

Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference



Hirst Partnership Board

DRAFT Terms of Reference v2

20th March 2024

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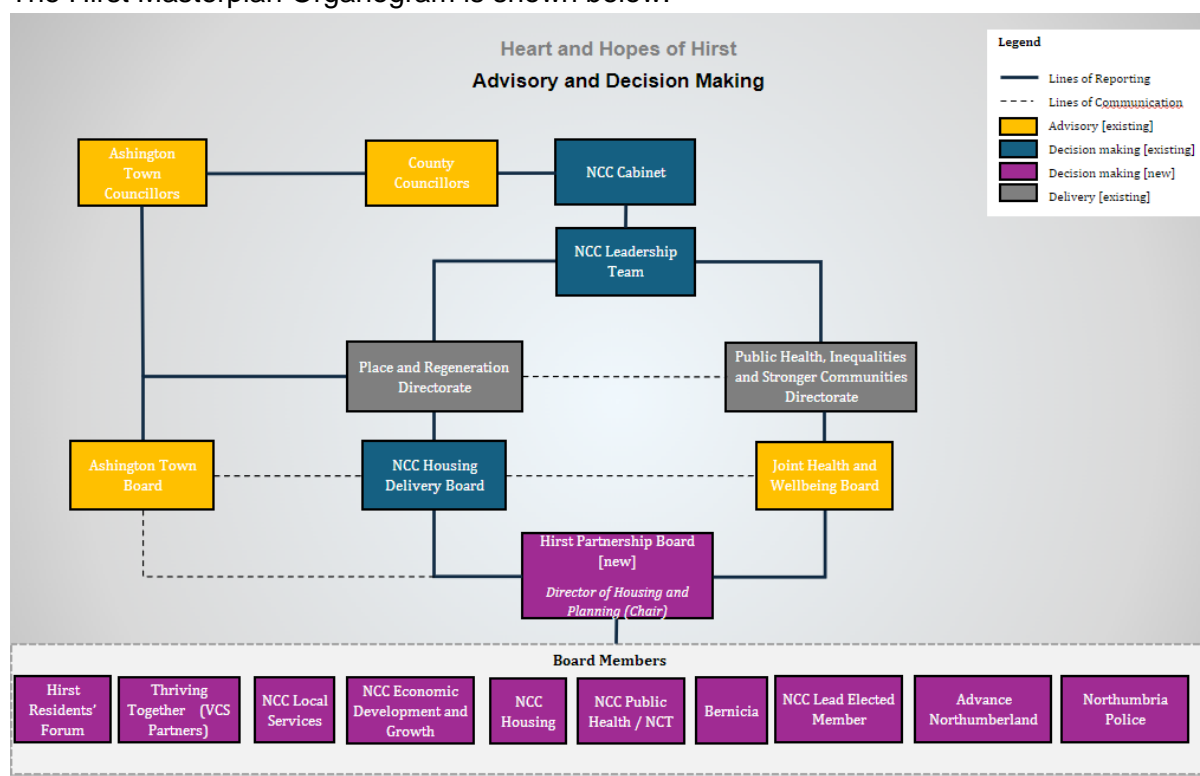
Hirst Partnership Board Governance Policy & Terms of Reference

1. Background

The Hirst Partnership Board has been established to oversee and advise on the delivery of the Hirst Masterplan for Ashington. This paper is intended to reflect the **Governance** requirements and to act as **Terms of Reference** for the board. This document should be read alongside the Hirst Partnership Board **Code of Conduct**.

This document will be reviewed, refreshed and signed off annually by the Board, or more frequently, if necessary, to respond to any relevant government funding guidance and the requirements of the projects it is set up to oversee. The governance policy will be updated within one calendar month of a change being required.

The Hirst Masterplan Organogram is shown below:



1.1 Board Responsibilities

- *The Hirst Partnership Board is an advisory board to the lead and accountable body; Northumberland County Council*
- *Advising on a clear programme of interventions as outlined in the Hirst Masterplan*
- *Ensuring communities' voices are involved in shaping design and decision making at each phase of development*
- *Actively engaging deliberately and constructively with residents and the private, public and voluntary sectors, providing updates and information on future plans.*
- *Ensuring equality, inclusion and diversity in all its engagement with local communities and organisations*

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- *Ensuring that housing decision making strategies are developed with the intention of providing improved housing options for the benefit of existing Hirst residents*
- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life ([the Nolan Principles](#))*
- *Keeping records of meetings and advice given*

1.2 Hirst Masterplan Geographical Area

See area map and how it was developed during the development of the Masterplan in Appendix 1. Map will be used as a guide.

