

# POLICY DIGEST, February 2017

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 30 January to Friday 3 March. 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>Self-sufficient local government: 100% business rates retention (15 February 2017)</b> This document provides a summary of responses and the government response to the consultation to allow local government to retain 100% of the business rates that they raise locally. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/self-sufficient-local-government-100-business-rates-retention">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/self-sufficient-local-government-100-business-rates-retention</a>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Resources
<b>100% business rates retention: further consultation on the design of the reformed system (15 February 2017)</b> In October 2015, the government committed that, by the end of the Parliament, local government should retain all taxes raised locally, including 100% of locally collected business rates. This amounts to a significant reform of the local government finance system. This consultation is part of a process of ongoing engagement and collaboration with interested parties on the design of reforms. It seeks views on some of the detailed aspects of the design of the reformed system. The consultation closes on 3 May 2017. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/100-business-rates-retention-further-consultation-on-the-design-of-the-reformed-system">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/100-business-rates-retention-further-consultation-on-the-design-of-the-reformed-system</a>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Resources
<b>Communities Secretary confirms funding certainty for council (22 February 2017)</b> Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has confirmed that councils will continue to benefit from the long-term financial certainty of a 4-year funding settlement, helping them to plan ahead with confidence. He also confirmed he is working closely with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to determine how best to provide further support to businesses facing the steepest increases, with further details expected to be set out in the Budget in 2 weeks. Mr Javid published individual funding allocations for local authorities for the second year of the historic settlement, with figures largely unchanged from those published a year ago. It means that over the course of this Parliament, councils will receive more than £200 billion	For information	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Resources

<p>in government funding – ensuring they can deliver the frontline services people value. Councils are also able to use this increased certainty to change the way they work and become more efficient, building on the £508 million savings already delivered across local government. It also prepares the ground for wider reforms, to ensure council's benefit from 100% business rate retention, giving them the financial autonomy they have long campaigned for. Councils in 6 areas across the country will start piloting this approach from April, with all councils invited to apply to participate in further pilots from April 2018.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-secretary-confirms-funding-certainty-for-councils">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-secretary-confirms-funding-certainty-for-councils</a></p>		
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PLACE SHAPING		
<p><b>Government announces ambitious plan to build the homes Britain needs (7 February 2017)</b></p> <p>The government has introduced bold new plans to fix the broken housing market and build more homes across England. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid says the current system isn't working and is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today. The reforms in a white paper published today sets out new measures to ensure the housing market works for everyone, including people on lower incomes, renters, disabled and older people by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting the right homes built in the right places - Consulting on the principle of a new, standardised way of calculating housing demand to reflect current and future housing pressures. Every local area will need to produce a realistic plan and review it at least every 5 years.</li> <li>• Speeding up house building - Giving local authorities the tools to speed up house building as well as powers to make sure developers build homes on time. The government will make it easier for councils to issue completion notices, shortening the timescales to require developers to start building within 2 years, not 3, when planning permission is granted.</li> <li>• Diversifying the market - Action to help small independent builders enter the market given including through the £3 billion Home Building Fund. Currently around 60% of new homes are built by just 10 companies.</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-ambitious-plan-to-build-the-homes-britain-needs">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-ambitious-plan-to-build-the-homes-britain-needs</a></p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p><b>Fixing the broken housing market: planning consultation</b></p> <p>The Housing White Paper sets out a programme of reform to tackle the long-standing problems in the housing market and ensure that more homes are built in the right places. In order to implement the vision set out in the White Paper, the Government is consulting on a range of specific planning proposals. It also sets out some wider changes to national planning policy in relation to affordable housing, sustainable development and the environment. Several proposals build on consultations and reviews conducted over the last year. The Government has taken account of responses to these in deciding the way forward. A summary of the responses to each consultation has been published alongside the White Paper. Many of the changes involve amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the Government intends to publish a revised Framework later this year, which will consolidate the outcome from the previous and current</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

