

Achievements in delivery of the Corporate Plan 2013-17

Northumberland County Council's Corporate Plan sets out the council's priorities for 2013 -17. During this time the council has been faced with significant cuts but has still managed to deliver a range of investments and excellent services. Some of these are detailed in this report.

Corporate Plan

Economic Growth

a great place to work.

We are leading the regeneration of the county through our review of market towns initiative, and our £238 million capital programme for 2015-16 and 2016-2017. We are re-investing money being spent on buildings the council no longer needs and creating one stop shops, making it easier for residents to still access council services locally and under one roof. Together with Arch, our development company, we are delivering the Northumberland Economic Strategy 2015-2020. We are also in the final stages of producing our Core Strategy which will support the creation of 10,000 extra jobs and the delivery of 24,320 extra homes (including a target of 30% affordable homes) in the county over the period 2011 to 2031, plus a new Garden Village of around 2000 homes.

Places and environment

a beautiful place.

We are preserving and improving the county; embracing our diversity from the rural areas, the coastline, national park, market towns and many more urban areas which make our county special. Our parks continue to achieve Green Flag status, the Tour of Britain in September 2015 saw Northumberland broadcast to 166 countries worldwide whilst the Tall Ships in August 2016 showcased the county internationally, attracting ships and visitors from across the world.

Stronger communities and families

a great place to live.

Working with parents, governors and schools we are helping to drive improvements in our schools. We are also investing significantly in one of the country's largest schools capital investment programmes to ensure our children receive the best possible education. Despite the national move to force schools to become academies we remain strongly committed to challenging and supporting schools to improve. We see our role as acting as a champion for children and parents in a time of significant cuts to national funding for schools.

Health and Wellbeing

a healthy place to live and work.

Following the transfer of Public Health from the NHS to the Council in 2012, the health and wellbeing of people living in Northumberland continue to improve. As well as increases in life expectancy and years of life in good health, people in Northumberland in general have high levels of happiness and low levels of anxiety. Further improvements are expected with our new focus on involving communities in identifying and building on activities which improve their health and wellbeing, as described in the 2015 Annual Report of the Northumberland Director of Public Health. Investment has continued in a range of public health services including sexual health and contraception services, 0-19 years public health services, exercise referral, drug and alcohol services and stop smoking schemes. Leisure and cultural activity contributes to both the wellbeing and quality of life of local communities. Between 2013 and 2017, and with Active Northumberland, we are investing over £40 million in new and modernised leisure facilities across the county ensuring our residents have access to some of the best facilities and activities available. We are also providing a range of services to improve health and wellbeing - a fundamental part of everyday life. We continue to provide library services across the county where others have closed them.

Developing the Organisation

an organisation for the future.

We are focused on delivering excellent services as effectively as possible within our reduced resources. We are using technology to maximise the time our staff can spend delivering services, including creating 'back office' hubs to bring together staff in those areas reducing costs and providing a space for staff working across the county to use, saving travel time and meaning more time working for you. We listen to and value our staff to ensure we continue to provide the best possible services whilst meeting the challenges we face.

DELIVERING AND INVESTING IN FIRST CLASS SERVICES

Northumberland is a beautiful place to live and visit. It is also a great place to work and invest in. Employment opportunities in the county are being boosted by lots of initiatives and new infrastructure, transport links, regeneration and a wider choice of housing.

Our market towns initiative will help to regenerate the county's nine towns; generating over £33 million in capital income and annual savings in Council running costs of £2 million to re-invest in the market towns. Helping to protect frontline services and keeping services local, the market towns initiative will also provide one stop shops for residents where they will be able to access council services under one roof. We are also combining office functions to generate savings and selling buildings and land we no longer need. Our market towns initiative has generated

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almost £12million in income by selling buildings and land we no longer need including the Pavillion Day Care Centre in Bedlington, Thornbrae in Alnwick, Cramlington Library, Shankhouse Fire Station, The Old Post Office in Alnwick and Blyth Fire Station. Whilst we have also been investing in a range of other properties to help regenerate the market towns including the refurbishment of Hexham House to become a wedding venue and holiday rentals; McDonald House in Berwick to provide a hub for council workers; and Northumberland Hall in Alnwick. We are using modern technology to ensure we can provide the best services.

We have an exciting £238 million capital investment programme, showing our commitment to boosting the local economy and benefiting residents; including new leisure facilities and schools and investment in our roads and transport; including a commitment to re-opening the Ashington Blyth-Tyne passenger train line and delivering the new £30m Morpeth Northern Bypass.

Through Arch, the Council's development company, between 2013-2016 we have attracted around £292m of private sector investment in the county.

The Northumberland Business Growth Programme has seen grants totalling £6.5m worth of support offered to 88 businesses for projects that are expected to lever circa £25m of private sector investment and create or safeguard circa 640 jobs.

All in all we are making a great county even better.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Our aim is to promote a more prosperous county that provides high wages, skilled jobs and opportunities to create thriving businesses.

We are investing in your towns:

- Our market towns initiative will help to regenerate the county's nine towns; generating over £33 million in capital income and annual savings in Council running costs of £2 million to re-invest in the market towns.
- We have introduced free parking in every town and parish that asked for it - making shopping locally a much more attractive prospect for people again.
- Three Council sites will become brand new Lidl stores in Bedlington, Blyth and Ashington and we're converting Bedlington's old Tesco site into a shiny new retail space - boosting jobs, footfall and spending.
- In Prudhoe, Arch, through a joint venture with Northumberland Estates, have developed a scheme to improve the retail offer. This includes a town centre retail development located on the former allotment site off Front Street with a second town centre development also proposed off Princess Way. It is anticipated that these developments will create around 200 jobs.
- Following the demolition of the old Kwik Save store in Walkergate, Berwick in September 2015 the construction of a new 1,500m² office building commenced in April 2016 and was completed in November 2016. £100,000 from the Mary Portas fund (match funded by the council) has been invested in regenerating the town.
- The Wallace Green Planning building has now been refurbished to create a modern back office facility for a number of council and NHS services. By investing in technology, it means that staff will be able to spend more time on providing services for residents and cut down on journey times.
- In Berwick, a number of buildings have been refurbished while others are undergoing modernisation work as part of the council's programme to review all its properties across the market town. A one stop shop for council services has been created in the refurbished Walkergate building bringing together the library, customer services and the Tourist Information Centre, as well as the local adult learning service.
- We have opened the Mowbray Day Centre for people with learning and physical disabilities. Near to shops and public transport the new site offers brighter, large

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rooms that give greater flexibility for activities that include dance and performing arts, sports activities and baking activity and sales.

