

POLICY DIGEST, June 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 5 June to Friday 30 June. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

| Policy Development | Action | Lead |
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| PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY | | |
| <p>The Queen's Speech (21 June 2017)</p> <p>Her Majesty the Queen has delivered her speech from the throne in what is expected to be the last Queen's Speech until 2019 in order that Brexit legislation will progress through Parliament.</p> <p>Key bills relating to local government</p> <p><i>Draft Tenants' Fees Bill</i></p> <p>Tackling unfair fees on tenants will make the private rental market more affordable and competitive. The draft Bill will bring forward proposals to: ban landlords and agents from requiring tenants to make any payments as a condition of their tenancy with the exception of the rent, a capped refundable security deposit, a capped refundable holding deposit and tenant default fees; and cap holding deposits at no more than one week's rent and security deposits at no more than one month's rent.</p> <p><i>Smart Meter Bill</i></p> <p>In order to help deliver more transparent energy bills and allow households to monitor their use effectively, the Bill will: extend, by five years, powers to make changes to smart meter regulations, and make sure the rollout is delivered effectively; and introduce a Special Administration Regime to ensure the continuing operation of the national smart meter service if the provider becomes insolvent.</p> <p><i>Draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill</i></p> <p>In line with the manifesto commitment, draft proposals will be published to update the law to help tackle the evil of domestic abuse and violence. Proposals will be published in draft for scrutiny by MPs and peers to help build a</p> | For information | |

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| <p>consensus and raise the profile of this issue. The draft measures will bring forward proposals: to establish a Domestic Violence and Abuse Commissioner; to define domestic abuse and create a consolidated new domestic abuse civil prevention and protection order; and to ensure that if abusive behaviour involves a child, then the court can hand down a sentence that reflects the devastating life-long impact that abuse has on the child.</p> <p><i>Financial Guidance and Claims Bill</i></p> <p>The Bill will combine three financial advice bodies into one, ensuring that people across the UK are able to seek the help and advice they need to manage their finances. The Bill will: establish a new statutory body, accountable to Parliament, with responsibility for coordinating the provision of debt advice, money guidance, and pension guidance; transfer the regulation of claims management services to the Financial Conduct Authority, and transfer complaints-handling responsibility to the Financial Ombudsman Service.</p> <p><i>Goods Mortgage Bill</i></p> <p>The Bill will implement recommendations from the Law Commission to update Victorian era law on logbook loans. The Bill will: increase protections to borrowers who have taken out a mortgage on goods that they own, such as their car (a “logbook loan”); and ensure borrowers are better informed about their loan and provide safeguards if borrowers get into financial difficulty.</p> <p><i>Data Protection Bill</i></p> <p>The Bill will fulfil a manifesto commitment to ensure the UK has a data protection regime that is fit for the 21st century. The Bill will: ensure that our data protection framework is suitable for our new digital age, and cement the UK’s position at the forefront of technological innovation, international data sharing and protection of personal data; strengthen rights and empower individuals to have more control over their personal data including a right to be forgotten when individuals no longer want their data to be processed, provided that there are no legitimate grounds for retaining it; establish a new data protection regime for non-law enforcement data processing, replacing the Data Protection Act 1998; and modernise and update the regime for data processing by law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>Consultations