

POLICY DIGEST, February 2015

This digest presents a summary of the latest policy developments at a national and regional level of strategic relevance to Northumberland and highlights Government announcements of relevance to local government. This issue covers period from Monday 2 February and Friday 27 February. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
<p>Upper-tier councils secure £74m for welfare and social care</p> <p>Councils have been awarded an extra £74m for social care and local welfare, as the government confirms local government funding for 2015/16. In a written statement to the House of Commons, local government minister Kris Hopkins said: "We are providing a further £74m to upper-tier authorities to recognise that councils have asked for additional support, including to help them respond to local welfare needs and to improve social care provision." However, the sector said the funding would be unlikely to cover the rising cost of social care faced by councils.</p> <p>http://www.localgov.co.uk/Upper-tier-councils-secure-74m-for-welfare-and-social-care/38066</p>	For information	
<p>100 councils set to freeze Council Tax as authorities sit on £30 billion (10 February 2015)</p> <p>Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles has welcomed the news that over 100 local authorities are set to freeze or lower their Council Tax this year. New figures showed that 114 town halls and police authorities will take up the offer of the government's freeze grant, with 8 set to reduce bills for taxpayers. And the news came as a government analysis showed councils' have at least a further £30 billion available to them in reserves and uncollected income.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/100-councils-set-to-freeze-council-tax-as-authorities-sit-on-30-billion</p>	For information	Steven Mason, Lead Executive Director
<p>Local digital today 2014</p> <p>Local Government Minister Kris Hopkins has called on councils to learn from town hall trailblazers who have got to grips with the digital age and are making multimillion-pound savings by putting services online. The minister was speaking as a new report highlighted how £500 million could be saved every year if all councils embraced these savings on offer through better services. The research suggests more than £5 billion could be saved over the course of the next decade. The report reveals the majority of councils have now started updating services for their tech-savvy 21st-century citizens and this is saving millions for town halls to invest back into local services.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/town-hall-trailblazers-could-save-5-billion-in-a-digital-decade</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Head of Corporate Services

<p>Restoring Britain’s City States: Devolution, public service reform and local economic growth</p> <p>This report sets out the shared ambition of ResPublica and the Core Cities Group – Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield – for the fullest possible devolution of public spending and tax raising powers to the UK’s largest cities and city regions. It argues for a rebalancing of the relationship between central government and cities, as the only real solution for addressing the interconnected challenges of local economic growth, public service reform and better governance. The report argues that cities will need far greater control over public resources to shape local economies and design integrated place-based services that meet local needs and achieve local outcomes, and that UK cities must enjoy equivalent levels of self-governance to other international cities and municipalities if they are to compete and prosper. The report offers a roadmap for city based devolution, and eight recommendations to ensure that the current momentum in the devolution debate is not lost, demanding action which starts before the 2015 General Election.</p> <p>http://www.respublica.org.uk/our-work/publications/restoring-britains-city-states-devolution-public-service-reform-local-economic-growth/</p>	For information	
<p>Local authorities receive additional £20 million for voter registration (24 February 2015)</p> <p>Under Individual Electoral Registration (IER), people are now required to register to vote individually, in a move that is increasing the accuracy of the register and giving people more control and ownership over the process. Minister for the Constitution, Sam Gyimah, has announced that the Government is providing an additional £20 million to local authorities in 2015 to 2016. This latest round of funding is part of the programme’s multi-year plan for funding the transition and will ensure that local councils have the necessary funds to continue IER’s successful delivery without having to dip into their existing council budgets.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-authorities-receive-additional-20-million-for-voter-registration</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
<p>Local Government – Time for Reinvention</p> <p>The future of local government needs a radical rethink early in the new Parliament – to define what councils are for, what functions best suit them, and what should be undertaken by others. This report, draws on the insights, specialist knowledge and advice of a large number of the leading management consultants who work with local government clients, puts forward 17 recommendations covering areas such as Getting Localism Right, Digitisation, Demand Management, and Leadership.</p> <p>http://www.mca.org.uk/reports/reports-data/local-government-time-for-reinvention</p>	For information	