- Northumberland County Council are now developing a new Economic Growth Plan for Berwick working with local stakeholders.
- As part of the wider regeneration of Ashington the County Council has committed £250,000 for a Shopfront Improvement Scheme to bolster the High Street.
- The County Council and Arch together secured new Enterprise Zone status for sites in three towns in Northumberland - Berwick, Morpeth and Ashington from 2017.
- The County Council supported 182 social enterprises.
- Rural Growth has been supported working across the North through the Borderlands initiative which has secured a new partnership for growth between Northumberland, Cumbria and Scottish Borders Councils.
- The County Council is a strategic and funding partner in the delivery of the new £12m The Sill National Landscape and Discovery Centre on Hadrian's Wall which is currently being built.
- At Newbiggin the redevelopment by Arch of two former now derelict public houses will continue and become a key part of the ongoing regeneration of the town. The new Front Street development will include commercial opportunities and an office for Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council, along with modern and accessible public conveniences, and apartments available to rent on the upper floors.
- Through the Portas scheme, Newbiggin was awarded £94,300 (match funded by the council) with a further £54,000 from a variety of sources to boost trade and rejuvenate High Street.
- Agreement has been reached in principle to secure the future of Alnwick Playhouse for both residents and visitors to the town. The building would continue to be a theatre, while the council will use part of the building to provide a library, tourist information and front-office council facilities.
- Work is underway to re-open Station Road, Ashington's main shopping street to traffic to boost local trade, improving the overall look of the street and help deliver wider economic benefits as part of the ongoing regeneration of the town centre. Approval was given to build a new smaller more efficient council headquarters on an invest to save scheme at Portland Park as part of the regeneration of Ashington.

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- We are working in partnership with Aln Valley Railway Heritage Railway to deliver cafe facilities on site at the growing heritage railway site at Alnwick. The aim is to provide working experience for people with learning disabilities who use our Pottergate centre, while raising the profile of people with learning disabilities in their own community and promoting the services provided by the Pottergate centre and the council.
- The Pottergate Centre in Alnwick has teamed up with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's Hospital Volunteer Service (HVS) to sell produce from the Pottergate Pantry in volunteer-run shops in the hospitals. The Pottergate Centre is one of eight day centres for adults with learning disabilities, supporting 51 adults with learning, physical or health-related disabilities.
- New public transport facilities, housing and retail premises represents a £3.3 million investment in Hexham town centre, including a new bus station. The Council supported the new Hexham Business Improvement District which has now been launched and will deliver £1.2 million of improvements to the town.
- The £1.9 million Seafood Town project provides dedicated facilities for fisheries in Amble. The council is working with the community in Amble to develop 15 retail pods in the Harbour Village development together with a Seafood Centre which seeks to support the local fishing fleet.
- Northumberland continues to be a popular wedding destination, with about 80 approved venues and more than 1,700 ceremonies taking place in 2015-16 with over half of the couples getting married coming from outside of Northumberland.

Employment opportunities:

- We have committed £5 million to developing the next phase of the Ashington Blyth Tyne passenger train line to Newcastle. The County Council's cabinet unanimously approved that the project will progress to GRIP Stage 3 (Network Rails project development process) in October 2016.
- Through our Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme we have reached out to 15,000 employees across the county to encourage travel to work by sustainable means and supported nearly 500 job seekers by providing personalised travel training.
- In February 2016 a new £2 million grant fund was announced to support rural businesses, farms wishing to diversify and new tourism initiatives in the South Tynedale area of Northumberland.
- The Council is working to promote the markets taking place across the county and welcomed Berwick's first teenage market.

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- We have united the range of trading activities and initiatives carried out at our learning disability day centres under our Made in Northumberland brand. The brand enables us to promote all the products and showcase the diversity of council services including catering from the Pottergate Centre, furniture recycling from the Tynedale Centre in Hexham, and jewellery and photography sales from Northstar in Berwick.
- The pilot Rural Growth Network Programme (which closed in September 2015) provided support to over 1,000 businesses to the value of £2.91m, leveraging £2.5m private sector investments and creating/safeguarding 333 jobs.
- Delivery of the new Rural Growth Network Programme – commenced 1st April 2015 supporting micro and medium sized businesses to grow the rural economy in Northumberland, Gateshead and Durham. By the end of the first year a total of six businesses had received grant funding of £1,582,486 leveraging a further £192,851 of public funding and £124,000 of private sector investment. the programme is targeted to create or safeguard a total of 260 jobs.
- The Business Northumberland Programme (which closed in September 2015) provided support to 539 pre-start, 59 new and 129 existing businesses resulting in the creation of 96 businesses and the creation/safeguarding of 206 jobs.
- The iNorthumberland Business Support Programme ended on 31st December 2015 having provided support to over 900 businesses and funding to 85 to upgrade their standard broadband connection to a superfast connection. as a direct result of this programme 30 jobs were created and a further 20 safeguarded.
- A new Business Northumberland Programme has been secured with funding from the European Regional Development Programme for England 2014-2020 which was approved in May 2016. These funds will be used to deliver a fully funded Business Support programme which will strengthen our provision of business support services across Northumberland and beyond. This programme will be known as Business Northumberland 2016-19.
- In March 2016 Northumberland County Council launched a new web tool to help users find career information from the region. The resource is being used by staff working with young people and unemployed adults, schools and post-16 learning providers to help students and those looking for work to plan appropriately and prepare for future employment demand.
- Working parents in Northumberland are leading the way as they benefit from 30 hours of free childcare for three- and four-year olds a year to make it easier for these parents to work before it is rolled out nationwide. The Government

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announced £13 million for a number of councils, including Northumberland, to offer the extended entitlement to some parents from September 2016. There will be a national roll-out in 2017.

Infrastructure:

- Having a county where everyone wants to live, work and visit also needs the right infrastructure. That's why we're investing the £238 million in delivering things most people take for granted, like access to broadband, street lighting and roads, such as the Morpeth Bypass. We're investing £30 million to build the new road, which will significantly reduce congestion around Morpeth and could inject around £50 million into the county's economy once it is completed in late 2017.
- We have invested £370,000 in a much needed extension to car parking at Alnmouth Railway Station to alleviate congestion at and around the station and are supporting plans to expand parking at Morpeth station.
- More than 140,000 properties can now connect to fibre broadband and at least 91% of homes and businesses in Northumberland are streaming, downloading and uploading – with superfast speeds - thanks to £7 million in funding from the Council.
- We have invested £1.9 million to subsidise bus services, recognising the rural nature of our county, despite other councils no longer funding them.
- We have built a new £2.2 million bus station in Hexham which opened in November 2016 providing modern facilities for bus users including an enclosed waiting area, toilets, refreshment facilities and travel information. Work has also started on a mixed development on the existing bus station site at Priestpottle to allow a retail and residential scheme providing 31 apartments and five affordable homes and generating 126 jobs.
- We are investing £19 million this year to maintain and improve the roads and transport network.
- We supported Blyth and Northumberland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in securing Coastal Community Team status, a programme that revives seaside towns and aims to bring jobs, growth and prosperity back to the area.
- Working with the Environment Agency, the £27.1 million (with a contribution from the Council of £12 million) Morpeth Flood Alleviation scheme was completed and officially opened in August 2015, protecting many properties from flooding. They were put into use in the storms in December 2015 and early 2016.

