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**Cabinet (7<sup>th</sup> December 2021)**

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Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25 (March 2021, updated October 2021).

**Executive Director:** Cath McEvoy-Carr - Executive Director of Adults and Children's Services.

**Cabinet Member:** Guy Renner Thompson - Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

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**Purpose of report**

To share with Cabinet *Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25*, a document designed to guide skills planning and the approach in designing impactful vocational skills provision within the county to yield greatest impact for residents and the local economy.

**Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Review the *Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25*, its content and general approach.
  2. Provide feedback on any aspects requiring adjustment or inclusion.
  3. Subject to approval, authorise use of the document with internal and external stakeholder groups.
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## **Link to Corporate Plans**

### **Links to NCC Corporate Plan 2020-21**

#### **a. How**

Providing greater impact of vocational training, raising opportunity to enter higher value career choices and supporting industrial growth in priority sectors.

#### **b. Living**

Access to more impactful education will support financial health, social mobility and affordability of homes in the county.

#### **c. Enjoying**

Access to more impactful education, valuable careers and financial health to raise participation in cultural and community functions.

#### **d. Connecting**

The vocational skills community will be closer to industry and more accessible to communities allowing greater levels of inclusion and progression to valuable careers.

#### **e. Learning**

Directly contributing to the availability of in demand vocational skills and readiness for apprenticeship/employment for the county, increasing accessibility to skills development for young people and adults as well as sector professionals.

#### **f. Thriving**

Directly supporting the priority for more and better jobs for residents.

## **Links to Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24**

### **a. Grow the business base**

Defining the vocational education approach will contribute to the provision of work ready young people and adults and provision of priority industry specific training, removing growth obstacles and attracting inward investment.

### **b. Support inclusive employment**

Defining the vocational education approach will contribute to the creation of a talent pool, accessible to all, that will allow direct progression to employment and apprenticeship opportunities in priority sectors.

### **c. Deliver productive places**

Defining the approach to developing local vocational skills delivery and raising attainment which support priority sectors will contribute to productivity, economic growth and inward investment.

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## **Key issues**

Vocational education in Northumberland does not yet offer an accessible, joined-up progression pathway through Further Education, into apprenticeships, employment, H.E. and undergraduate education (including higher level apprenticeships) in our most economically important sectors.

Attainment level in Northumberland is low with too many holding low level or no qualifications and too few holding higher level qualifications compared to national levels, there is a clear link between qualification level and economic participation and success and a strong link between those who hold no qualifications and worklessness. More well defined, relevant and accessible educational pathways must be created to raise attainment.

Too many residents suffer in work poverty and are in need of claiming financial support, a figure which can be reduced with the provision of more intermediate and higher-level qualifications in priority sectors to enhance progression opportunity and entry to higher value careers.

Northumberland county has median gross weekly pay below the north east region average and significantly below the national average. Northumberland also has a gender pay gap significantly greater than the north east region average and national average. Targeted raising of participation in skills and education which represent higher value sectors, particularly with underrepresented groups and wards with greatest socio-economic challenges, will contribute to reducing inequalities.

Northumberland has in excess of 15,000 residents employed in elementary occupations, elementary occupations are also at greatest risk from automation, enhancing attainment levels can contribute to reducing elementary occupation uptake.

Aspiration levels are low with some of the county's flagship employers reporting that they are offering rewarding opportunities with little uptake from local residents. A well-defined network of educational pathways into employment must be defined to reduce the perceived obstacles to employment that currently exist.

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## **Background**

During research completed Q3 and Q4 2020 into Q1 2021 a wide range of skills-based conversations have been had with a variety of internal and external stakeholder groups.

The topic of impactful vocational skills programme design and the approach for a best fit model to comply with Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework '*Intent – Implementation – Impact*' approach have been part of these discussions with regularity.

Following these skills-based research activities conducted on the subject of curriculum development opportunities the *Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25* was

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compiled to more formally share the vision for impactful vocational skills delivery within the county, how the intent behind that vision is formed, in which priority sectors the greatest impact can be yielded and to define some of the challenges which must be overcome.

*Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25* defines the approach which will contribute to delivering the objectives of the *Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24* under which it sits. It defines the approach to delivering the economic vision, priorities, and the mechanism to translate ambition into impact in terms of skills, employment and inclusive growth. It defines the mechanism which will allow communities to benefit from growth opportunities through skills and employment, changing perceptions of Northumberland as a county of economic opportunity.

*Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25* provides clear intent in the direction and the priorities of Northumberland County Council in delivering a relevant, sufficient and highly skilled workforce. Schools will understand the direction of travel of the local authority and will be able to confidently develop aspirations in children & young people that mirror the broader aspirations for the county.

*Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25* will be used to stimulate horizontal integration within the work of Education, Regeneration, Planning, Sustainability, Advance Northumberland and HR&OD workforce development, it will help attract inward investment to the county by clearly articulating the education, skills and employment priorities that the local authority have ambition to support across the county.

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## **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	<i>Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25</i> is in strong accordance with the <i>NCC Corporate Strategy 2018-21</i> and <i>Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24</i> , details of which are defined above.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	There are no direct financial impacts positive or negative associated with the skills plan however the plan defines approaches to deliver long range financial impacts to the

	economy within the county by overcoming talent-based growth obstacles.
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Equalities impact assessment not applicable as <i>Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25</i> does not impact individuals
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	None in relation to <i>Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25</i> . Any projects arising as a result of the plan will have a comprehensive risk assessment carried out as part of the outline business case.
<b>Crime Disorder &amp;</b>	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The proposals set out in this report are based upon a vision to act in the best educational interests of current and future young people, adults, businesses and employees in Northumberland.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have any positive or negative impact on carbon reduction however projects arising as a result of the plan may have a carbon reduction impact which will be assessed on a per-project basis as part of the outline business case.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	None
<b>Wards</b>	Applicable to residents in all wards who engage in vocational education.

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**Background papers:**

**Appendix 01** - Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25\_Condensed\_Updated Oct 2021.pdf

**Report sign off.**

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

	Full Name of Officer
Relevant Service Director	Audrey Kingham
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson
Legal	Jan Willis
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