



Northumberland  
County Council

A council that works for  
**everyone**

Corporate Plan 2020 - 21



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We want to attract more and better jobs

**Note:** this Corporate Plan 2020-21 was prepared pre-COVID-19 - ambitious plans for recovery from the pandemic were approved by the Council's Cabinet in June 2020 - this sets out how the Council and the county as a whole can recover from COVID-19 - [further information is available here.](#)

# 01 Introduction by the Leader of the council Peter Jackson

In May 2017, we were given the huge honour by the people of Northumberland to work in partnership with them to do something unique – to refocus our amazing county to position itself to be the best place to live in, to work in, to be educated in, to invest in and to visit.

## We committed to ensuring that all of you:

- feel safe, valued, and part of your community
- live in distinctive vibrant places, which you value and in which you feel proud
- can easily get to work, to learning, and to the various facilities and services you want to use regardless of your age, have the right qualifications and skills to secure a good job that pays well and provides the prospect of a rewarding career

**In the last two years we have made great progress, and are now delivering on many of our manifesto pledges, with big and bold ambitions for the future.**

We stopped penalising our young people and scrapped unfair travel charges, and introduced **a new Post 16 Transport Policy** to provide free transport to improve their access to education and training opportunities across the county.

Our **war on potholes** continues, and last year we repaired more potholes than any other English local authority, and have adopted techniques that deliver more permanent repairs. The council committed more of its own funds to help quickly address the damage to our roads caused by the 'Beast from the East'. And we have been successful in securing additional funding from the Department of Transport through both its Challenge and Pothole Funds, as we continue our commitment to invest in the maintenance of our roads and bridges.

Five **Local Area Councils** are now fully established, and have delegated powers to make decisions that affect their area and responsibility to determine planning applications, taking local decision-making to the heart of our communities. We have also worked hard to build positive working relationships with town and parish councils and continue to regard them as a critical partner going forward.



Post 16 transport policy



Town and Parish Council Conference



We listened to you and agreed there was a need to review the **Local Development Plan** to make sure that it is fully and truly met our future housing and economic needs, whilst respecting and protecting our beautiful county. Earlier this year, we submitted that plan to Government and the plan is now nearly ready for local examination.

We have a new development company, **Advance Northumberland**, that we work in partnership with to attract investment and deliver high quality developments for residents including Ponteland High School and Leisure Centre, the redevelopment of Bedlington Town Centre, Morpeth Leisure Centre, Portland Park in Ashington, Berwick Leisure Centre, the refurbishment of Blyth Sports Centre, as well as investments in Prudhoe and Amble. Many of these community facilities will be opened within the next 12 -18 months which demonstrates our commitment to delivering a county that works for everyone.

**Active Northumberland** has been recalibrated to work as a key strategic partner for the council, aiming to deliver the highest quality leisure services with a strong focus on improving the health and wellness across the county. The council now has a robust operating agreement with Active Northumberland, they have strengthened their Board and launched their new transformation strategy which is a positive step forward for the county.

We are now leading the way in our arts, culture, heritage and library services with our **Great Northumberland** programme achieving acclaim from regional, national and worldwide visitors, who enjoy our free cultural programme year after year. We are committed to delivering this programme until 2021 to ensure that Northumberland has a growing richness of arts, culture and heritage activities throughout the year. Our libraries offer is being developed to be one of the best in the country, with our flagship

libraries offering a broad range of activities supporting communities and promoting the benefits of literacy and learning for residents of all ages.

We have continued to invest in our parks and green spaces to offer a great low cost day out to residents and visitors alike, with new accessible play areas being delivered at Druridge Bay and Plessey Woods Country Parks, and further investment planned to improve the cafe facilities at both Druridge Bay and Bolam Lake to enhance the visitor experience. We have also progressed with our ambitious project to rejuvenate Hirst Park in Ashington and, with the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other key stakeholders, this historic park has been returned to its former glory. We are incredibly proud that nine of our formal parks have received the accolade of **Green Flag status** - confirming they are some of the best parks in the UK.





The development of our **Discover Our Land** campaign has grown beyond our expectations, and we have a loyal following of people who are proud to call Northumberland their home, and to celebrate our past, present and future. We have ambassadors and many successful stories of investing, working and living in Northumberland which show us at our very best, and we need to do more of this to champion the work that we are doing and our great county.

We now have a firm grip on the council's finances, and a greater understanding of the opportunities that we have with capital developments, as well as focusing on protecting essential services that people need.

The county still faces a number of challenges. We are all ageing and living longer and our health and social care services need to reflect this. We also know that it can be tough for young people to access learning, secure a good job, or get on the housing ladder - and as a result many leave the county. We have increased the number of apprenticeships as a council to the highest number ever, together with the introduction of degree level apprentices we are truly offering opportunities through both our organisation and our Adult Learning Service for everyone. We have managed the introduction of Universal Credit across the county, and we now need to focus on supporting wider initiatives such as high quality housing and access to education and skills, which often accompany those who need support.



