

POLICY DIGEST, December 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 5 December to Friday 6 January. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
<p>Putting small charities at the heart of public services (13 December 2016)</p> <p>The expertise and knowledge of small charities should be used to help shape and deliver public services across the country, Minister for Civil Society Rob Wilson has announced. Three new measures have been announced as part of a programme to help tackle the challenges of getting small charities into the public service supply chain. They are, developing a placed based Public Service Incubator that helps small charities get commissioned; exploring the development of a commissioning kitemark that will set out a best practice standard; and recruiting a voluntary, community and social enterprise crown representative. Mr Wilson has also announced that Sir Martyn Lewis will chair a voluntary sector-led implementation group on these proposals, to put them into practice.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/putting-small-charities-at-the-heart-of-public-services</p>	For information	
<p>Dedicated adult social care funding forms key part of continued long-term funding certainty for councils (15 December 2016)</p> <p>Councils across England will continue to benefit from the long-term financial certainty of the historic 4-year funding settlement, while at the same time having extra flexibilities to deliver adult social care services. To help town halls plan ahead, Communities Secretary Sajid Javid pledged to stick to the individual allocations that were published just 12 months ago, as the second year of the 4-year plan. It means over the 4 years of the settlement, councils will receive almost £200 billion in government funding – ensuring they can deliver the frontline services people value, while at the same time cutting waste. And to support their most vulnerable residents, Mr Javid announced plans for councils to be able to raise an additional £208 million for social care, by having the flexibility to increase the dedicated social care precept by up to 3% next year if they choose – equivalent to just £1 a month on an average Band D Council Tax bill. This</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Services

<p>comes on top of a £240 million social care grant for councils next year. The consultation on the local government settlement closes on 13 January 2017.</p> <p>Within this context, it should be noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The £240m adult social care grant has been funded by reducing the national pot for new homes bonus, and is not new funding for local government as a whole (though Northumberland appears to have gained from this). It appears to be a grant for one year only. • The permission to increase council tax by 3% essentially permits councils to bring forward part of the increase that they were already going to be permitted to make in 2019/20 -- it doesn't increase the recurring funding available in year three of the spending plan. • There is a new requirement attached to the 3% increase that the section 151 officer must produce a plan for adult social care spending over the next three years. Further guidance on the implications of this is awaited. <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dedicated-adult-social-care-funding-forms-key-part-of-continued-long-term-funding-certainty-for-councils</p>		
<p>Consultation on the Local Infrastructure Rate (15 December 2016)</p> <p>At Autumn Statement 2016, the government announced that it would consult on lending local authorities up to £1 billion at a discounted rate to support infrastructure projects that are high value for money. Under the government's proposal, local authorities would be able to borrow up to £1 billion at a new Local Infrastructure Rate which would be set at gilts + 60 basis points. Loans at the new rate would be available for a period of three years, with a maximum term of 50 years. This consultation document sets out details on the proposed rate and seeks views on its potential impact. The government welcomes responses from individuals, local authorities and representative bodies. All responses will be taken into account before the government decides whether to introduce this rate.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-infrastructure-rate</p>	<p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation</p>	<p>Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Services</p>
<p>Sir Eric Pickles publishes report into tackling electoral fraud (27 December 2016)</p> <p>Former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sir Eric Pickles MP, was asked by the government last year to consider what further changes were needed to make the electoral system more secure. This was particularly in light of the 2015 Tower Hamlets election court judgment that saw the disqualification of the elected mayor for a number of corrupt and illegal practices. Evidence has been gathered over the last year from local government, the police, academics and election experts. A series of 50 recommendations are outlined in the report, including: clamping down on postal vote 'harvesting' by political activists; piloting some form of identification at polling stations; action to tackle the links between electoral fraud and immigration fraud; and stronger checks and balances against municipal corruption.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sir-eric-pickles-publishes-report-into-tackling-electoral-fraud</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy</p>

PLACE SHAPING		