2. Northumberland County Council (the Lead Authority)

2.1 Role of Northumberland County Council

The Hirst Partnership Board will act in an advisory capacity to the Lead Council (Northumberland County Council)

2.2 Responsibilities of the Lead Council

- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)*
- *Developing a delivery team, delivery arrangements and agreements*
- *The development of detailed business cases*
- *Undertaking any required Health Impact Assessments, Carbon Impact Assessments or Public Sector Equalities Duties*
- *Acquisition, management and coordination of funding*
- *Monitoring and evaluating the delivery of individual Master Plan projects*

2.3 Northumberland County Council Policy Alignment

The Hirst Partnership Board will be aligned with the governance standards and policies of Northumberland County Council, including those around whistle blowing, conflicts of interest, complaints and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- *Complaints Policy*

Complaints received from stakeholders and members of the public will be considered and responded to, in line with the Northumberland County Council's complaints procedure.

- *Whistleblowing*

Where it is alleged that the Board is acting in breach of the law or failing to safeguard public funds the whistleblowing procedure of Northumberland County Council will be applied.

- *Data Protection*

To ensure the highest standards when collecting and using personal information the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy and procedure of Northumberland County Council will be applied in all cases.

- *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

The Board is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its work. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out, as appropriate, when developing plans, policies and projects.

- *Freedom of Information (FOI)*

All Freedom of Information requests will be dealt with in accordance with the Lead Council's policy and procedure.

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- *Gifts and hospitality*

A register of gifts and/or hospitality provided to individual Hirst Partnership Board members, or the Hirst Partnership Board will be maintained by the Lead Council. Board members have a responsibility for reporting gifts or hospitality received whilst delivering their role so that they can be recorded on the register held by the council.

2.4 Advisory Working Group

The Hirst Partnership Board will have an officer working group who will attend from Northumberland County Council and who will provide the capacity to develop and deliver the Hirst Masterplan.

2.5 Support and admin arrangements

Support will be provided to The Hirst Partnership Board by the Lead Authority, Northumberland County Council.

As the Accountable Body, it will provide a secretariat function which will involve organising meetings, preparing and circulating agendas and producing minutes.

Agendas and accompanying reports shall be published at least 5 clear working days in advance of a meeting and sent to all members of the Board.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership of the Hirst Partnership Board

Membership of the Partnership Board has been developed by the accountable body, Northumberland County Council, in agreement with partners Advance Northumberland and Bernicia.

A full list of those organisations and departments represented on the Board are listed in Appendix 2.

Membership is by invitation only and may be changed by the accountable body at any time.

3.2 Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

Conduct of the board shall be by the usual conventions of public authorities. All members must adhere to the Hirst Partnership Board Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles of public life.

Conflicts of interest may arise where an individual's personal, family, business or organisations interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the group or meeting that Board members are attending. All Members will declare interests as set out in the Hirst Partnership Board Code of Conduct.

3.3 Period of Membership

Membership of the Board will be for an initial two-year period from 1 February 2024.

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Members are eligible for reappointment in subsequent terms.

All members of the Board will be appointed or re-appointed at the next meeting after two years and subsequently every one year.

3.4 Amendments to Board Membership

The accountable body may propose amendments to board membership at any time

- to ensure that representation is maintained in line with Master Plan objectives.
- to best support the evolving nature of the Hirst Master Plan delivery.
- The decision to appoint or alter the membership of the Board rests with the Chief Executive of the Lead Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Lead Council.

3.5 Attendance of meetings

Only named Board Members may attend the meetings as a 'board member' unless a replacement is previously agreed in writing with the accountable body's board administrator and chair.

Board members may not attend a board meeting, nor vote on board matters unless they have first completed and submitted a declaration of interest form.

The accountable body may remove a board member who is deemed not to have declared a registrable interest.

External Advisors from Northumberland County Council, Advance Northumberland, Bernicia and elsewhere as required will be invited to meetings but will not have a vote.

4. Chair and Vice Chair

4.1 Nomination and election

The Lead authority will nominate a chair for the Hirst Partnership Board from the lead authority, unless otherwise agreed, this will be the Director of Housing and Planning.