Discover Our Land campaign launch

**Education achievements across Northumberland are improving**, and we are seeing a positive picture which we are working hard to develop going forward. As part of the **North of Tyne Combined Authority**, we now have two immediate opportunities to develop the landscape of education and skills development for Northumberland, through the exciting opportunity for an **Education Challenge Fund** and also the devolved Adult Education Budget, both of which we expect to see significant traction on in 2020.

This Corporate Plan sets out our ambitions for Northumberland until 2021, and our Medium Term Financial Plan supports this plan and our ambitions in a robust and sustainable way.



New schools for Hexham



Care for Life

We are seeing business both existing and new, **investing and growing in Northumberland**, attracting major investment to create not just more jobs but better, higher earning opportunities across our county.

We understand that **addressing climate change** needs to be acted on urgently, which is why our target date of net zero emissions for the county is 2030, and why we declared that there is a climate emergency. We are committed to doing all we can to protect our great county, and call on you to do the same.

I am continuing to be personally involved in negotiations with the Government to bring additional funds and powers through devolution, that will help in making us more competitive and make sure that everyone benefits from that economic growth **The North of Tyne Combined Authority Deal** and the **Borderlands Growth Deal** is just the start - there is so much more to come.



Borderlands Growth Deal



Investing in Northumberland Deep Ocean

Together they will give us the means to deliver transformational projects such as the **reopening of passenger rail services** from Newcastle right through the south east of Northumberland, the creation of an **international energy park on Blyth Riverside** (Energy Central), and the delivery of a range of iconic cultural and tourism initiatives.



Energy Central - Blyth

**We want to continue to fully involve you in this journey, and the decisions that we need to make along the way.**

Finally, **we will seek to collaborate** where it is in Northumberland's interests to do so. In securing a North of Tyne Devolution Deal (with Newcastle and North Tyneside), and a Borderlands Growth Deal (with Carlisle, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, and Scottish Borders) we demonstrate our drive - this is just the start. We want to make sure that our residents benefit from any economic growth these deals generate, including exploring new partnerships with our businesses and the region's universities. We need to harness their insight and enterprise to our collective horizons in what we are all capable of achieving.

My continued pledge to you all is that we will be clear and transparent in what we are trying to do, and we will keep you updated and engaged throughout as our plans move forward.

**Peter Jackson, Leader of the Council**



# Our key achievements since may 2017 include:

- Introducing a new Post 16 Transport Policy and scrapping previous charges to provide free transport for young people in order to improve their access to education and training opportunities across the county.
- Continuing our war on potholes by repairing more than any other English local authority - securing an extra £8 million from Government, in addition to the council's £19 million investment in our roads.
- Taking local decision-making to the heart of communities by establishing five Local Area Councils.
- Submitting an updated Northumberland Local Plan for inspection ahead of schedule, setting out our ambitious plans for growth, and giving us more certainty over what, when and where development happens.
- Investing in the future of our county with a £677 million programme of investment and development in schools, housing, roads and leisure facilities.
- Launching our new development company, Advance Northumberland, focused on investment in our county and our communities.
- Investing over £108 million in highways maintenance improvements across the county, with further significant investment planned for 2020/21.
- Establishing a new and sustainable relationship with our leisure centre charitable provider Active Northumberland.
- Playing a crucial role in creating the North of Tyne Combined Authority, with £5 million investment already secured for Northumberland.
- Successfully securing the £345 million Borderlands Growth Deal, with up to £80 million expected to be invested into the county over the coming years.
- Declaring a climate emergency in June 2019, and developing an Action Plan that sets out commitment to half our carbon footprint by 2025, and make the county carbon neutral by 2030.
- Securing funding and brought the Tour of Britain back to Northumberland and across the North of Tyne, attracting 175,000 visitors, with 78% coming from outside the area, bringing a welcome boost to our local economy by almost £5 million.
- Successfully achieving government investment to bring the Northumberland to Line closer to being operational.
- Investing in free cultural activities throughout the year as part of our Great Northumberland programme for all to enjoy
- Delivering the "Discover Our Land" campaign which encourages everyone to promote our county positively as a great place to live, work, invest and visit.
- Winning gold in the 2018 and silver in 2019 British Travel Awards UK's Holiday County/Destination of the Year for Northumberland putting Northumberland at the very top of the tourism economy in the UK.
- Achieving, for the first time ever as a county, a tourism spend of over £1 billion.
- Securing the prestigious Ministry of Defence (MoD) Gold Covenant Award for Armed Forces.
- Expanding and mainstreaming our Armed Forces Outreach Service providing vital support for ex-armed forces personnel.





# 02 How

We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for.

**Our Vision focuses on making Northumberland a county which you regard as a great place to live, and in which you can access the things you enjoy, whilst having the opportunity to learn and thrive.**

We have reviewed and agreed our new organisational values for the council to make sure that they reflect our ambitions and those of the staff. We have developed a shared ethos to how we, as a council, behave and operate under our stewardship.

