we will achieve our Best Value ambition.

At the heart of our best value approach is ensuring the delivery of value for money. This means maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost, as well as economy, efficiency, the effectiveness and impact of what we do, and ensuring we meet the equal opportunities requirements of our decisions to ultimately achieve the sustainable delivery of our services.

To do this our Council needs to run effectively. We will embed a planning, performance and accountability framework that will provide us with a clear mechanism to ensure we are doing the right things well, achieving the best impact from our decisions, and demonstrating the value we are delivering for our residents. It will define, synchronise and frame the many processes needed to robustly plan and prioritise our work from this corporate plan through to our medium-term financial planning, and wider strategic change plans through our BEST work, right down to service level plans and individual staff objectives.

Service level planning is a vital part of our Best Value approach. Service Plans set out clear accountability for how service priorities, improvements and delivery will achieve the Council's strategic priorities. They are a cornerstone of delivering value for money and effective performance management as they cover how impact will be measured to ensure we are using our resources, finances, people, skills and assets efficiently and effectively. Performance and impact are regularly reviewed and reported in the Council Performance Reports providing a mechanism by which managers, members and officers can focus on performance and improvement, and track progress.

## BEST WORK

BEST guides us in everything we do to provide the BEST services to residents and be the BEST we can be for Northumberland. As an organisation we will become more modern, efficient, and fit for purpose through a range of work across seven workstreams:

- **BEST Services to Customers**
- **BEST Use of Assets**
- **BEST Value for Money**
- **BEST Use of Technology**
- **BEST in Class Commissioning**
- **BEST Talent and Opportunities**
- **BEST Use of Resources**





We know to achieve our Best Value ambition and operationalise and fully embed our Planning, Performance and Accountability framework will take several years. To start this journey, over the next year we will:

ELEMENT OF FRAMEWORK	ACTION AND OUTCOME	BY WHEN
<b>Best Value</b>	Executive Management Team to complete Best Value self-assessment to identify areas for improvement.	<b>October 2023</b>
<b>Planning, Performance and Accountability Framework</b>	Produce Best Value action plan based on findings of Best Value self-assessment and identify how these actions will be delivered through a variety of means (BEST work and service plans).	<b>October 2023</b>
<b>Value for Money</b>	Develop Value for Money Assessment process and pilot through the BEST Value for Money Workstream.	<b>Summer 2023</b>
<b>Service Planning</b>	All services complete a value for money assessment to inform the improvement actions within their service plan and set a baseline for improvement to be measured against.	<b>October 2023</b>
<b>Individual Development</b>	A forward plan prioritising how services will be identified for a deep dive will be developed through the Planning, Performance and Accountability Framework in the Best Value for Money workstream. Deep dives into the performance of individual services to be completed in line with the prioritisation plan.	<b>Summer 2023</b>
<b>Corporate Planning</b>	Service plans to be developed to set out how each division will contribute to the Corporate Plan outcomes and how impact will be measured.	<b>Summer 2023</b>
<b>Corporate Planning</b>	Adapt personal "About You Review" appraisals to include priorities from the Corporate Plan.	<b>March 2024</b>
<b>Corporate Planning</b>	An annual report to be produced to set out achievements from the Corporate Plan.	<b>March 2024</b>



# LAND OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

## PLANNING, PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK



- **Corporate Plan** sets out our priorities and how we will achieve our vision for Northumberland
- **Best Value Assessment** will drive our best value action plan to ensure we are delivering our best value ambition
- **Medium Term Financial Plan** will ensure our finances are in line with the outcomes we are working to achieve
- **BEST Work** drives a strategic approach to providing the BEST services to residents
- **Learning and Development Plan** ensures we enable our staff to succeed at work

CORPORATE PLAN INDICATORS AND MEASURES - REPORTED QUARTERLY

- **Value for Money Assessments** enable services to identify opportunities for improvement
- **Service Plans** set out how our services will continually strive to improve what they do to improve outcomes
- **Workforce Plans** ensure services have the skilled people they need to deliver quality services

SERVICE INDICATORS MEASURE IMPACT OF SERVICES

- **Appraisals** set how the individual work of staff contributes to our corporate plan with six clear objectives - linked to corporate priorities and health and wellbeing
- **Training Plans** set out learning and development plans to build the skills and experience of our staff

SMART MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES IN APPRAISALS



# OUR VALUES

We believe that Northumberland is a land of great opportunities for everyone; our residents, employees, partners, businesses and visitors. We have set out an ambitious plan for delivery, supporting our county and its people to realise their potential. However, we recognise that how we deliver is as important as what we deliver, and this is the key to our success.

Our Northumberland team, officers and members, have developed a set of shared values that will underpin everything we do. It will guide the decisions we make, the way we work with each other and the difference we make in our communities.

**These values are the standards by which we will hold ourselves and each other to account. They are our promise to our residents.**

## People First



We provide services to our people (residents, colleagues, members, partners, visitors and businesses) through lasting, genuine, relationships that make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We listen and understand our people's needs and put them at the heart of our decision making.