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- Since the first green fibre street cabinet went live in January 2014 hundreds of kilometres of underground fibre optic cable has been laid and 219 new cabinets installed in what is one of the county's largest civil engineering projects in recent years.
- More than 146,000 households and businesses in Northumberland are now able to connect to fibre broadband as a result of the Council's £18.9 million iNorthumberland programme and BT's commercial roll-out of the high-speed technology. Work is underway on the second phase of the roll-out with the first homes and businesses expected to be connected late summer following an additional £4.1 million investment, meaning fibre broadband speeds within reach of a further 3,700 homes and businesses across Northumberland by June 2017. The programme has won a number of awards including one for promoting digital inclusion and skills with a win at the Next Generation Digital Skills Awards.
- Following a restructure of NCC's planning processes there has been a significant improvement. The percentage of major planning applications determined within target has risen from 45% in 2013/14 to 79% since last year, with minor planning applications rising from 53% to 69% in the same period in 2016. 'Other' planning applications, which include those from individuals or householders have also gone from 77% to 92%. Having greatly improved its overall performance the council is now focusing on improving its planning enforcement.
- We are in the final stage of preparing our Core Strategy – the Northumberland Local Plan - before it is submitted for review by a Government inspector. Still protecting more than 99% of Northumberland's Green Belt, and only proposing boundary changes in exceptional circumstances the Plan will be submitted in March 2017.

PLACES AND ENVIRONMENT

Our aim is to maintain and further improve the quality of our towns, villages and countryside, making it easier for residents to access services, high-quality and affordable homes, and to travel freely.

- Over the last 12 months 1,200 new homes have been built in Northumberland and we've invested over £20 million in the sector.
- Northumberland County Council has placed a strong emphasis on building new council homes and has financed the build of around 300 properties over the last three years. Around 180 affordable family homes have been built in Blyth at South Newsham, Tynedale Drive and Hodgson's Road and over 80 new homes in the north, across Amble, Shilbottle and Embleton.
- A new £1.9 million, 16 home development in the coastal village of Embleton opened in 2016 meaning local people can rent affordable homes in their local community.
- In July local residents moved into a new 20 property affordable housing development in Shilbottle which has been funded and developed by the Council.
- In April 2016 work started on a £2.8million Council funded scheme to build 26 new affordable bungalows in Morpeth Road, Blyth. The new housing development was finished in October 2016 made up of two bedroom bungalows, two of which have been built to accommodate wheelchair access. The dwellings are also built to Lifetime Homes Standard and include direct access 'en suite' facilities and provision for future hoists as well as level access showers. There are also dementia friendly elements such as glass fronted kitchen cabinets.
- A major £700,000 scheme to refurbish some of Alnwick's oldest council houses in the heart of the town has been completed by the Council. The interiors of 20 council properties in Kings Street have had new floors, walls, doors, insulation, heating and energy efficient boilers installed. At the same time they have been rewired and given new kitchens, bathrooms, blinds and carpets, with the tenants choosing their preferred colours, styles and materials.
- Council housing tenants are benefiting from a five year £31 million housing improvement programme to upgrade properties. The work includes kitchen and bathroom replacements, electrical rewiring, new heating systems, replacement roof coverings and windows.

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- £2.9 million has been invested in environmental improvements at our 350 home estate at Newsham and New Delaval. The work has included rendering, improved pathways, garden walls and roads and is due for completion at the end of the 2016.
- In September 2015 Homes for Northumberland, the arms-length organisation that has been managing the council's portfolio of over 8,000 homes, was transferred back into the council to reduce running costs and save money.
- 2016 was the 5th year for the annual Spirit of the Community awards. They are held to celebrate and recognise council tenants and community groups who have helped other residents to enjoy life or who have made a difference to others.
- Our ground-breaking work around tenant involvement was the focus of attention at the prestigious national tenants conference in Blackpool in June 2016. Representatives from the council and the tenants forum were invited to speak about the new Tenants Voice sub committee that had been set up and which puts tenants at the heart of decision making. The committee, the first of its kind in the country is made up of four tenants and four councillors and gives tenants a seat at the table with key decision makers and a direct voice and influence over decisions affecting housing services.
- In March 2016 Northumberland County Council launched a campaign to bring vacant properties back into use and help ease the county's housing shortage. In the first quarter of 2016, 64 properties were brought back into use.
- In July 2016 the council submitted an 'Expression Of Interest' to central government for support in developing proposals for a new garden village on land owned by The Dissington Estate, north of Darras Hall, Ponteland. It includes proposals for a garden village of approximately 1,800 dwellings with associated local services, facilities and infrastructure provision. While physically separate from Ponteland, the proposed development would be capable of delivering "significant benefits" to the town. These would include the provision of more than 500 affordable houses, delivery of a Ponteland Relief Road, enhanced community transport and infrastructure, and delivery of a flood alleviation scheme for Ponteland.
- We've installed over 1200 solar panel arrays on social houses, giving tenants access to free electricity during daylight hours.
- With the new streamlined planning committee system we are seeing an increase in approvals of applications for new housing development across the county.

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- We were awarded Bronze in the prestigious 'National Clean Britain Awards' large council category for our care of the local environment.
- Hexham's iconic bandstand is back in place after being restored to its former glory in May 2016 and work has started on the Sele Fountain following £125,00 from the county council, Hexham Town Council and a number of private donors.
- We have completed work to refurbish Berwick Breakwater at a total cost of £2 million, providing flooding and coastal erosion protection to 145 properties.
- We continue to support those in need through the local council tax support scheme (£23 million) despite significant cuts in funding.
- Through the £721,000 Supporting Families Programme, we have turned the lives around of hundreds of families who have needed our support, and due to the success we've been invited to take part in the next phase of the programme.
- Our children's centre services (which cost £4.2 million net to run a year) have supported 84% of children under the age of five in our most deprived communities.
- Our performance in placing children who are aged five years and over is almost twice that of the national average.
- Our £1.2 million annual expenditure on maintaining and protecting our parks has resulted in many of our parks across the county being awarded the prestigious Green Flag status – that means they're rated amongst the best in the UK.
- Our county won more gold awards than any other council in the latest Northumbria in Bloom awards – a credit to our local services teams and local parish and town councils who work so hard to keep our towns and green spaces clean and tidy.
- We launched 'Bin it for Good', our anti-litter campaign; around 250 people have received fines ranging from £50 to £400 for littering so far this year.
- In 2015 we launched a 'Love Northumberland Hate Litter' campaign. The campaign involved a combination of littering enforcement, community group litter picks, a programme of school engagement and over 300 visits to food businesses, with the campaign being highly commended in the prestigious 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign of the year awards. In the first 12 months over 350 littering fixed penalties were issued, 42 of which resulted in prosecutions, 400 tonnes of fly-tipped rubbish has been removed and 17 cases of fly-tipping

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have led to prosecutions. In May 2016 Northumberland County Council became one of the first councils in the country to use brand new legislation to tackle fly-tippers on the spot. The council's environmental enforcement team made quick use of the new powers by issuing a £200 FPN to a Lynemouth man for tipping four bags of garden waste onto a grass verge - just 25 yards from his house.