The board will nominate and elect two vice chairs from its board membership: one from the public sector and one who is not from the public sector.

4.2 Term of Office

All posts will be reviewed every two years or at the request of the post holder.

A post holder is eligible for re-election in subsequent terms.

4.3 Casting Vote

The Chair has a casting vote in the instance of a hung vote of the board.

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If the Chair of the meeting has a conflict of interest in a matter to be voted on in the meeting, the vice chair(s) in attendance will take on the role of determining the casting vote.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Hirst Partnership Board Chair

- *Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)*
- *Leading the Board in achieving its objectives, maintaining an overview of activity, and championing and supporting partnership working*
- *Ensuring that advisory decisions are made by the Board in accordance with good governance principles*

5. Committees and Subcommittees

The Hirst Partnership Board may establish committees and subcommittees in the course of its work.

Each committee and subcommittee must adhere to all the same principles as the main board. All committees and subcommittees must report in full to the main board at its next meeting.

6. Meetings

6.1 Frequency of meetings

The Board shall meet at least quarterly

A forward programme of scheduled meetings will be established which will be supplemented, as necessary, with meetings convened with the agreement of the Chair of the Board.

An extraordinary meeting can be called at no less than 14 days' notice if a minimum of five members wish to do so.

6.2 Non-member attendance of meetings

In consultation with the chair, members of the Board may nominate substitutes if they are not able to attend a meeting.

Board members may invite colleagues to Board meetings to observe and provide technical support, as required. Colleagues and observers will not have voting rights.

Officers, representatives and external consultants may be required to attend to provide updates on projects but will not have a vote.

6.3 Meeting Papers

All agendas, minutes, and supporting documentation will be circulated, electronically, to Board members 5 days before a meeting.

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6.4 Quorum

The quorum for any meeting of the Board shall be 50% of its membership or six members, whichever is the greatest, including the Chair.

The quorum must include at least one board member representative from the accountable body.

6.5 Chairing the Meeting

Meetings will be chaired by the accountable body nominated Chair.

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting will be chaired by one of the two Vice Chairs, on rotation.

In the absence of a Vice Chair, members of the meeting will elect a meeting chair from their number.

6.6 Decision Making

The Hirst Partnership Board acts in an advisory capacity to Northumberland County Council which is the lead and accountable body for the Hirst Masterplan.

Within the context of determining this advice to the Accountable Body (NCC), the Board members may from time to time be called upon to make decisions.

Decisions may be made by consensus.

Where a consensus view cannot be reached, decisions will be made on a 'one member, one vote' premise. Voting shall be by a show of hands of Board members and shall be by simple majority.

All board members will be required to adhere to the Code of Conduct Policy including its Conflict-of-Interest clauses whilst voting.

All decisions, whether consensus or voted, will be minuted.

If a member is unable to attend the meeting, they may send a named representative by prior agreement with the chair, who may vote in their stead.

In the situation of a hung vote, the chair of the meeting will have a casting vote.

If the chair has a declared interest in the vote, then the vice chair(s) in attendance will take on the role of determining the casting vote.

The Board may take decisions offline as appropriate, as agreed by the chair of the Board.

The rulings of the Chair shall be final.

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7. Engagement with the Community

It is intended that the broad membership of the Hirst Partnership Board will affect strong engagement with the business, community and public sectors of the Hirst area and its wider stakeholders.

Several successful pre-existing and emerging partnerships exist in the town. It is intended that the Hirst Partnership Board will work in close partnership with existing networks through its diverse board membership. However, it will be required on occasion to consult or engage more widely with the community. This will be delivered by the officer working group supporting the Hirst Partnership Board.

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Appendix 1 – Hirst Masterplan area map

The original masterplan brief defined a study boundary encompassing the main area of terraced streets from Woodhorn Road in the north to Seventh Avenue in the south and stretching from North Seaton Road / Milburn Road in the west to Alexandra Road in the east. This area included the majority of Advance Northumberland and some Bernicia homes, as well as long-term vacant properties. The study area also includes private landlord and owner-occupied homes. Stakeholders highlighted that the area containing Percy Street, Queen Street and George Street is also in need of appraisal; therefore, this area has also been included within the study area boundary. During the engagement process with local people and stakeholders, the importance of key assets such as Hirst Park and Hirst Welfare Centre emerged, and these areas have also been included in the study area. Although the red line shown on the plan opposite is the focus of the study, the masterplan considers areas beyond the red line including connections to the town centre, education, employment, and other community assets.