Together we are Northumberland County Council. Without our staff, we could not deliver the high quality service to our residents, businesses or visitors.

Our new vision and values have been developed for the council and will help guide us to be efficient, open and work for everyone. They will run through the very core of every project we work on and every decision we make.

## Our people

The heart of Northumberland



# Our vision is:

## One council that works for everyone

# Our values are:



- Respect the diverse communities we serve
- Act on feedback to ensure the best customer journey
- Look for opportunities to improve customer experience



- Build strong and long lasting relationships based on trust and mutual respect
- Involve communities and staff in decisions which affect them
- Support communities to embrace change and innovation



- Respond to the needs of all our residents
- Provide the right information at the right time
- Deliver services that have positive outcomes for the community



- Quality and safety will be at the heart of everything we do
- We will empower our residents to do as much for themselves as possible
- We set clear standards and report against them

# Our Operating Principles

There are five key traits that we want this administration to be remembered by - that when you look back over our four years in office, you feel we have consistently applied.

financial prudence

The first is **financial prudence**. We are aware that we have responsibility for a public pot of money to which you have all contributed to, and as such, we need to make sure that every penny of it is spent wisely. We will continue to adopt a robust business planning approach to how we make future investment decisions. We will also continue to take a proportionate approach to our use of reserves, our level of borrowing, the scale of our capital programme, and our propensity for awarding grants and loans.

We also want to be regarded as having been **resourceful**. We appreciate the need to make every pound count. We will therefore continue to constantly challenge all of our service delivery to be lean and efficient, and to embrace new ways of working that minimise waste and remove duplication,

resourceful

and this is now gathering traction through the implementation of our improvement and innovation plan. We have fundamentally reviewed and developed how we work with partner organisations such as Advance Northumberland, Active Northumberland, and Northumberland Tourism, to make sure they are delivering the right activities and offering value for money, whilst recognising they can access funding that is closed to councils. In all of this, the views and ideas of our staff are paramount, and working together we can achieve so much more.

Despite this, we know that we will continue to have to face tough decisions that will not be universally popular. We will not take these lightly and pledge that we will always **listen to and consider** your views.





## listen to and consider

We believe that the key actions we have taken in our first two years demonstrate that we will pay attention to and act on your concerns. So, our headquarters remain on site at the current County Hall; we have submitted our Local Plan for examination; we have already released more funds for highway improvements; and we are reviewing our approach to home to school transport - these were a few of the things we said we would do, and we have. This will continue throughout our term of office - and where there are conflicting opinions, we will explain why we took the decision we did.

We also want to be seen as **empowering**. At the heart of this is our commitment to take more decisions at a more local level. Our five new Local Area Councils (covering North Northumberland; Castle Morpeth; Ashington and Blyth; Cramlington,

## empowering

Bedlington and Seaton Valley; and Tynedale) are now well established and have delegated authority for certain planning and transport decisions, and we anticipate that their powers, budgets and influence will grow. We also appreciate that our networks of parish and town councils, and voluntary and community sector organisations are best placed to deliver certain services and activities. We are working with both to ensure that community-led solutions and approaches are taken forward, and we have established positive relationships which have proved mutually beneficial to our residents across the county. This has included renewing existing and developing new formal partnership agreements with some of our main Town and Parish Councils that have invested over £1 million in the provision of enhanced environmental standards tailored to the needs of their local area.

## collaborate

Finally, we will seek to **collaborate** where it is in Northumberland's interests to do so. In securing a North of Tyne Devolution Deal (with Newcastle and North Tyneside), and a Borderlands Growth Deal (with Carlisle, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, and Scottish Borders) we demonstrate our drive - this is just the start. We want to make sure that our residents benefit from any economic growth these deals generate, including exploring new partnerships with our businesses and the region's universities. We need to harness their insight and enterprise to our collective horizons in what we are all capable of achieving.



Hexham Bandstand



Alnwick Playhouse



Union Chain Bridge

# 03 Living

## We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for.

**We are committed to ensuring that all of you feel safe, valued, and part of your community.**

We all want to feel well. Good health and a feeling of wellbeing is one of the most important things to the majority of us and is as much to do with building on those assets that make us feel well as preventing the conditions that cause ill health such as smoking and drug and alcohol misuse. When we feel content and well we experience positive relationships and enjoy a good work and home life. The Council has a key role in supporting people and communities to achieve their potential and we know that you are Northumberland's biggest asset.

We want to ensure that positive choices are easy to make, that being out in your village, town or community is safe and welcoming, that you can enjoy walking and cycling to get from A to B or for fun with family and friends. We want to help you to enjoy a long and healthy life and we will support you to do this by providing a range of programmes which will help you achieve and maintain positive and healthy lifestyles in a way which suits you. This includes ensuring you have access to high quality urban green spaces and the local countryside for recreation and informal leisure activities.

