

# POLICY DIGEST, May 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 2 May to Friday 27 May. Previous and subsequent editions are available at [www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy).

| Policy Development   | Action  | Lead   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY</b>   |   |  |
| <b>Strengthening local government transparency (12 May 2016)</b><br>The Government is consulting on proposals to change the way that local authorities record details of their land and property assets, and publish information about their procurement, their contracts and the delivery of some of their services. It is also proposing to include new requirements about information on parking charges and enforcement and about the way transparency data is published and presented. Finally, it is proposing to include recommendations that local authorities publish information about their dealings with small and medium-sized enterprises. The consultation closes on 8 July.<br><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-local-government-transparency">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-local-government-transparency</a> | Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation | Alison Elsdon,<br>Director of<br>Corporate<br>Resources                        |
| <b>The Queen's Speech (18 May 2016)</b><br>The Queen has delivered her speech to Parliament setting out the Conservative Government's programme for the next Parliamentary year. A list of the Bills of relevance to local government are summarised at the end of this Digest.<br><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/queens-speech-2016">https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/queens-speech-2016</a>   | For information   |  |
| <b>PLACE SHAPING</b>   |   |  |
| <b>New penalties to crack down on fly-tipping (9 May 2016)</b><br>Anyone caught illegally dumping waste could soon face an on-the spot penalty of up to £400, the Environment Minister Rory Stewart has announced. From Monday 9 May local authorities will be given greater powers to tackle the crime by issuing penalty notices of between £150 and £400 to those caught in the act of fly-tipping anything from old fridges or sofas to garden waste or rubble.<br><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-penalties-to-crack-down-on-fly-tipping">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-penalties-to-crack-down-on-fly-tipping</a>   | For information   | Paul Jones,<br>Acting Director of<br>Local Services<br>and Housing<br>Delivery |

|  |                 |  |
|--|-----------------|--|
| <p><b>Going the extra mile: connecting businesses and rural communities</b></p> <p>This new report by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) shows that half of all small firms think the UK's roads and public transport system have deteriorated in recent years. Only one in 10 (10%) small business owners thought roads and public transport had got better - demonstrating a real need to prioritise infrastructure investment in local and rural road networks alongside big projects on the Strategic Road Network. FSB found small businesses are overwhelmingly reliant on roads, with nine in 10 firms (89%) placing high value on the network. Rural businesses are even more likely to rely on roads as they often report little or no access to public transport links like rail or buses. The report demonstrates how congestion, poorly maintained local roads, and a lack of regional strategic planning are all combining to pose a significant economic barrier to economic growth – particularly in rural areas. FSB would like to see current and future devolution deals used as an opportunity for new combined authorities to commit to greater investment in local transport infrastructure. Protecting transport spending, alongside better strategic planning, investing in the local road network and public transport will all help support UK small businesses.</p> <p><a href="http://www.fsb.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/fsb-calls-for-investment-in-neglected-rural-roads">http://www.fsb.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/fsb-calls-for-investment-in-neglected-rural-roads</a></p>   | For information | Paul Jones,<br>Acting Director of<br>Local Services<br>and Housing<br>Delivery |
| <p><b>£21 million green transport funding to support job creation and clean up air quality (24 May 2016)</b></p> <p>Councils across the country have won nearly £21 million of funding from the government to promote green forms of transport, the Government has announced. The funding is being given out for 23 sustainable travel initiatives across England that boost local economies by supporting people's ambitions - offering cheap, clean and healthy travel options to access jobs and education opportunities. The North East Combined Authority secured £2.677m of the funding to continue the Go Smarter programme which includes a significant delivery element within Northumberland.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/21m-green-transport-funding-to-support-job-creation-and-clean-up-air-quality">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/21m-green-transport-funding-to-support-job-creation-and-clean-up-air-quality</a></p>   | For information | Geoff Paul,<br>Director of<br>Planning and<br>Economy                          |
| <p><b>Government underlines its commitment to establish the National Infrastructure Commission via primary legislation (19 May 2016)</b></p> <p>Following a consultation on how the National Infrastructure Commission should be structured and run, the government has underlined its commitment to establish the commission via primary legislation. The response document also sets out that it will be mandatory for the government to respond to all recommendations from the commission. Infrastructure is crucial to help build a more balanced, healthy economy for working people, and this important new organisation will determine national infrastructure priorities and hold the government to account for their delivery. The commission, which has been operating in interim form since October 2015, has begun work on a National Infrastructure Assessment, which will set out its analysis of infrastructure needs over a 10 to 30 year horizon and set out an overarching, long-term vision. The commission is also currently undertaking studies on two infrastructure challenges: how the UK can become a world leader in 5G deployment, and how it can take early advantage of the potential benefits of 5G services; and how to unlock growth, housing and jobs in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor. The public consultation lasted for 10 weeks from 7 January 2016 to 17 March 2016.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-underlines-its-commitment-to-establish-the-national-infrastructure-commission-via-primary-legislation">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-underlines-its-commitment-to-establish-the-national-infrastructure-commission-via-primary-legislation</a></p> | For information | Geoff Paul,<br>Director of<br>Planning and<br>Economy                          |