- In 2015 we trained our civil enforcement officers to begin taking action against dog fouling and litter and since in the first 12 months a total of 1,612 waste control investigations were carried out, along with 1,885 for dog fouling. A record 54 successful prosecutions for environmental offences were taken by the Council; including 42 for littering, six for fly tipping and eight for dog fouling. Along with the prosecutions, 455 fixed penalty notices were issued for littering and dog control offences. This is the highest number ever issued by the council in one year and represents a 37% increase from 2014.
- All of our street lights will be modernised within the next three years – a £25 million project replacing 17,000 lampposts and 29,000 lights – ultimately it will save £300,000 a year in reduced energy and maintenance costs. Free wi-fi is also being fitted onto lampposts as part of the project. Pilots in Blyth, Ashington and Berwick could be extended to other parts of the county. As well as the streetlights, around 500 illuminated signs will be replaced, and all 1,207 illuminated traffic bollards will be changed to use the new efficient lighting.
- Our frontline staff have new mechanical sweepers and ride on mowers to improve our street cleansing and grass cutting services thanks to £1.75 million being spent over the last three years.
- Northumberland suffered substantial damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure during flooding and severe weather in December 2015 and January 2016 – leaving it with a repair bill of more than £24 million. Firefighters, local services teams and other staff worked tirelessly to support communities affected, in particular Corbridge, to keep them safe during the worst floods in the Tyne Valley since 1771. Almost 200 homes were flooded across the county and in Corbridge more than 50 homes were evacuated as the swollen River Tyne burst its banks. Staff also worked hard as part of the clean-up operation afterwards. In March 2016 confirmed it would provide £14.6 million from the Department of Transport towards these repair costs. The allocation will allow the council to progress work on a number of vital schemes in the county, including repairs to Ovingham Bridge, landslips at Bywell and Widehaugh and works in Corbridge. 23 small and medium sized businesses with up to 250 full time equivalent employees successfully applied for flood recovery grants and so far 102 householders and businesses that were flooded in December 2015 applied for a property level resilience grant of up to £5,000. In addition to the larger projects planned, a programme of minor works has also been produced - with £4m scheduled to be spent on over 57

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works across the county to roads, bridges, fords and drainage systems, and £300,000 repairing the numerous footpaths, bridleways and footbridges impacted by the high winds and heavy rain.

- The council also received £1.1m funding towards pothole repair costs. Before the storms in early December, the county's pothole backlog had been eradicated – but a combination of heavy rains followed by sub-zero temperatures have led to further problems. In January 2016 figures showed almost all the potholes reported to the over the previous two years had been repaired. Between November 2013 and November 2015 a total of 12,500 potholes were reported to the council and of these 12,472 were repaired – which equates to 99.775%. During the same time a further 50,605 potholes were identified and repaired during routine inspections by the council. A massive £1m repair (March 2016) programme is getting underway to repair the county's roads damaged by the winter weather in 2015/16. Jetpatchers can each repair around 145 potholes a day, at an average cost of less than £10 a hole. Meanwhile "hotbox teams", a more traditional method of repairing potholes, will be repairing a further 60 holes a day at a cost of around £12 a hole. Extra staff have been drafted in to repair highway drainage systems which have affected by the prolonged periods of heavy rainfall and flooding including clearing debris from gutters, re-cutting verges and digging out ditches. In addition, the council will be carrying out patching works ahead of the annual road surface dressing programme, to repair the extra damage caused by the extreme weather.
- Between 2013 and 2017 £75.3m is being invested in the county's infrastructure through the Local Transport Plan programme. This included the B6344 road at Crag End, near Rothbury, which had been closed completely after a land slip and was re-opened in March 2016 after nearly three-and-a-half years and £10million spent on repairs. The physical construction work involved driving hundreds of concrete filled steel tubes up to 80 feet into the ground, with a large concrete beam across the top and 144 ground anchors connected around 100 feet into the ground to stop the land from moving. A length of approximately 400 metres of road has also been fully rebuilt. The project won an Institute of Civil Engineering (ICE) North East Award.
- Working with partners across the county we are investigating the feasibility of reopening a train station at Gilsland; providing a gateway to Hadrian's Wall.
- Hirst Park in Ashington is being restored to its former glory following development funding of £139,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund, and £12,400 from Northumberland County Council and Ashington Town Council.

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- Bolam Lake near Morpeth is celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2016 with help from a £55,000 grant was awarded to the Council by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Butokokan Judo Club which teaches the art of Judo to students aged five onwards from Newbiggin Sports Centre and Ashington have new sports mats after being awarded a grant of £3,167 from the Council's Community Chest Scheme to purchase new equipment for their club. The Council has given £1.78m in grants since 2013 to support xx voluntary and community groups and organisations through its Community Chest Scheme.
- £4m has been invested by ward councillors in schemes in their wards and local areas over the last four years.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

Our aim is to ensure all residents feel genuinely safe, belong and have a say in how the county is run. We aim to provide a range of quality community and cultural services, and facilities to inspire creativity and participation.

- Woodhorn Museum (through an annual investment of £1 million from the Council) was the first - and is one of only three - venues to host the iconic 'Weeping Window' - the installation attracted over 125,000 visitors to Woodhorn during the seven week period in autumn 2015.
- Visits to Northumberland funded museums have increased by 30% in the previous year.
- Three of Northumberland's most popular tourist spots have scooped top honours at 2016s BBC Countryfile Magazine awards. Northumberland National Park won the National Park of the Year award; Hadrian's Wall scooped the Heritage Site of the Year; with Bamburgh Castle taking the title of Landmark of the Year.
- In February 2016 the council approved major plans for the redevelopment of Hexham House, a grade 2 listed building with dramatic views over Hexham Abbey. The £1.5m scheme will involve the creation of a new Register Office and two wedding ceremony venues with seven luxury holiday apartments in the remainder of the building.
- In February 2016 a new scheme to celebrate and promote food and drink produced entirely in Northumberland was launched. 'Produced in Northumberland' is a joint initiative between Northumberland County Council, Active Northumberland and Northumberland Tourism, which recognises producers and businesses that use and promote food and drink made in the county. The verification scheme aims to raise the profile, value and public confidence in Northumberland food and drink. The economic impact of food tourism in the county is worth nearly £276m a year and it's hoped the scheme will help to add value to the visitors' overall experience as food and drink is such an important and memorable part of their visit.
- For the seventh year running residents benefited from free or discounted entry to top attractions in Northumberland during a weekend in March as part of the Residents' Festival organised by Active Northumberland and the Council.
- Northumberland County Council in partnership with Northumberland National Park Authority secured a four year funding deal for a busy Northumberland bus route which should bring legions of tourists to Hadrian's Wall. The AD122

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bus service which runs along the most spectacular stretch of the World Heritage Site from Hexham to Haltwhistle during Northumberland's peak tourist season (Easter-September) is used by both residents and tourists allowing them to visit stops along Hadrian's Wall. In 2015 there were around 5,000 more journeys on this bus service than the previous year.