and enquiries</p> <p><i>Public enquiry into the Grenfell Tower Fire</i></p> <p>The Department for Communities and Local Government is urgently conducting an audit of all high rises in England by local authority. Fire and Rescue services will follow up the inspection of any buildings identified as high risk and action will be taken to safeguard residents where required. The Government will be assessing the position on Building Regulations, recognising the need to take account of public inquiry interim findings and conclusions. The Government will also develop a new strategy for resilience in major disasters – which could include a new Civil Disaster Reaction Taskforce that will help at times of emergency.</p> <p><i>Independent Public Advocate</i></p> <p>The purpose of the Independent Public Advocate is to keep the bereaved and surviving victims of disasters informed of</p> | | |
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| <p>progress in any relevant investigation and make them fully aware how they can contribute to that investigation. The Public Advocate will be able to access information held by public bodies and will, where appropriate, report on or share that information with representatives of the victims. The Public Advocate would ensure that, in the event of disasters involving multiple fatalities and where there are numerous persons affected, no individuals or families are sidelined in what will necessarily be large and complex proceedings to determine the facts and causes of the events that have affected them.</p> <p><i>Social Care</i></p> <p>The Government will work with partners at all levels, including those who use services and who work to provide care, to bring forward proposals for public consultation. The Government will consult on options to encourage a wider debate. • The consultation will set out options to improve the social care system and to put it on a more secure financial footing, supporting people, families and communities to prepare for old age, and address issues related to the quality of care and variation in practice.</p> <p><i>Housing</i></p> <p>The Government will consult and look to take action to promote transparency and fairness for leaseholders. We will look at the sale of leasehold houses and onerous ground rents, working with property developers, the Competition and Markets Authority and others as outlined in the Housing White Paper.</p> <p><i>Mental Health</i></p> <p>The Government will begin to consider what further reform of mental health legislation is necessary, including changes in how the Act is implemented on the ground. Considerations will include: looking at why rates of detention are increasing and taking the necessary action to improve service responses; examining the disproportionate number of those from certain ethnic backgrounds, in particular black people, who are detained under the Act; reviewing the use of Community Treatment Orders, to see if they remain fit for purpose in helping people leaving hospital to receive better care and support in the community; considering how the rights of family members to get information about the mental health and treatment of their loved ones can be improved; and ensuring that those with mental ill health are treated fairly, protected from discrimination, and employers fulfil their responsibilities effectively.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-speech-2017</p> | | |
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| PLACE SHAPING | | |
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| <p>New air quality plan published for consultation (5 May 2017)</p> <p>The government has published a draft plan to improve air quality by reducing nitrogen dioxide levels in the UK. The options now open for consultation on reducing nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities are designed to reduce the impact of diesel vehicles, and accelerate the move to cleaner transport. Local authorities are already responsible for improving air quality in their area, but will now be expected to develop new and creative solutions to reduce emissions</p> | <p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation</p> | <p>Paul Jones, Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery</p> |