| ECONOMIC PROSPERITY  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>New universities to deliver choice and opportunity for students (16 May 2016)</b></p> <p>More young people will have the opportunity to access a high-quality university education and secure a graduate job as part of new plans announced by the Government. The government will press ahead with proposals to make it easier for 'challenger institutions' to award their own degrees, and the plans will also give students more information about teaching standards and job prospects to help them make better informed decisions about what and where to study. The measures follow the government's steps last year to end student number controls, which has enabled record numbers of students to aspire to higher education and secure a university place. In a move that delivers on several key manifesto commitments, the plans will also ensure students get better value for money, with a new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) that will encourage universities to raise standards and focus on helping students from all backgrounds into employment or further study. The white paper, Success as a Knowledge Economy, has been published and follows a consultation launched in November 2015.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-universities-to-deliver-choice-and-opportunity-for-students">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-universities-to-deliver-choice-and-opportunity-for-students</a></p> | For information                                      |   |
| <p><b>£90 million boost for the Great British Coast (23 May 2016)</b></p> <p>Businesses and communities across the Great British Coast could be sailing towards a cash windfall, ministers have announced. Creative coastal entrepreneurs can now bid for a share of £90 million government funding available UK-wide over the next 4 years to support their plans to reel in jobs and revitalise our much-loved seaside areas. This latest cash boost for coastal communities is all part of the government's efforts to rebalance the economy and help all areas of the country thrive. Grants of between £50,000 and £4 million are available to a range of organisations including: coastal community teams; charities; councils; development agencies; local enterprise partnerships; private sector companies; social enterprises; and voluntary and community sector organisations. Bids for the latest round in England will close on 30 June 2016.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/90-million-boost-for-the-great-british-coast">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/90-million-boost-for-the-great-british-coast</a></p>   | Officers to support applications from Northumberland | Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy                      |
| HEALTH & WELLBEING   |  |   |
| <p><b>The overlooked over 75s: poverty among the 'Silent Generation' who lived through the Second World War</b></p> <p>This report from Independent Age provides an analysis of the financial circumstances of older people with a focus on those people aged 75 and over. The report looks at different groups of older people and identifies those groups at most risk of living on low incomes. It concludes that older pensioners' incomes are on average £59 a week lower than younger pensioners, and £112 a week lower than working age adults – this equates to an annual income almost £6,000 lower than a working age adult. As a result, a fifth of older people aged 75 and over are living below the poverty line – this includes a quarter of all single women aged 75 and over. The recommendations focus on urging the Government to do more to ensure that older people access all the allowances and credits they are entitled to.</p> <p><a href="https://www.independentage.org/policy-research/research-reports/overlooked-over-75s-poverty-among-silent-generation-who-lived">https://www.independentage.org/policy-research/research-reports/overlooked-over-75s-poverty-among-silent-generation-who-lived</a></p>  | For information                                      | Vanessa Bainbridge, Director of Adult and Community Care Services |