consultations. It will also incorporate changes to reflect changes made to national policy through Written Ministerial Statements since March 2012. The consultation closes on 2 May. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fixing-our-broken-housing-market-consultation">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fixing-our-broken-housing-market-consultation</a>		
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<b>ECONOMIC PROSPERITY</b>		
<p><b>A 'new, positive and constructive' partnership with the European Union (2 February 2017)</b></p> <p>The government has published its plan for 'a new, positive and constructive' partnership in the mutual interest of the UK and the EU, with a White Paper presented to Parliament. The document, entitled 'The United Kingdom's Exit from, and New Partnership with, the European Union', mirrors the 12 principles set out by the Prime Minister to guide EU exit negotiations in her speech at Lancaster House on 17 January. These include providing certainty and clarity wherever possible, ensuring free trade with European markets, controlling immigration and taking control of our own laws. The paper highlights the mutual interest to the UK and the EU of maintaining the freest and most frictionless trade possible in goods and services following UK exit. The paper also recognises the importance of delivering a smooth, mutually beneficial exit, avoiding a disruptive cliff-edge. So a phased process of implementation of new arrangements — whether relating to immigration controls, customs systems, cooperation on criminal and civil justice matters, or future regulatory and legal frameworks for business — will be in our mutual self interest. The White Paper notes that the time needed to phase in new arrangements in different areas may vary. The document also confirms plans for a separate White Paper on the Great Repeal Bill, which will ensure certainty and stability by transposing EU law into UK law, wherever practical and appropriate, and separate legislation in areas likely to be affected by the outcome of the negotiation, such as customs and immigration.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-new-positive-and-constructive-partnership-with-the-european-union">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-new-positive-and-constructive-partnership-with-the-european-union</a></p>	For information	
<p><b>Rebooting devolution: A common-sense approach to taking back control</b></p> <p>This IPPR North report cites that the 'devolution revolution' has stalled, largely for lack of a clear purpose, process or timescale. On this basis, a rebooted approach to devolution requires a principle-based framework that would devolve powers and responsibilities to the lowest appropriate level of government and take a commonsense approach to vital questions of scale, 'packages' of powers, and metro-mayors. Far from being prescriptive, a principle-based framework would provide local areas with the certainty to develop a proposal that works for their context. This report outlines such a framework; focusing especially on non-metropolitan areas, where deals have been most difficult to achieve.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ippr.org/publications/rebooting-devolution">http://www.ippr.org/publications/rebooting-devolution</a></p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p><b>Forgotten opportunities: The dynamic role of the rural economy in post-Brexit Britain</b></p> <p>This IPPR North report presents a fresh, place-based approach to rural policy that addresses local, national and global issues effectively, and recommends the introduction of 'rural devolution deals' that would give local and combined</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

<p>authorities powers and obligations to improve food production and sustainability, the environment, industrial strategy and capital spending to support infrastructure and development.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ippr.org/publications/forgotten-opportunities-the-dynamic-role-of-the-rural-economy-in-post-brex-it-britain">http://www.ippr.org/publications/forgotten-opportunities-the-dynamic-role-of-the-rural-economy-in-post-brex-it-britain</a></p>		
<p><b>Working well: A plan to reduce long term sickness absence</b></p> <p>Not enough is being done by businesses or government to prevent people leaving work and moving onto sickness benefits; the result is a stubbornly high number of employment support allowance and incapacity benefit claimants. This IPPR report makes the case for a new 'Fit Pay' policy that would give employers the incentive to work with staff to keep them healthy and in work.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ippr.org/publications/working-well-a-plan-to-reduce-long-term-sickness-absence">http://www.ippr.org/publications/working-well-a-plan-to-reduce-long-term-sickness-absence</a></p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p><b>Skills 2030: Why the adult skills system is failing to build an economy that works for everyone</b></p> <p>England's current adult skills system cannot deliver an economy that works for everyone: low demand and investment among employers has resulted in a glut of low-quality provision with poor outcomes in terms of pay and productivity. This report reviews the evidence, and recommends that the government expands the apprenticeship levy into a wider skills levy and creates a regional skills fund to invest in the lowest-skilled areas.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ippr.org/publications/skills-2030-why-the-adult-skills-system-is-failing">http://www.ippr.org/publications/skills-2030-why-the-adult-skills-system-is-failing</a></p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p><b>Paying for our progress: How will the northern powerhouse be financed and funded?</b></p> <p>The North needs a principles-based approach to infrastructure investment that recognises the importance of both finance and funding, of public and private investment working together, of greater subsidiarity and local autonomy, and of a more sophisticated approach to appraisal. Through case studies and practical examples, this report sets out those principles.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ippr.org/publications/paying-for-our-progress">http://www.ippr.org/publications/paying-for-our-progress</a></p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p><b>Digital Strategy to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business (1 March 2017)</b></p> <p>Culture Secretary launches Digital Strategy set to create a world-leading digital economy that works for everyone. More than four million free digital skills training opportunities will be created as part of a Digital Strategy to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business and ensure our digital economy works for everyone. A pioneering new Digital Skills Partnership will see Government, business, charities and voluntary organisations coming together to make sure people have the right skills for the jobs in their area and are aware of all the digital training opportunities on offer. This Government-led initiative will help both businesses and individuals and make sure no one is left behind. The strategy includes new commitments, including a plan by Lloyds Banking Group to give face-to-face digital skills training to 2.5 million individuals, charities and small and medium businesses by 2020; plans by Barclays to teach basic coding to 45,000 more children and assist up to one million people with general digital skills and cyber awareness; and a pledge by Google, as part of their commitment of five hours of free digital skills for everyone, to help boost digital skills in seaside towns.</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Resources

<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/digital-strategy-to-make-britain-the-best-place-in-the-world-to-start-and-grow-a-digital-business">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/digital-strategy-to-make-britain-the-best-place-in-the-world-to-start-and-grow-a-digital-business</a>		
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## HEALTH & WELLBEING