<p>Transport Secretary puts passengers at the heart of the railway (6 December 2016)</p> <p>Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has put the passenger at the heart of delivery across the railway by announcing plans to bring track and train operations closer together. The Transport Secretary has set out his vision for England's railways to deliver better, more reliable services to passengers and improved coordination across track renewal and train operations. Plans include the creation of East West Rail, the first new integrated rail operation in decades that is separate to Network Rail, and the closer alignment of incentives between the management of infrastructure and the operation of train services. In addition the Secretary of State has announced that he wants to see the rail industry working more closely together to deliver a better service for the passenger.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-puts-passengers-at-the-heart-of-the-railway</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>New national plan and funding brings bigger boost to estate regeneration (8 December 2016)</p> <p>A new government strategy and additional funding will breathe new life into rundown estates Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has announced. As part of a new blueprint for regenerating deprived housing estates, an additional £32 million of new funding is now available, along with £140 million from the estate regeneration fund to build places that work for everyone. It means that councils, housing associations and developers can now bid for a share of £172 million of government investment to transform local neighbourhoods and deliver high-quality housing. They will also get advice on transforming areas from a new 'national strategy' to address common challenges that can stop projects, such as resident protection concerns or finding the necessary finance. The new national strategy was developed by an independent advisory panel, chaired by Lord Heseltine and the Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell. The strategy has guidance that covers: resident engagement and protection – this includes a model residents' charter to help ensure a better standard of resident protection; good practice guide – steering schemes through all the key stages including the range of finance options available; alternative approaches to regeneration – providing advice on community led housing development; and case studies – illustrating and highlighting examples of design and quality, along with community engagement. The intention is that the strategy will evolve and develop as new guidance and tools become available.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-national-plan-and-funding-brings-bigger-boost-to-estate-regeneration</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Acting Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery
<p>£60 million boost for communities affected by second homeownership (23 December 2016)</p> <p>Community-led housing has been given a further boost from a new annual £60 million fund which will help almost 150 councils tackle the problem of high levels of second homeownership in their communities. The Community Housing Fund will put local groups in the driving seat and help them deliver affordable housing aimed at first-time buyers in response to the problem second homes can cause in reducing supply. One third of the funding - almost £20 million - will be allocated directly to local authorities in the South West as this is the most popular region for second homes in England. It accounts for 21% of all second homeownership. Northumberland County Council will receive funding from the £1.3million allocated to the North East.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/60-million-boost-for-communities-affected-by-second-homeownership</p>	For information	

<p>First ever garden villages named with government support (2 January 2017)</p> <p>The first ever garden villages, which have the potential to deliver more than 48,000 homes across England, have been given government backing. In an expansion of the existing garden towns programme, these smaller projects of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes continue the government's commitment to support locally-led development and make sure this is a country that works for everyone. The 14 new garden villages – from Devon to Derbyshire, Cornwall to Cumbria – will have access to a £6 million fund over the next 2 financial years to support the delivery of these new projects. This money will be used to unlock the full capacity of sites, providing funding for additional resources and expertise to accelerate development and avoid delays. The government also announced its support for 3 new garden towns in Aylesbury, Taunton and Harlow & Gilston – and a further £1.4 million of funding to support their delivery. Together with the 7 garden towns already announced, these 17 new garden settlements have the combined potential to provide almost 200,000 new homes across the country.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-ever-garden-villages-named-with-government-support</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Green light for construction of thousands of new Starter Homes (3 January 2017)</p> <p>2017 will see the first Starter Homes being built on brownfield sites across the country, Housing Minister Gavin Barwell has confirmed. Thousands of new homes backed with financial support will help more first time buyers into home ownership. They will be built exclusively for first-time buyers between 23 and 40 years old at a discount of at least 20% below market value. The first wave of 30 local authority partnerships – selected on the basis of their potential for early delivery – will spearhead schemes. These partnerships have been established under the government's £1.2 billion Starter Homes Land Fund which supports the development of starter homes on sites across England. These new developments will also support the wider growth and regeneration of local areas, including some town centre sites, and help make sure this is a country that works for everyone. The first places will begin construction later this year along with sites supported by the Homes and Communities Agency.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/green-light-for-construction-of-thousands-of-new-starter-homes</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>New money for affordable homes released (5 January 2017)</p> <p>Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has unlocked £7 billion in a dramatic expansion of the government's affordable housing programme to meet the diverse housing needs of the country. Housing providers can now apply for a share of the fund, which was allocated an additional £1.4 billion at the Autumn Statement to deliver 40,000 new affordable housing starts across the country. Alongside this extra funding, the government is expanding the existing affordable homes programme to offer a wider range of ways of helping people into home ownership and to provide support for those that need affordable housing. By expanding the variety of tenures available, which now includes Affordable Rent, Shared Ownership and Rent to Buy, the programme will help meet the housing needs of a wider range of people in different circumstances and at different stages of their lives. The £7 billion programme will deliver more than 200,000 homes.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-money-for-affordable-homes-released</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>The state of the North 2016: Building northern resilience in an era of global uncertainty (9 December 2016)</p> <p>IPPR North's annual State of the North report for 2016 addresses the three key issues – Brexit, industrial strategy and local economic resilience – that will build business confidence amid unpredictable times, and offers a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each LEP area in the region.</p> <p>http://www.ippr.org/publications/the-state-of-the-north-2016</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Environment Secretary announces £120 million support for rural communities (4 January 2017)</p> <p>£120 million of funding will be made available to support farmers, grow businesses, and generate thousands of jobs in rural communities, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom has announced. Rural and farm businesses will soon be able to apply for the next round of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Growth Programme, which will help new businesses get off the ground and support existing companies to grow, develop new products and access new export markets.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-secretary-announces-120-million-support-for-rural-communities</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>Consultation on funding reform for supported accommodation sector (21 November 2016)</p> <p>A consultation has been launched on the detail of a new funding model for the supported accommodation sector. Proposals to ensure a sustainable future for the sector were announced in September, along with a commitment to consult on the details. As previously announced, from 2019/20 a new funding model for supported housing will be introduced, which will ensure that the sector continues to be funded at current levels, taking into account the effect of the government policy on social sector rents. Supported housing, which supports some of the most vulnerable people from across the country, will continue to be exempt from the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap until 2019. From then the new funding model will protect the sector from the cap with a top-up of additional ring-fenced funding. This will mean Housing Benefit and the housing element of Universal Credit will focus on paying for core housing costs, whilst the new ring-fenced pot of money will give local authorities greater flexibility to commission services in line with local needs. The application of the LHA policy for general needs accommodation will also now be aligned with the timing of these plans, so will now be introduced in 2019 instead of 2018. This is part of the government's reforms to build a welfare system that is fair for those who use it and fair for those who pay for it. The consultation period runs for 12 weeks until 13 February 2017, and will also seek views on how best to fund the provision of short-term housing, such as hostels, refuges and emergency accommodation.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-on-funding-reform-for-supported-accommodation-sector</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation	Vanessa Bainbridge, Director of Adult and Community Care Services

STRONGER COMMUNITIES		
<p>Casey calls for integration plan to bind communities together (5 December 2016)</p> <p>Dame Louise Casey has published her report into social integration in Great Britain, calling for more to be done to bridge divides between people and bind communities together. Commissioned by the government in 2015, her review finds that with the country experiencing rapid population change there are still large social and economic gaps between ethnic groups; that ethnic segregation is increasing in some areas; and that women in some communities are suffering from huge inequalities. Following a year-long review into integration and opportunity in isolated communities, the social policy expert calls for a major new government programme to help: empower all communities to take advantage of modern Britain's economic opportunities; provide more English language classes for isolated groups; encourage young people to mix in schools and across communities; and secure women's emancipation in communities where they are being held back by regressive cultural practices. Dame Louise also proposes better safeguarding arrangements for all children who are not in mainstream education; increased integration expectations to be set out earlier in the immigration process and a new oath of integration enshrining British values for all holders of public office.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/casey-calls-for-integration-plan-to-bind-communities-together</p>	For information	
<p>Building a country that works for everyone: Independent Panel publishes report on putting values at the heart of our businesses (5 December 2016)</p> <p>Businesses are being asked to consider how they can make a positive social impact in the work they do. The calls come from an independent panel report into how mission-led businesses can be grown in the economy commissioned by Rob Wilson, Minister for Civil Society. The review chaired by Nigel Wilson, Chief Executive of Legal & General, has made a series of recommendations for boosting mission-led businesses in the UK. Mission-led businesses are profit-driven businesses that commit to have a positive social impact on society and the environment. They use the power of business to make a difference and help solve important problems like helping to improve children's education, cut down on household bills by reducing food waste and support people struggling with mental health problems. Examples include Cook Trading Limited, Timpsons, and Patients Know Best.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/building-a-country-that-works-for-everyone-independent-panel-publishes-report-on-putting-values-at-the-heart-of-our-businesses</p>	For information	
<p>£2.5 million funds to boost community-led services (9 December 2016)</p> <p>Small grassroots community groups including neighbourhood organisations, parishes and local voluntary groups are set to get a direct funding boost of £2.5 million from the government. The new 'Communities Fund' is being launched to help local people who are struggling to manage. It will be targeted depending on local pressures, and could be used to help those facing domestic abuse, to provide support for disabled children's services or to support those facing long-term unemployment. Alongside grants of £70,000 or more, grassroots organisations will benefit from expert advice from the local government sector, training from a 'grassroots network' and advice on evaluating the success of their services.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/25-million-funds-to-boost-community-led-services</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p>New funding for school improvement (30 November 2016)</p> <p>New resources to ensure the number of good school places continues to rise have been announced by Education Secretary Justine Greening. Less than a week after new figures showed the number of good or outstanding places had risen by 420,000 in the last year, the Education Secretary reiterated her determination to continue that upward trend by making new funds available to the school system. These include: from September 2017, a £50 million a year fund for local authorities to continue to monitor and commission school improvement for low-performing maintained schools; a new £140 million 'Strategic School Improvement Fund' for academies and maintained schools - aimed at ensuring resources are targeted at the schools most in need of support to drive up standards, use their resources most effectively and deliver more good school places; and alongside this new work, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has committed to spend a further £20 million over the next 2 years to scale up and disseminate evidence-based programmes and approaches. The government's ambition remains that all schools will become academies forming a fully school-led system, where headteachers and school leaders collaborate to drive improvement in their schools. In the meantime, while there continues to be a dual system of maintained schools and academies, it is vital that all schools have the resources they need to tackle underperformance.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-for-school-improvement--2</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills
<p>Plans to end the postcode lottery of school funding revealed (14 December 2016)</p> <p>Crucial reforms that will tackle the historical postcode lottery in school funding have been set out by Education Secretary Justine Greening. Funding every child fairly and according to their specific needs sits at the heart of delivering the government's pledge to build a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few. The government has protected the core schools budget in real terms since 2010, but the system for distributing that funding across the country is unfair, opaque and outdated. It is based on patchy and inconsistent decisions that have built up over many years and on data that is over a decade old. This outmoded system allows similar schools with similar students to receive levels of funding so different that it puts many young people at an educational disadvantage. Currently, disparities in the current school funding system mean a school could get 50% more if it were situated in another part of the country. This cannot be allowed to continue, which is why the government has published its fair funding proposals, replacing the current system with a new formula to ensure that children with similar characteristics and similar needs attract similar levels of funding - regardless of where their families happen to live. As a result of the proposed national funding formula, due to be introduced from 2018 to 2019, more than 10,000 schools will gain funding. Significant protections have also been built into the formula so that no school will face a reduction of more than more than 1.5% per pupil per year or 3% per pupil overall. In addition, for pupils with high-level special educational needs (high needs), where funding changes could be even more acutely felt by the most vulnerable young people in our society, no area will see their funding reduced.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-end-the-postcode-lottery-of-school-funding-revealed</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills



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