|   |                 |  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| <p><b>Discharging older patients from hospital</b></p> <p>The health and social care system's management of discharging older patients from hospital does not represent value for money, according to the National Audit Office (NAO). The spending watchdog estimates that the gross annual cost to the NHS of treating older patients in hospital who no longer need to receive acute clinical care is in the region of £820 million. This report found that, while some efforts to rectify the situation have been made, an ageing population and more older people being admitted to hospital means there needs to be a step change in performance to resolve the problem. Data on delayed transfers of care substantially under-estimate the range of delays that patient's experience. Over the past two years the official data shows there has been an increase of 270,000 (31%) in days in acute hospitals when beds have been occupied by patients who have had their discharge delayed unnecessarily, to the current figure of 1.15 million days. These figures, however, only account for delays after clinicians and other professionals deem a patient to be ready for discharge, and does not include all patients who are no longer in need of acute treatment. Based on evidence gathered by the NAO, the true figure for patients aged 65 and older who are no longer benefiting from acute care could be as high as 2.7 million days. Among the NAO's recommendations is that the Department of Health, NHS England and NHS Improvement should set out how they will break the trend of rising delays against the demographic challenge of growing numbers of older people.</p> <p><a href="https://www.nao.org.uk/report/discharging-older-patients-from-hospital/">https://www.nao.org.uk/report/discharging-older-patients-from-hospital/</a></p> <p>This evidence session of the Public Accounts Committee at which enthusiasm was expressed about the idea of Northumbria's partnership with Northumberland being replicated everywhere may also be of interest:</p> <p><a href="http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/public-accounts-committee/discharging-older-people-from-acute-hospitals/oral/34184.html">http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/public-accounts-committee/discharging-older-people-from-acute-hospitals/oral/34184.html</a></p> | For information | Vanessa Bainbridge,<br>Director of Adult and Community Care Services |
|---|-----------------|--|

|   |                 |  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| <b>STRONGER COMMUNITIES</b>   |                 |  |
| <p><b>All Together Now: Whole Systems Commissioning for Councils and the Voluntary Sector</b></p> <p>In this report from the New Local Government Network, the primary conclusion is that raising the scoring for social value in the commissioning process could have a profound effect on how local government works with its partners and on the outcomes it is able to deliver for citizens. Smaller charities tend to have closer links to communities and specialist knowledge based on their close relationships with users. However, they are in danger of being left behind with the current commissioning process as they do not have the bid-writing capabilities of larger organisations. If smaller charities cannot access council funding, the biggest consequence is on people and communities as specialist, grass roots services may cease to operate. Valuing more than just price will level the playing field for those bidding for the tender. While in the current economic climate, price will inevitably remain an essential part of the criteria for any commissioning process, elevating the weighting of social value will allow commissioners to look beyond short-term cost and to a longer-term view of value for money and quality of services for people.</p> <p><a href="http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2016/emphasising-social-value-puts-people-at-the-heart-of-local-government-commissioning/">http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2016/emphasising-social-value-puts-people-at-the-heart-of-local-government-commissioning/</a></p> | For information |  |

|   |                 |  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| <p><b>Consultation launched into distribution of Big Lottery Fund (20 May 2016)</b></p> <p>The government has launched a consultation welcoming views into how National Lottery money is distributed across England and the UK. Minister for Civil Society, Rob Wilson is seeking views from the public in a 12-week consultation to help guide the policy direction for the Big Lottery Fund. The consultation seeks opinions on the Fund's distribution of National Lottery money across England and programmes covering the whole of the UK. The consultation closes on 12 August 2016.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-launched-into-distribution-of-big-lottery-fund">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-launched-into-distribution-of-big-lottery-fund</a></p> | For information |  |
|---|-----------------|--|

| <b>COMMUNITY SAFETY</b>   |                 |                                     |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Home Secretary sets out radical fire and rescue reform programme (24 May 2016)</b></p> <p>The Home Secretary has unveiled a programme of reform for fire and rescue services that promises to be as radical and ambitious as that delivered in policing since 2010. The reform programme will focus on introducing a rigorous and independent inspection regime of fire and rescue services to replace the current peer review system; challenging services to transform the diversity of a firefighter workforce that is currently 96% white and 95% male (diversity data will be published to allow the public to gauge how representative their local service currently is); publishing comparative procurement data from every fire and rescue authority in England to show how much each pays for common items like uniform, operational kit and vehicles to encourage services to pool their purchasing power and buy collectively; and legislating to give Police and Crime Commissioners the ability to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services where a local case is made to bring greater accountability to the work of local fire and rescue services</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-sets-out-radical-fire-and-rescue-reform-programme">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-sets-out-radical-fire-and-rescue-reform-programme</a></p> | For information | Alex Bennett,<br>Chief Fire Officer |