- Berwick is to get a new town centre coach park at Chapel Street to support tourism and boost the economy of the town.
- Following a £400,000 investment from the government, the Hadrian's Wall Connect Project is set to boost tourism numbers in 2016 through a range of improvements to make it easier for visitors to access the unique World Heritage Site. The grant led by VisitEngland has helped to secure the popular Go North East AD122 bus service for a further four years and will also see the introduction of 'Hadrian's Wall Welcome Hubs' at key visitor locations including Carlisle, Haltwhistle and Hexham railway stations.
- A popular coastal footpath, known locally as Lover's Walk and part of the Coast path and St Oswald's Way trail, has been reopened in Alnmouth following repairs by Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Estates.
- In 2015 Northumberland Live was launched, a free music festival which took place in Blyth. Due to its success events took place in 2016 in Blyth and for the first time in Bedlington; attracting 12,000 and 6,500 people respectively.
- We are keeping our communities safer through our £7 million investment in two new fire stations at Hexham and Alnwick and have improved our emergency response equipment with a new £200,000 incident command and control vehicle and a new special rescue vehicle. Hexham fire station is due to open in December 2016 whilst Alnwick, combined with a new depot is set to open in Spring 2017.
- Staff from our adult social care direct payments team are offering a range of support to people who prefer to employ their own care and support workers. The service makes it easier to manage the technicalities of being an employer – making it less intimidating to handle issues such as tax, insurance, criminal record checks (Disclosure and Barring Service, or DBS checks) and immigration status. For those who wish to use it, employment can give more personalised control over who provides support and care, and how it is provided. It is available both to people who qualify for public support - through cash Direct Payment or Personal Health Budget - and those who fund support themselves.
- Our annual 'LOVE Northumberland' awards – now in their seventh year - celebrate the very best in community and voluntary environmental work

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across the county making the county the great place it is; preserving and improving the environment in the county, celebrating community spirit and promoting county pride.

- More than 50 local residents have been honoured as local heroes for the contribution they've made to their community in the Northumberland Local Heroes Awards launched in 2012. The awards highlight how much good work is done by local people for the benefit of neighbours and their local area.
- Our adult social care support planner service is working in conjunction with Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group to encourage GPs to refer adult patients who are lonely and isolated to our support planner service. The initiative supports the national Social Prescribing agenda which aims to improve health and wellbeing by helping people access local community activities and support.
- The national organisers of the Tour of Britain hailed the Northumberland stages of the race in September 2015 as a major success showing that the direct economic impact of hosting the event was £2.13m. The county was showcased across 129 countries during the two-day event with 115,000 spectators, of which 21% of spectators came from outside the North East region and 23% stayed overnight. The North Sea Tall Ships Regatta is estimated to have generated £8m in economic benefits to the county.
- The 2015 Kielder Marathon, sponsored by the Council and Active Northumberland, saw an increase of 43% participation over the Marathon weekend compared to the previous year. 52% of participants came from the local area with 79% of participants booking overnight accommodation.
- Over £1 million has been invested in improving and developing our parks over the last three years with the regeneration of two parks in Berwick and the development of a new water play area in Amble. Investment of up to a further £2 million is planned over the next three years to undertake enhancement projects in the parks in Hexham, Ashington, Bedlington, Cramlington, Blyth and Morpeth.
- Developments will take place at a number of existing sports pavilions as well as the development of a new community pavilion at Gallagher Park, Bedlington which will create community and changing facilities. £137,000 towards this development was secured from Sport England.
- Investments continue to be made to ensure we can provide top quality outdoor playing pitches in the county. Over the last year we have invested over £330,000 in the refurbishment of all-weather pitches at Prudhoe and Hirst Welfare, Ashington, as well as securing an additional £483,000 from the Football Foundation for the development of a new artificial turf pitch at Bedlington High School.

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- In 2014, 9.3 million people visited Northumberland, a rise from 8.8 million in 2013.
- The overall economic impact of tourism in Northumberland increased by 2.3% in 2014 to £765 million, up from £747 million in 2013.
- Residents in Northumberland are benefitting from a new scheme which will see free central heating fitted to a number of homes without, or with only partial, central heating. NCC successfully bid for a £6.5m Government grant on behalf of other local authorities in the region to tackle fuel poverty. Twenty projects nationwide were awarded funding, totalling £25 million as part of the Central Heating Fund scheme which will improve the energy efficiency of more than 7,000 households across England.
- We continue to invest significant resources in helping schools to improve despite central government's move to take this responsibility away from local authorities.
- We act as champions for children and parents and challenge schools and academies to provide the very best. We have two very significant issues of challenge; firstly the number of pupils in secondary schools that are not good enough and secondly the progress made by our most disadvantaged young people. An impressive 98% of parents got their first preference in 2016 for a secondary school place, an increase of two percent over last year's 96% figure and one of the highest in the country. The council processed 4,957 applications for places at middle and high schools across the county.
- Our first and primary schools continue to perform well, with 87% judged to be good or outstanding. However, many are severely challenged by the lack of central funding. We are determined to support schools and groups of schools to do better.
- Apprenticeships, traineeships and study programmes provided through our Learning and Skills team are rated 'Good' by Ofsted. We are keen to develop the skills agenda in partnership with colleges and other local authorities.
- Since it was introduced in 2012 some 800 young people from across the county have taken part in the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme, which is designed to equip school leavers between the ages of 16 and 17 with skills in community leadership and organisation.
- Whilst many councils have completely stopped supporting Post-16 school's travel investment we continue to invest £1.4 million, recognising the rural nature of the county.

