

POLICY DIGEST, April 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 3 April to Friday 28 April. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Producing the goods – Collaboration as the next frontier of productivity This report from the New Government Local Network considers how councils can cope with ever increasing financial pressures by focusing on squeezing more impact from every pound, while still providing quality services. The report focuses on ways they can do this in collaboration with others. It found that councils should trial new ideas on a small scale, evaluate their success, and move on to new ideas if they are not constructive. The sector should then be less embarrassed about admitting failure, and better at sharing these examples of what does and does not work, to prevent unsuccessful ideas and pilots being repeated in other councils. http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2017/councils-should-make-more-use-of-pilots-and-trials-to-test-innovative-policy-ideas/	For information	
PLACE SHAPING		
New measures to unlock brownfield land for thousands of homes (3 April 2017) Councils will have new tools to speed up development of derelict and underused land for new homes, Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell has confirmed. Local authorities across the country will now have to produce and maintain up-to-date, publicly available registers of brownfield sites available for housing locally. The new registers will help housebuilders identify suitable brownfield sites quickly, promising to unlock land for thousands of new homes. Communities will be able to highlight local derelict or underused building sites that are primed for redevelopment. This can bring investment to the area and increase the number of new homes in the area. As set out in the recently published Housing White Paper, the registers are part of the government's ambitious programme to speed up house building, promote brownfield sites for development and release land to deliver many more new homes.	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-unlock-brownfield-land-for-thousands-of-homes		
<p>Tougher measures to target rogue landlords (6 April 2017)</p> <p>New rules will help crackdown on rogue landlords that flout the rules and improve safety and affordability for renters. Announcing the measures, Housing Minister Gavin Barwell confirmed the powers will give local authorities the tools to crack down on the small minority of rogue landlords who shirk their responsibilities.</p> <p>This comes as part of the government's plan set out in its housing white paper to create a bigger and better private rental sector that meets the needs of tenants and landlords alike, giving those who rent a fairer deal. Councils are now able to impose fines of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for a range of housing offences. They will be able to retain all of the income to make sure it is used for private sector housing enforcement purposes. Rent repayment orders, which can be issued to penalise landlords managing or letting unlicensed properties, have also been extended to cover a wider range of situations. These include the illegal evictions or harassment of the occupiers of a property, using violence to secure entry and the breach of a banning order.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tougher-measures-to-target-rogue-landlords</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery
<p>Bidding opens for £490 million road funding (6 April 2017)</p> <p>Counties across England can bid for a share of £490 million to improve their roads. The funding, which will be for schemes from 2018 to 2020, is designed to tackle congestion and provide upgrades to local roads to improve journey times. Bids are encouraged for a wide variety of schemes which will cut congestion, including by making use of technology and by opening up the data held by local councils. The pot of money is from the National Productivity Investment Fund, which is providing £1.3 billion to enhance transport links to boost growth.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bidding-opens-for-490-million-road-funding</p>	Officers to consider submitting a bid	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Government publishes new anti-littering strategy (10 April 2017)</p> <p>The Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom has unveiled the Government's first Litter Strategy for England to reduce the near £800m burden to the taxpayer of clean-up costs. Under the new measures, the most serious litterers could be hit with the £150 fines, while vehicle owners could receive penalty notices when it can be proved litter was thrown from their car – even if it was discarded by somebody else. The new motoring rules, which are already in force in London, make owners liable even if they didn't throw the litter themselves.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-new-anti-littering-strategy</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery
<p>Government publishes £1.2 billion plan to increase cycling and walking (21 April 2017)</p> <p>The government has published its £1.2 billion long-term plan to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys. The government wants cycling and walking to become the norm by 2040 and will target funding at innovative ways to encourage people onto a bike or to use their own two feet for shorter journeys. Plans include specific objectives to double cycling, reduce cycling accidents and increase the proportion of 5 to 10 year-olds walking to school to 55% by 2025. The £1.2 billion allocation includes: £101 million to improve cycling infrastructure and expand</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

cycle routes between the city centres, local communities, and key employment and retail sites; £85 million to make improvements to 200 sections of roads for cyclists; £80 million for safety and awareness training for cyclists, extra secure cycle storage, bike repair, maintenance courses and road safety measures; £389.5 million for councils to invest in walking and cycling schemes; and £476.4 million from local growth funding to support walking and cycling. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-12-billion-plan-to-increase-cycling-and-walking		
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ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

£40 million cash boost for the coast (3 April 2017) Communities up and down the coast are set to benefit from a £40 million cash boost, Sajid Javid has announced. Piers, promenades and coastal paths are some of over 30 exciting new projects set to create new jobs, attract tourists and boost economic growth for their local areas. This latest investment delivers on the government's manifesto commitment to support fishing and coastal communities, and create an economy that works for everyone. The funding is helping coastal tourism regain its position as England's largest holiday sector. With one third of all domestic overnight trips made to the coast, coastal tourism is now worth £8 billion to the economy each year. Two bids in Northumberland successfully secured funding - Berwick Harbour Commission was awarded £2 million grant towards a £2.49 million project to improve and repair Tweed Dock, jetty and groyne, to secure the long term future of the Port of Berwick; and Blyth Harbour Commission was awarded a £800,000 grant towards a £1.44 million project to build and fit out a training facility in the Port of Blyth. The facility will train people in the construction of turbines and the loading/securing turbines/subsea equipment on land and onto a waterborne supply vessel. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/40-million-cash-boost-for-the-coast	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
Devo digital: Digital skills for the northern powerhouse A huge opportunity will be lost if the north of England is unable to provide sufficient talent to facilitate the continued growth of the digital sector. This report from IPPR North puts forward recommendations that would help the North to address its digital skills gap, in order to remain competitive in a post-Brexit environment. http://www.ippr.org/publications/devo-digital	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
Business Secretary announces Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund investments (21 April 2017) Business Secretary Greg Clark has announced the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, committing over £1 billion over the next 4 years in cutting-edge technologies to create jobs and raise living standards. The funding from the flagship Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) will be spent across 6 key areas over the next 4 years, driving progress and innovation that will create opportunities for businesses and sectors across the UK. The government has worked with businesses and academics to identify core industrial challenges, where research and innovation can help unlock markets and industries of the future in which the UK can become world-leading. Through the ISCF, government will bring together the UK's world leading research with the ambitions of business to meet these challenges head-on. The	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