Having a decent roof over your head is fundamental to this health and well being. None of you should be forced to live on the streets, or in a "home" that is a health hazard or physically impedes independence. We therefore pledge that we will support any one of you facing this scenario to find fit-for-purpose accommodation for the long-term.

We acknowledge that this will mean increasing the supply of both affordable and specialist supported housing, including extra care housing for older people. We have commenced a number of these priority schemes now and this will continue to be a priority for us but any new building needs to be in the right place, at the right scale and for the right end-user. We want to continue to have a constructive dialogue with you as to how we best achieve this to meet the specific needs of your community.

Having a decent roof over your head is fundamental to this health and well being





## Being scared or feeling lonely can cause untold anxiety

We also know that loss of dignity, being scared or feeling lonely can cause untold anxiety. We will not tolerate any form of abuse, and safeguarding your welfare will be of paramount concern. We will also provide tailored support for those of you with defined care and support needs in a way that puts you in control, and gives you the confidence and resilience to live independently as part of the wider community. Within this, we will continue to promote Ageing Well to help older people stay active, connected and well.

We are also keen to foster the basic human needs of friendship and belonging. We will do our best to support the retention of local meeting places - such as community centres, village halls, post offices, and public houses - through the co-location of in-demand Council services. Through our parks investment programme we have worked with local communities to breathe new life into disused community buildings, such as the pavilions at both Eastwood Park in Prudhoe and Astley



Hepscott Horticultural and Skills Unit

Park in Seaton Delaval, which are now thriving community assets. Your role will be to use and animate these assets as bustling hubs that offer a rich tapestry of activities and events that engage everyone.

Struggling to make ends meet and being in debt has a debilitating effect. Supporting more of you into work and - just as importantly - those of who on low wages into better paid jobs is critical - an issue which we will return to later. But we also need to create a culture of good financial management.

We have now set up and continue to support the work of the Northumberland Community Bank which is growing considerably by the day. Regardless of your income level or your financial difficulties, this Bank will offer you sound independent advice on how best to manage your money; refer you to the benefits and support services you are entitled to; and give you access to ethical savings schemes and loan facilities that fit with your personal circumstances.



Care for life



Northumberland Community Bank financial support



# Since May 2017 our achievements include:

Allocated 750 new council properties on average year on year.

- Ensuring that over two thirds of adults (65.7%) are undertaking the recommended levels of physical activity (17/18 data)
- Launching a Physical Activity Strategy with partners across Northumberland to encourage more people to be more active.
- Ensuring that 97% of the eligible population have been offered an NHS Health Check, which is higher than the national average.
- Committing to deliver up to 1,000 much needed council homes and affordable housing across the county.
- Improving nearly 2,000 council owned properties each year by installing new kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, windows and doors and carrying out roof replacements and electrical rewiring.
- Allocating 750 new council properties on average year on year.
- Responding to over 37,000 repairs to our council properties each year
- Developing a Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the next 10 years.
- Training over 250 people from across health, social care and voluntary sectors in Making Every Contact Count.





- Making sure our most vulnerable residents get the support and care they need 24/7, 365 a year.
- Achieving high levels of satisfaction with 91% of residents surveyed saying they were extremely, very or quite satisfied with the care and support they receive.
- Maintaining 90% positive grading from respondents who say that the services they use have made them feel safe and secure.
- Launching a new Home Safe Support Team for residents, in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, operating 8 am - 8 pm, 365 days per year.
- Maintaining 100% of our in-house services are rated good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Developing and launching a Care for Life apprenticeship programme to support the development of care skills within the county.
- Moving the Tynedale Horticultural service to a new purpose built environment supporting people with Learning Disabilities.
- Ensuring almost all of our children's homes are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- Delivering almost 200 additional new support accommodation homes for those that need different levels of care and supervision, to allow them to live independently.

Achieving high levels of satisfaction with 91% of residents surveyed saying they were extremely, very or quite satisfied with the care and support they receive



# 04 Enjoying

## We want you to love where you live.

**We are committed to ensuring that all of you live in distinctive vibrant places, which you value and in which you feel proud.**

We have raised the standard of our local services, and we are committed to continuing to do so. Whether we are emptying the bins, filling potholes or cutting roadside verges, we want you to be assured that we care about keeping the county's streets and roads clean, tidy and safe.

We understand that this will bring challenges given the size and extent of the county, and that for some services, these will become even more acute in prolonged periods of dry, wet or cold weather. But we will respond as promptly as we can and keep you informed of what we are planning when, as far as possible. So, we ask you to play your part by a responsible resident and refraining from dropping litter or dumping rubbish; recycling wherever possible; and making more journeys on foot, by bike, or by jumping on a bus or train.

We also appreciate the quality of the wider environment. Northumberland is blessed with stunning countryside and coastline, that is peppered with a host of remarkable cultural and heritage assets, and home to a network of towns and villages that each have their own unique characteristics. We not only want to protect and

improve this quality, but also make sure that the places where you live, work and play continue to evolve and grow whilst retaining and deepening their appeal.

We know this means planning the careful release of land for new development, maintaining the vibrancy of our town centres, and striving to keep essential local facilities and attractions open. Our revised Local Plan provides an overarching framework for this. But equally, you are the experts, you know your community. So we urge you to get involved - put your ideas forward. The established Local Area Councils aim to help with this, and complement other important local processes such as neighbourhood planning, to enable you to get involved in local decision-making on issues that affect your community.

Community participation also extends to pursuing shared hobbies and interests, keeping fit and playing sport, and being creative through music, drama and the arts. We see this as vital - it binds us together, gives us self-worth, and improves our wellbeing by giving us a welcome release from the pressures of modern life. We have committed to investing in our leisure and cultural assets with our ambitious capital programme, offering investment in a number of new leisure centres combined

with our cultural fund which supports Great Northumberland. These initiatives continue to develop programmes that inspire more people to join in. In return, we trust you will continue to passionately support and run the clubs, societies, and venues that bring our communities to life.





# Since may 2017 our achievements include:

- Developing and delivering the “Discover Our Land” campaign which encourages everyone to promote our county positively as a great place to live, work, invest and visit.
- Winning gold in 2018 and silver in the 2019 British Travel Awards UK’s Holiday County/ Destination of the Year, putting Northumberland at the very top of the tourism economy for the UK.
- Achieving tourism spend of over £1 billion, for the first time ever as a county.
- Integrating services and creating community hubs such as Queen’s Hall in Hexham, and the recently opened Alnwick Playhouse, a £3.2 million renovation incorporating the library and tourist visitor centre.
- Investing in free cultural activities throughout the year as part of our Great Northumberland programme for all to enjoy.
- Securing funding and bringing the Tour of Britain back to Northumberland and across the North of Tyne, attracting 175,000 visitors, with 78% coming from outside the area.
- Continuing to invest in our parks and green spaces, and delivering a £1m Country Park Investment Programme, including the provision of new accessible play areas at Druridge Bay and Plessey Woods Country Parks.
- Completed the £2.7 million investment of the Hirst Park Revival ‘Parks for People’ Project with the support of grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other key stakeholders.
- Secured the prestigious ‘Green Flag’ awards for nine of our parks.
- Recognising and celebrating the contributions of our incredible volunteers, schools, charities and other community organisations that have been improving the environment through our Love Northumberland awards.
- Renewing our existing and developing new partnership agreements with some of our main Town and Parish Councils, who are now investing over £1.2 million to deliver enhanced environmental standards tailored to meet the specific needs of their communities - including in

Cramlington, Ashington,

Achieving tourism spend of over £1 billion, for the first time ever as a county



# 05 Connecting

We want you to love have access to the things you need.

**We are committed to ensuring that everyone can easily get to work, to learning, and to the various facilities and services you want to use.**

And responding to the needs of our customers, we know that many of you want access the services we provide online and at a time that suits you. Our digital transformation programme puts our customers at the heart of everything we do, to improve access to our services and information through technology, make them connected and easy to use, as well as improving the way we work and deliver services by using digital solutions.

Access to high-speed and reliable digital connectivity will increasingly be central to achieving this. The technology is now capable of providing hyperfast broadband, and we will work tirelessly to make this a reality through the progressive insertion of a “full fibre” network. This will complement our ongoing efforts to secure, as a minimum in the short term, superfast broadband to all properties, and we are actively lobbying on this with Government. We will then have in place an infrastructure to enable improved productivity and business opportunity; as well as significantly increase consumer and learner choice and convenience.

Notwithstanding this, we also appreciate that not everything can or should be done online. Physical access, particularly given the proximity of both the Tyneside conurbation and Edinburgh together with the extent of our rural area, remains important. So, we will continue to push for further improvements - beyond those announced for the A1 and A69. In consultation with you, we will tackle congestion and accident black spots across the wider road network and within our main towns.

We also believe that the existing rail line from Ashington through south east Northumberland to Newcastle Central Station is an asset, that under our leadership, has become a step closer to becoming a reality. Once opened this new economic corridor will reintroduce passenger services unlocking commercial investment and a commute which offers unrivalled access to our county as a place to live, work, invest and visit.

Maintaining and improving the quality of services on the wider bus and rail network is also critical. We will expand the availability of real-time information so you have certainty as to when the next bus or train will arrive. We will also act as a broker between you and the commercial operators to maximise the reach and frequency of marginal services - challenging you both

to come up with solutions that meet essential community travel needs at a “value for money” rate. For our part, we will continue to ensure that our home to school transport commitments are met as efficiently as possible - and with community use in mind. We have addressed the unfair situation that students aged between 16 and 18 face in travelling to their nearest place of education, to ensure that they are fully supported to gain a fair and high quality education, and be the best they can be.