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- An exciting new combined education and leisure facility is being developed for Ponteland. The council is investing £57 million of capital in new buildings for a Ponteland Secondary School and Ponteland Primary School on a shared site, with leisure facilities. The investment will allow state of the art facilities to be developed and new buildings constructed for a Ponteland Secondary School and Ponteland Primary School on a shared site, along with the community leisure facilities. New school buildings will also be developed for Darras Hall First School to support it in becoming a primary school on its existing site.
- We have worked with over 70 schools across the county to promote sustainable and healthy travel to over 15,000 pupils encouraging more walking, cycling and scooting to school.
- The Council is contributing more than £4 million to new high schools being built in Alnwick, Bedlington and Prudhoe. This means from September 2016 more than 2,800 pupils will have a better environment in which to learn as well as the communities having new and improved leisure facilities to use in the evenings and weekends. More than £3.3 million has been invested in maintaining schools across the county and £5.02 million is being invested in an extension to Ashington High School.
- £14.9 million is being invested in improving and extending ten schools in Alnwick following a reorganisation of schools in the Alnwick Partnership, as well as building a new high school in the town.
- We are focussing on developing our provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities in partnership with local special schools and the Department for Education.
- We continue to work with the regional schools commissioner to ensure new academy sponsors are well matched to meet the needs of schools in Northumberland who they wish to sponsor.
- The variation in GCSE results across secondary schools and academies is far too wide and we are determined to continue to challenge schools and academies to do better.
- Our Northumberland School meals team was shortlisted in the north east catering awards, North East LACA Awards Excellence 2016 for the Catering Management team of the year for the improvements it has made to the school meals provision. Stamfordham First school was also shortlisted for the Primary School Catering team of the year for its high level of initiative, creativity and passion and for the extra steps it has taken to engage the children and the wider community.

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- Working on behalf of the North East Combined Authority we have secured £3.3 million to support unemployed jobseekers with mental health conditions into paid employment.
- The Council, working in partnership with Northumberland Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations has been successful in attracting £3 million from the national Building Better Opportunities programme to support residents who have multiple and complex needs into work. This will be delivered by a partnership of six Northumberland VCS organisations who will provide a flexible range of peer support and mentoring across the County.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our aim is to ensure everyone has the opportunity to lead healthy, independent lives for as long as possible and to safeguard our most vulnerable residents.

- We are spending £51.6 million a year on commissioned and in-house services to enable people to live independently; examples include £4.5 million on our short term support service which enables people to recover their independence after a major health crisis or accident and direct payments totalling £6.3 million enabling 758 people to take full control of their own support arrangements.
- We also work hard with partners to protect public health and promote the health and wellbeing of people in Northumberland. Investment has continued in a range of public health services including sexual health and contraception services, 0-19 years public health services, exercise referral, drug and alcohol services and stop smoking schemes. Northumberland residents can now access free home sampling kits which enable them to get tested for HIV.
- As the Annual Report of the Council's Director of Public Health says, Northumberland residents are in good health overall - and getting healthier. The 2015 report (published in 2016) identified a number of key achievements over the last 12 months and sets out a new approach to meeting the challenges that lie ahead. The report finds a population with high levels of happiness and low levels of anxiety. Northumberland residents can expect to live on average 63 years in good health (more than 75% of their lives) but this varies across the county and there is work still to be done to narrow the gap where health inequalities exist. It also sets out a new strategy for making Northumberland a healthier place to live, which stresses the importance of involving communities in identifying and building on activities which improve their health and wellbeing. The Better Health at Work programme is growing, with eight new businesses achieving the Bronze standard, with an additional reach of 1,265 employees.
- We have also seen several other marked improvements in public health over recent years, including: an increase in the proportion of adults who do not smoke from 81.9% in 2012 to 83.4% in 2015; a increase in the proportion of pregnant women who do not smoke by the time of delivery from 80.6% in 2012/13 to 85% in 2015/16; and a dramatic decrease in the numbers of teenage pregnancies from 239 in 2007 to 121 in 2014. The Council will continue to work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Northumberland.

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- We have comprehensively updated our arrangements for adult social care to meet the enhanced expectations of new national legislation (the Care Act). We have developed a coordinated approach to “early intervention”, to ensure that people get immediate help to recover after an illness or accident, and that people who currently have low-level needs, or who are currently able to meet their needs without our help, can get comprehensive advice and information about support in the community which can help to prevent their needs from becoming more serious. Where people need long-term support from us, we have introduced a new approach to assessing their needs and planning their care and support, aiming to make sure that they are fully involved in the process, and have access to the same information as the professionals working with them.
- We have risen to the challenge of new legal requirements introduced by the Supreme Court for the protection of the human rights of people with cognitive impairments who need 24-hour supervision, and are now legally regarded as being “deprived of their liberty”. We have achieved this despite the cumbersome requirements of the existing Act of Parliament, which was not designed to meet the Supreme Court’s interpretation of human rights law, and despite the Government’s failure to give local authorities funding to cover the ongoing costs.
- In 2015, our adult social care service, with funding from Macmillan Cancer Support, appointed a team of four Macmillan social workers to support people with cancer and a range of life-limiting or long-term conditions. The social workers also provide ongoing support to family and friends. The aim is to improve the quality of life for the patient, their family and friends, by helping people get timely, joined up community support, with tailored health and social care plans which reflect the individual’s own wishes. The team also helps to arrange and coordinate hospital discharges, helping people to spend more time at home or in their preferred place of care.
- In 2016 Macmillan social worker Heather Kent won the Adult Social Worker of the Year category in the prestigious national Social Worker of the Year Awards.
- The Northumberland Carers Guide to hospital services, a collaboration between social care staff and in-patient acute services, is now available as a standard information booklet on hospital wards.
- Our Ageing Well Allies training has been developed to help anyone who works with older people, including volunteers, to become more confident in signposting people to activities, services and groups which might help them reconnect with their communities.
- We are investing £2 million in sporting facilities in Bedlington; with improved facilities at the new Bedlingtonshire Community High School and

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developments at Gallagher Park. The park will be modernised with a new pavilion and new facilities, including toilets. The new Bedlingtonshire Community High School will have new facilities and will be open to the public from September 2016. Developments include a new studio for health and fitness classes, a multi-functional 4-court sports hall for activities including badminton, basketball, netball and 5-a-side football.

- The new £21m state-of-the-art Ashington Leisure Centre opened to the public in January 2016. The flagship leisure facility in Ashington is a regional centre of excellence for sport with facilities including indoor cricket nets; a six-lane, 25-metre swimming pool, exercise studios, and a six-court sports hall with extensive floor space and equipment for gymnasts. It is also home to the library which has an extensive range of books and digital resources, a dedicated IT hub with 18 computer terminals for research, free wi-fi, and a bespoke children's library. The leisure centre has also won a number of awards, including the Tourism and Leisure category of the RICS North East 2016 Awards. The new Ashington Leisure Centre has won a prestigious RIBA North East Award at last week's 2016 Awards ceremony.
- There is further investment in improving our leisure centres across the county. State-of-the-art facilities are coming to Cramlington, Blyth, Prudhoe, Berwick and Ponteland, helping to regenerate areas, improve health and wellbeing and placed at the heart of local communities. This includes:
 - £3.1 million in Concordia Leisure Centre to provide state-of-the-art climbing facilities; including the north east's only Clip 'n Climb climbing wall. The refurbishment includes a refurbished gym, a dedicated spinning studio, a new fitness studio, a revamped café and the relocation of Cramlington Library into the centre. There is also a new ten lane tenpin bowling facility improved party rooms, dry changing with the sauna converted into a new spa. The work was completed in July 2016.
 - The Swan Centre in Berwick is to undergo a £3.5m transformation to modernise the look and feel of the centre and also address a gap in sports and leisure provision for children and young people in Berwick. A range of new facilities is now under consideration in consultation with local people and centre users and could include 10 pin bowling and a clip n' climb facility as well as an upgrade for the pool changing village and lighting.
- An exciting refurbishment is now underway to bring a state of the art gym and fitness studio to Prudhoe Waterworld.
- An immediate response service combining social and healthcare staff in Northumberland is providing multi-disciplinary support to enable people with a

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sudden illness, medical condition or change in circumstance, who are at risk of hospital admission, to remain at home safely.

- We were identified as working at “silver” level in the Local Government Association/ADASS standards for person-centred safeguarding. This covers:
 - Information packs for service users and carers explaining person centred outcomes
 - The Josephine project - using a life size, anatomically correct cloth woman to support women with learning disabilities to explore a range of health and sexual health issues with a particular focus on ensuring women with learning disabilities are able to ‘keep themselves safe’.
 - Arrangements for engaging young people in adult safeguarding processes.
- Newbiggin sports and community centre is to become a vibrant new hub for local people and a one-stop shop for many council services. As well as sports and leisure, the centre will become home to library services and a range of other council services, including the Men with Sheds project, and a key facility for local groups to use.
- A £500,000 project funded by the council will see the development of Druridge Bay Community Centre in Hadston. Proposed developments include a 2-storey extension of the community centre to provide a fitness suite on the ground floor and a new space and ring upstairs for the boxing club. The new gym will be equipped with the latest state-of-the-art fitness equipment and an instructor will be employed to provide advice and guidance on health and fitness training programmes. Phase two will the former school site and will feature fitness and play facilities.
- Morpeth Road Primary, in Blyth is creating a £45,000 BMX track for the following an investment by Active Northumberland and the Council.
- We are continuing to protect our libraries and co-locating them with other services where possible. With an annual running cost of £3.9 million our libraries attract over one million users and all our libraries now provide Wi-Fi access.
- Every year the Summer Reading Challenge encourages children to read six or more books of their choice during the holidays, with incentives and rewards up for grabs, plus a certificate and medal for every child who completes the challenge.

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- A Risk and Independence Team has been launched to offer personalised support for adults with complex support needs with a focus on finding more personalised, community-based solutions.
- Across the county one stop shops are being created to protect frontline services and to keep services local whilst making it easier for residents to access council services under one roof. To date Ashington library has moved into the leisure centre, the library and customer information centre in Cramlington have moved into the refurbished Concordia Leisure Centre and Ponteland library will be moving into the leisure centre later in 2016. At Hexham the council and Active Northumberland are working with Queen's Hall Arts to develop a cultural hub for the town which will include an integrated tourist information and library services, alongside arts provision. Library and customer services in Morpeth have a new temporary home in the recently refurbished Royal Sovereign House in Manchester Street, providing a one-stop shop for customers. In Berwick the library, registration, tourism and customer services are now housed in the newly refurbished Walkergate building in Berwick, providing a one-stop shop for customers, along with the adult learning service.
- Working with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust we have been chosen to take a national lead on transforming care for patients. Building on our already successful work to integrate health and social care in one of the most rural counties in England, the Vanguard project will deliver an integrated primary and acute care system for the county, leading the way nationally. It will further enhance the provision of local services, empowering local communities to live longer and healthier lives at home, with an increased focus on prevention.
- We introduced 'Hospital to Home' at Wansbeck and Hexham Hospitals, offering a two hour response to help people stay in the community rather than going to hospital. We really care, protect and develop our young people. Our fostering service and all our children's homes are judged by Ofsted as being good or outstanding. A social media campaign identified over 300 people who were interested in fostering or adopting.
- A combined Northumberland Carers' Guide and Wellbeing Check has been developed for use by all health and social care practitioners to help carers think about their needs and how to meet them.
- We've invested £1.5 million building three new children's homes and improving our existing Kyloe House facility.
- Our performance in placing children who are five and over is almost twice that of the national average and the number of children in care in the county continues to be low.

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- We have delivered over 83,000 concessionary travel passes, providing 2.5 million free public transport journeys to older people and other eligible residents.
- An innovative Northumberland project, the Haltwhistle Integrated Care Facility, which integrates health, housing and social care, was named Inspirational Project of the Year at the Chartered Institute of Housing's Celebrating the Region Awards, in 2015.
- The council's adoption service and children's safeguarding board were praised by government inspectors. Following an intensive four-week inspection, Ofsted have rated as "good" the council's performance around adoption, as well as the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which oversees some of the most vulnerable young people in the community.
- Northumberland County Council's Youth Offending Service (YOS) has been praised in a recent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The report, which was published on 6th July, praised the service and described work being carried out with children and young people as exceptional.
- In January 2016, fire services in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Darlington and Cleveland joined forces with NEAS to respond to patients with emergency life threatening symptoms. During the six month Emergency Medical Response trial, fire crews have attended a total of 2,904 patients across the patch as a result of 999 calls, of which 136 were in Northumberland, 395 were in Tyne and Wear, 1,811 were in Durham and Darlington and 562 were in Cleveland. The trial has been so successful it will continue up to February 2017.
- In February 2016 NCC helped support the publications of a 'Happiness Issue' magazine to help Northumberland residents aged 50-plus to beat the blues. The new edition of the 'Golden Guide', a free magazine for the over-50s, features a special 16-page supplement on happiness, taking a light-hearted look at the subject, but with a very practical message. The Guide is packed with local information on topics including leisure, health, money and care, and new listings include activities from amateur radio to orienteering, and allotments to orchestras.
- Northumberland held its first ever Ageing Well conference in February 2016; to celebrate the positive contribution older people make to their community. It featured a range of speakers and workshops, the extra smile awards, a marketplace showcasing information from organisations and charities and was open to older people and professionals who work with them.

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- During a visit to the county in March 2016 the chief executive of Public Health England, Duncan Selbie, described Northumberland County Council's approach to public health as 'exceptional'. He visited Northumberland County Council to find out more about the public health work that is going on locally and to share best practice from other areas.
- Northumberland communities are benefitting from a new and improved community transport scheme from April 2016. Northumberland County Council supported the Getabout voluntary car scheme for the last six years – a service that provides door-to-door transport for people with mobility problems or without access to public transport. To ensure the best possible service for the future, and responding to calls to help more people and expand the service more widely across Northumberland, the council awarded Adapt North East to provide the scheme.
- A new day service for people with dementia was officially opened in March 2016. Essendene Day Service which moved into the previous day centre space connected to Tynedale House, Cowpen, Blyth is open seven days a week. It is a residential and respite service which is better suited to support the dementia day service than the previous site at Foundry House, Bedlington. The building was refurbished to a high standard, with many of the facilities better than the previous site.
- In April 2016 the county council and its partners in health, tourism, and transport launched an ambitious new strategy to increase cycling and walking in Northumberland. The plan aims to embed a new sustainable travel culture in Northumberland by 2025, and encourage 90% of residents to make at least one journey a week on foot or on a bike. Currently only 13% of journeys in Northumberland under 5km are made on foot or on two wheels.