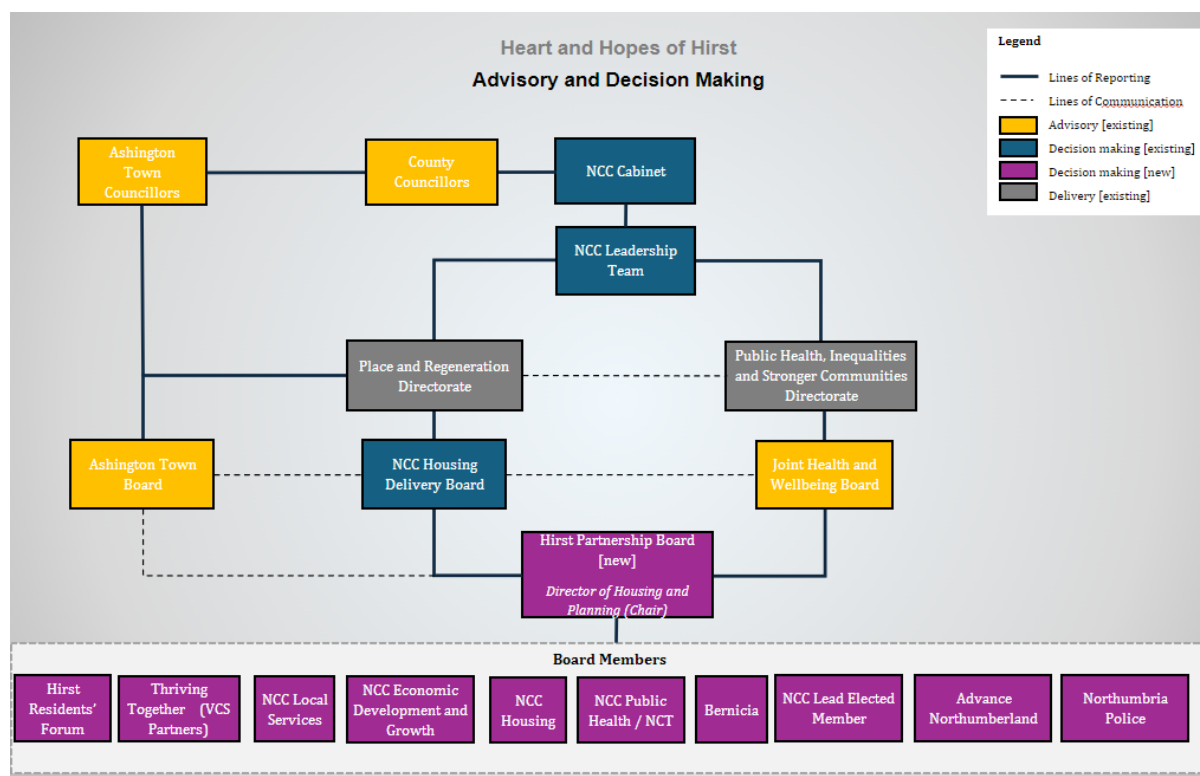
The board acknowledge that there are different views locally on what constitutes the Hirst and exactly where the boundaries are. For the purposes of the Master Plan delivery, 'Hirst' refers to the Hirst masterplan study area shown on the plan below.



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Appendix 2 - Summary of Organisational Representation on the Hirst Partnership Board



	Organisation	Team / Position
1	Northumberland County Council	Director of Housing and Planning (Chair)
2	Bernicia	Chief Executive
3	Advance Northumberland	Chief Executive
4	Hirst Residents Forum	Chair
5	Thriving Together (VCS Partnership)	Chief Executive
6	Northumberland County Council	Local Services
7	Northumberland County Council	Economic Development and Growth
8	Northumberland County Council	Public Health
9	Northumberland County Council	Housing
10	Northumberland County Council	Lead Member
11	Northumbria Police	Senior Officer

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Revision Log

Draft	Date	Reason	Author
1	9 th January 2024	First draft for team review	AL
2	20 th March 2024	Amends following SLT, amend quorum to 50% or six members and add NCC Lead Member and Northumbria Police to board membership	AL
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