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| <p>as quickly as possible, while avoiding undue impact on the motorist. The government is consulting on a range of measures that could be taken to mitigate the impact of action to improve air quality. In line with the timetable directed by the Courts the government is seeking views on these proposals in advance of preparing its final plan for publication by 31 July. All final decisions will be taken by the incoming government. This consultation will run until 15 June.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-air-quality-plan-published-for-consultation</p> | | |
| <p>Expert panel appointed to advise on immediate safety action following Grenfell fire (27 June 2017)</p> <p>Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has announced a new independent expert advisory panel to advise on any immediate measures that can be put in place to make buildings safe following the Grenfell Tower fire. A separate independent Public Inquiry will investigate what happened and who was responsible for the disaster. This expert panel will look at any immediate action that is required so the public can be confident everything possible is being done to make all public and private buildings safe as quickly as possible. The Panel will be made up of a range of building and fire safety experts, and will be chaired by Sir Ken Knight, former London Fire Commissioner and former Government Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser. The panel has a wealth of experience in fire and building safety, including testing processes. They will also draw in wider technical expertise as necessary to inform their advice to the Communities Secretary.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/expert-panel-appointed-to-advise-on-immediate-safety-action-following-grenfell-fire</p> | For information | |

| HEALTH & WELLBEING | | |
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| <p>An analysis of 2 decades of efforts to improve social mobility (28 June 2017)</p> <p>Two decades of government efforts to improve social mobility have failed to deliver enough progress in reducing the gap between Britain's 'haves and have nots', the Social Mobility Commission has warned in a hard-hitting new report. The commission, an independent body that monitors progress on social mobility, calls on current and future governments to learn 5 key lessons from the mistakes and successes of the past 20 years. It warns that without deep-seated reform, social and economic divisions in British society are set to widen with consequences for community cohesion and economic prosperity. The 'Time for change' report examines various public policies pursued over the last 20 years and assesses the impact they have had - for good or ill - on social mobility in Britain. The in-depth analysis, carried out for the first time, covers 4 life stages from the early years and school through to training and further/higher education and then into the world of work. It gives 'red', 'amber' and 'green' ratings depending on how successful governments have been in translating policy into positive social outcomes. Damningly, the report is not able to give a single 'green' rating to any of the life stages. Both early years and schools are given an 'amber' rating, while young people and working lives receives a 'red'. Overall, only 7 policies score a green while 14 score 'amber' and 16 'red'. While the report says that some policies - such as increasing employment and getting more working-class young people into university - have had a positive impact, overall the report concludes that 'too little' has been done to break</p> | For information | |

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| the link between socio-economic background and social progress. It says that over 20 years new divides have opened up in Britain, across geographies, income groups and generations - and that many policies of the past are no longer 'fit for purpose'. It comes up with 5 key lessons from the past and makes recommendations for government. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/an-analysis-of-2-decades-of-efforts-to-improve-social-mobility | | |
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STRONGER COMMUNITIES

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| UK government publishes proposals on rights of EU citizens (26 June 2017) <p>The government has published detailed proposals outlining how it intends to protect the rights of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU. The policy paper makes clear how EU citizens looking to remain in the UK can do so. It paper confirms the creation of a new 'settled status' for EU citizens who arrive before a cut-off date, which is yet to be specified and will be agreed as part of the negotiations with the EU. Applicants who already have 5 years' continuous residence in the UK will be immediately eligible for settled status. Those who arrived before the specified date but do not yet meet the 5 year threshold by exit day will be allowed to stay until they reach that milestone and can also secure settled status. Those EU citizens who are granted settled status will be treated like a comparable UK national, entitled to broadly the same rights and benefits. And a grace period of up to 2 years will be in place for all EU citizens, including those who arrive after the cut-off date, allowing them to regularise their status to remain in the country. All those applying to remain in the UK will undergo full criminality checks.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-publishes-proposals-on-rights-of-eu-citizens</p> | For information | |
| Third Sector Trends Study 2017 <p>The Third Sector Trends study was conceived and originally commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation with research conducted by the Universities of Southampton, Teesside and Durham. The Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland was a co-funder of the research and is now responsible for its legacy. The Community Foundation is now collaborating with partners including St Chad's College at the University of Durham, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and IPPR North to expand and continue the research. The most recent North East England report was published by the Community Foundation in 2017 with further support through our partnerships with the Esmée Fairbairn and Garfield Weston Foundations.</p> <p>http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/third-sector-trends-study</p> | For information | Geoff Paul, Director of Planning & Economy |
| The Art Council announces its National Portfolio for 2018-22 <p>The Arts Council has announced its new National Portfolio for 2018-22 - a fresh, ambitious and wide-ranging group of organisations that it believes will bring new energy to the arts and cultural sector, while reaching more people in more places than ever before. In all, 831 organisations will receive a total of £1.6 billion over four years for 844 projects. Importantly, we'll be investing £170 million more outside London and there will be significantly increased investment in places like Reading, Bradford, Plymouth, Northumberland and Stoke. The National Portfolio includes organisations</p> | For information | Nigel Walsh |

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| across England of all sizes and scales, with museums and libraries coming into the portfolio for the first time. The cultural assets in Northumberland which form part of the national portfolio include The Maltings at Berwick, Queen's Hall in Hexham, and the Woodhorn Charitable Trust. | | |
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<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/welcome-national-portfolio>

Northumberland

Northumberland County Council

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