We highlighted earlier the importance we place on protecting community assets and encouraging regular walking and cycling, and our work on this continues to thrive. Both also have the added advantage of reducing car journeys and contributing to our Climate Emergency to be carbon neutral by 2030, and our commitments around this. Nonetheless, the geographical scale of the county is such that we have to accept that driving will remain a necessary way to get around for many of you. But we can and must do what we can to at least make it cleaner and greener. We have started to deliver on our commitment to install a comprehensive network of electric car charging points, to give you the assurance that you will never run out of power on county roads.

## Since may 2017 our achievements include:

- Securing £12 million funding to boost digital connectivity in rural communities.
- Scrapping charges for post-16 travel and providing free transport for students across Northumberland.
- Successfully achieving government investment to bring the Northumberland to Newcastle rail line closer to being operational - progressing the Northumberland Line rail project to outline business case stage, reducing the total scheme costs and improving the economic case - this has ensured its inclusion in both the Department for Transport's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline and the region's Transforming Cities Fund submission.
- Delivering significant road improvements through investment of over £20 million per year in highway maintenance and improvement schemes, through the Local Transport Plan capital programme (LTP £19 million), and other Government funding.
- Securing funding for and successfully completed a £6.5 million Rural Road Maintenance Challenge Fund project, and delivering an additional £7.7 million of highway maintenance work funded by Department for Transport.
- Identifying a preferred route for the proposed Blyth Relief Road, and securing its inclusion in Transport for the North's ask of the National Roads Fund.
- Ensured our 48,000 street lights are maintained and in good working order, and our £25 million investment programme to convert them to energy saving LED lighting is due for completion in January 2020.
- Managing 127 car parks with almost 8,200 parking spaces, and 2,450 on street permitted parking places.
- Delivering improvements to car parking with additional parking at Bamburgh, Craster, Seahouses, Berwick, Ponteland and Alwick, with further improvements planned to help support the town centre economies.
- Increasing cycling and walking resources across the county, and an integrated Walking and Cycling Strategy developed.
- Delivered cycle training to over 2,000 children each year, giving them the opportunity to travel safely and lead a healthier lifestyle.
- Securing £3.3 million from National Lottery Heritage Fund in a unique cross-border project to conserve and repair of the historic Union Chain Bridge, including community engagement and education programmes.
- Lobbying Highways England to accelerate the dualling of the A1 and to deliver improvements to the A69.



**Blyth Tyne Rail Network**



**Rural Road Maintenance**



**Full Fibre Network**



# 06 Learning

## We want you to achieve and realise your potential.

**We are committed to ensuring that all of you, regardless of your age and your circumstances, have the right qualifications and skills to secure a good job that pays well, and provides the prospect of a rewarding career.**

Our education performance continues to represent our single biggest challenge but one where some of our greatest progress is being made. We are starting to see improvements with our latest GCSE results and we recognise that we need to equip all school leavers with the right skills and give them, and the wider workforce, the opportunity to grow and develop those skills. We will continue to work particularly hard to narrow the gap in the performance of children from disadvantaged households. We will also continue to work closely with our special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) students and families, to develop improved support and outcomes, where listening to their views and creating shared actions has been one of our greatest achievements.

We are working hard to bring about fundamental change to the whole lifelong learning system from early years, school age qualification attainment, progression to Further and Higher Education and work, through to employability, in-work learning and retraining.

We are engaging positively with early years, schools and education providers to create a shared culture, that fundamentally lifts aspirations and puts learning excellence at the forefront of all of our minds across the county. This requires leadership at all levels and throughout our mixed economy of education providers, but they have all given us a firm commitment and level of support to make a good positive start on this.

As part of this, we believe the greater participation of our business community is critical. We need to continue to involve them in our schools more, and they are stepping up to the challenge. We now have firms becoming school sponsors, more business leaders becoming governors or enterprise advisers, and generally having a level of involvement in the county's education. They can particularly help in promoting technical education (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) where we know there are local career opportunities, and our local firms are engaging more in the work that we are doing to offer apprenticeships, training and skills development for their workforce.

The university sector also has a key role to play. They are now a key partner as well as a source of inspiration and motivation for our learners, but also as a catalyst and engine for ideas and innovation.

Digital skills are now a prerequisite for the modern workplace. Increasingly, not only do we need to have a grasp of the basics, we also need to grow and adapt our expertise as the technology develops. For this reason, promotion of digital literacy has become a strong feature of our work, as a fundamental strand of our learning strategy, but our training and library access really now can assist you to realise your full potential.