| <b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</b>  |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|---|
| <p><b>Next steps to spread educational excellence everywhere announced (6 May 2016)</b></p> <p>The government is committed to ensuring every child has an excellent education which allows them to achieve their full potential. The reforms of the past 6 years have led to 1.4 million more children being taught in 'good' and 'outstanding' schools. Central to this improvement has been the academy programme. The academy programme puts control of running schools in the hands of teachers and school leaders - the people who know best how to run their schools. That's why the government is committed to every school becoming an academy. Since launching our proposals in the education white paper, the government has listened to feedback from MPs, teachers, school leaders and parents. It is clear from those conversations that the impact academies have in transforming young people's life chances is widely accepted and that more and more schools are keen to embrace academy status. As a result of these conversations, the government has decided, while reaffirming our continued determination to see all schools to become academies in the next 6 years, that it is not necessary to bring legislation to bring about blanket conversion of all schools to achieve this goal. The government will continue to require underperforming schools to convert to academy status where they can benefit from the support of a strong sponsor. One hundred and four directive academy orders have already been issued to underperforming schools in the last month since the new legislation came into force. The Government will also continue to support 'good' schools to convert and to take the lead in supporting other</p> | For information | Andy Johnson,<br>Director of<br>Education and<br>Skills |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>schools as part of multi-academy trusts. In the last monthly figures 227 schools put in applications to convert, the highest monthly figure since the programme began, and we expect this rate to increase. In addition, the government will bring forward legislation which will trigger conversion of all schools within a local authority in 2 specific circumstances. Firstly, where it is clear that the local authority can no longer viably support its remaining schools because a critical mass of schools in that area has converted. Under this mechanism a local authority will also be able to request the Department for Education converts all of its remaining schools. And secondly, where the local authority consistently fails to meet a minimum performance threshold across its schools, demonstrating an inability to bring about meaningful school improvement. These measures will target those schools where the need to move to academy status is most pressing. For other high-performing schools in strong local authorities the choice of whether to convert will remain the decision of the individual schools and governing bodies in question.</p> |  |  |
|--|--|--|

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-steps-to-spread-educational-excellence-everywhere-announced>

**Northumberland**

Northumberland County Council

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

**All issues are available at [www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy)**

## **The Queen's Speech – list of bill relevant to Local Government**

### *Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill*

- Neighbourhood Planning: To strengthen neighbourhood planning and give more power to local people. The new legislation should aid neighbourhood planning by making the local government duty to support groups more transparent and by improving the process for reviewing and updating plans.
- Planning Conditions: To ensure that pre-commencement planning conditions are only imposed by local planning authorities where they are absolutely necessary.
- Compulsory Purchase: To make the compulsory purchase order process clearer, fairer and faster for all those involved. Including reform of the context within which compensation is negotiated. The government would establish a clear, new statutory framework for agreeing compensation which should be based on the market value of the land.
- National Infrastructure Commission: To establish the independent National Infrastructure Commission on a statutory basis. The Commission would provide the government with expert, independent advice on infrastructure issues by setting out a clear, strategic vision on the future infrastructure that is needed to ensure the UK economy is fit for 2050.
- Land Registry: The new legislation would enable the privatisation of Land Registry, which would support the delivery of a modern, digitally-based land registration service that will benefit the Land Registry's customers, such as people buying or selling their home.

### *Bus Services Bill*

The Bill will include:

- Powers for elected mayors and local transport authorities to improve bus services.
- Mayoral combined authorities would be given London-style powers to franchise local services.
- Data about routes, fares and times would be made available across the country to app developers to give passengers better information about how to make the most of local bus services.
- Local authorities would be able to use new powers to set required standards of service with bus providers, including branding, ticketing and the frequencies of services.
- New powers to franchise services would be made available to combined authorities with directly elected Mayors to allow them to take control of their services as Transport for London does in London.
- Applications from other local authorities will be considered on a case by case basis.

### *Children and Social Work Bill*

- Looked-after children and care leavers: Standards for how local authorities should act as a 'corporate parent' to support children in care and as they move into adult life. A requirement on local authorities to consult on and publish a 'local offer' to care leavers, setting out the services they are entitled to. An extension to the right to a Personal Adviser, someone who will make sure care leavers receive the support they need as they transition into adulthood, to all who want one up to the age of 25.
- Adoption: Ensuring courts and local authorities take better account of a child's need for stability up to the age of 18 when making decisions about their future. A duty on local authorities and schools to promote educational achievement for adopted children and those in the long-term care of family members or guardians. Regulation of social workers. A specialist regulator for social work, to enable a clear focus on standards and effective training and development.
- Children's safeguarding: Better protection of children by ensuring that lessons are learned from serious child safeguarding cases. Support for innovation in

children's social care by allowing local authorities to pilot new, innovative approaches.