<p>The Five-Year Forward View into action: NHS England and Greater Manchester announce shared plan for £6billion health and social care funding (27 February 2015)</p> <p>Greater Manchester and NHS England have announced groundbreaking plans around the future of health and social care with a signed memorandum agreeing to bring together health and social care budgets – a combined sum of £6bn. This trailblazing move sees NHS England, 12 NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, 15 NHS providers and 10 local authorities agree a framework for health and social care – with plans for joint decision-making on integrated care to support physical, mental and social wellbeing.</p> <p>The Memorandum of Understanding, approved and countersigned by the Chancellor and the Health Secretary, puts local people in the driving seat for deciding on health and care services that suit Greater Manchester. It will also help in the long-term to ease pressure on hospitals – while focusing on services in community that bring health and social care closer to home. Integrated care in Greater Manchester will focus more on preventative work in the community – putting strategies in place to keep people well and as independent as possible. For example, people with long-term conditions like asthma or heart conditions will be treated by specialists in the community as much as possible – only going to hospital when necessary. NHS England has agreed all plans with the Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), NHS providers and local councils to cement a place-based approach to join up health and social care. This approach helps to realise the vision set out in the NHS’s Five Year Forward View.</p> <p>This historic agreement does not require any reorganisation of the NHS or its principles. It also builds on the work of Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the innovative devolution settlement with Government on November 3 (2014) – and is a significant step closer to the area’s ambition of full devolution of public spending. The scope of the Memorandum of Understanding includes the entire health and social care system in Greater Manchester, including adult, primary and social care, mental health and community services and public health. The second part of the agreement provides a framework for strategies around governance and regulation, resources and finances, the property estate, health education, workforce and information sharing and systems being brought together. The memorandum is an outline agreement and more details will follow in due course. From now, Greater Manchester will start making its own decisions and a roadmap will come into effect from April 1. This roadmap will provide the foundations for joined up business and investment proposals until full devolution is in place by April 2016.</p> <p>http://www.agma.gov.uk/gmca/gmca-devolution-agreement1/caring-for-gm-together/index.html</p>	For information	
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PLACE SHAPING		
<p>UK to lead development of driverless car technology (11 February 2015)</p> <p>A major review has confirmed the UK is uniquely positioned to develop driverless car technology. Up to now, the scope for testing driverless cars has been limited, but the industry has now been given the green light for testing on public roads. The UK’s regulatory environment now sets it apart as a premium location for developing new technology, with tremendous potential for reducing accidents and making traffic flow more smoothly.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-lead-development-of-driverless-car-technology</p>	For information	David Laux, Head of Technical Services

<p>£22 million funding to boost neighbourhood planning (26 February 2015)</p> <p>Housing and Planning Minister Brandon Lewis has announced a multi-million pound boost to support communities looking to set up neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood planning allows people to decide the future development of their area, including where new homes and businesses should be built. Nearly 1,400 areas representing 6 million people across England are already using their neighbourhood planning powers, with others looking to follow suit. Neighbourhood planning groups will now be able to apply for grant funding as part of the £22.5 million programme. Grants can be used to pay for events to engage the local community, print leaflets and to pay for specialist planning expertise. The support programme runs to 2018 and from April it will also provide community groups with technical assistance and expert advice to support new neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders, throughout the process.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/22-million-funding-to-boost-neighbourhood-planning</p>	For information	Karen Ledger, Head of Planning and Housing Services
<p>Future of Northern and TransPennine Express rail franchises</p> <p>This ‘Stakeholder briefing document’ for the Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE) rail franchise competitions summarises consultation responses received and features the government’s final response. The document provides a description of what has been included in the new invitations to tender (ITTs) for the Northern and TPE franchise competitions. It also sets out what this might mean for stakeholders when the new franchises begin in April 2016.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-northern-and-transpennine-express-rail-franchises</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>£17.5 million for skills in Leeds City Region (5 February 2015)</p> <p>The government has announced £17.5 million for businesses to improve skills in the Leeds City Region. The Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) secured this funding from the government’s Employer Ownership of Skills Pilot (EOP). The funding will be awarded to small and medium-sized businesses in the Leeds City Region to invest in the skills of their workforces, enabling them to develop and grow their business. This is supported by more than £20 million in employer contributions.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/175-million-for-skills-in-leeds-city-region</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
<p>Free wi-fi to help rail commuters stay connected (11 February 2015)</p> <p>Rail passengers will benefit from free wi-fi on trains across England and Wales from 2017, Rail Minister Claire Perry has announced today. Train operators are being asked to set how they will meet the commitment to provide this important service for passengers. All train operators bidding for new franchises and direct award agreements will have to include this specification in their bid. Where there is no new franchise agreement due in the next 2 years, almost £50 million of funding will be released from the Department for Transport to ensure wi-fi is available on selected services from 2017.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-wi-fi-to-help-rail-commuters-stay-connected</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing

<p>Women entrepreneurs are untapped talent says report (16 February 2015)</p> <p>Women entrepreneurs could play a bigger role in the UK economy, creating jobs and boosting growth as well as reducing gender inequality. Women entrepreneurs could play a bigger role in the UK economy, creating jobs and boosting growth as well as reducing gender inequality, according to the findings of an independent report. The report found that although the number of female-run small and medium-sized businesses has increased, there is still more to be done to close the gender gap between men and women. The government will be writing to the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships to remind them of the importance of representing the communities they operate in, with more diverse boards and supporting all businesses in their area.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/women-entrepreneurs-are-untapped-talent-says-report</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
<p>Long term economic plan for the North East announced by Chancellor (27 February 2015)</p> <p>The Chancellor has set out his six point long term economic plan for the North East showing what has been delivered, what is underway and what more can be done to build a Northern Powerhouse that enables the region to reach its potential as a driving force in the UK. The plan aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise the long term growth rate of the North East to at least the forecast long term growth rate of the whole UK by building a Northern Powerhouse – adding an extra £6 billion to the North East economy in real terms by 2030, equivalent to over £2,000 per person • create 50,000 new jobs in the North East by backing the core strengths of the local economy like chemical innovation and exports • deliver £4.5 billion investment in transport in the North East, the largest in a generation, including £2.7 billion for the Intercity Express Programme, developing plans for 140mph trains from Newcastle to York, improved services and new trains on northern rail routes, and £1 billion for roads in the North East, enabling transformational upgrades to the A1. This also includes a new review into support for regional airports like Newcastle and Durham Tees Valley that could be affected by Air Passenger Duty devolution • build on the North East’s strengths in science, chemicals, manufacturing and exports, by increasing government support for inward investment and trade, backing the chemicals industry through new proposals from the Centre for Process Innovation, extending the successful Tees Valley Energy Enterprise Zone and establishing a new health science UTC in Newcastle promoting science and IT skills • boost tourism and the rural economy in the North East to attract an additional 150,000 overseas visitors each year with new investment for the iconic Lindisfarne Castle, Hadrian’s Wall and the Captain Cook Museum • devolve greater powers to the great cities and counties of the North East - by continuing work with the North East combined authority on devolution proposals and agreeing in principle to a skills devolution with the Tees Valley combined authority once it has been formed <p>There are no quick fixes to achieving these important goals, so the Chancellor is also setting out a specific timetable to deliver the key concepts of this plan over the five years of the next parliament, and the following decade. As important next steps in the plan to build a Northern Powerhouse, the Chancellor announced a number of new measures to improve transport, back the chemicals industry, science and innovation, and improve quality of life in the North East.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/long-term-economic-plan-for-the-north-east-announced-by-chancellor</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing

<p>Report on small firms 2010 to 2015 by Lord Young</p> <p>A new report on small firms from the Prime Minister's Enterprise Advisor Lord Young reviews the changing face of business over the past 5 years. The report shows that small businesses are entering a 'golden age', with a record number of small firms now established in the UK – some 5.2 million, an increase of 760,000 since 2010 – and a record number of people in work. It finds that our changing relationship with the internet has brought down barriers that might previously have stopped a good idea from being turned into a viable business. The government's drive to roll out super-fast broadband around the country, which has now reached over 2 million homes and businesses, and the increasing use of tablets and smartphones providing on-the-go internet access have made it easier for those working for themselves to reach customers and make sales. The report also charts a change in culture, with growing numbers of people choosing to be their own boss not simply out of commercial necessity, but because of conviction in their own ideas. It also outlines how government policies providing more support for small firms and new enterprises have helped transform the business landscape over the past 5 years.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-and-accessible-technology-key-to-golden-age-for-small-business</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
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HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>Prime Minister's challenge on dementia 2020</p> <p>This document sets out what this government wants to see in place by 2020 in order for England to be: the best country in the world for dementia care and support and for people with dementia, their carers and families to live; and the best place in the world to undertake research into dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases. It also highlights the progress to date on improving dementia care, support and research.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prime-ministers-challenge-on-dementia-2020</p>	For information	Jane Bowie, Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning

STRONGER COMMUNITIES		
<p>The Local Double Dividend</p> <p>This CLES research report argues the flawed economic thinking and a Treasury economic model that has left so many parts of the UK lagging behind may simply be replicated at a local level following devolution unless we change tack. Supported by Carnegie UK Trust and the Smith Institute, the report examines the barriers to local economic development, the root causes of poverty and uneven economic performance and the limitations of current debate around devolution. The report argues a 'Double Dividend' approach is required in which both economic and social success is seen as intrinsic to local prosperity. Social outcomes such as decent wages, and enduring social institutions, are key to an area's sustainable economic success but are too often seen as a barrier to growth.</p> <p>http://www.cles.org.uk/publications/the-local-double-dividend/</p>		

<p>£6 million new funding to give communities even greater local control (17 February 2015)</p> <p>Communities Minister Stephen Williams has announced a new £6 million funding boost to the Community Rights programme. This will give even more people greater control and influence over what happens locally. This new funding will mean: likeminded communities will be able to network and learn from each other through the new My Community Network; communities will have access to tailored advice through a phone and online advice service to help them use the range of community rights and other neighbourhood approaches; 100 more neighbourhoods will be supported to use the Our Place approach, enabling councils and other public sector providers, voluntary and community groups, local businesses and the community to work together to tackle important local issues from job creation to health priorities.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/6-million-new-funding-to-give-communities-even-greater-local-control</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p>Better inspection for all: A report of the responses to the consultation</p> <p>This report summarises the responses to Ofsted’s ‘Better inspection for all’ consultation, which ran from 9 October to 5 December 2014. The Government consulted on the following proposals for changes to inspection, to be introduced in September 2015: a Common Inspection Framework for all early years settings on the Early Years Register, maintained schools and academies, non-association independent schools and further education (FE) and skills providers; short inspections (to be conducted approximately every 3 years) for maintained schools, academies and FE and skills providers that were judged good at their last full inspection; and conducting a full inspection of non-association independent schools within a three-year period.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/better-inspection-for-all</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills



Policy Digest is produced on 4 to 6 weekly cycle by the Council’s Economic and Inclusion Policy Team within the Planning, Economy and Housing Directorate
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