# Since may 2017 our achievements include:

- Progressing a £130 million schools development and improvement programme including Ponteland, Hexham, Haydon Bridge, Berwick, Amble and Seaton Delaval for state of the art facilities for our young people.
- Launching a new multi-agency Children and Young People's Plan so that they get the best out of life.
- Scrapping charges for post-16 travel and providing free transport for students across Northumberland.
- Investing £10.6 million in home to school transport for 7,800 students.
- Working hard to ensure that 90% of our primary schools in the county are now good or outstanding, and 66% of our secondary schools in the county are now good or outstanding.
- Significantly improving GCSE results, with the percentage of students in the county achieving grade 4 or higher increasing over the last two years.
- Securing better A-level results in the majority of schools in Northumberland, with more students have achieving higher grades and will be going on to their first choice of higher education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Creating 18 new places in mainstream schools in the county for students with special educational needs - eight places at Seaton Sluice First School and 10 places at Astley High School.
- Delivering an additional 82 places at special schools in Northumberland - at The Dales School in Ashington and Priory School in Hexham.
- Having the highest number of apprentices we have ever had.
- Developing and successfully launched a Care for Life apprenticeship programme to support the development of care skills, with a 100% retention rate.
- Securing a dedicated Education Challenge fund secured through North of Tyne Combined Authority devolution deal, and bid being prepared to secure further investment.
- Securing UN Accredited Teacher of Climate Change in every school across Northumberland and the North of Tyne.
- Increasing the uptake in digital skills across our libraries by 53%.

Progressing £130 million schools development and improvement programme including Ponteland, Hexham, Haydon Bridge, Berwick, Amble and Seaton Delaval





# 07 Thriving

## We want to attract more and better jobs.

**We are committed to ensuring that our businesses are booming by doing everything in our power to create the right conditions for economic growth. We are now a county that is open for business.**

Key to this is ensuring the sustainability and growth of our existing companies, and we are starting to see some of our companies excel in this area. We are working with the larger international brands to maximise the success of their operations based within the county. Supporting the extensive range of our smaller and medium sized enterprises to scale up, extend their reach, innovate and diversify, which is a priority for our business development and growth partners.

Indeed, our ambition is for Northumberland to be nationally recognised as the place to be, if you are a large company or small business owner who wants to both prosper and be located in or close to a high-quality rural setting. The attraction of new inward investment has focused on reinforcing the supply chains of our growth sectors in advanced engineering; renewable energy; food and drink; healthcare and life sciences; and advanced manufacturing. In particular, the nationally-significant, deep-water energy park planned on the River Blyth (branded as Energy Central) is now becoming a reality, and

will put us on the international map as a premier business destination. Within all of this, it goes without saying that the delivery of our transport and digital connectivity ambitions will be pivotal.

There are two other sectors which we believe warrant special attention. Tourism is also important to our economy and we have already had success in the British Travel Awards in 2018 and 2019. Complemented by our focused Discover Our Land campaign we believe we have even more potential to attract more visitors to stay longer, at all times of the year, and spend more. We will therefore continue to work with our attractions, hospitality businesses, and other partners to deepen the range and quality of the visitor experience.

The county's farming, forestry and fishing industries are both suppliers of local produce, and the custodians of our countryside and coastal waters. In the post-Brexit world, we will seek measures that safeguard their commercial viability, particularly in marginal areas such as the uplands.

Community-led regeneration is fundamental to our approach. Projects that are built in the community, by the community, and for the community are powerful, in that they bring about real change that lasts and grows over

time. Places such as Kielder, Wooler and Amble have clearly demonstrated this and are rightly showcased as national exemplars. We will give all of our local partners the space and support they need to generate ideas and make them happen. We want you to continue to get behind these, and constructively engage in making things better for your community, building on the real success achieved so far.

