

POLICY DIGEST, April 2016

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 4 April to Friday 29 April. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
<p>Financial Sustainability: new essential guide</p> <p>This guide from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) outlines different approaches that can be employed to put services on a sustainable footing. These can be implemented individually, but are most powerful if they are combined. The narrative for each approach contains numerous case studies. This is intended to inspire readers with ideas as to what could be possible in their area. Basic practical guidance and assistance is given in the appendices, describing some existing structures that councils can utilise in applying these approaches. The guide ends with useful links which provide additional resources for those wishing to explore these issues further. These include LGiU briefings, reports by a range of organisations and links for the case studies in this guide. The guide also includes sections on the context, approaches taken by councils, stimulating growth, maximising revenues, partnerships, investing to save and joining up services.</p> <p>http://www.lgiu.org.uk/briefing/financial-sustainability-new-essential-guide/</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Resources
PLACE SHAPING		
<p>Regeneration of stations set to deliver thousands of new properties and jobs (10 April 2016)</p> <p>A massive programme of development of railway stations and surrounding land will deliver thousands of new homes and jobs and significantly boost local growth, the Communities Secretary has announced. A new agreement between Network Rail and the Homes and Communities Agency will see them working with local councils to trail-blaze development opportunities across England's railway stations for housing and businesses. The ambitious initiative could deliver up to 10,000 new properties on sites around stations in the coming years. Government wants to hear from at least 20 local authorities to take the scheme forward.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regeneration-of-stations-set-to-deliver-thousands-of-new-properties-and-jobs</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Interim Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery

<p>Consultations for next phase of marine planning opens (11 April 2016)</p> <p>The Marine Management Organisations (MMO) are asking for your views on the first documents to be published as part of the North East, North West, South East and South West marine plans. The MMO have launched two consultations, which focus on the draft Statement of Public Participation for each area and the draft Sustainability Appraisal scoping report. The Statement of Public Participation sets out whom, when and how the MMO will engage with stakeholders during the marine planning process. The Sustainability Appraisal provides an independent assessment of the marine plans at each stage in their development, ensuring that economic, social and environmental sustainability is at the core of the marine plans. The consultations close on 11 May 2016.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultations-for-next-phase-of-marine-planning-opens</p>	<p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation</p>	<p>Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy</p>
<p>Councils get new powers to tear down pointless road signs (17 April 2016)</p> <p>New powers to tear down pointless road signs that are an eyesore and distract drivers are to be given to councils. The number of signs on our roads, more than doubled from 2.45 million in England in 1993 to an estimated 4.57 million in 2013. Now simpler rules are being brought in to give town halls the power to take down unnecessary signs and for the first time, signs that say 'new' layout ahead will have 'remove by dates' on the back so they are not needlessly left in place for years. The Department of Transport has appointed Sir Alan Duncan MP to lead a task force that is looking at removing pointless signs – and this crackdown will pave the way for wider changes.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-get-new-powers-to-tear-down-pointless-road-signs</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Paul Jones, Acting Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery</p>
<p>ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</p>		
<p>Gunning for growth: film promotes Northern Powerhouse to the world (12 April 2016)</p> <p>The Government is promoting a new film showcasing how the North of England is ripe for investment across the world. The video highlights how the natural beauty and iconic sights of the Northern Powerhouse, combined with its skilled workforce and cutting edge, makes it the ideal investment hotspot. The government is investing £150 billion on health, £45 billion on schools and £13 billion on transport in the Northern Powerhouse over this Parliament to help build on these strengths and make it an even more appetising prospect to investors. The film is being promoted by British embassies across the world, as well as by supportive trade bodies and Northern businesses.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gunning-for-growth-film-promotes-northern-powerhouse-to-the-world</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy</p>
<p>Technology boost for UK businesses (19 April 2016)</p> <p>The EU Commission has published details on how businesses across the EU, including those in the UK, can get better access to the technologies that will help them to modernise. The innovative package includes improving access to cloud computing and services, data analytics and the Internet of Things. It will improve the way the UK does business in the research, technology and industrial sectors, and enable UK companies to compete globally. The package builds on the existing work going on in the UK, such as digital catapults and support for quantum technologies. It will also help business and research communities make the most of EU research and development in high technology areas.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/technology-boost-for-uk-businesses</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy</p>

HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>Catalyst or distraction? The evolution of devolution in the English NHS</p> <p>This Health Foundation report presents an analysis of the state of devolved health care in England and it examines the case for greater decentralisation. It concludes that it is uncertain whether decentralisation will result in improvements in health and care outcomes. It also sets out three recommendations for improving the success of any Devolution Deals involving health care: a clear national vision, process and framework; better alignment with other policy initiatives; and significant investment in leadership capacity.</p> <p>http://www.health.org.uk/publication/catalyst-or-distraction-0</p>	For information	Penny Spring, Director of Public Health
<p>Public Health England Strategic Plan (13 April 2016)</p> <p>The document sets out how Public Health England (PHE) intends to protect and improve the public's health and reduce inequalities over the next 4 years. It also outlines actions PHE will take over the next year to achieve these aims and deliver its core functions. It builds on the Department of Health's Shared Delivery Plan, the NHS 5 Year Forward View, and From Evidence into Action. It confirms the role that PHE will continue to play in the health and care system, building on evidence, prioritising prevention and supporting local government and the NHS.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-england-strategic-plan</p>	For information	Penny Spring, Director of Public Health
STRONGER COMMUNITIES		
<p>New £1.5 million funding to bring communities together (4 April 2016)</p> <p>The Near Neighbours programme - that brings together diverse communities and different faiths through a range of activities - has been awarded an additional £1.5 million of funding, Baroness Williams of Trafford has announced. Using the infrastructure of the Church of England, Near Neighbours provides small grants and support to grassroots groups to help them run projects which bring about lasting benefits to neighbourhoods with significant religious diversity. From teaching computer coding to girls in north London, setting up a pop up community café in Leeds to community gardening in Luton, the programme covers a broad range of activities across the arts, the environment and sport. Since its launch, in 2011 over 1,100 projects have been established, benefiting 1 million people in some of England's most diverse communities, including over 50% of projects offering new skills to the unemployed.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-15-million-funding-to-bring-communities-together</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p>Schools causing concern</p> <p>The Department of Education has published new statutory guidance for local authorities (LAs) covering "schools causing concern" (within the meaning of section 44 of the Education Act 2005) and schools that are "eligible for intervention" (within the meaning of Part 4 of the 2006 Education and Inspection Act), and also other maintained schools about which the LA and/or Secretary of State have serious concerns. The new guidance reflects changes under the Education and Adoption Act 2016 giving new intervention powers to the Secretary of State and extending</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills

<p>the types of maintained schools eligible for intervention to include coasting schools. The new intervention powers of the Secretary of State will be exercised by Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs), who will be expected to follow the new guidance when doing so. The guidance becomes effective on 18 April (when the provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 commence, except those on coasting schools).</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2</p>		
<p>Next steps for delivering landmark childcare offer unveiled (3 April 2016)</p> <p>Proposals to provide hard-working parents with greater choice and flexibility over their childcare as part of the government's landmark 30-hour free offer have been published. The 9-week consultation sets out plans to broaden the types of hours offered to cover 6am to 8pm and extending the minimum length of childcare sessions so as to provide greater flexibility to hard-working mothers and fathers, giving them the support they need. It follows the Childcare Act being given royal assent - with an extra £1 billion funding per year over this Parliament - and an increase to the national hourly funding rate. The consultation, which closes on 8 June, is being launched alongside a review into ways of reducing red tape within the sector, so that childcare providers have more contact time with the children they look after. Plans to fund provider expansions so they can offer more childcare places in the areas of greatest need and deliver our 30-hour offer will also get underway.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-steps-for-delivering-landmark-childcare-offer-unveiled</p>	<p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation</p>	
<p>Reception baseline comparability study published (7 April 2016)</p> <p>The Department for Education has published the results of a study that compares the 3 reception baseline assessments used by schools in the 2015 to 2016 academic year. Schools have been able to choose from 3 providers to suit their wider approach to assessment and the results were intended to be used to measure the progress schools make with their pupils from reception year to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) in 2022. The study concludes that the 3 different assessments are not sufficiently comparable to create a fair starting point from which to measure pupils' progress. As a result, the results cannot be used as the baseline for progress measures, as it would be inappropriate and unfair to schools. Key stage 1 (KS1) will continue to be used as the starting point from which to measure this year's reception pupils' progress to KS2. Schools will have the option to continue to use the baseline assessments in the 2016 to 2017 academic year, should they wish to sign up for reception baseline as part of their on-entry assessment of pupils. The outcomes from the assessments will not be used for accountability.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reception-baseline-comparability-study-published</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills</p>



Northumberland County Council

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All issues are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy