

POLICY DIGEST, March 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 29 February to Friday 1 April. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
Budget 2016 (16 March 2016) Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne has delivered his Budget to the House of Commons. The announcement of several new devolution deals, big changes to the business rates system, and the 'academisation' of all schools by 2022, are among the biggest changes for local government. A summary of the key announcements for local government is reproduced at the end of this Digest. https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/budget-2016	For information	Steven Mason, Chief Executive
PLACE SHAPING		
New £1 million competition to boost rail tourism (1 March 2016) A £1 million competition to encourage more visitors to travel by rail to see hidden gems across the UK has been launched by the Department for Transport. The competition will offer grants to rail operators for innovative ideas and trials and is aimed particularly at heritage railways and community rail partnerships. It hopes to encourage more tourists and make it easier to explore the UK by rail. The competition is expected to generate around 20 winners, who will receive grants ranging from £25,000 to £75,000 to develop their ideas. Projects could include: improving the connectivity of heritage and community rail; improved disability access; special ticketing offers; and better cycle facilities at stations. The vast majority of heritage railways and community railways are outside London and one key objective is to encourage more tourists to travel to destinations beyond the capital. Currently, around 10 million people a year visit a heritage railway with the sector contributing an estimated £250 million to the UK economy. Community rail lines account for around 40 million journeys per year. They are often rural based and many support the tourism industry of these areas. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-1-million-competition-to-boost-rail-tourism	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

<p>New £5 million school bike training programme to create safe and confident young riders (7 March 2016)</p> <p>New cycle training with £5 million Department for Transport (DfT) funding to teach safe riding early, provide maintenance education and encourage family cycling has been announced by the Cycling Minister Robert Goodwill. Pilots of the Bikeability Plus scheme in 18 areas across England have shown that the number of children who cycled to school at least once a week more than doubled to 10%. Nearly 20,000 children have already received the training and the £5 million funding will now reach an additional 200,000 more across England. The programme also introduces 4 to 5 year olds in reception classes to balance training, so they have a fun, positive introduction to cycling as they start school. Older children will also be shown how to fix and maintain their bikes themselves - so they can keep on staying active and cycle safely. A focus of Bikeability Plus is introducing children and parents in disadvantaged communities who might not otherwise cycle to the healthy and affordable way of getting around.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-5-million-school-bike-training-programme-to-create-safe-and-confident-young-riders</p>	For information	David Laux, Head of Technical Services
<p>Northern transport strategy spring report marks major progress (7 March 2016)</p> <p>The Northern transport strategy spring 2016 report has been launched by Transport for the North and the Department for Transport. The report sets out plans for transformative projects such as Northern Powerhouse rail and Smart North – a system to help passengers switch easily between buses, trains and trams across the region while ensuring value for money. It also updates on some of the key improvements made over the last year across the region, with billions of pounds already guaranteed across rail, road and smart ticketing to deliver better journeys for passengers and support economic growth across the region. The government is investing £13 billion on transport projects across the north.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/northern-transport-strategy-spring-report-marks-major-progress</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Locally-led garden villages, towns and cities (16 March 2016)</p> <p>This prospectus sets out how we can support local areas who want to create new garden villages, towns and cities. It offers tailored government support to local areas with ambitious and innovative proposals to deliver 1,500 homes and above. It is divided into 2 parts covering expressions of interest for different scales of development. The first part of the prospectus invites expressions of interest by 31 July 2016 for new ‘garden villages’ of between 1,500 to 10,000 homes. The second part of the prospectus invites expressions of interest on a rolling basis in new garden towns and cities of more than 10,000 homes.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/locally-led-garden-villages-towns-and-cities</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Flood charities get £8.4 million boost from government (22 March 2016)</p> <p>Charities supporting those affected by this winter’s floods will get an £8.4 million boost, Communities Secretary Greg Clark has announced. The move is part of a multi-million pound package of support for areas hit by Storms Desmond and Eva at the end of last year. The government will match, pound for pound, the funds raised by charities and community groups in flood-hit areas. Mr. Clark praised the dedication and commitment of charity groups and community foundations in raising the funds, and providing vital support to those “when they needed it most”. The funds are expected to contribute to: clean-up costs; emergency repairs; clothing; food and drink; heating and heating equipment; and basic furniture.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/flood-charities-get-84-million-boost-from-government</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Interim Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery

<p>National parks: 8-point plan for England for 2016 to 2020 (23 March 2016)</p> <p>This plan sets out how the Government intends to protect, promote and enhance National Parks in England from now until 2020. It sets out the priorities for improving National Parks and includes plans to connect more young people to the environment through National Parks, and to increase visitor numbers. The plan also includes plans to develop apprenticeships through National Park Authorities, and to protect and enhance the natural environment. This plan has been produced in partnership with England's National Parks.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-8-point-plan-for-england-2016-to-2020</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Draft cycling and walking investment strategy (27 March 2016)</p> <p>The government's ambition is to create a walking and cycling nation. To further this goal it has created a draft cycling and walking strategy for consultation which is seeking: suggestions and evidence of innovative projects and programmes which could be developed to further our goals of increasing cycling activity, reversing the decline in walking activity, and reducing the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured; views on how to increase cycling and walking in typically under-represented groups; views on the approach and actions set out in the strategy to meet our key objectives; views on the potential roles of government and non-government bodies in delivering the strategy, plus the how they work together; views on the assistance local authorities and local enterprise partnerships would find beneficial to support development of infrastructure plans; and views on the Government's proposed activities for meeting our objectives of better safety, mobility, and streets. The consultation closes on 23 May2016.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation process	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>Baroness Mone publishes 'Be the boss' review (1 March 2016)</p> <p>Leading entrepreneur and businesswoman Baroness Mone OBE today unveiled the findings of her independent review to help increase business start-ups in the most disadvantaged communities across Great Britain. <i>Boosting enterprise in more deprived communities</i> is the culmination of a 6 month-journey in which Baroness Mone met business leaders, start-up owners and aspiring entrepreneurs from areas of high unemployment across the country. The self-employment rate in Great Britain stands at 10% of the working age population, however in the 10% most deprived areas; people are almost 50% less likely to be self-employed. Baroness Mone worked to identify what barriers they faced when starting up a business, and to create a series of recommendations to reverse this trend. Some of the review recommendations include: improving access to start-up loans; strengthening the quality of New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) support to achieve stronger and more viable businesses'; encouraging existing self-employed people to mentor new business starters; and asking schools, local authorities and government to look further at how business skills can be taught to pupils.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/baroness-mone-publishes-be-the-boss-review</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

<p>Greg Clark offers communities multi-billion pound offer to boost local growth (22 March 2016)</p> <p>England's 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships will be able to apply for a share of £1.8 billion to support projects in their areas. Local leaders wanting to boost skills, support business and build more homes will be offered the chance to apply for the latest round of Growth Deals worth billions of pounds, Greg Clark has announced. Under the Growth Deals, England's 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships – made up of council leaders and business representatives – will be able to apply for a share of £1.8 billion to support projects in their areas that boost local economic growth and create jobs. The money forms part of the government's £12 billion Local Growth Fund, which is already being used to support successful projects – chosen by communities themselves.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greg-clark-offers-communities-multi-billion-pound-offer-to-boost-local-growth</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Local Enterprise Partnerships</p> <p>This report from the National Audit Office concludes that whilst the role and remit of Local Enterprise Partnerships has grown significantly and rapidly since 2010, the approach taken by the Government to oversee Growth Deals risks future value for money. The report found that LEPs themselves have serious reservations about their capacity to deliver and the increasing complexity of the local landscape. To oversee and deliver Growth Deal projects effectively, LEPs need access to staff with expertise in complex areas such as forecasting, economic modelling and monitoring and evaluation. Only 5% of LEPs considered that the resources available to them were sufficient to meet the expectations placed on them by government. In addition, there is a risk that projects being pursued will not necessarily optimise value for money. Pressure on LEPs to spend their Local Growth Fund allocation in year creates a risk that LEPs will not fund those projects that are most suited to long term economic development. LEPs have also found it challenging to develop a long-term pipeline of projects that can easily take the place of those that are postponed. The Department has acted to promote standards of governance and transparency in LEPs, and all 39 LEPs had frameworks in place to ensure regularity, propriety and value for money by March 2015. The Department, however, had not tested the implementation of such assurance frameworks at the time that Growth Deals were finalised. The NAO found that there are considerable gaps in LEPs' compliance with the Department's requirements in this regard, and that the availability and transparency of financial information varied across LEPs.</p> <p>https://www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/local-enterprise-partnerships/</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>New National Infrastructure Delivery Plan gets Britain building (23 March 2016)</p> <p>A plan that brings together all of the government's infrastructure priorities over the next five years has been published. For the first time, this new National Infrastructure Delivery Plan brings together the government's plans for this Parliament to support large-scale housing and regeneration, as well as investment in new local schools, hospitals and prisons. These plans are underpinned by the government's commitment to invest over £100 billion in infrastructure by 2020-21, together with significant investment by the private sector, to deliver important projects that are vital to grow the economy and improve people's lives. The plan also highlights the government's commitment to build a Northern Powerhouse, by connecting up the great towns and cities of the North. The plan incorporates the latest version of the National Infrastructure Pipeline which highlights over £425 billion worth of planned investment in over 600 major projects and programmes across the UK to 2020-21 and beyond. In addition the plan sets out £58 billion of public investment for housing and regeneration, education, health and justice.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-national-infrastructure-delivery-plan-gets-britain-building</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>PM announces new support to improve the life chances of millions (14 March 2016)</p> <p>The Prime Minister David Cameron has announced that up to 3.5 million people will be eligible for a government-backed bonus on their savings as part of a drive to improve the life chances of the disadvantaged,. In January, as part of his all-out assault on poverty, the Prime Minister set out the government's plan to transform life chances across the country. This includes the creation of a new savings scheme for people on low incomes – with research showing that almost half of UK adults have less than £500 set aside for emergencies. The Prime Minister now delivers on this commitment with a new Help to Save scheme, in which anyone in work and in receipt of Universal Credit or Working Tax Credits will be able to save up to £50 a month and receive a 50% bonus after 2 years – worth up to £600. Account holders can then choose to continue saving under the scheme for a further 2 years and receive another £600 bonus. This will see them earn a savings pot worth up to £3,600 after the full 4 years of the scheme – with £1,200 coming from the government. Delivering on this commitment David Cameron also announced that the government will provide £12 million over the course of this Parliament for a new investment fund to build capacity in the system. The fund will be managed by the Careers & Enterprise Company. Once established, 25,000 young people a year who are at risk of under achieving or dropping out from education will receive extra support from high-flying professionals. The money will be used to scale up proven mentoring programmes to reduce disengagement among young people in the years before they sit their GCSEs. It will prioritise young people stuck in 'cold spots' across the country who do not currently have access to mentors. The Careers & Enterprise Company will work to encourage business people and professionals to volunteer to act as mentors to provide crucial support and guidance to help young people fulfil their potential. Their work will be backed by a £2 million advertising campaign.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-new-support-to-improve-the-life-chances-of-millions</p>	For information	
STRONGER COMMUNITIES		
<p>New £3.6 million programme to help communities take control of their local pub (10 March 2016)</p> <p>A major new support and finance programme to help people take control of their local pub for the benefit of the community has been announced by Community Pubs Minister Marcus Jones. The Community Pub Business Support Programme is a £3.62 million, 2-year programme that will see a comprehensive package of business development support, advice, and loan and grant funding being delivered to community groups in England to help them establish community-owned pubs that can clearly demonstrate how they will bring significant social, economic and environmental benefits to their communities. Jointly funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and Power to Change, the programme will be led by Plunkett Foundation and delivered in collaboration with leading organisations within the sector. The programme aims to support 80 community-owned pubs to open over 2 years and will offer a flexible package of support including access to an advice line, events, workshops, peer-to-peer study visits, and business development advice.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-36-million-programme-to-help-communities-take-control-of-their-local-pub</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

<p>Culture White Paper (23 March 2016)</p> <p>The Culture White Paper sets out the government's vision, strategy and proposals for the cultural sectors (the arts, museums and galleries, libraries, archives and heritage). It outlines the key issues facing the cultural sectors today and the role we want culture to play in our society; what the government and our public bodies will do to address those issues; and how we will ensure that everyone can enjoy and benefit from culture. As announced at Budget 2016 and included in the White Paper the government will establish a review to examine how church buildings and cathedrals in England can become more financially sustainable. Bernard Taylor, Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire, will lead the review.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-white-paper</p>	For information	
<p>Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021 (23 March 2016)</p> <p>The Independent Library Report for England (published on 18 December 2014) called for a national strategy which could articulate what public libraries in England are and why they are a force for good for us all. At the request of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce has developed a draft Ambition document for public libraries in England. The purpose of the document is to provide a focus for collaborative action, and a clear articulation of the government's and Taskforce's vision and support for public libraries in England. It also provides a confirmation of how libraries support and add value to a range of local and national policy priorities and link to practical examples of existing good practice. It is not intended to dictate what library services each local authority must deliver and how. The document is primarily intended for decision makers in local and central government, members of the library workforce and partners of or suppliers to libraries. The survey will remain open until 3 June 2016.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-2021</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation process	
COMMUNITY SAFETY		
<p>£80 million to stop violence against women and girls (8 March 2016)</p> <p>In a radical shift from crisis response to early intervention and prevention, the government has announced it is to increase the committed funding to £80 million to protect women and girls from violence, as part of a new violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy. This will transform the system meaning more women and girls can escape the risk of violence early on. A new VAWG Service Transformation Fund comes into effect in 2017. This will promote projects which are leading the way in stopping violence before it happens, preventing abusive behaviour from becoming entrenched, and establishing the best ways to help victims and their families. This significant boost to the funding will see government working with local areas to deliver a secure future for refuges and other specialist accommodation, as well as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage Units. As part of the early intervention work and to break the cycle of violence, the government will work with local authorities on changing the attitudes and behaviours of perpetrators, to make sure rehabilitation, mental health interventions and other appropriate perpetrator programmes are in place.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/80-million-to-stop-violence-against-women-and-girls</p>	For information	Jane Bowie, Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p>Fairer school funding plan revealed (7 March 2016)</p> <p>Historic reforms that will bring an end to the unfairness in the school funding system have been outlined by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan. Providing educational excellence everywhere is a key part of the government's mission to extend opportunity to every child. This includes delivering on the manifesto commitment to protect the core schools budget. This will be over £40 billion next year, including the pupil premium - funding worth £2.5 billion a year targeted at the most disadvantaged pupils. Under proposals published for consultation today, the government has started the process of introducing a national funding formula from 2017 to 2018. This represents an important move towards a system where school funding is allocated on a consistent national formula. As part of this, local authorities will receive funding to help with their responsibilities towards young people with high-level special educational needs on a fair and formulaic basis, so that no pupil is disadvantaged simply by where they live. The plans outlined will ensure that every school and local area, no matter where they are in the country and that funding gets straight to the frontline. A single national funding formula for schools will remove the role of the local authority, ensuring pupils with similar needs attract the same level of funding to their school, and will also give head teachers far more certainty over future budgets. The consultation closes on 17 April.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fairer-school-funding-plan-revealed</p>	<p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation process</p>	<p>Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills</p>
<p>High needs learners are not always receiving the support they need to reach their potential (22 March 2016)</p> <p>This Ofsted report explores the early implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014, and the impact it has had on the lives and prospects of learners with high needs. In the past, ineffective arrangements between education, health and social care agencies have impacted on the ability of high needs learners to successfully transition from school, to post-16 provision and to adult life. The Children and Families Act 2014 made a firm commitment to tackle this. Ofsted's report finds that, of the local authorities and further education (FE) providers surveyed, the implementation of the Act had not been fully effective. The report highlights a number of concerns about arrangements, including: nearly half of the providers visited not having adequate strategies, experience or expertise to support their learners with learning difficulties or disabilities; specialist, impartial careers guidance found to be generally weak; too many learners on programmes that do not lead to further learning, employment or independent/supported living; slow progress by high needs learners in English and mathematics; and poor recording of learners' progress.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/high-needs-learners-are-not-always-receiving-the-support-they-need-to-reach-their-potential</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills</p>
<p>Education Secretary unveils a new blueprint for adoption (27 March 2016)</p> <p>A brand-new strategy to transform the life chances of those children who spend up to 18 months in care waiting to be adopted has been unveiled by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan. The 4-year strategy explicitly sets out for the first time how it will deliver a system where all children are matched with adoptive parents without delay, free from the shackles of council red tape. The plan also includes a new drive to boost the educational success of adopted children. For the first time ever, every single child adopted from care will have a designated teacher and 'virtual school head' who will provide tailored support to help children overcome trauma and give these young people the best possible education.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-unveils-a-new-blueprint-for-adoption</p>	<p>For information</p>	