#### *Local Growth and Jobs Bill*

The Bill will include allowing local authorities to retain 100% of their business rates and strengthening local councils' powers to cut business rates for local firms and give combined authority Mayors the power to raise additional funding for infrastructure where they have the support of local businesses.

#### *Education for All Bill*

This Bill will include new laws to expand the academies programme in the poorest performing local authority areas; a new funding formula to deliver fair funding for every school and pupil in the country; and measures to make schools accountable for the provision and progress of excluded pupils so that those currently let down by the system are given an excellent education.

#### *Digital Economy Bill*

The Bill will include giving every household a legal right to a fast broadband connection; new laws to help telecommunications providers build the infrastructure needed for faster broadband and better mobile networks; and allowing consumers to be automatically compensated when things go wrong with their broadband service.

#### *Modern Transport Bill*

The Bill will include legislation to enable the future development of the UK's first commercial spaceports; new laws to make the UK ready to pioneer driverless cars; and new rules to bring safe commercial and personal drone flight for households and businesses a step closer.

#### *Prison and Courts Reform Bill*

This Bill will include new powers for Prison Governors to allow them unprecedented levels of control over all aspects of prison management; a complete overhaul of education, health and training to reduce re-offending and give people the chance of a fresh start; and new performance measures to assess prisons' current performance, long term direction and progress.

#### *Lifetime Savings Bill*

This Bill will include the new Help to Save scheme, which will help those from low incomes build up their savings. Workers in receipt of working tax credits or Universal Credit who save up to £50 a month will receive a Government bonus of 50% – to a maximum of £600 – after two years. A new Lifetime ISA for young people will be introduced, with a Government top up bonus of 25% on all savings up to £4,000 a year.

#### *Soft Drinks Industry Levy*

The levy will be used to: double the primary school PE and sport premium from £160 million per year to £320 million per year from September 2017 to help schools support healthier, more active lifestyles; provide up to £285 million a year to give 25% of secondary schools increased opportunity to extend their school day to offer a wider range of activities for pupils, including more sport; and provide £10 million funding a year to expand breakfast clubs in up to 1,600 schools starting from September 2017.

#### *National Citizen Service Bill*

This Bill will put the National Citizen Service (NCS) on a statutory footing and strengthen links between young people and schools, local governments and central governments to promote participation in the programme.

#### *Bill of Rights*

This Bill will include measures to reform and modernise the UK human rights framework and protections against abuse of the system and misuse of human rights laws.



#### *Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill*

This Bill will include:

- Stronger powers to disrupt extremists and protect the public.
- Powers to intervene in intensive unregulated education settings which teach hate and drive communities apart.
- A new civil order regime to restrict extremist activity, following consultation.
- Closing loopholes so that Ofcom can continue to protect consumers who watch internet-streamed television content from outside the EU on Freeview.

#### *Criminal Finances Bill*

This Bill will include measures to reform proceeds of crime legislation to allow the Government to recoup more illicit income; a new criminal offence for corporations that fail to stop staff facilitating tax evasion; and new rules to toughen the UK's anti-money laundering regime.

#### *Policing and Crime Bill*

This Bill will include a new duty to on all three emergency services to collaborate, to improve efficiency and effectiveness; new authority for chief officers to designate wider powers on police staff and volunteers, so they can make best use of their workforce; and a stronger oversight role for PCCs over local complaints, giving them an explicit responsibility for ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of the local police complaints system, and extending HM Inspector of Constabulary's remit to enable it to inspect private contractors.

#### *Small Charitable Donations Bill*

The Bill will allow charities and community amateur sports clubs to maximise fundraising power by reforming the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme to ensure it supports the maximum number of charities and donations possible.

#### *NHS (Overseas Visitors Charging) Bill*

This bill will include: measures that would ensure cost recovery is effective and efficient and the full cost of care is recovered and can be put back into the NHS; measures that would extend the number of services for which the NHS can charge overseas visitors and migrants; and measures that would mean that fewer people coming to the UK from the EEA are eligible for free NHS healthcare.