<p><b>Social care sector must have post-Brexit action plan to raise poor standards</b></p> <p>New analysis by IPPR shows that training and working standards in the care sector need to be improved if it is to attract more UK workers and avoid labour shortages post-Brexit. It finds that, alongside boosting funding, an ambitious workforce strategy is necessary to tackle longstanding challenges with poor working conditions and substandard care. The report highlights that: Around 60,000 of social care workers are EU migrants and with uncertainty about the future of freedom of movement, the flow of EU migrant workers could provide a less reliable source of labour post-Brexit; The UK will need to recruit 1.6 million low-skills health and social care workers, two-thirds of the current workforce up to 2022, larger than any other occupation in the UK; and The level of quality and training of care workers in the UK is significantly lower when compared to similar economies and poor workforce conditions mean that the sector struggles to recruit, train and retain workers with the skills to deliver high standards of care. In response, IPPR argues that – alongside extra investment – urgent action is needed to improve standards in the care sector.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/social-care-sector-must-have-post-brexit-action-plan-to-raise-poor-standards">http://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/social-care-sector-must-have-post-brexit-action-plan-to-raise-poor-standards</a></p>	For information	Vanessa Bainbridge
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## STRONGER COMMUNITIES

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## COMMUNITY SAFETY

<p><b>Prime Minister's plans to transform the way we tackle domestic violence and abuse (17 February 2017)</b></p> <p>Theresa May has announced plans to transform the way we think about and tackle domestic violence and abuse – one of the most widespread and heinous offences, but one where victims are often let down by the legal system. Domestic violence and abuse shatters lives but the way we deal with it at the moment does not go far enough – with a plethora of different offences and procedures scattered across the statute book. This lack of clarity has led to an unacceptable diversity across the country in terms of the degree of effort put in to try and tackle it. Although the prosecution of, and convictions for, such offences have started to improve in recent years, there is inconsistency in the use and effectiveness of the various law enforcement measures across the country. In recognition of this, the Prime Minister has announced plans for a major new programme of work leading towards bringing forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Act. The programme of work will look at what more can be done to improve support for victims especially in the way the law, and legal procedures, currently work for such victims. Experts in this area will be invited to contribute ideas and proposals for</p>	For information	
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<p>improving the way the system works which is likely to lead to legislation – making it much easier for law enforcement bodies to find and use more consistently the measures at their disposal. The Prime Minister will also ask for any potential ‘quick wins’ in the intervening period to be identified and acted upon.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-ministers-plans-to-transform-the-way-we-tackle-domestic-violence-and-abuse">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-ministers-plans-to-transform-the-way-we-tackle-domestic-violence-and-abuse</a></p>		
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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p><b>Ofsted launches new social care common inspection framework (22 February 2017)</b></p> <p>A range of children’s social care settings will be subject to the same social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) from 1 April 2017, Ofsted has announced. Last year Ofsted published a consultation on the principles for children’s social care inspections, with a new common inspection framework and proposals for a new approach to the inspection of local authority children’s services. The online consultation received more than 200 responses, the vast majority of which supported the proposals. Ofsted also piloted the SCCIF and held face-to-face meetings with many interested people and groups. From 1 April, the following three principles will link all our inspections of children’s social care providers: to focus on the things that matter most to children’s lives; to be consistent in our expectations of providers; and to prioritise our work where improvement is needed most. At present there are several variations in the inspection guidance for social care providers across the range of settings, and differences in the criteria used by Ofsted to make judgements on each type of service. The experiences and progress of children are central to the new SCCIF. The framework will support inspectors to focus on the difference the provider makes to the lives of children and other service users. The SCCIF does not mean a one-size-fits-all approach to inspection. The framework is tailored to reflect and address each distinct type of children’s social care provider.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-launches-new-social-care-common-inspection-framework">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-launches-new-social-care-common-inspection-framework</a></p>	For information	Kathy ??
<p><b>New funding to boost schools facilities and healthy lifestyles (28 February 2017)</b></p> <p>Schools are to receive £415 million to help pupils benefit from healthier, more active lifestyles, Education Secretary Justine Greening has announced. Primary, secondary and sixth-form colleges will be able to use the funding to pay for facilities to support physical education (PE), after-school activities and healthy eating. Schools will also be able to use the new healthy pupils capital programme to improve facilities for children with physical conditions or support young people struggling with mental health issues. Alongside the funding for the PE and sport premium, breakfast clubs and universal infant free school meals, it represents over £1.3 billion investment in the 2018 to 2019 academic year to help young people live healthier lifestyles. This builds on wider government work such as the recent sports strategy. The money - from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy - will be available to schools in the 2018 to 2019 financial year and more details on how the fund will be distributed will be published later this year. Government has also pledged to ensure that the amount schools receive will not fall below £415 million regardless of the funds generated by the levy.</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills



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)