Budget 2016 – Key announcements for Local Government by policy area

Devolution

The government announced new mayoral devolution deals with the West of England, East Anglia, and Greater Lincolnshire. The government has agreed a further devolution deal with Greater Manchester, including a commitment to work towards the devolution of criminal justice powers, and a second devolution deal with Liverpool City Region. Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region will pilot 100% business rates retention and there will be an increase in the share of business rates retained in London.

Business Rates

The government will cut business rates from next year for half of all properties. From 1 April 2017 the government will permanently double Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) from 50% to 100% and increase the thresholds to benefit a greater number of businesses; increase the threshold for the standard business rates multiplier to a rateable value of £51,000, taking 250,000 smaller properties out of the higher rate; and from April 2020, indexation of business rates will be cut from RPI to CPI. The government will aim to introduce frequent business rate revaluations and will publish a discussion paper in March 2016 outlining options on how to achieve this to support businesses and the stability of local authority funding. By 2022, local authority business rate systems will be linked to HMRC digital tax accounts so businesses can manage this alongside other taxes. Firstly, the government will work with local authorities across England to standardise business rate bills and ensure ratepayers have the option to receive and pay bills online by April 2017. Once local authority and HMRC systems are linked, the government will consider the feasibility of replacing SBRR with a business rates allowance for small businesses. Local government will be compensated for the loss of income as a result of the business rates measures above, and the impact considered as part of the government's consultation on the implementation of 100% business rate retention in summer 2016.

Education

The government will expect all schools to become academies by 2020, or to have an academy order in place to convert by 2022. The current system for allocating school funding will be replaced by the National Funding Formula for schools from 2017-18. The government's aim is for 90% of schools who gain additional funding to receive the full amount they are due by 2020. To enable this, the government will provide around £500 million of additional core funding to schools over the course of this Spending Review. The government is investing £20 million a year of new funding in a Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy. Up to £285 million a year will be provided to give 25% of secondary schools increased opportunity to extend their school day to offer a wider range of activities for pupils, including more sport. The government will provide £10 million funding a year to expand breakfast clubs in up to 1,600 schools starting from September 2017, to ensure more children have a nutritious breakfast.

Housing and homelessness

The government has launched the Starter Homes Land Fund prospectus, inviting Local Authorities to access £1.2 billion of funding to remediate brownfield to deliver at least 30,000 Starter Homes. The government also announced the delivery of 13,000 affordable homes two years early by bringing forward £250 million of capital spending to 2017-18 and 2018-19. The government will invest £100 million to deliver low-cost 'second stage' accommodation for rough sleepers leaving hostel accommodation, and domestic abuse victims and their families moving on from refuges. This will provide at least 2,000 places to enable independent living for vulnerable households and individuals, with the aim of freeing up hostels and refuges for those in most acute need. It will invest £10 million over two years to support new ways to prevent and reduce rough sleeping, particularly in London, and will double the funding for the Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond announced at the Autumn Statement 2015 to £10 million to drive innovative ways of tackling entrenched rough sleeping. The government will take action to increase the number of rough sleeping EU migrants returning to their home countries.

Transport and Infrastructure

The government is providing £300 million of funding to improve northern transport connectivity and is giving the green light to High Speed 3 between Leeds and Manchester. The government is giving the green light to Crossrail 2, supported by £80 million to help fund development. Transport for London will be expected to match that contribution. The National Infrastructure Commission will conduct an assessment of how the UK can become a world leader in 5G deployment, and

how it can take early advantage of the potential benefits of 5G services. The Commission will also consider proposals for unlocking growth, housing and jobs in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor. The government has announced a £50 million in Pothole Action Fund for England in 2016-17, enabling local authorities to fill nearly a million potholes. The government will put Midlands Connect on a statutory footing by the end of 2018 to create a sub-national transport body for the Midlands.

Personal savings

The government will introduce a new Help to Save scheme for those on low incomes. It will be open to those receiving Universal Credit with minimum weekly household earnings equivalent to 16 hours at the National Living Wage, or those who receive Working Tax Credit. It will work by providing a 50% government bonus on up to £50 of monthly savings into a Help to Save account. The bonus will be paid after two years with an option to save for a further two years, meaning that people can save up to £2,400 and benefit from government bonuses worth up to £1,200.

Planning

The government announced measures to speed up the planning process, including minimising the delays caused by planning conditions and ensuring the delivery of local plans by 2017. The government will reduce planning restrictions for existing telecoms infrastructure and allowing taller new ground based masts to be built. The Homes and Communities Agency will work in partnership with Network Rail and local authorities to provide land around stations for housing, commercial development and regeneration. The government will make it easier for local authorities to work together to create new garden towns, also to consult on a second wave of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) reforms with the objective of making the CPO process clearer, fairer and quicker. For areas that want smaller settlements, the government will provide technical and financial support to establish garden villages and market towns of between 1,500 to 10,000 homes. The government will announce what planning and financial flexibilities will be offered to local authorities that submit proposals for settlements that deliver a significant number of additional houses.

Efficiencies and outsourcing

The government will find a further £3.5 billion of savings from public spending in 2019-20. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury will lead an efficiency review, which will report in 2018. The government will consult on new rules requiring local authorities to be transparent about the cost of the in house services they provide, and whether there could be savings from using competitive external providers. The government aims to deliver savings of £200-300 million by establishing a number of British Wealth Funds which will pool the assets of the Local Government Pension Scheme administering authorities. It will work with administering authorities to establish a new Local Government Pension Scheme infrastructure investment platform to boost infrastructure investment.

Childcare

The youngest children will enter the Tax-Free Childcare scheme first, with all eligible parents brought in by the end of 2017. The existing scheme Employer-Supported Childcare will remain open to new entrants until April 2018 to support the transition between the schemes.

Flooding

The government will increase spending on flood defence and resilience of over £700 million by 2020-21. The government will increase maintenance expenditure in England by £40 million per year, and deliver more flood defence schemes – including investing over £150 million in Leeds, York, Calder Valley, Carlisle and wider Cumbria. This increase in investment will be funded by a rise in the standard rate of Insurance Premium Tax by 0.5 percentage points.

Skills and Apprenticeships

From April 2017, employers will receive a 10% top-up to their monthly levy contributions in England and this will be available for them to spend on apprenticeship training through their digital account.

Local Growth Fund

£1.8 billion will be allocated through a further round of Growth Deals with Local Enterprise Partnerships later this year. A further £2 billion of the Local Growth Fund is being allocated through the Home Building Fund.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

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