

POLICY DIGEST, May 2015

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 4 May to Friday 29 May. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Her Majesty's Government: May 2015 (14 May 2015) Following The Queen's approval of the ministerial appointments and resignations announced since the general election, the government has been constituted. The key change of relevance to local government is that Greg Clark replaces Eric Pickles as the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. In addition, Stockton South MP James Wharton has been named as the minister for the "Northern Powerhouse" and Alistair Burt is the new Minister of State for Community and Social Care. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/election-2015-prime-minister-and-ministerial-appointments	For information	
Essential Guide: Public Service Mutuals This guide from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) provides an overview for councillors and officers in local government with an interest in or considering 'spinning out' their internal service teams into an external mutual organisation, and for councillors scrutinising existing mutuals. It will also be of interest to partners in the community and voluntary sector. It reviews the development of mutual and co-operative enterprises for the delivery of public services under the coalition government, focusing on developments and issues in and around local government. It is not a detailed 'how to guide' for establishing a public service mutual. http://www.lgiu.org.uk/essentialguide/public-service-mutuals/	For information	
National map of shared services 2015 The LGA has re-launched the national shared services map for 2015 which now shows that there are 416 shared service arrangements occurring between councils across the country resulting in £462 million of efficiency savings. http://www.local.gov.uk/shared-services-map	For information	

<p>English Devolution: local solutions for a successful nation</p> <p>The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a white paper on devolution, setting out local government's offer of partnership with Government. In alternative proposals to the Cities Devolution Bill, the report emphasises that devolution must reach all corners of England. The publication builds upon the evidence of three independent commissions that all conclude devolution must reach non-metropolitan England, responsible for 56 per cent of national output, and sets out a roadmap to achieve this. The paper also brings together views from across the LGA's 372 member councils and acknowledges the Cities Devolution Bill, expected in the Queen's Speech, but argues that devolving only limited powers to metropolitan regions does not go far enough.</p> <p>http://www.local.gov.uk/devonext-publication.jsessionid=B955C1F7C8E1E8C82F6CBB87D27B6B66</p>	For information	
<p>PM sets out his vision for the country in a 'one nation' Queen's Speech (27 May 2015)</p> <p>Ahead of the Queen's Speech Prime Minister David Cameron said: <i>"Behind this Queen's Speech is a clear vision for what our country can be. A country of security and opportunity for everyone, at every stage of life. That is our ambition. To build a country where whoever you are and wherever you live you can have the chance of a good education, a decent job, a home of your own and the peace of mind that comes from being able to raise a family and enjoy a secure retirement. A country that backs those who work hard and do the right thing. This is the Queen's Speech for working people from a 'one nation' government that will bring our country together. We have a mandate from the British people, a clear manifesto and the instruction to deliver. And we will not waste a single moment in getting on with the task."</i> As part of the long-term plan to back working people and make work pay, the government is determined to reward work by letting people keep even more of the money they earn. The government has already committed to raising the income tax personal allowance to £12,500 by 2020. And will now go further in its actions to offer more security to working people by confirming that legislation will be brought forward to ensure that future increases to the Income Tax personal allowance reflect changes to the National Minimum Wage. This will mean that people working 30 hours a week on the minimum wage will not pay any Income Tax. Increases in the personal allowance during the course of this Parliament are expected to benefit around 30 million working people. The government will also bring forward legislation for a 5 year tax lock which means there will be no Income Tax, VAT or National Insurance rises in this Parliament.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-sets-out-his-vision-for-the-country-in-a-one-nation-queens-speech</p>	For information	
<p>The devolution dashboard: Where do each of the main parties stand on decentralisation?</p> <p>With decentralisation certain to be one of the most vital issues facing the next parliament, this IPPR North briefing offers an illustrated guide to the strength and nature of each party's commitments to devolution in England. It considers each party's pledges on devolution as set out in their manifestos and includes a 'devolution dashboard' in which each of the three major parties is 'scored' according to the extent to which their manifesto pledges represent significant advances in terms of decentralisation in England. These key commitments on English devolution from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat manifestos are also quoted in full for comparison and ease of reference.</p> <p>http://www.ippr.org/publications/the-devolution-dashboard-where-do-each-of-the-main-parties-stand-on-decentralisation</p>	For information	

PLACE SHAPING		
<p>A brighter future for our towns and cities</p> <p>The Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) have collaborated with the Institute of Economic Development (IED) on this report which lays out 16 steps that local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and government can take to improve performance. The recommendations include: strategic development plans for places that are underperforming; an overhaul of business rates and empowering and resourcing Local Enterprise Partnerships so they can “manage positive change.”</p> <p>http://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/professional-bodies-lay-out-16-steps-for-tackling-underperforming-towns-and-cities</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Corporate Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
<p>Over a million more people given the chance to own their own home (26 May 2015)</p> <p>The Communities Secretary Greg Clark is to announce landmark changes to spread home ownership to millions, as part of the government’s commitment to working people. The Queen’s Speech will include a ground-breaking Housing Bill that will extend the Right to Buy to 1.3million housing association tenants.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-a-million-more-people-given-the-chance-to-own-their-own-home</p>	For information	Karen Ledger, Head of Planning and Housing
<p>Greg Clark tells Whitehall and town halls: loosen your grip on surplus land (31 May 2015)</p> <p>Communities Secretary Greg Clark has committed to leading the charge for Whitehall departments to let go of surplus and redundant land and property for new homes – and for town halls to follow suit. Speaking ahead of the first meeting of a dedicated ministerial Housing Taskforce, Mr Clark is urging departments to “loosen their grip” on sites that are standing idle so they can be released for new housebuilding, with a clear target to release enough land for 150,000 homes by 2020 – equivalent to the number of homes in Wakefield. He is also calling on England’s 326 councils to follow the government’s lead and look at the land assets they hold, and use some of those plots, particularly those on brownfield sites, to provide new homes for their communities.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greg-clark-tells-whitehall-and-town-halls-loosen-your-grip-on-surplus-land</p>	For information	Paul Leo, Head of Strategic Estates
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>Devolution plans to give more power to cities (14 May 2015)</p> <p>In his first post-election speech, George Osborne sets out his plans to give English cities powers over housing, transport, planning and policing. His view is that Greater Manchester – which will elect a mayor in two years and take on such powers - should become a blueprint for other large cities. A Cities Devolution Bill will be in the Queen’s Speech later this month.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-on-building-a-northern-powerhouse</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Corporate Director of Planning, Economy and Housing

<p>Benchmarking Local Innovation</p> <p>This report from the Enterprise Research Centre (ERC) has revealed an ‘arc of innovation’ stretching from Cambridge, through the south east Midlands to Gloucestershire. Figures drawn from a poll of over 14,000 firms, charting the level of pioneering business activity between 2010 and 2012 illustrates that Oxfordshire LEP reported the most innovative activity, followed closely by Greater Cambridge and Peterborough, the South East Midlands LEP and Gloucestershire. Tees Valley was named the best performing of the Northern local economic areas. Liverpool City Region was ranked 10th on the list, the North Eastern LEP 13th, Greater Manchester 20th, and London 25th. Eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and Cumbria achieved the lowest rankings. Regions were ranked on levels of successfully introduced products and services, launch of ‘new to the market’ products, collaboration, research and development, new marketing or strategic thinking and business process innovation. However, the report confirms that the level of local innovation depends on both the type of business activity and the forward-thinking nature of individual firms.</p> <p>http://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Benchmarking-Local-Innovation1.pdf</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Corporate Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
<p>HEALTH & WELLBEING</p> <p>Fuel poverty report shows improvement (28 May 2015)</p> <p>The annual data from the English Housing Survey which measures the impact of fuel poverty in England has been released. A combination of rising incomes and energy efficiency improvements in low income households has seen a decrease in the fuel poverty gap from £909 million in 2012 to £877 million in 2012, with an overall reduction of £32 million. There has also been an improvement in fuel poverty levels in England from 2.36 million in 2012 to 2.35 million in 2013.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fuel-poverty-report-shows-improvement</p>	For information	Karen Ledger, Head of Planning and Housing Services



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