Developing our organisation

Our aim is to grow a unified council where all staff and elected members understand their role and are collectively motivated to deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible.

- Service to our residents is what matters most to us. And to make sure we're providing the best quality service we can, we've invested a lot of time and funding in improving the way we work. Our market towns initiative - looking at the Council's estate has generated almost £12million in income so far by selling buildings and land we no longer need including the Pavillion Day Care Centre in Bedlington, Thornbrae in Alnwick, Cramlington Library, Shankhouse Fire Station, The Old Post Office in Alnwick and Blyth Fire Station.
- Our new website was launched in 2015 and has made it easier for residents to find information. It also reduces calls to our contact centre, enabling transactions to be completed online 24/7. A new system was launched in 2016 whereby residents, businesses and landlords can now have a free 'My Northumberland Account' which is an interactive and secure online customer portal to deal with their council tax, housing benefits, and business rates online. Every year the council deals with more than 200,000 telephone and face to face interactions and has print and postage costs in excess of £300,000. But the move to an online system could save the council as much as £1m over three years.
- 1,400 county council and school staff benefitted from an early introduction of the Living Wage; the Northumberland Living Wage was introduced in October 2015, recognises the excellent work of our staff.
- In 2016 we invested more in our occupational health service to ensure our staff are able to provide the best possible services for the people of Northumberland.
- Mobile technology is helping frontline care staff to provide a more flexible and efficient service. An investment of £300,000 has led to tablet computers being issued to more than 350 staff, including social workers and occupational therapists, in place of desktop computers. During visits, staff can record discussions and outcomes directly onto the device with information being uploaded and patient/service users' records updated more quickly to the central social care information systems for other professionals to access. This enables staff to work in a more flexible way, spending more time with patients and service users and less time in the office. The tablets enable staff to work from any social care office across the county, reducing travelling and duplication of data recording.

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- The roll out of Northumbria Wi-Fi in council buildings has allowed adult social care staff to use their tablets at a range of council premises across the county, in the same way as if they were connected at their own office base.
- Social care staff were the first to benefit from an on-line training 'webinar'. This innovation links staff to on-line face-to-face training from their desk, laptop or mobile device. Sessions offer the efficiencies of digital learning, whilst ensuring the group interaction of a live event.
- We were recognised again as one of the top 100 employers in Britain in Stonewall's 2016 Workplace Equality Index, coming third in the Local Government category.
- National recognition for good practice: four social workers have been shortlisted for the National Social Worker of the Year Awards in recognition of their outstanding work.
- The Hospital to Home service, a joint programme with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, has been shortlisted for a Health Service Journal award in the Improved Partnerships between Health and Local Government
- Figures from the latest Adult Social Care Survey 2015/16 show 94.6% of people who responded in Northumberland said the care and support they received helped them to feel safe and secure. This was the highest score in the north east and an increase of 2.3% from last year. In Northumberland 95.1% of people who responded said the care and support they received helped to improve their quality of life. For all indicators we were above the north east and national averages. The Adult Social Care Survey (ASCS) is an annual national survey overseen by NHS Digital.
- We have reduced the cost of residents calling us by changing our main number to 0345 600 6400.
- We have invested £13.6 million in the renewal of vehicles and plant used in the delivery of key frontline services.
- Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has signed up to a new initiative aimed at helping emergency services staff cope with mental health issues.
- Tyneside and Northumberland Mind have launched the Blue Light Network to support emergency service workers in the North East and are enlisting the help of 'Blue Light Champions' from the emergency services to help deliver mental health support to their colleagues.
- In 2016 we launched a new staff awards to recognise the excellent contribution they make to provide the best service for residents and the

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partnership work of Northumberland County Council's Health and Wellbeing team, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Northumbria Police and Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service was recognised in the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust 'Building a Caring Future Award' in 2016. -

- More than 3,500 secondary pupils at 32 schools across the county took part in a health survey run by the council. Students were given 87 questions to answer anonymously on five themes, covering a range of topics such as drugs and alcohol, diet and exercise, internet safety, and economic wellbeing. Key findings include 71% said they were happy, 97% of children had never taken drugs (including legal highs); 63% of students felt encouraged to 'make positive decisions' at school; 61% felt their school was preparing them well for adult life, and 80% felt their work was marked in a way that made it clear where improvements could be made. The results will be used to identify future improvements to services and focus increasingly limited resources where they will make the biggest difference to the lives of young people across Northumberland.
- In May 2016 Northumberland County Council was been awarded £25,000 from the Local Government Association for a digital project that will transform the way public health services are delivered in the county. It is for a cloud-based health portal, an online platform which allows health professionals to securely access patient data in real time and share resources from any computer or device. The money is part of a national transformation programme involving work with troubled families, health and social care integration, and welfare reform.
- In January 2016 the council published a five year plan aimed at further reducing the number of homeless people living in Northumberland.
- Plans for a smaller, more cost-effective County headquarters were granted planning permission in April 2016 and is due to be ready for staff to move in in January 2019. The new council headquarters in Ashington is an 'invest to save' capital scheme which will save the authority £630,000 a year and almost £16m over the next 25 years – compared to staying at its current site. It will also enable more council staff to work from towns across the county, improving services for residents while bringing dozens of services back into towns. The overall development, which will use 30% less carbon than a traditional office, will include:
 - Office space for 910 work stations
 - A customer service centre next to the main entrance
 - Conference facilities
 - Publicly accessible meeting rooms
 - A cafe and rest room that can accommodate public access.

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The new building will form part of the wider Portland Park development in the town. An audit found the economic benefits of the scheme to the north east could be high as £93 million.

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The council:

Inspects and maintains over 5,000kms of road, 2,000km of footways and around 4,200 structures including 1,174 bridges, 935 culverts and 1698 retaining walls.

Manages 48,000 street lights

Manages 127 car parks with almost 8200 parking spaces and 2450 on street parking spaces

Delivers cycle training to over 2,000 children a year

Cuts 8.5m m2 of grass

Cleans 82,000 drains, sweep 12,500 miles of road and empties 7,500 litter bins a year.

Sweeps up around 377 tonnes of litter and rubbish and clear

Empties over 7.5 million household waste and recycling bins

Looks after 3,000 miles of public rights of way including 637 foot bridges

Maintains 21 urban and 8 country parks and managed 13 miles of the county's coastline

Maintains 44 playing fields

Operates 20 cemeteries and 1 crematorium

Runs 9 markets

Maintains over 660 vehicles and 500 items of plant ranging from refuse collection vehicles and gritters through to lawn mower and strimmer.

Collects £165 million from 150,000 council tax properties

Collects £65 million from 12,500 businesses

Receives 32,000 calls into the contact centre

Assists 187,000 customers in the customer information centres