## Respect



We are committed to building a trusting, caring and supportive environment for all our colleagues and communities. That means we are there for each other, act with empathy, value differences and encourage others to express themselves in order to collectively achieve our common goals. We treat others as they would wish to be treated.

## Excellence



We strive for the highest quality delivery of our services. This means being accountable for our actions and delivering on our commitments. We share and celebrate what works, are open and learn from what doesn't and take pride in continually improving.

## Resilience



We have robust controls, practices and support in place to protect our residents, our colleagues and our communities and empower them to thrive and live well. We are committed to acting sustainably in order to drive the right impact, over the long term, whilst ensuring best value for money.

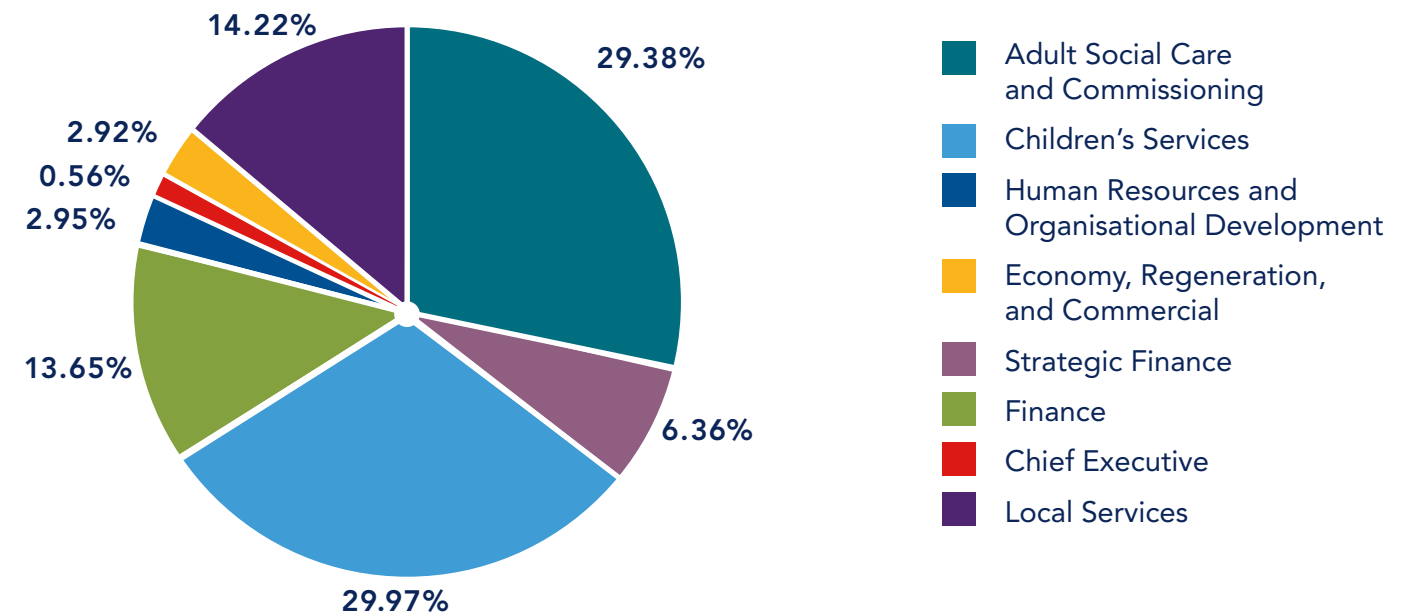
## The difference we will see at the end of the three years:

1. We have a clear set of values and supporting behaviours, that are shared, owned and understood by everyone in Northumberland County Council.
2. Our people (officers and members) apply the values and behaviours consistently.
3. Our values and behaviours are woven through our people practices. They guide our recruitment, how we measure our performance, how we develop our people, and how we recognise and reward success.
4. We will have measures to know our performance, track our improvement and be open and transparent about our progress.

# OUR RESOURCES

## OUR FINANCIAL POSITION

In February 2023, Northumberland County Council agreed a balanced budget for the financial year 2023-24. The budget took account of the financial settlement from Government as well as the wider financial context including significant price increases in the supplies and services we use to deliver services to residents. Like almost all councils, our budget sets out a range of efficiency measures and savings targets which will be delivered during the coming year. These will ensure our services are value for money however, in achieving this we will strive to ensure residents and businesses do not experience cuts to their day-to-day services. As part of the budget setting process, the Council's Interim Executive Director of Finance was satisfied that the Council set a viable budget and confirms that the Council has the required financial strength within its reserves to cope with any anticipated financial challenge.



## THE CORPORATE PLAN AND COUNCIL BUDGET

We will use this plan to shape how we deliver all of our services and functions, ensuring service plans and staff appraisals are clear on how they will contribute to achieving our Vision and Priorities. By setting the context for the next Budget and Medium-Term Financial Planning process, the Corporate Plan will ensure our spending plans align to delivering on the three Priorities.



For more information go to:

[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)