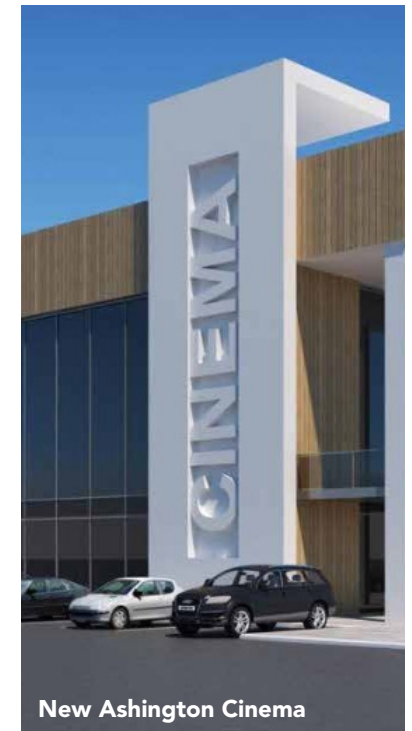


Ponteland Schools and Leisure

# Since may 2017 our achievements include:

- Achieving tourism spend of over £1 billion, for the first time ever as a county.
- Investing in the future of our county with the biggest capital investment programme of £677 million.
- Securing significant funding to invest in the regeneration of our town centres including Ashington, Prudhoe, Bedlington, Blyth and Hexham.
- Progressing a £130 million schools development and improvement programme including Ponteland, Hexham, Haydon Bridge, Berwick, Amble and Seaton Delaval.
- Investing £65 million county-wide to transform and upgrade sport and leisure facilities, including Morpeth, Blyth, Hexham and Ponteland.
- Through our partnership with Advance Northumberland:
  - Achieving significant progress with Northumberland Energy Park Phase 1, by securing £45 million of investment to support Energy Central to realise new growth and employment opportunities at the former power station in Blyth.
  - Attracting 12 new businesses to invest up to £25 million into Northumberland and creating 660 new jobs.
  - Working with 38 businesses who have collectively invested almost £54 million into Northumberland, and created 569 new jobs and safeguarded an additional 113.
  - Delivering business support to over 100 Northumberland businesses.
- Played a crucial role in creating the North of Tyne Combined Authority with colleagues, with £5 million investment already secured for Northumberland.
- Successfully securing the £345 million Borderlands Growth Deal, with up to £80 million expected to be invested into the county over the coming years - Heads of Terms confirming in principle investment in Alnwick Garden's Lillidorei project and The Maltings Theatre in Berwick, as well as a number of areas that Northumberland will also benefit from.
- Declaring a climate emergency in June 2019, and developing an action plan that sets out commitment to half our carbon footprint by 2025, and make the county carbon neutral by 2030.
- Over £10 million of capital investment now secured to deliver on the council's commitments around climate change for new renewable energy schemes to reduce our own carbon footprint.
- Securing £3.3 million funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of a unique cross-border project to undertake the conservation and repair of the historic Union Chain Bridge, along with a comprehensive programme of education, community engagement and heritage activities to celebrate its status as the world's oldest suspension bridge still open to traffic.
- Developing Future High Street Fund and Heritage Action Zone funding bids to secure additional investment for Northumberland towns.

Investing in the future of our county with the biggest capital investment programme of £677 million



New Ashington Cinema



# Our key priorities to 2021 include:

Continuing to roll out our £677 million capital programme of investment across every corner of the county

- Delivering real transformational change across Northumberland.
- Putting our customers at the heart of everything we do.
- Making sure our most vulnerable residents get the support and care they need.
- Giving our children and young people the best start in life so they can achieve their full potential.
- Continuing to punch above our weight, and promote our great county as a place to visit, raise a family, build a career, or to invest and establish and grow a business.
- Delivering on our commitments in the North of Tyne Combined Authority, and the Borderlands Growth Deal, making sure we take every opportunity for the benefit of our county.
- Using our influence with Government, and those of the newly elected MP's, to attract further investment.
- Progressing negotiations to secure Government investment to bring the Northumberland to Newcastle rail line back into use.
- Continuing to roll out our £677 million capital programme of investment across every corner of the county.



Blyth Regeneration plans



Portland Park Ashington



Blyth Tyne Rail Network Investment

- Investing in maintaining our highways, and continuing with our park enhancement and investment programme.
- Formally adopting the Northumberland Local Plan.
- As the North East's greenest county, delivering on our climate change commitments making our county cleaner and greener.
- Working with our partners Advance Northumberland to continue delivering key regeneration and infrastructure projects, attract further inward investment, and providing support to businesses across the county.



Caring for our vulnerable residents

- Rolling out our commitment to deliver up to 1,000 much needed council homes that serve the needs of our residents.
- Responding to the libraries consultation and enhancing the county's library offer to meet the changing demands in 21st century Northumberland.
- Launching a new tourism digital platform and refreshed brand to increase visitors numbers and boost the local economy.
- Using digital transformation as a tool to enable our communities to thrive, support businesses to grow and to improve how we operate as an organisation.



Advance Northumberland



Community Support



Increasing visitor numbers to Northumberland



# 08 Success Measures

**We want  
to make a  
difference**

**Consistent with our operating principles to listen and consider your views - and to take more decisions at a local level - central to measuring our success will be how you feel we are performing, and responding to the challenges and opportunities the county and the council face.**

We undertook a Residents' Perception Survey in early 2018, and we will continue to monitor and update that in 2021 to gauge your opinions, and make sure you continue to have your say. We will continue to implement our action plan from 2018 to review the areas of improvement to 2021, to ensure that we strive for continuous improvement.

This will provide a breakdown of resident views in each Local Area Council. The table below illustrates the core (but not exhaustive) list of indicators that are included in the survey - and your responses will inform our subsequent policy and budget decisions.

# Core list of indicators

- Attitudes to the local area
- **I am satisfied with my local area as a place to live**
- I think over the past 12 months that my local area has got better
- **I feel safe outside in my local area**
- Involvement in the area
- **I feel strongly that I belong to my local area**
- I agree that my local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together
- **I agree that people in my local area pull together to improve the local area**
- I agree that I can influence decisions affecting my local area
- **Satisfaction with the council**
- I am satisfied with the way the council runs things
- **I agree that the council provides good value for money**
- I speak positively about the council
- **I trust the council a great deal or to some extent**
- I think the council acts on the concerns of its local residents
- **Communication**
- I feel the council keep them informed about the services and benefits it provides
- **I do not feel confident in accessing the internet**
- I have been unable to do something on the council's website
- **The Economy**
- I am positive about the economy of my local area
- **I think my personal financial circumstances will get worse over the next 12 mths**
- Health
- I feel my health is good I support a minimum price on alcohol