<p>funding allocations announced are designed to help deliver a step-change in the UK's ability to turn strengths in research into commercialised products. The first 3 areas set to receive investment through the fund – healthcare and medicine, clean and flexible energy, and robotics and artificial intelligence – were announced at the 2017 Spring Budget. The Business Secretary has confirmed the total investment in each field (subject to business case approval): as £197 million; £246 million; and £93 million respectively. The Secretary of State also announced that 3 additional areas will be receiving ISCF grants in the next 4 years. These relate to driverless cars, manufacturing and future materials, and satellites and space technology.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/business-secretary-announces-industrial-strategy-challenge-fund-investments</p>		
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HEALTH & WELLBEING

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STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Multi-million pound boost for community-led services (6 April 2017)

Communities Minister Andrew Percy has announced a multi-million pound cash boost to community-led efforts giving local people greater control over local services. More than 54 projects will receive a share of over £3 million communities funding to help deliver additional services. A third of the projects receiving funding will focus on offering personalised schemes to improve people's health and general wellbeing. Other schemes will tackle social isolation, help people find a job, and support those facing homelessness.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-boost-for-community-led-services>

For information

COMMUNITY SAFETY

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

£2.4 billion funding boost for England's schools (3 April 2017)

Thousands of schools across England are to benefit from a £2.4 billion cash injection, Education Secretary Justine Greening has announced. Local councils say they need to create over 230,000 primary and secondary school places nationally between 2017 and 2020. This funding will provide a further boost to the government's drive to help create over 600,000 extra places by 2021, which will generate additional capacity to meet local demand. Schools, local authorities and academy trusts will also receive a share of £1.4 billion to invest in upgrading or improving their school buildings. As part of this, academies and sixth-form colleges throughout the country, will receive a total of £466 million

For information

Andy Johnson,
Director of
Education and
Skills

<p>to pay for almost 1,500 vital school building work projects. Alongside this multi-billion pound investment, the government is considering wider proposals to ensure school standards continue to rise by creating more 'good' places in every part of the country. These proposals include lifting the ban on new grammar schools - on the strict condition they improve the education of other pupils in the system - as well as harnessing the expertise and resources of our universities, and our independent and faith schools.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/24-billion-funding-boost-for-englands-schools</p>		
<p>Families to benefit from £55 million boost to childcare schemes (11 April 2017)</p> <p>Thousands of new childcare places for working parents around the country are being created thanks to a multi-million grant scheme, the Early Years Minister Caroline Dinenage has announced. The £50 million capital grants double the government's investment to help nurseries, pre-schools and playgroups invest in new buildings and upgrade facilities. This will deliver more than 9,000 additional childcare places – helping to deliver the government's commitment to give working families 30 hours free childcare from September. The money builds on the £50 million funding announced in January, doubling the total spend to £100 million and altogether providing nearly 18,000 extra childcare places. Alongside this, nearly £5 million will go to organisations that are helping children from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional needs to access high-quality early education, so that every child can reach their full potential, regardless of their background. The 12 opportunity areas announced by the Education Secretary will also benefit from £5 million as part of the government's latest capital investment. These areas, identified as social mobility 'coldspots', are already benefitting from a share of £72 million – today's funding will be a further boost for families living there.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/families-to-benefit-from-55-million-boost-to-childcare-schemes</p>	For information	Cath McEvoy, Director of Children's Social Care
<p>More than 130 new free schools to create more good places (12 April 2017)</p> <p>Thousands of new school places will be created across the country following the largest wave of free schools approvals this Parliament, giving more parents the choice of a good school place for their child. The Department for Education has approved applications for 131 new schools, creating more than 69,000 places. These schools will be led by high-performing institutions, including a grammar-school-led multi-academy trust (MAT) and the largest state boarding school in the country, demonstrating how existing high-performing schools can help raise attainment more widely, as set out in the government's education proposals.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-130-new-free-schools-to-create-more-good-places</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills
<p>Tax-Free Childcare launches today for children under four (21 April 2017)</p> <p>Working parents can now start applying for two new government childcare schemes launching this year – Tax-Free Childcare which begins immediately and 30 hours free childcare which starts in September. This means that working parents of children, who will be aged under 4 on 31 August 2017, can now apply through the new digital childcare service for Tax-Free Childcare and receive a government top-up of £2 for every £8 that they pay into their Tax-Free Childcare account. All parents of disabled children (under 17 years old) will also be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare from today. In addition, parents of 2-3 year olds, who will be eligible for a 30 hours free childcare place in</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills

September, can apply through the childcare service and start arranging a place with their childcare provider.		
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https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-free-childcare-launches-today-for-children-under-four		
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Northumberland County Council

***Policy Digest* is produced on 4 to 6 weekly cycle by the Council's Economic and Inclusion Policy Team
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All issues are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy