Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the COUNTY COUNCIL which will be held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth on WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2014 at 3.00 pm to transact the business mentioned in the accompanying agenda paper.

Yours faithfully,

Steven P Mason

Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources

To the members of the County Council
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

3 September 2014

AGENDA PAPER

Business to be transacted at a meeting of the County Council, to be held on the 3rd day of September 2014.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSURES OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Unless already entered in the Council’s Register of Members’ interests, members are required to disclose any personal interest (which includes any disclosable pecuniary interest) they may have in any of the items included on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 4 July 2012, and are reminded that if they have any personal interests of a prejudicial nature (as defined under paragraph 17 of the Code Conduct) they must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact the Legal Services Manager, Liam Henry, on 01670 623324. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

3. MINUTES

Minutes of the following meetings of County Council, to be signed by the Chair and sealed with the common seal of the Council:

(a) Wednesday, 7 May 2014 – annual meeting (see pages 9-17)
(b) Friday, 11 July 2014 – extra-ordinary meeting (see pages 18-40)

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS by the Business Chair, Leader and Head of Paid Service.

5. CORRESPONDENCE (if any) to date of meeting.

6. QUESTIONS to be put to the Business Chair, a member of the Policy Board or the Chair of any Committee or Sub-Committee, in accordance with the Constitution’s Rules of Procedure No. 9.
7. (a) TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE POLICY BOARD:

(i) Tuesday, 29 April 2014 (see pages 41-47)
(ii) Thursday, 29 May 2014 (see pages 48-55)
(iii) Wednesday, 4 June 2014 (see pages 56-61)
(iv) Tuesday, 10 June 2014 (see pages 62-74)
(v) Thursday, 24 July 2014 (see pages 75-78)

(b) AND TO APPROVE the following resolutions as they involve budget and policy framework matters requiring Council approval:

(i) Minute No. 4 (a) (g) of the 29 May 2014 meeting relating to Proposals for the Ashington Partnership (pg 53).
(ii) Minute No. 21 (b) (c) of the 10 June 2014 meeting relating to the NEPO Transformation (pg 74).

8. TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER MINUTES FROM THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

(a) Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see pages 79-94)
(b) Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see pages 95-135)
(c) Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see pages 137-157)
(d) Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee (see pages 159-181)
(e) Audit Committee (see pages 183-190)
(f) Health and Wellbeing Board (see pages 191-203)

9. NOTICE OF MOTION

Motion No.1

In accordance with Council Rules of Procedure No.10, Councillor A.H. Murray to move the following motion, received by the Democratic Services Manager on 24 August 2014:

“Following the decision to remove the subsidy on post sixteen transport, the Council resolves that a report is presented to the December 2014 Council meeting to update us in a comprehensive way on how the decision has been implemented, and what effect it has had on the educational prospects of our young people. The impact of this change of policy and the subsequent implementation has been significant for many families and young people across the County, and so the full Council should
have the responsibility of assessing the impact of the changes to school transport arrangements.
The report to Council should contain information on:-

1. The number of passes which have been purchased compared to the number of free passes issued to post sixteen students last year.
2. The impact that the removal of the subsidy has had on school bus provision to all students, and how bus and train operators have responded to these changed conditions.
3. The impact on the take-up of spaces at Northumberland colleges compared with those out of the County.
4. The actual savings accrued to the Council compared to those anticipated”.

10. REPORT OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR- CORPORATE RESOURCES


To consider the supplementary report of the Independent Remuneration Panel of August 2014, and to decide if its recommendations should be adopted (see pages 205-210).

11. REPORT OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

Community Governance Reviews – Togston Parish Council and Horncliffe Parish Council

To consider the outcome of Community Governance Reviews in the County (see pages 211-213).

12. VACANCIES

Council is requested to agree appointments to a number of vacancies as follows:-

Committees/Working Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Member/Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communities and Place OSC</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Environment/Rights of Way</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Planning North</td>
<td>LD or Labour</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Planning North</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Planning North</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDF Working Group</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Working Group</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Working Group</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Licensing and Regulatory | Ind | Member

Outside Bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Number of places</th>
<th>Criteria (if any)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Park Authority</td>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HfN Strategic Board</td>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HfN Alnwick Area Board</td>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HfN Building for Northumberland Board (new)</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership</td>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Tweed Commissioners</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Resident within the Tweed district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Councillors (new)</td>
<td>One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Northumberland (new)</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING – MAY 2015

The Council’s annual meeting for 2015 is currently scheduled for Wednesday 6 May 2015, the day before the anticipated general election.

Council is therefore recommended to agree that the annual meeting date be moved to Thursday, 14 May 2015 at 3.00 pm.
IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

- Declare it and give details of its nature before the matter is discussed or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- Complete this sheet and pass it to the Democratic Services Officer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (please print):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item to which your interest relates:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nature of Registerable Personal Interest i.e. either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Annex 2 to Code of Conduct or other interest (as defined by Annex 3 to Code of Conduct) (please give details):

Nature of Non-registerable Personal Interest (please give details):

Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?
1. Registerable Personal Interests – You may have a Registerable Personal Interest if the issue being discussed in the meeting:
   a) relates to any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as defined by Annex 1 to the Code of Conduct); or
   b) any other interest (as defined by Annex 2 to the Code of Conduct)

   The following interests are Disclosable Pecuniary Interests if they are an interest of either you or your spouse or civil partner:

   (1) Employment, Office, Companies, Profession or vocation; (2) Sponsorship; (3) Contracts with the Council; (4) Land in the County; (5) Licences in the County; (6) Corporate Tenancies with the Council; or (7) Securities - interests in Companies trading with the Council.

   The following are other Registerable Personal Interests:

   (1) any body of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management) to which you are appointed or nominated by the Council; (2) any body which (i) exercises functions of a public nature or (ii) has charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purpose includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management ); or (3) any person from whom you have received within the previous three years a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of more than £50 which is attributable to your position as an elected or co-opted member of the Council.

2. Non-Registerable Personal Interests - You may have a non-registerable personal interest when you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are, or ought reasonably to be, aware that a decision in relation to an item of business which is to be transacted might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well being or financial position, or the well being or financial position of a person described below to a greater extent than most inhabitants of the area affected by the decision.

   The persons referred to above are: (a) a member of your family; (b) any person with whom you have a close association; or (c) in relation to persons described in (a) and (b), their employer, any firm in which they are a partner, or company of which they are a director or shareholder.

3. Non-Participation in Council Business

   When you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are aware that the criteria set out below are satisfied in relation to any matter to be considered, or being considered at that meeting, you must: (a) Declare that fact to the meeting; (b) Not participate (or further participate) in any discussion of the matter at the meeting; (c) Not participate in any vote (or further vote) taken on the matter at the meeting; and (d) Leave the room whilst the matter is being discussed.

   The criteria for the purposes of the above paragraph are that: (a) You have a registerable or non-registerable personal interest in the matter which is such that a member of the public knowing the relevant facts would reasonably think it so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgment of the public interest; and either (b) the matter will affect the financial position of yourself or one of the persons or bodies referred to above or in any of your register entries; or (c) the matter concerns a request for any permission, licence, consent or registration sought by yourself or any of the persons referred to above or in any of your register entries.

   This guidance is not a complete statement of the rules on declaration of interests which are contained in the Members’ Code of Conduct. If in any doubt, please consult the Monitoring Officer or relevant Democratic Services Officer before the meeting.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

At the annual meeting of Northumberland County Council held at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 7 May 2014 at 3.00 p.m.

PRESENT

COUNCILLORS

Arckless, G.R.  Johnstone, T.
Armstrong, E.  Jones, G.W.
Bawn, D.  Jones, V.
Bridgell, S.C.  Ledger, D.
Burt, E.  Lindley, I.P.
Cairns, H.  Murray, A.H.
Campbell, D.  Nisbet, K.
Cartie, E.  Parry, K.
Castle, G.  Pidcock, B.
Cessford, C.  Pidcock, L.
Dale, P.A.M.  Reid, A.W.
Daley, W.  Reid, J.
Davey, J.G.  Richards, M.E.
Davey, S.  Rickerby, L.J.
Dickinson, S.  Riddle, J.R.
Dodd, R.R.  Sambrook, A.G.
Douglas, M.I.  Sanderson, H.G.H.
Dungworth, S.  Sawyer, J.
Fearon, J.B.  Sharp, A.
Flux, B.  Simpson, E.
Foster, J.D.  Smith, J.E.
Gallacher, B.  Swithenbank, I.C.F.
Gibson, R.  Thorne, T.N.
Gobin, J.J.  Tyler, V.
Graham, K.  Wallace, A.
Grimshaw, L.  Watkin, R.J.D.
Hepple, A.  Watson, J.G.
Homer, C.  Webb, G.
Horncastle, C.W.  Wilson, T.S.
Hutchinson, J.I.  Woodman, J.
Jackson, P.A.
OFFICERS

Bennett, A. Chief Fire Officer
Henry, L. Principal Solicitor
Lally, D. Executive Director - Wellbeing and Community Health
Logan, C. Head of Financial and Customer Services
Mason, S. Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources
Roll, J. Service Manager: Democracy
Rowland, B. Executive Director - Place
Stubbs, K. Committee Services Manager

1. ELECTION OF BUSINESS CHAIR AND DEPUTY BUSINESS CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

The Leader moved Councillor Dickinson as Business Chair. This was seconded by the Deputy Leader.

Councillor Jackson did not support the nomination of Councillor Dickinson. He felt the position was now due a review of its role, and did not feel that it would be possible for the independence required of the role to be brought by Councillor Dickinson.

On the nomination being put to the vote there voted FOR: 36; AGAINST: 25.

RESOLVED that Councillor Dickinson be elected Business Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Dickinson in the Chair.

Councillor Dickinson then called for nominations for Deputy Business Chair. The Leader moved Councillor E. Simpson, which was seconded by the Deputy Leader.

Councillor Jackson queried the need for this new post, which was not included in the Constitution. The Leader responded that the proposal was in response to advice from counsel, and in response to a request from Councillor J. Reid, he agreed that all members could have sight of that.

Councillor Sanderson queried the justification for the post and Councillor Watkin sought reassurance that the Authority was not acting illegally in making this appointment without reference to its existence within the Constitution. Members were advised that the current position no different to the election of the Business Chair the previous year without it being included in the Constitution. The appointment essentially created the post, and the constitution would be amended accordingly. The Authority was not acting illegally in doing this.
On the nomination being put to the vote there voted FOR: 34; AGAINST: 27. 
RESOLVED that Councillor Simpson be elected Deputy Business Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Kelly, Lang, Robson, Taylor and Tebbutt.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CIVIC HEAD AND DEPUTY CIVIC HEAD FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

The Leader nominated Councillor Graham as the Civic Head, which was seconded by the Deputy Leader. Councillor Nisbet, as outgoing Civic Head, detailed the highlights of her year of office, adding that she had raised £4,000 for her charity, motor neurone disease. She thanked members for their support, and paid particular tribute to Susan Taylor, Tracy Hollan and Jackie Roll for their help and assistance during the course of the year.

The Leader then nominated Councillor Nisbet as the Deputy Civic Head, which was seconded by the Deputy Leader.

RESOLVED that Councillor Graham be appointed Civic Head, and Councillor Nisbet be appointed Deputy Civic Head for the ensuing year.

4. MINUTES

In relation to Minute No. 78 (Announcements), Councillor Swithenbank advised that a schedule of how the £2.7m of additional funding for roads from the government would be spent would be published by the end of the month.

With regard to Minute No.82 (d) (Communities and Place OSC minutes), Councillor Swithenbank advised that a briefing note on the Northumbria Safer Roads Initiative, which included an analysis of the enforcement work carried out within the County, would be circulated to members in the next few days.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the County Council, held on Wednesday, 2 April 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed and sealed with the Common Seal of the Council.

5. DISCLOSURES OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor Ledger disclosed a non registerable prejudicial interest in item 10(a) on the agenda (Policy Board Minutes 8 April 2014, Minute No. 86), as he had a relative employed at one of the schools within the Bedlingtonshire Partnership, and advised that he would withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Councillor Foster advised that she also had a non registerable prejudicial interest in the same matter as governor at Stakeford First School and would also withdraw.
6. **APPOINTMENTS**

(1) Council was asked to note the appointment of the Deputy Leader and Policy Board Members, and their portfolios as follows:

- Deputy Leader with Corporate Resources – D. Ledger
- Planning, Housing and Regeneration – A. Hepple
- Streetcare and Environment – I.C.F. Switchenbank
- Adult Care and Public Health – S. Dungworth
- Children's Services – G.R. Arckless
- Community Infrastructure and Culture – V. Tyler

Policy Board Member without Portfolio – P.A. Jackson, J. Reid, P. Kelly

**RESOLVED** that the appointments be noted.

(2) **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**

Council was asked to confirm the appointment of Committees and Working Groups included with the agenda as **APPENDIX 1**, their terms of reference and membership numbers. Council was also asked to appoint the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Committees and Working Groups listed in the agenda.

A small number of changes were proposed to Committee memberships and an additional working group for Leisure, Tourism and Artistic Culture was proposed (copy attached to the sealed minutes).

Councillor Jackson referred to the useful role served by the Constitution Working Group in the past, and felt that it should continue. He suggested that when amendments to the constitution were required, they should be brought to an all-party working group before being considered by Council in order to save Council time.

The Leader responded that the proposals for dealing with changes to the constitution, by way of an annual report from the Monitoring Officer, would bring the Authority in line with many other Authorities. However, any major changes could be raised with the Group Leaders and an ad-hoc working group formed if necessary.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the Committees and Working Groups be appointed as listed in Appendix 1, subject to the addition of the Leisure, Tourism and Artistic Culture Working Group and the minor changes to member representation circulated at the meeting;

(b) the following Chairs and Vice Chairs be appointed:-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee/WG</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Vice Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPSS OSC</td>
<td>A. Wallace</td>
<td>A. Sambrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACS OSC</td>
<td>B. Pidcock</td>
<td>E. Burt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;W OSC</td>
<td>M. Richards</td>
<td>E. Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;P OSC</td>
<td>B. Gallacher</td>
<td>J. Lang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension Fund Panel</td>
<td>A.W. Reid</td>
<td>E. Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Committee</td>
<td>A. Dale</td>
<td>A.W. Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards Committee</td>
<td>Mr J. Jackson</td>
<td>G. Webb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Area Planning</td>
<td>J. Taylor</td>
<td>D. Watkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Area Planning</td>
<td>M. Douglas</td>
<td>L. Grimshaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Area Planning</td>
<td>C. Horncastle</td>
<td>I. Hutchinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEROW Committee</td>
<td>P. Kelly</td>
<td>J. Foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing Committee</td>
<td>K. Parry</td>
<td>K. Nisbet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing and Reg</td>
<td>K. Parry</td>
<td>K. Nisbet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitions Committee</td>
<td>S. Dickinson</td>
<td>V. Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellbeing Board</td>
<td>S. Dickinson</td>
<td>Ms C. Atkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Area Committee</td>
<td>S. Bridgett</td>
<td>H. Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Area Committee</td>
<td>D. Campbell</td>
<td>L. Pidcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Area Committee</td>
<td>R. Dodd</td>
<td>V. Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Services WG</td>
<td>S. Dickinson</td>
<td>S. Dungworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Liaison WG</td>
<td>K. Graham</td>
<td>T. Thorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDF WG</td>
<td>P. Kelly</td>
<td>C. Horncastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing WG</td>
<td>G. Webb</td>
<td>J. Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIC Urban WG</td>
<td>E. Cartie</td>
<td>S. Davey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIC Rural WG</td>
<td>G. Castle</td>
<td>D. Watkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regeneration WG</td>
<td>T. Johnstone</td>
<td>K. Nisbet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Works WG</td>
<td>J. Sawyer</td>
<td>A.W. Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure, Tourism and Artistic Culture WG (NEW)</td>
<td>I. Lindley</td>
<td>A.W. Reid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) any further minor changes to Committee membership to be agreed between the Group Leaders.

### (3) APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Council was asked to nominate its representatives to a number of outside bodies.

With regard to the Combined Authority Scrutiny appointments, Councillor Jackson expressed his disappointment that proportionality across the region was not being applied, which meant that it would be difficult for opposition groups to have a fair say and fully hold the Combined Authority to account.

Councillor J. Reid felt that more proportionality could have been gained for scrutiny by calculating the number of opposition members across the region and allocating it on that basis.
The Leader responded that the Combined Authority was about all councils in the region working together for the benefit of the region as a whole.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the following nominations be made:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Nominations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny</td>
<td>Two (one Labour – T. Johnstone, one Conservative – W. Daley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Authority Audit and Standards</td>
<td>One – A. Dale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Authority Transport North East Committee</td>
<td>Two – D. Ledger and I. Switchenbank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency Regional Flood And Coastal Committee</td>
<td>One plus one deputy – D. Ledger and G. Davey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundwork North East and Cumbria Board</td>
<td>One – J. Lang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kielder Partnership</td>
<td>One – A. Dale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Park Authority</td>
<td>Six – S. Davey, A. Murray, J. Riddle, G. Sanderson, A. Sharp, J. Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle Royal Grammar School</td>
<td>One – T. Robson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of England Reserve Forces and Cadets Association</td>
<td>One – D. Ledger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Pennines AONB Partnership</td>
<td>One – A. Dale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership</td>
<td>Four – G. Jones, I. Switchenbank, J. Taylor, J. Woodman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland College Board</td>
<td>One plus one officer – R. Arckless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County Blind Association</td>
<td>One – V. Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland Sport</td>
<td>One – V. Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland Strategic Partnership Leadership Forum</td>
<td>One plus one officer – D. Ledger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTC Touring Theatre Company</td>
<td>One – TBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumbria Police and Crime Panel</td>
<td>Two – D. Ledger, C. Homer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee</td>
<td>One – R. Arckless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherburn Hospital Governing Body</td>
<td>One – S. Davey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) any further changes to nominations to be agreed between the Group Leaders.
7. **POLICY BOARD MINUTES**

The Leader moved the following minutes of Policy Board:

(i) **Tuesday, 8 April 2014**

With regard to Minute No. 87 (Options for the Future of County Hall and Corporate Headquarters), Councillor Jackson sought reassurance on three issues:

- That all options would be developed
- That there would be pre-scrutiny of the report to Policy Board in October
- That all options discussed in the consultant’s report would be done on a fair basis.

The Leader confirmed this would be the case.

In accordance with Minute No.5 above, Councillors Ledger and Foster left the room for the resolution on this matter.

**RESOLVED that:**

(a) the minutes of the Policy Board meeting held on Tuesday 8 April 2014 be received; and
(b) the following resolution be approved as it involves budget and policy framework matters requiring Council approval:

**Minute No. 86 (4) (c) (vi) relating to Outcomes of Consultation on proposals for part of the Bedlington Partnership**

8. **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

(a) **Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

These were presented by Councillor Wallace.

With regard to Minute No. 66 (State of Northumberland’s Economy), Councillor Dale expressed concern that some registered providers were not signed up with the Homefinder Service. She felt that there was a need for a policy that all residential providers were signed up to local agreements to ensure there was enough affordable housing for local people, and she asked for a report on this. Councillor Hepple responded that providers were regularly encouraged to sign up, but agreed to look at the issues which had been raised by the Housing Working Group on the subject.

Councillor Watkin urged some caution as affordable housing providers were a valuable employer in some areas and it would be unfortunate if they were adversely affected by this.
It was confirmed that Arch was signed up to Northumberland Homefinders.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.

(b) **Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

These were presented by Councillor B. Pidcock who stressed the co-operative working which existed within the Committee across all political groups.

Councillor Sanderson raised a point of clarification regarding Minute No. 89 (Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) Annual Report), and the point that the Partnership should be better defined, querying why this had not been a specific recommendation from the Committee. Councillor Arkless acknowledged the point made by Councillor Sanderson, and provided some clarification about the current funding arrangements for the NSCB. It was clear that the Authority would not be able to continue at its current funding level, and that proper resourcing arrangements were needed. The Scrutiny Committee wanted further information about how the NCSB operated, and the Chair of the Committee was to attend a Board meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.

(c) **Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

These were presented by Councillor Richards.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.

(d) **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

These were presented by Councillor Sawyer.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.

(e) **Audit Committee**

These were presented by Councillor Dale who drew members’ attention to Minute No. 47 (Reports of the External Auditor) and the recommendations from three recent reviews which had been completed. She suggested that Scrutiny should look at these recommendations to ensure that they were implemented.

With regard to Minute No. 48 (Procurement of the Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning System), Councillor Dale asked that Scrutiny also look at whistleblowing issues in light of these events.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Audit Committee be received and the issues highlighted by Councillor Dale be noted.
9. **DELEGATED DECISIONS**

Councillor Jackson asked that all members receive a copy of the final version of the LTP.

**RESOLVED** that the decisions taken by Directors following consultation with Portfolio Holders be noted, and all members be sent a copy of the final version of the LTP.

10. **ANNUAL REPORTS**

**RESOLVED** that the following annual reports be received:

(1) Overview and Scrutiny Committees

(2) Standards Committee

(3) Pension Fund Panel

The Common Seal of the County Council of Northumberland was hereunto affixed in the presence of

..............................................................
Chairman of the County Council

..............................................................
Duly Authorised Officer
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

At an extra-ordinary meeting of Northumberland County Council held at County Hall, Morpeth on Friday, 11 July 2014 at 9.30am.

PRESENT

COUNCILLORS

Arckless, G.R.                Jones, G.W.
Armstrong, E.                  Jones, V.
Bawn, D.                       Kelly, P
Bridgett, S.C.                Lang, J.A.
Burt, E.                       Ledger, D.
Cairns, H.                    Lindley, I.P.
Campbell, D.                   Murray, A.H.
Cartie, E.                     Nisbet, K.
Castle, G.                     Parry, K.
Cessford, C.                   Pidcock, B.
Dale, P.A.M.                   Pidcock, L.
Daley, W.                     Reid, A.W.
Davey, J.G.                    Reid, J.
Davey, S.                      Richards, M.E.
Dickinson, S.                  Rickerby, L.J.
Dodd, R.R.                     Riddle, J.R.
Douglas, M.I.                  Robson, T
Dungworth, S.                  Sambrook, A.G.
Fearon, J.B.                   Sanderson, H.G.H.
Flux, B.                       Sharp, A.
Foster, J.D.                   Simpson, E.
Gallacher, B.                  Smith, J.E.
Gallacher, B.                  Swithenbank, I.C.F.
Gibson, R.                     Tebbutt, A
Gobin, J.J.                    Thorne, T.N.
Graham, K.                     Tyler, V.
Grimshaw, L                    Wallace, A.
Hepple, A.                     Watkin, R.J.D.
Homer, C.                      Watson, J.G.
Horncastle, C.W.               Webb, G.
Hunter, E.I.                   Wilson, T.S.
Hutchinson, J.I.               Woodman, J.
Jackson, P.A.
Johnstone, T.
11. **ANNOUNCEMENTS** by the Chairman, Leader and Head of Paid Service.

The Business Chair announced that Susi Robertson, previously a Locality Officer with the Council, had passed away on 9 July, and this was also the first meeting of Council since Councillor Taylor had passed away in June. Everybody present observed a minute’s silence in their memory.

12. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Sawyer.

13. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations were declared in relation to Councillor Jackson’s motion regarding Post 16 Transport:
- Councillor G Jones declared a non registerable personal interest as his children were 14 and 17 years old
- Councillor Murray declared a non registerable personal interest as he had three grandchildren
- Councillor Dungworth declared a non registerable personal interest as her children were 15 and 17 years old
- Councillor Daley declared a non registerable personal interest he was father to a 16 year old child, but he already paid for school transport for the child, who attended a denominational school
- Councillor Campbell declared a non registerable personal interest as she had three grandchildren
- Councillor Nisbet declared a non registerable personal interest as she had one grandson.
14. **QUESTIONS** to be put to the Chair, a member of the Policy Board or the Chair of any Committee or Sub-Committee, in accordance with the Constitution’s Rules of Procedure No. 10.

**Question 1**

Councillor G. Castle put the following question to the Policy Board member for Children’s Services:

"Could the Executive please provide a report on the progress of the Alnwick High School replacement and confirm that we are on track to commence construction on site in early 2015"

Councillor R. Arckless replied that the new schools were planned to be open between April 2016 and September 2016. The Alnwick school replacement project was on programme, with a planning application being submitted at the end of July and construction planned to start on 2 February 2015. Miller construction had been appointed to construct both Alnwick and Bedlington schools together with 10 other schools in the North East batch. The new schools were planned to be open between April 2016 and September 2016.

**Question 2**

Councillor D. Bawn put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“Please provide an update to the Council on the investigation into why large parts of Morpeth failed to receive Polling Cards prior to the recent European Elections; specifically:
  a) What was the extent of the problem.
  b) What steps have been taken to prevent a repeat of this episode in future”.

The Leader of the Council replied that the Electoral Registration Officer was aware that a number of electors from specific areas in Morpeth did not receive a polling card in advance of the election. He had started a full investigation into the issue in order to determine the cause and ensure that steps were put in place to prevent this happening again. The investigation had been delayed due to staffing changes at a senior level within the elections team, but would be completed by the middle of August. In the meantime the elections team were carefully monitoring the process for the forthcoming Longhoughton by election.

Councillor Bawn welcomed the investigation and looked forward to reading the findings in August.

**Question 3**

Councillor D. Bawn put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“What does the Leader feel is the reason for his ongoing problems in getting the message of his administration correctly to the local press, media and wider public? We had the press and media reporting that he wanted to build 2000 houses on the County Hall site which was later claimed to be inaccurate.
Then we had the press and media reporting that ALL potholes in Northumberland were to be filled in before the end of June, which was also claimed to be inaccurate. What steps has he taken to ensure that he is not "misquoted" in future?"

The Leader of the Council replied that there were always dangers in relying upon the media for all the facts about any issue. Journalists were often under enormous pressure to publish quickly. The Council regularly published information on our website and through social media. We would advise local people to check our website for full details on any key issue.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Bawn also asked if the Leader shared concerns that council press releases were not politically impartial. The Leader of the Council indicated that he would reply to this in writing.

**Question 4**

Councillor D. Bawn put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“A "Labour Group Spokesman" was quoted in the Journal Newspaper on 26th June 2014 claiming that this Meeting would cost the Taxpayer £45,000.00. Please provide a full breakdown of the anticipated costs of this meeting to include:

1) Anticipated Councillor's travel expenses (for Councillors not already in County Hall on other business)
2) Anticipated Travel Expenses for Officers to attend the Meeting whose normal place of work is not County Hall
3) Printing Costs of Agenda Papers (excluding costs for printing minutes of Committees, which would have to have been printed for the September meeting in any event).
4) Printing Costs of Notice of Meeting.
5) Postage Costs of Notice of Meeting and Agenda Costs, over and above the normal postage costs of sending papers to Councillors.
6) Any miscellaneous costs required (please note that "Officer's Time" is not a cost to the taxpayer as Officers are paid in any event whether or not the meeting occurs.)"

The Leader thanked Councillor Bawn for his question and noted with interest that he had chosen to focus on the cost of an unnecessary meeting rather than the correct use of the call in procedure or indeed the impact of Government cuts. In order to avoid this distraction he had asked the S151 Officer to provide a detailed breakdown of the total cost incurred to date. This information showed costs had exceeded £80,000.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Bawn asked why he felt it unnecessary for the Council to meet between May and September and why the 2 July meeting was cancelled on the grounds of no business before none had been submitted? The Leader replied that he expected issues to have been called in, but the Policy Board decision on post 16 transport hadn't, and this meeting had to be called at rate payers' expense.
Question 5

Councillor W. Daley put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“The creation of the LA7 Combined Authority by the Government and 7 Local Authorities has the ambition of creating the best possible conditions for growth in jobs, investment and living standards, making the North East an excellent location for business and enabling residents to develop high-level skills so they can benefit long into the future.

Within the LA7, Cllr Grant Davey has been given responsibility for all matters relating to Employability and Inclusion. Could the Leader of the Council please outline how young people in Northumberland, especially those currently in school or thinking of attending college, will be supported by him on his lead role of Inclusion and Employability?”

The Leader replied that a full briefing paper on Employability and Skills was to be presented to the Combined Authority. This would be shared with all Councillors once it had been officially published by the Combined Authority.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Daley stated that Northumberland was a diverse economy, and inclusiveness meant removing barriers to work and opportunities. He asked what the Council had done to remove it. The Leader replied that £130m was being taken out of the county, and the £180m promised had been taken away from the control of local authorities. The Council was inclusive with its post 16 transport policy, whereby a £600 charge covered the costs of £1100 in rural areas and £900 in urban areas, thereby cushioning rural students.

Question 6

Councillor P. Jackson put the following question to the Business Chair:

“On 16th June you were handed a formal request for an Extraordinary ´Meeting signed by 11 County Councillors. On what grounds did you refuse to call this Extraordinary Meeting within the seven days of receiving a formal request as you are required to do under the Council's Constitution?”

The Business Chair said in response to the submitted requisition for an extraordinary meeting, Councillor Jackson had been asked what business he wished to have conducted at such a meeting, as his requisition received on the 16th June did not provide any information in this regard. It was reasonable to expect a requisition requesting an extraordinary meeting to specify the business which was to be conducted. The motion which formed the only substantive business on the summons for this meeting was not then submitted by Councillor Jackson until the 23rd June, some seven days later. The Lead Executive Director then wrote to Councillor Jackson to express some concerns he had regarding the content of the motion and seeking Councillor Jackson’s confirmation that he wished to proceed with the request for an extraordinary meeting. That exchange of correspondence took some time to conclude after which the decision to call the meeting was taken on the 30th June, seven days after receipt of the motion. The decision to convene
the meeting was confirmed to Councillor Jackson by the Lead Executive Director on the morning of 1 July and the summons for the meeting issued on the 3 July.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Jackson said he had detailed his reasons in his note of 16 June, which related to the cancellation of the 2 July meeting and alleged maladministration for doing so before possibly knowing there could have been no business, and would the constitution be abided by in the future? The Business Chair reaffirmed that there had been a delay in receiving the requested information, and the meeting was called once it was received.

**Question 7**

Councillor R. Dodd put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“I hope the Leader will join me in putting party politics aside and welcome the Government’s move towards introducing a fairer funding formula for schools, which will see the Government hand an extra £10.6 million for in 2014/15. Can the Leader provide the Council with Council Timetable as to when and how this new funding will be allocated to local schools?”

The Leader of the Council replied that the principal content of the Department for Education (DfE)’s most recent consultation was to seek views about how an additional £350m should be distributed nationally to support schools in the poorest funded Local Authorities. The figures in the consultation paper suggested that Northumberland could gain by £10.6m in 2015/16, which at 6.4% was the fifth highest percentage gain in the whole of the country out of the 62 Local Authorities proposed to benefit. Central Government’s formal recognition of the historic underfunding of Northumberland schools and their intention to address that problem was most welcome. The consultation closed on 30 April 2014 and the outcome of that consultation was not expected before mid-July.

The Council was currently consulting with all Northumberland Schools as to how this additional funding should be distributed to schools through the 2015/16 formula. This consultation will close on 5 September 2014. The timetable following the consultation was as follows:

- 17 September 2014 – results of consultation with schools taken to Schools Forum for their views and recommendations
- 7 October 2014 – recommendations of Schools Forum taken to Policy Board
- 22 October 2014 – Policy Board decision taken back to Schools Forum
- 31 October 2014 – Deadline for submission of formula structure and indicative formula values to the DfE
- Mid - January 2015 - Final formula values agreed and submitted to the DfE
- Early February 2015 – 2015/16 Budget Shares issued to schools.

**Question 8**

Councillor C. Homer put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“After months of expectation, I am very pleased to see the consultation finally starting on the NCC preferred option for Hexham bus facilities. However, the one consistent theme over this time has been a complete lack of definitive detail, coupled with often outlandish statements in the local press. Many of the concerns
from local people that I have received, have centred around the way that the whole issue has been handled from day one. It would be true to say we have had one grand scheme after another, and yet, not a single bit of formal public consultation so far. Can the Leader give me his word that the Council will listen to and take in to account local resident's views?"

The Leader of the Council replied that Councillor Homer and everyone concerned could be assured that the Council would listen to, and take account of, the views not only of local residents but everyone with a stake in Hexham Bus Station, including those from the wider Hexham area and businesses. To this end, as planned, a Hexham Bus Station Engagement Event was taking place on 11 July in the Council Chamber at Prospect House, Hexham from 10.00am onwards. This would include sessions for Parish Councils, bus operators and businesses as well as an open drop-in session for members of the public.

The aim of the event was to provide information and engage with residents and key stakeholders on eight options that had been considered for the future of the Bus Station. No decision would be made until early autumn, and only after further consultation had been completed and options further developed.

**Question 9**

Councillor J. Fearon put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

"The Leader will be aware that the County Council has decided to replace Prudhoe High School's Governing body with an Interim Executive Board. Can the Leader explain to Council the reasons for this, and assure the parents and pupils, not just of Prudhoe, but across the whole of East Tynedale, that the Council will do everything it can to help Prudhoe High School out of Special Measures?"

The Leader of the Council replied that following the recent Ofsted monitoring visit earlier this month Prudhoe Community High School was judged as making good progress towards getting out of the special measures category. Particular comment was made regarding the significantly improved support from the Council and leadership in the school and the improvements in teaching and learning.

To further support the on-going improvements the County Council had applied to the Department for Education to institute an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the Governing Body. The IEB would lead the school as it moved in to the next phase of its development, determined to offer the young people of Prudhoe and wider East Tynedale the best deal possible when it came to their education and future aspiration.

The IEB, along with the Council’s enhanced support, was concentrating on ensuring rapid improvement. The IEB membership included a range of professionals, selected to ensure skills in a range of areas including commercial and business skills, safe guarding, contracting, estates and IT and most importantly governance and assurance leadership experience and parent governor experience.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Fearon asked how the problem could have developed so quickly. The Leader replied that the Administration was very
concerned about the situation, and for any schools in similar situations, and they would do their best to keep up standards.

**Question 10**

Councillor R. Gibson put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“The Government's invest of an extra £5.6m in Northumberland's roads is beginning to have an impact and things are slowly improving. However we have all heard concerns about the poor quality of the pothole repairs. Will the Leader ensure measures are put in place to ensure any future repairs are as long lasting as possible?”

The Leader of the Council replied that the Council strived to ensure that all repairs were carried out to a high standard and the solutions that were deployed were appropriate and provided value for money. In the last year we have modernised our approach and introduced new delivery methods, with the majority of potholes now fixed using the Jetpatcher or Roadmender (hot tar) methods which were expected to last up to three years. This stopped further short-term deterioration and provided time for more permanent repairs to be carried out. This approach had proved to be more cost effective, and had improved productivity significantly, allowing us to provide a quicker, more responsive service and deal with a backlog of pothole repairs which stood at more than 35,000 in May 2013.

Alongside repairing potholes to protect the road and increase its longevity, drainage works were carried out, gullies were unblocked, over growing vegetation was removed and road channels were swept. All roads were inspected with an assessment made on the most appropriate method of repair to ensure maximum longevity and effectiveness. Over 90% of reactive pothole repairs carried out should last in excess of 18 months, 10% would potentially fail due to other factors such as surface water run-off and for other reasons.

The real issue however, was that Northumberland - like many places in the UK – was struggling to manage the impact of the long term deterioration of its highway through a combination of severe winter weather and in particular unusually wet weather, and long term underinvestment.

The rate of demand for repairs would continue unless the Council could secure significant capital investment in the long term reconstruction of the highway network. The Council would continue to spend its existing budget wisely and deliver improved efficiency where possible. At the same time, the Council would continue to compete and bid for national funding programmes. The extra £5.6million, that had been recently secured, demonstrated this and was welcomed.

The Council would continue to lobby central government for additional resources to secure the necessary capital investment and tackle the underlying reason for long term deterioration of our highways. The Council had written to ministers on several occasions to bring this long term investment issue to the attention of ministers. For example, this year alone the Leader had written to Brandon Lewis MP and Councillor Swithenbank had written to Patrick McLoughlin MP to highlight the damage caused by flooding and the need for long term investment. He was aware that the previous administration also wrote to ministers on several occasions to
highlight these issues.

Whilst the grants the Council had recently received were helpful, they would not resolve the long term investment challenge.

Councillor Swinthebank added that so far between 65,000 – 70,000 potholes had been fixed, and nationally the average cost was £52 each. Council staff had achieved this at £15 each, and should be congratulated by all group leaders for how they adapted new technology and were getting roads into the condition that people wanted them.

**Question 11**

Councillor A. Dale put the following question to the Leader of the Council:

“At Full Council on 2nd April this year I broached the subject of the bullying of Councillors and also members of staff. The results of the recent staff survey are included in the Lead Executive Director’s Briefing of 11th June. The briefing states that one of the areas that merits special attention is that bullying and harassment is perceived to be an issue. The Council has indicated that where there is bullying or harassment the Council will address it within an action plan. Can you please let me know what steps this Council is taking to ensure that bullying and harassment does not take place in the workplace.”

The Deputy Leader of the Council replied that the Administration took the issue of bullying extremely seriously and had requested that a dedicated helpline was established which will be available to both Councillors and staff outside of normal line management, and would enable issues to be reported in complete confidence.

The recent staff survey did highlight a perceived issue around bullying in the workplace and currently the Heads of Service were developing an Action Plan which would pick this up together with other issues raised in the survey.

As a supplementary question Councillor Dale stressed the need for good outcomes for staff, and asked about the reporting mechanism so people could know what action had been taken and the outcomes. Councillor Ledger advised that this would be done, and if any bullying was reported it would be dealt with as it had been in the previous 12 months.

**15. PUBLIC QUESTIONS – SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE**

The Business Chair explained that the Council had received a number of questions from the public in relation to the Post 16 School Transport Policy. Under the Council’s rules of procedure, questions from the public were only permitted prior to ordinary meetings of Council. Members were therefore asked to consider whether they were agreeable to the Council’s rules of procedure being suspended to allow valid questions from the public received by noon on Tuesday, 8 July 2014 to be considered at this extraordinary meeting.

**RESOLVED** that rules of procedure be suspended to allow valid questions from the
public to be considered, and normal procedure for Public Question Time as detailed within the Council’s Constitution apply.

**Part A: Questioners in Attendance**

Twelve questions had been received from members of the public who were attending the meeting, which were asked and answered as follows:

1. **MRS. C. FAWCUS, ASHWELL, NORTH LANE, NORTH SUNDERLAND, SEAHOUSES, NE68 7UQ**

   “The indications given by the Labour administration in their original proposals to impose charges for Post 16 transport throughout Northumberland, at the Policy Board, at the Budgetary Meeting of the Full Council and most importantly during the 3 month long consultation period, was that their intention was to set the charge of a maximum £450 per pupil. Can the Leader of the Council give us a full explanation as to how the £450 suddenly became £600 – an increase overnight of 33% and does the Leader of the Council not have the first clue of the sudden and immediate financial difficulty of hundreds of families overnight across Northumberland (even at £450)? Many will have to pay not only once, but twice or even three times”.

   The Leader replied that the consultation paper stated that the cost of providing transport for 3500 students had risen to £3.3m, so it was clear that the cost of withdrawal of all subsidies (which was a stated option in the consideration document) would be well over £900 per student. There were a number of policy options which were consulted on. They included an option to “withdraw subsidies for student travel completely……..”. This was the option that was eventually adopted, albeit in a slightly diluted form. This meant directing students to use public bus or rail services where these were available. Where they were not, the Council acknowledged the need to make seats available on school transport services commissioned by the Council, and the consultation paper stated that in such cases the full cost would need to be paid for by the student. If the Council sought to do this and fully recover the costs of transport it arranged directly, this would have entailed an average payment of over £900 per year for a student to travel on a school transport service, but a decision was made to limit the charge at £600 per student. The £600 charge was the average cost of season tickets the Council currently purchased on behalf of existing Post-16 students from our two major suppliers of public bus services in the County, i.e. Arriva & Go NE.

   There was a separate option to charge all students £450, and this would have involved the Council continuing to heavily subsidise Post-16 transport but after consideration this option was not adopted as part of the Policy Board’s decision-making process. These policy options were made very clear in the consultation document.

   Mrs Fawcus asked a supplementary question about consideration given to people’s views about not being able to pay the cost and the need to set it at £600 if people could not use the bus services in question. The Leader replied that the Council did not wish to increase the amount, but the situation had changed with the Government giving bursaries; some schools were paying for all their post 16
students.

2. **MRS. C. FAWCUS, ASHWELL, NORTH LANE, NORTH SUNDERLAND, SEAHOUSES, NE68 7UQ**

“Why was the existing school transport provision not monitored? If the authority’s decision is based on the need to reduce £320m from its budgets in 2014/15 would it not have been possible to review the current provision with a view to making changes to the current use of transport providers. For instance, having a co-ordinated approach to the use of taxi’s to transport children to the same town from rural communities. There are a number of cases where the journeys and use of transport appears illogical and very costly (examples can be provided). A total review of all school transport would have been more cost-effective and not be discriminatory towards post 16 rural children.” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that that Council had a statutory obligation to provide free school transport for children of compulsory school age (up to 16 years old) if they lived beyond the statutory walking distance of their catchment or nearest school so charging for the costs of their school transport journeys was not an option available to the Council. The Council had a rolling programme of route reviews and re-tendering activity which was undertaken on an area by area basis. This ensured potential savings were realised, and opportunities were taken to eradicate unnecessary costs whilst also taking account of statutory and policy-led constraints. There was a close working relationship between the Council’s School Transport and Procurement teams which ensured all school transport services were tendered. Savings in the region of £1.8m had been made through route reviews alone over the past 5 years.

If people had examples from their local area where they thought further rationalisation to school transport provision could be made he urged them to contact the school transport team who would look into their concerns. Quite often there were reasons why different taxis served the same village; this could be because they were transporting children to different schools with conflicting opening and closing times etc.

3. **MR. J. LLOYD, 18 RAMSEY’S LANE, WOOLER, NE71 6NR**

“You have publicly stated that one of the main reasons for changes to post-16 transport is to support education within the county. You believe that the new charging regime will encourage less people to send their children out of Northumberland.

As parents have to bear the cost of transport charges regardless of whether their children stay within county or go elsewhere, how can this possibly be encouraging and supporting local schools and colleges within Northumberland?” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that whilst most families would be responsible for the costs of travel for their children when they enter Post-16 education the Council had taken the following initiatives to ensure that attendance at a student’s local school or
college was financially a more attractive option; (i) negotiated new “zonal” tickets from Arriva which offered cheaper travel for students attending local schools and colleges; (ii) changed its transport policy so that if a travel permit was required on a school bus commissioned by the Council (necessary in those areas of the County where there wasn’t a viable public transport system) it would only be provided if a student was attending their nearest educational establishment (iii) ended the practice of funding travel to out of catchment area schools or out of the county colleges for students when similar courses are available more locally. Whilst regrettfully, funding for the travel arrangements of students entering Post 16 education had had to be withdrawn, the new policy was explicit in encouraging attendance at local schools, colleges and other training providers.

Mr Lloyd added that it was one week before the end of term and parents did not know their options; could this problem have not been foreseen? The Leader advised that schools had been sent this information and queries should be raised with them.

4. MRS. A. JOYNSON, THE WATER MILL, WAREN MILL, BELFORD, NE70 7EE

“Does the Leader of the Council believe the statutory consultation on the introduction of Post 16 travel charges to be value for public money as all of the responses and comments heard in reply to the consultation were entirely ignored by the policy board in making their decision?” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader advised that the purpose of the consultation was threefold; (i) to find out what people thought about this particular issue (ii) to identify their priorities and concerns and (iii) to fulfil our statutory obligations. We appreciated the time and effort people took to respond to the consultation exercise. Their views were recorded and analysed and the feedback received was very much influencing the way the Council was rolling-out the new Post-16 Transport Policy.

Liaison was taking place with colleagues in schools and colleges to put in place arrangements whereby students in financial hardship who didn’t qualify for financial assistance from the Council could then apply for help from their learning provider. The Council was taking forward plans to widen the curriculum offer available at local high and secondary schools in Northumberland, and working closely with bus companies to ensure more price competitive tickets were available for young people. Details were now available on our school transport webpage. In fact some learning providers in Northumberland were already responding positively to the Council’s change in policy with regards Post-16 transport by arranging and funding their own bus services. This was what had happened in other local authorities who had already felt the need to make this difficult decision.

Any proposal to charge for a service that was currently provided free was never going to be greeted positively by members of the public and so it proved with Post-16 transport. Members of the Council’s Policy Board had to take account of the views of the public against the context of the huge financial challenges the Council was currently facing. It had taken a decision to reluctantly withdraw most of the financial subsidies currently provided for Post-16 transport.

Ms Joynson asked why postcodes were requested on the forms, was this to get
typical voting preferences? The Leader replied that collecting details of postcodes assisted in gathering information about where children might go to school.

5. MRS. A. JOYNSON, THE WATER MILL, WAREN MILL, BELFORD, NE70 7EE

“How can the Leader of the Council justify the sudden and catastrophic financial penalty for having a 16 year old in school by stating that all other councils do this when it is actually up to the council what you do, as long as rural children are protected and age is not discriminated against according to the Government’s transport guidance, ‘each authority can set its own rules’ “ (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that each authority could set its own rules and Northumberland appeared to be unique in maintaining a free travel scheme for students in Post-16 education. Other authorities withdrew free provision many years ago. The Government had not ring-fenced Northumberland from the spending cuts imposed on councils. The Council could not simply continue to ignore the extremely difficult financial realities it was facing at the present time.

There was a common feeling that the introduction of a £600 charge for those students that were reliant on a school bus to travel to and from their local school discriminated against those families living in rural areas. The statutory guidance issued by the Government to local authorities stated: “Young people in rural areas should not be worse off financially because they need to travel further to access education and training provision than their peers in urban areas”. Furthermore, the statutory guidance stated: “Local authorities may ask learners and their parents for a contribution to transport costs”. When making these regrettable changes to transport policy, the Council had sought to do so in the most equitable way possible given the severe strain on Council resources.

In those areas of the County which were not served by public bus services a mechanism needed to be established that ensured the cost of travel for Post 16 students was transferred to families – to do otherwise would leave the Council open to the charge that it was establishing more favourable travel arrangements for students in rural areas when compared to those in more populated areas of the County who were expected to use and pay the full cost of public transport.

The £600 charge was the average cost of season tickets the Council currently purchased on behalf of existing Post-16 students from its two major suppliers of public bus services in the County, i.e. Arriva & Go NE.

Mrs Joynson added that Councillors needed to be brave to explore possible ways to reduce the £600 cost through other possible efficiencies. The Leader indicated that the Council would be very open to any suggestions about how to reduce the cost of services; the School Transport service would work with people who wished to put forward any ideas. Councillor Swithenbank added that progress was being made to reduce the costs through work with transport providers on the price, zoning and days. Work would also take place with local schools.
6. MS. J. PÖRKSEN, 9 PARK SIDE, HEPSCOTT, MORPETH, NE61 6LZ

“What evidence does the Council have which proves that charging a fee for post-16 transport or making young people pay for public transport where available will not discriminate against young people in remote and rural areas of the county, especially with regard to their rights for equal educational and subsequent career opportunities with other young people in the county?” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that the Policy Board made a specific commitment to monitor the effects of the change to post-16 transport policy so evidence would become available throughout the new academic year. What was proven was that the introduction of the free student travel scheme did not lead to an increase in the number of students participating in Post-16 education. In fact, the number actually fell. Whilst the number of 16-18yrs olds in county had declined by 6% since 2008 the number of students in further education had declined by 11% over the same period. In 2008 the number of students who qualified for free transport represented 10% of all students in further education; currently 50% of all students in further education qualified for free transport. Only 20% of school population in compulsory (pre-16 education) received free school transport. Therefore the introduction of free post-16 transport had not been successful in attracting more students into Post-16 education throughout this period; it was merely funding transport for students who would undertake Post-16 studies irrespective of whether or not free transport provision existed.

Ms Pörksen replied that the numbers would change due to new regulations about young people staying in education, training or employment; the following year’s 16 year olds should not be sacrificed to see if the policy would work, for example the numbers travelling from Berwick had much reduced. The Leader replied that currently 90 young people travelled from Berwick by train on an expensive pass, and a new free bus would be put on to Northumberland College.

7. MS. J. PÖRKSEN, 9 PARK SIDE, HEPSCOTT, MORPETH, NE61 6LZ

“Given that, under the Council’s Constitution, only Council can set the budget & financial policy, and that on 18th February 2014, as minuted, no delegated authority was given to the Policy Board to change the budget in relation to Post 16 School Transport, what legal right has the Policy Board to raise the proposed charge above £450 without reference back to Council for approval?” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that Court of Appeal in the Doncaster libraries decision in October 2013 made quite clear the distinction between the provision of the budget by full Council and the responsibility for the management of the services by the executive or, in Northumberland’s case, Policy Board. The Court in that case pointed out that setting "a budget is not the same as deciding what expenditure will in fact be incurred" and went on to say that although full Council was the final arbiter of what goes into the budget it was not allowed to micro-manage the authority’s functions and interfere with executive functions - of which Post 16 School Transport in this instance was one - which were delegated to the executive, not by full Council, but by the operation of law.
It was made clear by the Court in that case that a local authority’s budget process is "geared to avoiding any budget deficit by ensuring that the revenue expenditure will not be exceeded", but that what full Council cannot do is to require the Executive to expend money in a particular way, or, to expend a particular sum of money on a particular function.

Ms Pörksen questioned whether there was the moral authority to decide this as well as the legal authority. The Leader replied that moral judgement was subjective, the Administration had a social conscience, and £1m had been retained to help the most needy in society. One in five post 16 students would benefit from the parachute payments.

8. MRS. N. MALLABURN, 59 WINDSOR GARDENS, ALNWICK, NE66 1LP

"To what extent did the Equalities Impact Assessment carried out by the council before implementation of this Transport Policy take into account the age of the student? As you will be aware age is one of the 'Protected Characteristics' under current Equalities Legislation. It will be the case very soon that these over 16's will be in Compulsory Education.” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that the equality impact assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. This Act placed a duty on all public bodies to consider the impact of its policies, practices, functions and key decisions on a number of groups with a protected characteristic which as you say includes age. The EIA acknowledged that the effects of this change of policy would need to be carefully monitored following its implementation.

From the 2014/15 academic year, all young people were required to participate in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turned 17. From 2015, this requirement would apply to their 18th birthday. This was often referred to as the “raising of the participation age (RPA). There was a common misconception that this meant the compulsory school leaving age has changed to 18; it did not. Whilst it was true that young people can meet the requirements of the RPA through full time education, they could also do so via an apprenticeship; full-time work or volunteering combined with part-time study. Certainly he could understand that the timing of making changes to the Council’s Post-16 Transport Policy would cause concern amongst parents but the Council faced unprecedented strain on council budgets, and to continue with the free travel arrangements was simply unsustainable.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader replied that the scheme had been introduced in 2008, monitored, considered and then a decision taken to cut as it was an unaffordable service.

9. MRS. N. MALLABURN, 59 WINDSOR GARDENS, ALNWICK, NE66 1LP

“What advice have you and your legal / advisory officers given to your fellow councillors in preparation for today’s (Fri 11th July) meeting to assist them in deciding whether to suspend the ‘Decision’ in respect of Post-16 transport for September until after the Council re-consults to find an equitable solution between the financial constraints it faces and those disadvantaged immediately and unfairly
by the current decision”. (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that he had given no specific advice to his fellow councillors in relation to this matter. He was of the view, however, that as this was a matter which had been delegated by the operation of law to the Council’s Policy Board to make, that full Council had no power to suspend the decision lawfully taken by the Policy Board on 29 May 2014, and that any amendment to that decision and/or the relevant Transport Policy could only be made by the Policy Board.

Mrs Mallaburn referred to some advice provided for members on a pink letter. The Leader advised that that legal advice would be discussed prior to the next agenda item.

10. MRS. A. LAMONT, 3 WALBY HILL, ROTHBURY, NE66 7NT

“Government guidelines state clearly that: Distance should be a factor that local authorities consider in determining eligibility for support with transport. Young people in rural areas should not be worse of financially because they may need to travel further to access education and training provision than their peers in urban areas. This policy is not adhering to these guidelines. How will you change the policy to rectify this inequality?” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that statutory guidance issued by the Government to local authorities stated: “Young people in rural areas should not be worse off financially because they need to travel further to access education and training provision than their peers in urban areas”. Furthermore, the statutory guidance stated: “Local authorities may ask learners and their parents for a contribution to transport costs”. When making these regrettable changes to transport policy, the Council had sought to do so in the most equitable way possible given the severe strain on Council resources.

In those areas of the County which were not served by public bus services, a mechanism needed to be established that ensured the cost of travel for Post 16 students was transferred to families – to do otherwise would leave the Council open to the charge that it was establishing more favourable travel arrangements for students in rural areas when compared to those in more populated areas of the County, who were expected to use and pay the full cost of public transport.

As a supplementary question, Mrs Lamont referred to issues with her daughter’s application and other local authorities’ policies which included ways in which people could pay, unlike Northumberland’s. As other young people at her daughter’s school lived near her school paid nothing, the scheme should be suspended and rethought. The Leader replied that there was an appeals mechanism and the Executive Director – Local Services could follow up her case.

11. MISS. E. LAMONT, 3 WALBY HILL, ROTHBURY, NE66 7NT

“I will be attending my local school in September which is 19 miles away. Under the new policy as currently published I will be paying upwards of £770 per year on an annual bus pass as there is a limited bus service from Rothbury. Even if reduced bus fares are put in place I am being charged upwards of £500 a year where my school friends who live in Morpeth are being charged nothing. I am being penalised
for living rurally. Is this fair?” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that she would be required to pay £530 to for a two-zone pass from Arriva. This was a reasonable cost given the distance Rothbury was from Morpeth and was considerably cheaper than their original ticket offer price of £770. The statutory guidance issued by the Government to local authorities stated: “Young people in rural areas should not be worse off financially because they need to travel further to access education and training provision than their peers in urban areas”. Furthermore, the statutory guidance stated: “Local authorities may ask learners and their parents for a contribution to transport costs”. When making these regrettable changes to transport policy the Council had sought to do so in the most equitable way possible given the severe strain on Council resources.

In those areas of the County which were not served by public bus services a mechanism needed to be established that ensured the cost of travel for Post 16 students was transferred to families – to do otherwise would leave the Council open to the charge that it was establishing more favourable travel arrangements for students in rural areas when compared to those in more populated areas of the County who were expected to use and pay the full cost of public transport. Officers and the equality impact assessment had both considered the scheme to be fair.

In response to a supplementary question about how to raise the cost of the pass in eight weeks, the Leader advised the family to talk to the school, as it had agreed to target the bursaries available.

12. MS. L. LEWIS-DOUGLAS, 56 HIGH STREET, WOOLER, NE71 6BG

“How does the Leader of the Council expect parents to prepare financially when we are only getting letters now, the 7th July, a matter of days before the end of the school year? Why are the schools and council just in talks now, when we have to apply for September, as a parent I still don’t know what the options are available, or their cost, for transport from Wooler and I am just expected to have a spare £600+, for this immediately – which I do not have.” (To the Leader of the County Council).

The Leader replied that criticism had been made by many of the attendees regarding the timescales within which this regrettable decision had been made. It was the case that the statutory consultation on the provision of Post-16 transport, which started on 24th February following the budget process, closed at 9am on Monday 19th May. The decision to change Post-16 transport policy was made on Thursday 29th May. The Council had a statutory requirement to publish the revised Post-16 Transport Policy by the end of May. A committee report which was written and updated throughout the consultation period was submitted to councillors following the closure of the consultation.

Whilst this was a relatively narrow timescale for elected members to make decisions regarding the future provision of Post-16 transport, a draft report was written and consultation feedback was provided to senior members of the Council on a regular basis throughout the consultation period thereby ensuring that the decisions which were eventually made in relation to Post-16 transport were taken in full knowledge of the facts, including the costs of the scheme and the feedback received from the consultation. This was reflected in the detail of the Policy Board report and
accompanying papers which could be accessed on the council website.

As a supplementary question, Ms Lewis-Douglas asked about the possibility of the Council offering interest free loans. The Leader advised that it was possible to pay by direct debit; information was available on the council website, and people should keep in touch with their school about what they needed to do.

**Part B: Questioners not in Attendance**

Five questions were received from people who were not in attendance at the meeting; these questions would be answered in writing.

**16. NOTICE OF MOTION**

In advance of the motion being debated, the Head of Paid Service explained that he and the Legal Services Manager were responsible for advising on council procedure. Confidential procedural advice had been issued to members, which had subsequently become partially available in the press. He had advised against the calling of the meeting after discussions with the Monitoring Officer, on an impartial basis. It was misleading to say that Council could overturn the decision of Policy Board or direct it to amend the decision, as the decision was not a departure from the policy or budgetary framework. Policy Board had indicated that it would review the policy at a later point. The decision about post 16 transport had been correctly made by the Policy Board, which had carefully considered following full consultation being undertaken.

**(a) Notice of Motion No.1**

In accordance with Rules of Procedure No.10, Councillor P.A. Jackson moved the following motion, received by the Service Manager: Democracy on 23 June 2014:

“This Council recognises the strength of feeling felt by many residents of Northumberland regarding the decision of Policy Board of the County Council to impose charges on the provision of transport for those attending post 16 transport education (“the Decision”).

It is the view of the Council that this decision should be re-visited as it was made without a proper equalities impact assessment of the effect of the Decision on rural and other communities.

Also, the charge agreed by the Policy Board of £600, was not one of the options set out in the Statutory Consultation undertaken prior to the Decision.

In light of the foregoing, the Council is in grave danger of facing Judicial Review for maladministration, as the procedure in which the Decision was formulated and promulgated is flawed.

This Council acknowledges the competence of the Policy Board to make such a decision, but formally requests that the Policy Board suspends the Decision and re-consults to find an equitable solution between the financial constraints it faces and those disadvantaged unfairly by the current decision.”
In introducing his motion, Councillor Jackson recognised the split of responsibilities in the Local Government Act 2000, but felt that the process had not been open or accountable and the timing of this meeting was not suitable for public attendance. He expressed concerns about the decision to cancel the 2 July meeting, and that he had little faith in the scrutiny system due to one party holding all the chair and vice-chair positions. He had submitted the motion as he considered that there had been an inadequate consultation process and response to it; there had been problems with its implementation, and he queried the funding arrangements for the new scheme. He had suggested other possible funding streams such as withholding staff salary increment increases, staff redundancy cost savings, the costs from maintaining empty properties and also using the budget underspend. He felt education should be about choice and not telling young people where they had to study and that a more transparent and coherent policy was required.

Councillor Sanderson seconded the motion, referring to a quote from Field Marshall Montgomery about the importance of leadership to inspire confidence to a common purpose. He expressed concern that instead of an all-party administration after the 2013 elections, 95% of chairs or vice-chairs were Labour or Independent councillors. This raised questions about the democratic process, who challenged the decisions made and whether it was right to have such strict control. There should be the opportunity to challenge and allow residents from all across the county the right to have their say. This meeting was to ask the Policy Board to change course, inspire confidence and compromise, but not blame.

The Leader responded that the Labour Group had supported the post 16 transport policy in 2008 when the Council could afford it, but not now. He expressed concern about the proposal to save money by stopping staff salary increment increases, as this would require the breaking of national terms and conditions from staff by having to sack all employees and re-engage them on lesser terms to use the funding to support this project. He reminded members that the proper democratic process, as per the Council constitution, would have been to ‘call in’ the decision. The Administration wished to save jobs, and one way was to retain education in the county with young people studying in Northumberland, rather than travelling to Newcastle and North Tyneside. The equality impact assessment was considered fair, and non-mandatory council functions had to be considered. The issue would have resolved itself as schools had had time from May to adjust to the new arrangements, in which £180m funding was now sent directly to schools from the Government. He advised members that the process had been followed correctly, and the procedure published at the right time.

A long detailed debate then followed in which the main points/issues raised where:

- the previous policy had helped thousands of students with their education, and it would be important in the next year with the new regulations about staying in education, training or employment
- issues regarding the estimated cost of holding this meeting had not been helpful
- if the funding was still available, would the scheme have been left as it was as, as it was either forced by the Government, or the Administration felt it was a better way forward for post 16 transport
- council tax payers were subsidising the small number of post 16 students
who travelled at their expense; English local authorities faced a £5.8 billion funding gap and a threat to their viability with reducing government funding and the rising cost of services

- free travel was well intended, but had led to an export of Northumberland students to Newcastle and North Tyneside, damaging Northumberland’s economy as neighbouring local authorities benefitted, and Northumberland schools became unviable
- council cuts were severe and local authorities might deliver very few services in years to come
- other counties such as Surrey, Essex, Northamptonshire, Kent and Derbyshire all charged similar amounts for post 16 transport
- the call in process would not have been effective; the Policy Board couldn’t be forced to change their minds but could only be asked to
- Councillors were raising the concerns on behalf of their constituents; this had been a grassroots campaign
- many schools had not signed up nor considered the requirements of the new scheme yet, so parents could not fully know the implications
- There was concern about the lateness of the scheme; it had been made legally but not sensibly; more work was required quickly with parents so they knew where they stood
- The Council was only gifted powers from the Government, and this was against a backdrop of removing £31.2 million from non ring-fenced funding, so non-statutory services had to be considered. It was not possible to sustain all services.
- all young people should be able to fulfil their aims, and having choice in education was more important than having to go to the nearest school or college. Education was essential for helping communities and society to move forward. Everybody deserved the best education and people should not be penalised for where they lived, especially those in low income areas
- the responsibility for funding post 16 transport should sit with the Government, as they funded the travel for under 16s
- the Council should assist but not subsidise 1400 pupils to leave Northumberland every day for a £6m cost
- more time should be allowed so that headteachers could consider potential solutions
- to go to Northumberland College, young people from Berwick would have to leave their homes at 6.30am and get home around 7pm
- a better depth and quality of courses were required in the county. Some courses were not available locally, and young people needed choice to pursue their career aspirations. If more choice was available locally, young people would not need to travel
- decisions had been taken long before the current Government took office and the policy was rushed, wrong and needed to be reviewed
- much funding was required for roads, schools and other services, yet massive cuts were being made and public sector borrowing requirements were going up. This was the best deal to be done in difficult times
- many young people were finishing school the following week without knowing what their options would be for September; the system needed to be clear.

At this point the meeting was approaching 12.30pm and it was duly moved and seconded that the meeting should continue beyond three hours in
duration to finish the remaining business.

**RESOLVED** – that the meeting continue beyond three hours duration, in accordance with Item 4 of Part 4 of the Council’s constitution.

Further key points in the continuing discussion included:
- more education funding would be available for Northumberland as a result of the decision, which was a considered response to a difficult situation
- young people had no choice or any say in the decision made
- the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the issue in a thorough and impartial way and calling in the Policy Board’s decision would’ve been a better way of holding it to account than bringing the issue to County Council. In its debate the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been assured that bursaries would be available to those people in most need
- the £3.3m cost had to be cut to protect funding for more vulnerable people
- it was more accessible for young people in the west of the county to attend schools and colleges in Newcastle and Gateshead, with opportunities to study more vocational courses and combinations of A Levels
- many young people would no longer take up their school/college places as a result of the change of policy
- the process had been followed correctly, including pre-scrutiny, during which a request for further consideration to be given to the proposed cost had been proposed but not seconded. The decision had not however been called in and was now legally binding. Members would be ill advised to go against officers’ advice on the process
- working with the Administration would help everybody to improve what would be delivered over the next year
- it was different for people in rural areas as they had fewer means of transport; registering bus services should be considered
- all parents had to pay the same amount, so there shouldn’t be reference to a rural/urban divide
- it would’ve been a better route to lobby Parliament for more funding rather than having this debate
- this was not a vote against the constitution but just a request to look again at the policy
- a false impression had been given that the previous policy was sustainable, and hopefully this would be a better policy in the long term.

As the Leader was named at several points during the debate, he responded to a number of issues including how funding had been removed from local authorities, then returned via direct bursaries to schools. The Council had to find £32m savings in each and every one of the current and next three years. The next steps would be to move on and monitor the operation of the new policy. The implementation of the scheme could not be delayed as this would also stop the implementation of the bursaries. Northumberland College offered the most choice and most of the curriculum available within the Tyneside area. The cost of children travelling from Berwick by train to Tyneside totalled £500,000, and Berwick Academy intended to revise what courses they offered. Parental choice was not being removed, but parents needed to contribute as the Council no longer had the funding to pay for the
previous scheme.

In closing the debate on his motion, Councillor Jackson welcomed the full and frank debate. He expressed concern about the role of the scrutiny process, considered that insufficient implementation work had been arranged, that the scheme was prematurely being thrust on schools, and that Policy Board should review the policy at its earliest opportunity. It was important to fight for Northumberland; £10.6m had been promised for Northumberland schools from the government in the next financial year, with more promised.

Councillor Jackson requested a named vote on his motion, which was seconded by Councillor J Reid. On the requisite number of members supporting this, the votes were cast as follows (Councillor Rickerby had left the meeting before the vote was taken):

**FOR: 30 as follows:-**

| E. Armstrong | G.W. Jones |
| D. Bawn | V. Jones |
| S.C. Bridgett | A.H. Murray |
| H. Cairns | P.A. Jackson |
| G. Castle | J.S. Reid |
| C. Cessford | J.R. Riddle |
| W. Daley | T. Robson |
| R.R. Dodd | J.E. Smith |
| J.B. Fearon | A. Sharp |
| B. Flux | H.G.H. Sanderson |
| R. Gibson | A. Tebbutt |
| C. Homer | T.N. Thorne |
| C.W. Horncastle | R.J.D. Watkin |
| E.I. Hunter | J.G. Watson |
| J.I. Hutchinson | J. Woodman |

**AGAINST: 34 as follows:-**

| G.R. Arckless | P. Kelly |
| E. Burt | J.A. Lang |
| D. Campbell | D. Ledger |
| E. Cartie | I.P. Lindley |
| P.A.M. Dale | K. Nisbet |
| J.G. Davey | K. Parry |
| S. Davey | B. Pidcock |
| S. Dickinson | L. Pidcock |
| M.I. Douglas | A.W. Reid |
| S. Dungworth | M.E. Richards |
| J. Foster | A. Sambrook |
| B. Gallacher | E. Simpson |
| J.J. Gobin | I.C.F. Swithenbank |
| K. Graham | V. Tyler |
| L. Grimshaw | A. Wallace |
ABSTENTIONS: 0

Whereupon the Chairman declared the motion lost.

The Common Seal of the County Council of Northumberland was hereunto affixed in the presence of

.................................................................
Chairman of the County Council

.................................................................
Duly Authorised Officer
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY BOARD

At a meeting of the Policy Board held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 29 April 2014 at 10.00 am

PRESENT

Councillor G. Davey
(Leader of the County Council in the Chair)

POLICY BOARD MEMBERS

Arckless, G.R.  Ledger, D.
Hepple, A.  Reid, J.
Jackson, P.  Switchenbank, I.C.F.
Kelly, P.  Tyler, V.

OTHER COUNCILLORS

Dickinson, S.  Richards, M.E.
Gallacher, B.  Sambrook, A.G.
Pidcock, B.  Simpson, L.

OFFICERS

Clark, J.  Head of Planning and Organisation
Henry, L.  Principal Lawyer
Lally, D.  Executive Director – Wellbeing and Community Health
Mason, S.P.  Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources
Mays, T.  Head of Education Service

88. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dungworth.

89. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Policy Board held on 8 April 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.
90. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - WELLBEING AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

Proposed Closure of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School, Amble

The report outlined the results of the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School, Amble on their proposal to close their school and provided an analysis of the responses received during the statutory period. Policy Board was asked to make a decision as to whether or not to approve the closure of the school as requested by the Governing Body (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The report of the Family and Children’s Services OSC meeting of 24 April 2014 and the draft minute of the Petitions Committee meeting of 3 April 2014 were circulated to members (copies attached to the signed minutes).

The Chair made some opening remarks to Policy Board on the purpose of the meeting, the role of the Policy Board in that, and the importance of considering all relevant information. He then outlined the procedure which would be followed.

Mr Tony Mays made a presentation to members highlighting the main points of the report which included the background to the current position and the representations received during consultation. He drew members’ attention to the key points of the report detailed in pages 14 to 20, including the impact of closure on the proportion of denominational schools, small school issues, standards, rural schools, schools causing concern, alternative provision, staffing, early years, land and buildings and special educational needs.

Mr Paul Claridge, Chair of Governors, made a number of points to members including the following:

- Problems had existed at the school for a number of years.
- A change in leadership at the school had investigated a number of options to improve the situation.
- Ofsted had recognised that the school had shown recent improvement but as results were judged over the previous three years, it had been placed in special measures.
- Attempts to find a sponsor had not been successful.
- The Governing Body had reluctantly felt that they had no other viable option other than to consult on closure.

In response to a question from Councillor Kelly, Mr Claridge confirmed that even without the Ofsted inspection, closure would still have had to be considered because of the existing funding issues. With only 21 pupils on roll, the financial situation was severe, and all pupils would have had to be taught in one classroom, which was not acceptable.

Councillor Pidcock presented the report of the FACS OSC which had looked very carefully at the background and all of the relevant issues. The Committee had been clear that the arguments for closure far outweighed those for retention, and that the pupils’ education would benefit from closure.
Councillor Dickinson outlined the recommendations from the Petitions Committee meeting, which had been followed up since the meeting.

Representations were then made by Mrs R. McGarvey, parent, including the following points:-

- She felt the whole process had been handled badly and too quickly.
- She queried why no Interim Executive Board had been implemented to replace the Governing Body.
- She queried why no alternatives to closure had been considered.
- Ideas and alternative proposals had been put forward by parents and the community but none had been given serious consideration.
- Published attainment levels which had showed an improvement at the school were valid and proved that St Cuthbert’s had the best attainment levels in Amble.
- Neither of the alternative schools in Amble could take all of the pupils needing a place.
- Busy Bees Nursery had confirmed they would move into the school and she was aware of a number of other children who would start at the school if it stayed open.
- There had not yet been a second monitoring visit by Ofsted, but progress was being made and she felt there was too much haste to get the school closed.
- She urged members to take positive action by replacing the Governing Body and allowing Busy Bees to move into the school.

Members raised a number of questions around the funding situation and the impact of Busy Bees on that, capacity at other schools in the town, the possibility of all pupils at the school being taught together, and about the attainment data and the number of pupils it related to. Responses were provided by Mrs McGarvey and officers.

Members were then provided with legal advice from Liam Henry. He reminded members of the issues they needed to take into account in reaching their decision and gave them specific advice on a range of points.

Members were being asked to consider whether to approve a proposal on closure of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School, Amble, Northumberland following publication of the Statutory Notice on 13 March 2014, and he drew members’ attention to the relevant Guidance which applied to a proposal of this type.

Mr Henry detailed the statutory closure process which was in five parts:-

- Statutory consultation. He was satisfied that the consultation process followed in respect of the proposal satisfied the requirements of the applicable guidance.
- Publication. He confirmed that the proposal notice met the statutory requirements.
- Representations. The requisite 4 weeks had been given for representations to be both made and received.
- Decision Stage – currently before Policy Board.
- Implementation – this would depend on the decision taken.

Members then needed to take into account the factors set out in the guidance and take those factors into account in reaching their decision. Some of the factors outlined in the guidance were:

- Standards and the effect on displaced pupils.
- Schools causing concern.
- Rural Schools.
- Balance of denominational provision.
- Early years / Special Educational Needs provision.
- The impact on community services.
- Views of interested parties.

Finally, members’ attention was to the types of decision which could be made when considering proposals for a school closure as follows:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with a modification (subject to consultation with the Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School) or;
- approve the proposal (with or without modification) subject to certain conditions being met.

The Chair asked members whether they felt they had been given sufficient information to enable them to reach a decision. Members confirmed that they had.

Councillor Arckless advised that this was a particularly difficult decision for him. He had been aware of difficulties at this school for some time. He paid tribute to the efforts of staff who had made tremendous efforts with pupils, and he referred to the support provided by the Authority to the school over a sustained period. This had resulted in progress, but not enough to avoid a special measures category.

He accepted the rights of parents to choose a denominational school, and he recognised that closure of this school would remove that option. However, the move towards closure had come from the Governing Body of the School and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The main concern had to be what was in the best long term interests of the pupils. If the proposal to close did not go ahead, then did the school have a sustainable future? Clearly the Governing Body and the Diocese did not think so.

He paid tribute to parents and to Mrs McGarvey for their efforts and acknowledged the points raised by Mrs McGarvey in her submissions to both FACS OSC and the Petitions Committee, many of which had been addressed in the report. However, he was not convinced there was was sufficient potential income from Busy Bees to sustain the school’s budget, and schools were funded on pupil numbers not the size of the school.
Ofsted guidance expected that these matters were dealt with as a matter of urgency to give children the best chance. He then moved the report’s recommendations 1-3. Regarding the final recommendation, he moved that:-

Taking into account the Department for Education’s (DFE) “School Organisation Maintained Schools: Guidance for Proposers and Decision Makers, January 2014” and the “School Organisation Maintained Schools, Annex B: Guidance for Decision Makers, January 2014” Policy Board approve the proposal subject to a condition being met that all the school’s pupils have an offer of a place at another school in Amble, if required”. He advised that a date would have to be included by which the condition should be met. This was seconded by Councillor Swindenbank.

Councillor Reid queried the consequences should the condition not be met, and expressed his disappointment that no-one from the Diocese had attended the meeting to support their proposals. He felt the school could possibly be made viable given sufficient time and that closure may be in the best interest of the school but not necessarily the community. However, the Diocese’s proposal was closure and time was a factor.

In response to Councillor Reid, Councillor Arckless advised that all possible assistance would be provided to ensure that the condition was met. The condition was in response to a proposal from FACS OSC and reinforced the Authority’s will to assist going forward.

Councillor Swindenbank commented that he did not agree with stipulations from Ofsted regarding closure or academisation but even without this aspect, the number of pupils and funding would have led to the same situation. He did not agree that teaching a mixed age range in a single class with limited resources provided adequate preparation to children for later school, and he therefore supported the proposals.

On the recommendations, as amended above, being put to the vote there voted FOR: 8; AGAINST: 0.

RESOLVED that:-

1) the recommendations of the FACS OSC and petitions Committee be noted;
2) the following be noted:
   • the proposal from the Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School;
   • the consultation process they have undertaken and their response to the outcomes of that consultation; and
   • the Statutory Proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2014 published by the Governing Body on 13 March 2014;
3) the report from the Chair of Governors attached to the report at Appendix 1 be noted;
4) the impact of the proposal set out in the Statutory Proposal attached at Appendix 3 of the report be noted; and
5) taking into account the Department for Education’s (DfE) ‘School
Organisation Maintained Schools: Guidance for proposers and decision-
makers, January 2014’ and the ‘School Organisation Maintained Schools,
Annex B: Guidance for Decision-makers, January 2014’ attached to the
report at Appendix 8, Policy Board approve the proposal subject to a
condition being met that all the school’s pupils have an offer of a place at
another school in Amble, if required.

The Chair then advised that there would be a short adjournment so the decision
and the reasons for it, could be confirmed. The meeting adjourned at 11.07 am.

On the meeting reconvening at 11.26 am, the Chair advised that advice had been
received that the condition proposed by Councillor Arckless was not one of those
recognised within prevailing regulations, and could not therefore be included.
Councillor Arckless added that the result of this was that the final resolution would
therefore be to approve the proposal without modification. However, he gave an
assurance that his proposal regarding the offer of places at other Amble schools
would be carried out. He moved recommendations 1-3 as detailed in the report, and
a final recommendation to approve the proposal without modification, which was
seconded by Councillor Switchenbank.

On the recommendations being put to the vote there voted FOR:8; AGAINST :0.

RESOLVED that:-

1) the recommendations of the FACS OSC and petitions Committee be noted;
2) the following be noted:
   • the proposal from the Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First
     School;
   • the consultation process they have undertaken and their response to
     the outcomes of that consultation; and
   • the Statutory Proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August
     2014 published by the Governing Body on 13 March 2014;
3) the report from the Chair of Governors attached to the report at Appendix 1
   be noted;
4) the impact of the proposal set out in the Statutory Proposal attached at
   Appendix 3 of the report be noted; and
5) taking into account the Department for Education’s (DfE) ‘School
   Organisation Maintained Schools: Guidance for proposers and decision-
makers, January 2014’ and the ‘School Organisation Maintained Schools,
   Annex B: Guidance for Decision-makers, January 2014’ attached to the
   report at Appendix 8, Policy Board approve the proposal without modification.

The Chair asked Policy Board to confirm the following as the recorded decision:-
The proposal to close St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School, Amble with effect from 31 August 2014 should be adopted and implemented for the following reasons:-

1. St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School, Amble was placed in special measures in October 2014. In line with current Government Policy in relation to inadequate schools, the school would be required to either close or become a sponsored academy.

2. Pupil numbers at the school have been falling for a number of years. At the beginning of consultation on this proposal there were 38 pupils on roll, while the school has a capacity for 120 pupils. However, following the departure of the current Year 4 pupils at the end of this school year, there would only have been 23 pupils in St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School from September 2014. There is only one pupil due to be enrolled in the school in September 2014.

3. As result of the additional management and leadership capacity that would be needed to remove the school from special measures in the face of a reducing budget from a falling roll, neither Council Officers nor the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle believe that a suitable sponsor would be willing to take on the school.

4. Furthermore, it is believed that the school would have difficulty in recruiting a suitable Roman Catholic Headteacher in the light of the challenging circumstances faced by St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School.

5. There is sufficient capacity within the town of Amble across Amble Links First School and Amble First School to accommodate all the displaced pupils. Additionally, parents would be able to apply for a place for their child at another local Roman Catholic first school should they wish.

6. The proposal to close St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School was brought forward by the Governing Body and is supported by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

The consultation on this proposal has been appropriate, reasonable and robust.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY BOARD

At a meeting of the Policy Board held at County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 29 May 2014 at 2.30 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Davey
(Leader of the County Council in the Chair)

POLICY BOARD MEMBERS

Arckless, G.R. Hepple, A. Jackson, P. Kelly, P. Ledger, D. Reid, J. Switenbank, I.C.F. Tyler, V.

OTHER COUNCILLORS


OFFICERS

Aviston, S. Bendell, R. Clark, J. Cusack, M. Elsdon, A. Henry, L. Lally, D. Paul, G. Rowland, B. Capital Projects Officer Acting Head of Sustainable Transport Head of Planning and Organisation Passenger Transport Operations Manager Head of Corporate Resources Principal Lawyer Executive Director – Wellbeing and Community Health Director of Planning, Economy and Housing Executive Director – Place

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies were received from Councillor Dungworth.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Policy Board held on 29 April 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – PLACE

Review of Post 16 Transport Provision

The report reviewed the Council’s current provision of transport for Post-16 students in the context of government cut backs which meant the authority needed to remove £32m from its budgets in 2014/15 and a further £100m over the next three years.

Post-16 transport is currently provided free of charge to students who live more than 3 miles from the nearest school or Further Education (FE) provider that offers that student their chosen course. The report explored the potential options for change and outlined the feedback received from the public via the recent consultation process which closed on 19 May 2014, and a petition received on 15 April 2014.

Having reviewed the costs and benefits of several options, the report recommended for adoption a revised Home to School Transport Policy, to be published by 31 May 2014 and implemented from 1 September 2014 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

In introducing the report, Councillor Swithenbank explained that no members liked facing such difficult decisions, but the reality of funding cuts meant it was necessary, and each non-statutory duty was being examined.

Until six years ago, this had not been a free service. Since then, the numbers of those travelling outwith their nearest provision had escalated, with 50% of students now accessing education other than at their local school/college. The policy had not increased the numbers of those accessing post 16 education in the County as had been hoped; in fact it had had the opposite effect. The fall off in usage of Northumberland high schools and Northumberland College was damaging the quality and depth of provision locally, and action had to be taken to address the drain in funding away from the County and the associated consequences of that.

A start had to be made to unwind the detrimental effect on the County’s educational establishments in order to protect the educational centres and to save money. There were provisions contained in the proposed policy to protect those most in need, but the longer this issue was delayed, the worse the situation would become. He recommended the proposals to members, which was seconded by Councillor Ledger.
Councillor Pidcock outlined the debate on the issue at the Family and Children’s Services (FACS) OSC meeting that morning (copy of report circulated at meeting and attached to the signed minutes).

Members had looked very seriously at the issues and had been reluctant to impose any further financial penalties on the working poor, but had agreed that maintaining education in Northumberland was important. Many detailed questions had been raised with answers provided by officers. The Committee had recommended that Policy Board agree recommendations 1 and 3 in the report. With regard to recommendation 2, following a vote, the Committee had recommended that Policy Board agree the removal of the current free Post 16 transport scheme only when equal educational opportunity existed throughout the County.

Having listened to the concerns expressed by FACS, the Leader proposed a further two recommendations which would go some way to addressing these concerns as follows:-

- That the Council play an active role in working in partnership with schools, colleges and other training providers to ensure students’ access to post 16 educational opportunities in their own locality are continuously improved.
- That the impact of the new post 16 transport policy be monitored on an ongoing basis following its implementation.

Councillor Jackson raised a number of points including:

- The level of proposed charge had increased since it had been first raised as part of the budget process. This meant the Authority compared unfavourably to other County Councils referred to in the report.
- He appreciated the mitigation measures detailed in the report.
- No attempt had been made to address some of the issues raised during the consultation process.
- The link between the drop in those accessing post 16 education in County and the availability of free transport was not as clear as was being portrayed. The reputation of schools and colleges and the quality of courses of offer had also to be taken into account, though he acknowledged that this situation was changing.
- Many specialist subjects could not be catered for within Northumberland which had a discriminatory effect.
- The proposals would enshrine rural discrimination because of the geographic nature of the County.
- There were other areas of the budget where less could be spent to protect this area.

Councillor Kelly raised a number of points including:

- The education maintenance allowance had previously allowed post 16 students to make individual choices based on their own circumstances but this had been abolished by the Government.
- The previous Administration had introduced the existing policy in order to extend freedom of choice, but this had limited choice for those who were
least able to afford it. The result had been shrinking Sixth Forms in Northumberland schools with Newcastle and North Tyneside schools benefitting.

- There was a need to be even handed in charges between urban and rural areas.
- He did not agree with freedom of choice as it had a negative effect on those who were unable to exercise that freedom.
- The proposals represented a way of treating post 16 students in the same way as neighbouring authorities and would strengthen Northumberland schools.

Councillor Reid raised a number of points including:-

- He felt that the reasoning behind the proposals needed to be clear – it was either for financial reasons or because the policy of providing free transport was not the right thing to do but could not be both.
- The Government’s proposal to raise the school leaving age to 18 in 2015 needed to be taken into account. If the Authority was minded to continue to support students on current courses, then a solution only needed to be found to bridge the gap.
- The proposals outlined in the report would also have unintended consequences and would create problems elsewhere. He would not be supporting them.

Councillor Arckless raised a number of points including:-

- A lot had changed since this policy had been introduced in 2008, including the loss of £150m from the revenue budget and the change in responsibility and funding for post 16 education away from local authorities.
- There were two elements to the proposals – financial and educational. The government’s decision to accelerate the level of cuts and to front load them onto local authorities had had a significant effect. Also, there was clear evidence that these cuts had been targeted at councils in the north. The viability of small high schools in Northumberland was a real issue, and the Authority should do all it could to sustain them. He was proud of the support provided to Northumberland College by the Authority and he welcomed the changes being introduced.
- The safeguards proposed in the report were important and he hoped that the Authority could work with the transport providers to deliver the best deal possible.
- He paid tribute to the role played by Scrutiny who had asked some searching questions and expressed their own views. He reminded members this was not an easy decision for anyone, and supported the Leader’s additional recommendations.

The Leader referred to a letter from Northumberland College which had been circulated at the meeting and which supported the Authorities proposals for changes to the policy (copy attached to the signed minutes). He also referred to a submission from Mrs Susan Hedley (copy attached to the signed minutes) and advised Mrs Hedley that the answers to her questions were contained in the second part of the report.
On the amended recommendations being put to the vote there voted FOR: 7; AGAINST: 2 (P. Jackson/J. Reid); ABSTENTIONS: 0.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Policy Board agree that maintaining the current travel scheme for students in Post-16 Education is not sustainable, and whilst still complying with statutory obligations to facilitate access to Post-16 Education, changes need to be made to the Council’s travel policy if costs are to be brought under control;

(b) approval be given to the removal of the current free Post-16 Transport Scheme;

(c) approval be given to the publication by 31 May 2014 of the revised Post-16 Transport Policy attached to the report at Appendix 1 which:

- retains the current student travel scheme for all existing Post-16 students who continue their studies in September 2014;
- makes special provision for students from low income backgrounds who attend their nearest appropriate educational establishment;
- makes special provision for students with a Statement of Special Education Need, a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan who attend their nearest educational establishment which can meet their needs;
- means that students who can travel on public transport would have to pay the full cost to the transport provider and;
- would continue to offer contracted school transport services, where public transport is not available, for an annual charge of £600 for students that attend their nearest educational establishment;

(d) the Council play an active role in working in partnership with schools, colleges and other training providers to ensure students’ access to post 16 educational opportunities in their own locality are continuously improved;

(e) the impact of the new post 16 transport policy be monitored on an on-going basis following its implementation; and

(f) the report of the Family and Children’s Services OSC be noted.

4. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – WELLBEING AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

(a) Proposals for the Ashington Partnership

The report set out a recommendation to Policy Board to authorise statutory consultation on proposals to extend the age ranges of Ellington and Pegswood First Schools from 3-9 to 3-11 and to extend the age range of Linton First School from 4-
9 to 4-11 with effect from 1 September 2015 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Councillor Arckless advised that Scrutiny had supported the proposals and reminded members that the proposals came from Ashington Learning Partnership. The school buildings would all remain in use but would be used in a different way. This fitted with the national curriculum and would help with the new provisions on early years’ education.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the support of the Governing Bodies of Ellington, Pegswood and Linton First Schools for consultation on the proposals to extend the age ranges of their schools be noted;

(b) consultation be carried out on the proposals to extend the age ranges of Ellington and Pegswood First Schools from 3-9 to 3-11 and extend the age range of Linton First School from 4-9 to 4-11;

(c) the agreement of the Governing Body of the Ashington Learning Partnership Trust to consult on the proposals set out below be noted:

   (i) close Ashington Hirst Park Middle School and Bothal Middle School with effect from 31 August 2015;

   (ii) extend the age ranges of Ashington Central First School and Ashington Wansbeck First Schools from 3-9 to 2-11 with effect from 1 September 2015;

   (iii) extend the age range of Ashington High School from 13-18 to 11-18 with effect from 1 September 2015.

The consultation carried out by the Ashington Learning Partnership Trust will take place concurrently with consultation by the County Council on the proposals set out in Recommendation b,

(d) the decision to undertake further consultation, if necessary, be delegated to the Executive Director of Wellbeing and Community Health, in consultation with the Policy Board Member for Children’s Services;

(e) a further report following consultation be submitted to a meeting of the Policy Board, at which a decision on whether or not to progress to the issue of a Statutory Proposal will be made;

(f) should the Policy Board agree to the publication of a Statutory Proposal following consultation; in accordance with Regulations, it be noted that the Policy Board will determine all the proposals on behalf of the County Council;

(g) Council be recommended to agree that the project be included within the Medium Term Plan, funded as set out in paragraph 13 of the report; and

(h) the report of the Family and Children’s Services OSC be noted.
(b) Universal Free School Meals for Infant Age Children

The report informed Policy Board of the important changes happening in school lunch provision in state funded infant, first and primary schools from September 2014, and asked members to agree the basis for the allocation of capital funding to ensure Northumberland schools were able to deliver this policy (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Councillor Jackson queried whether it would be possible to monitor the impact of the proposals. Members were advised that it would be difficult to measure a specific impact but it could be used as one of the measures in the range to improve standards.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the contents of the report and the benefits to Northumberland’s first and primary schools be noted;

(b) the Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Health be authorised to allocate the capital grant to schools on the basis of technical advice about the capacity of their current kitchens to meet a 35% increase in demand for meals, taking account of the condition of their current equipment and its compliance with regulatory requirements; and

(c) the report of the Family and Children’s Services OSC be noted.

5. REPORT OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

Performance Overview

The report advised elected Members of the position at the end of quarter 3 on key areas of the Council’s performance. As it referred to quarter 3 of 2013-14, it reported on the performance as per the Council structure which was in place during the quarter (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

Councillor Jackson queried progress with action plans to deal with speed of decision making on planning applications as this was of importance to the local economy.

The Leader advised that the planning service was in the middle of a reorganisation but a robust action plan would be brought forward in due course. Councillor Ledger added that further improvements would be seen when the IDOX system and new management arrangements were fully implemented.

Councillor Hepple advised that, as portfolio holder, this issue was high on his agenda and he welcomed the revised format of the report.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.
6. **AREA COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

Policy Board was asked to consider feedback from the Area Committee meetings (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. **NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Policy Board was asked to consider nominations to the outside bodies listed in the report (previous members were shown for information) (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

RESOLVED that the nominations be agreed subject to the following:-

(a) Councillor Webb be added to the nominations for Arch

(b) Councillor Dickinson replace Councillor Dungworth on Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Governing Body; and

(c) a councillor be identified for the vacancy on the National Association of Councillors.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY BOARD

At a Joint meeting of the Policy Board and the Board of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust held at Shieldfield Park, Berwick-upon-Tweed on Wednesday, 4 June 2014 at 12:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Davey
(Leader of the County Council in the Chair)

POLICY BOARD MEMBERS

Arckless, G.R.  Ledger, D.
Dungworth, S.  Reid, J.
Jackson, P.  Kelly, P.

OTHER COUNCILLORS

Dickinson, S. (Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board)
Hunter, I.
Murray, A.
Smith, J.
Watkin, R.J.D.

OFFICERS

Mason, S.P.  Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources
Roll, J.  Democratic Services

ALSO PRESENT

Atkin, C.  Vice-Chair Health and Wellbeing Board

NORTHUMBRIA HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST BOARD MEMBERS

Mackey, J.  Chief Executive
Flood, B.  Trust Chairman
Dunn, P.  Executive Director of Finance
Telford, B. Director of Commercial Development
Wright, A. Executive Director of Operations
Stringer, A. Executive Director of HR and Organisational Development
Riley, C. Director of Communications and Corporate Affairs
Bartoli, B. Executive Director of Performance and Governance
Bannister, S. Director of Estate and Facilities
Lally, D. Executive Director of Community Services
Stephenson, R. Executive Director of Nursing
Swithinbank, I.C.F. Non-Executive Director
Sanderson, P. Non-Executive Director
Mundy, N. Non-Executive Director
Thomson, D. Non-Executive Director

TRUST OFFICERS

Brayson, P. Managing Director of Northumbria Healthcare Facilities Management
Limited a wholly owned subsidiary of Northumbria Health
Chaplin, A. Elderly Care Consultant

8. COUNCILLOR JOHN TAYLOR

Before the commencement of the meeting, the Leader asked those present to observe a minute’s silence following the sad news of the death of Councillor John Taylor, (Longhoughton Ward), earlier in the day.

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors A. Hepple, P.A. Jackson and V. Tyler. Councillor I.C.F. Swithinbank was present but representing the Trust Board.

D.Evans (Medical Director); M.Thomas (Director of Health Informatics); D.Thomson (Medical Director); A. Laverty (Director of Patient Experience); R.Curless (Divisional Medical Director); I.McMinn (Non-Executive).

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor I.C.F. Swithinbank declared an interest in that he is a non-Executive Member of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust Board and a Policy Board Member. He took no part in any vote.
Daljit Lally, Executive Director – Wellbeing and Community Health declared an interest in that she is also a Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust Board member.

11. **BERWICK INFIRMARY REDEVELOPMENT**

Paul Brayson, Managing Director for NHFM Ltd presented the Outline Business Case for the redevelopment of Berwick Infirmary (copy attached to the signed minutes) which the Boards were asked to approve.

Mr. Brayson gave a brief history of the existing hospital which had served the community well since 1840 but was now outdated and emphasised the Trust’s commitment to developing community hospitals as a key component of their “Building a Caring Future” programme.

The preferred option for the new hospital would maintain and re-provide all existing services within new build accommodation on the existing site using a form of multi-phase construction whilst allowing existing services to continue.

An identified works budget of £25 million had been identified and the timetable envisaged completion in May/June 2018.

**Officers responded to a number of questions and comments made by members of the public:**

1. A resident felt there had been very little communication with the public regarding the preferred site of the hospital and the rejection of planned building works on alternative sites.

   Also, the timing of the meeting gave little opportunity for people to attend.

   **Response:**

   *The lack of consultation was strongly denied as many public consultation meetings regarding planned services had been undertaken.*

2. Another resident commented that the siting of the new hospital was not as important as the services provided and there seemed to be less services proposed than currently provided.

   He also asked whether the hospital would include a poly-clinic even though NHS Choices’ review states they are not beneficial.

   **Response:**

   *It was confirmed that all services currently available would be re-provided in the new hospital.*
Also, the only discussion with GPs had been about whether they wanted to relocate into the new hospital thereby providing primary and secondary services on one site. There would not be a poly-clinic on site.

3. Cllr Tom Forrester, Berwick Town Council, sought reassurance that the preferred site allowed for growth in the population. He queried whether, if Scotland gained independence and patients were no longer allowed to use Border’s health services, was there scope within the development plans to increase sizes and facilities in Berwick?

**Response:**

The Trust confirmed that the site is suitable for current and future needs with availability to develop a third storey if required.

Scottish independence would have no foreseen implications. Emergency cases would still go to Borders Hospital or the new Emergency Care Hospital at Cramlington.

4. Alan Bowless, resident, referred to the report which stated the current services served a population of 25,800 and asked whether account had been taken of the significant rise to 112,000 during the summer months?

He also commented that Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England had stated that more use should be made of Community Hospitals and asked if this been taken into consideration?

**Response:**

It was confirmed that the increase in population during summer months had been accounted for in development plans.

Community hospital provision has always been regarded by the Trust as extremely important for communities. Reference was made to the recent innovative development at Haltwhistle, major investment at Hexham and at Rothbury. Community Hospitals were a key element of the Trust’s strategy to provide services locally wherever possible.

5. County Councillor I. Hunter asked whether maternity services would be relocated to the main hospital site or remain stand alone? She highlighted the aging population and the difficulty in travelling to Wansbeck/Cramlington given the lack of public transport.

**Response:**

It was confirmed that maternity services would be relocated within the new hospital and that the current accommodation would become redundant.
It was stressed that some general hospital facilities could not be provided at Berwick but the Trust sought to provide local services when it was safe to do so.

The Chair thanked those present for their contribution to the discussion.

RESOLVED that the Business Case for the Berwick Infirmary Redevelopment be approved by unanimous decision.

12. REPORT OF THE LEAD DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

Provision of a Loan to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

The Policy Board were asked to endorse provision of a loan for £25million to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust to facilitate the redevelopment of Berwick Infirmary. Access to this loan would allow the development to be carried out much earlier.

The Council has well developed working relationships with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust including a joint director post covering Adult Care, Housing and Community Health Services. As a result of these strong working relationships a proposal had been developed which would enable the Council to use its ability to borrow under the Prudential Code to benefit both employment and healthcare service provision within Northumberland.

The proposed transaction also benefitted both the Foundation Trust and the Council as standalone organisations and builds upon the strong service links that already exist between them. Appropriate security would be obtained in order to protect the interests of the Council.

Linda Pepper, Berwick Governor queried how, when the County Council faced significant financial pressure and needed to cut services, they could afford to loan £25million to the NHS.

The Chair explained that the Council is able to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board at a very low rate of interest and then loan the money to the Trust through a mortgage deal at a very competitive rate. Such a deal benefited everyone.

Councillor ICF Swithenbank abstained from the vote given his declaration of interest. The remaining Policy Board members voted unanimously to:

1. Note that the proposal had been subject to the risk appraisal process and that the risks of proceeding were deemed to be acceptable,

2. Agree that a loan of £25 million to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust be granted provided that the Lead Executive Director for Corporate Resources obtains sufficient security from the Trust to enable the loan to be repaid.
13. REPORT OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

Procurement Shared Service

The Deputy Leader presented the above report which sought Policy Board approval for the Shared Procurement Business Case which described the recommended option for the shared service model for procurement services between Northumberland County Council, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust.

The report highlighted the background and context for a procurement shared service, alongside the benefits that could be realised, (copy attached to the signed minutes).

The Deputy Leader explained that under the previous Administration, Northumberland County Council, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and North Cumbria University Hospital NHS Trust in 2012 agreed a vision to develop a shared procurement service to provide a sustainable cost effective procurement service for all stakeholders.

Following a diagnostics analysis of the procurement activity across the three organisations strong synergies had been identified across spend (£143.4 million), suppliers (£105.5M across 604 suppliers), shared technology platforms and the availability of skilled procurement resources. These synergies would:

* reduce service costs
* maximise collaborative spend and savings opportunities
* increase economic benefits for Northumberland
* maximise commercial opportunities to compete in the open market

The report had been supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting earlier in the week.

The Joint Trust and Policy Board members voted unanimously to:

Approve the development of a Joint Venture shared service model for procurement services across Northumberland County Council, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust. The joint venture model will allow current staff to remain with their current employer, with no headcount reductions, and be managed by a jointly appointed Shared Head of Procurement.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY BOARD

At a meeting of the Policy Board held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 10 June 2014 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Davey
(Leader of the County Council in the Chair)

POLICY BOARD MEMBERS

| Arckless, G.R. | Kelly, P. |
| Dungworth, S. | Ledger, D. |
| Hepple, A. | Switthenbank, I.C.F. |
| Jackson, P. | Tyler, V. |

OTHER COUNCILLORS

| Dickinson, S. | Pidcock, B. |
| Gallacher, B. | Simpson, L. |
| Johnstone, T. | |

OFFICERS

| Bennett, A. | Chief Fire Officer |
| Clark, J. | Head of Planning and Organisation |
| Edwardson, R. | Head of Service, Education Support |
| Henry, L. | Principal Lawyer |
| Jones, P. | Head of Neighbourhood Services |
| Lally, D. | Executive Director – Wellbeing and Community Health |
| Mason, S. | Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources |
| Mays, T. | Head of Early Years and Schools |
| Richards, S. | Assistant Chief Fire Officer |
| Rowland, B. | Executive Director – Place |

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J. Reid.
15. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Policy Board held on 29 May 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

16. **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS**

Councillor Ledger disclosed a non registerable prejudicial interest in item 4 on the agenda (Proposals for Part of the Bedlington Partnership) as his daughter worked in one of the schools affected.

Councillor Ledger left the room whilst the following matter was considered.

17. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - WELLBEING AND COMMUNITY HEALTH**

**Proposals for Part of the Bedlington Partnership**

The report provided an analysis of the representations received from interested parties relating to the linked proposals to close Guide Post Middle School and to reorganise Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools to primary status (by extending the age ranges of these schools) during the four week statutory period that began on 10 April 2014.

The report requested Policy Board to approve the closure of Guide Post Middle School with effect from 31 August 2014 and to approve the extension of the age ranges of Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools from age 3 - 9 (or 4 - 9) first schools to age 2 - 11 (or 4 - 11) primary schools with effect from 1 September 2014 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The report of the Family and Children’s Services (FACS) OSC, a further submission from a parent and the second page to Lord Nash’s letter, missing from the original report, were circulated to members (copies attached to the signed minutes).

The Chair made some opening remarks to Policy Board on the purpose of the meeting, the role of the Policy Board in that, and the importance of considering all relevant information. He then outlined the procedure which would be followed.

Mr John Clark made a brief presentation to members highlighting the main points of the report, which included the background to the current position, the representations received during consultation and the officer response to that. He referred to the representation circulated recently to members from Ms Sarah Goss, and advised that these issues had been raised by others and were addressed in the report. He drew members’ particular attention to a number of key points in the report including provision for pupils, transport and land and buildings.

Councillor Pidcock presented the report of the FACS OSC, which had thoroughly examined all of the arguments and options for pupils, and had closely questioned officers on the report. The Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained in the report.
Councillor Arckless expressed his gratitude to all members of the FACS OSC for their considered debate on the issue. He acknowledged that it had not been an easy decision for them, but their clear investigation of the issues had been very helpful.

Representations were then made by the following parents and parent/governors:-

**Mrs M. Coulson, grandparent**

Her concerns centred on the following areas:

- Safe walking routes to schools particularly for working parents.
- Long bus journeys for younger children with older children.
- The safer environment offered for younger children in a middle school environment without pressure from older children.
- The fear that the proposals represented a strategy to introduce two tier education in the County resulting in a lack of support for existing arrangements. Two tier arrangements were not working in other parts of the County.
- Time should be allowed for the Guide Post Middle School to show proper improvement. DfE guidance indicated five terms was appropriate. The Council should identify a plan with the DfE to keep the school open until 2015.
- The DfE had indicated they would work with the school to find a sponsor. This should be pursued.
- There would be a significant impact of closure on the community.
- Standards at Mowbray First School and Bedlingtonshire High School were little better than Guide Post Middle School, both judged as requiring improvement.
- The planned changes were having a detrimental effect on children.
- The costs involved in implementing the proposals would be better spent on improving the schools.
- Three tier education could work given the right funding and support. Two tier schools were too large and did not meet the needs of individual children.

**Mrs C. Davison, parent**

- There were problems with emergency services vehicles accessing the housing areas around first schools at the start and end of the school day.
- The academy option should be considered further.
- Parents' views were being ignored and concerns were not being addressed.
- The speed of decision making was of concern.

**Mr G. Huntley, parent/governor**

- Existing safety issues around parking at schools would be made worse by the school run between high school and first school.
- There would be more lone journeys for children and there were concerns about the length of the journey for younger children.
• Would there be a further inspection of the safe walking route to ensure its adequacy, why was there a need to spend £57,000 on this and would a copy of the report be made available?
• Buses were not reliable and were too expensive.
• Was there enough funding for the improvement works required, particularly to deal with provision for 2 year olds?
• Would there be sufficient time in the school holidays to complete all of the work?

The Leader responded that information could be sent out about the safe walking routes. The decision regarding two year old provision had been made by the Government and the Authority had little control over bus companies, which were private companies.

In response to some of the comments made, Mr Mays acknowledged that Mowbray First School required improvement, but this was very different to being in special measures, and investment from the teaching school fund had resulted in significant improvements.

Leadership and management at Bedlingtonshire High School had been judged to be good, and recent monitoring suggested that significant improvement had already been made following the provision of support.

Mr R. Butler, Vice Chair of Governors at Ringway First School, advised that the school had identified an option for the provision for a double mobile classroom on site which would save around £200,000 and he urged officers to investigate this further.

Councillor Jackson felt there was a need to ensure that the provision of transport to the high school was safe for younger children travelling with older children, and he queried whether there had been any incidents to give cause for concern.

The Chair of Governors at Bedlingtonshire High School was present at the meeting and he confirmed that there had been no incidents on the school bus. However, if there was a need for additional buses this would be investigated.

Councillor Kelly commented that there were previous examples of this situation in other partnerships and acceptable solutions had been found. He queried whether parents had considered options such as walking buses. Mrs Davison responded that this had not been considered because of the distance to school for some children, and the safety of the walking route. She also expressed concern about the number of available spaces on buses.

Mr Clark responded that discussions had been held with the transport team to ensure that there were enough bus places available for those who wanted them. In response to concerns expressed earlier, he assured members that funding was available for the building work, including that for two year old provision, and that the majority of building work would be undertaken in school holidays. Any work which was done in September would be clearly separated from regular school.

The Chief Fire Officer was present at the meeting and in response to concerns expressed by Mrs Davison regarding access by emergency vehicles, he advised...
that he was not aware of any problems. However, he would investigate the issue to confirm any facts.

Regarding the proposal and figures mooted by Mr Butler, Councillor Arckless commented that these were not robust costings, but he felt it was reasonable to retain some flexibility and ask officers to investigate the proposal further.

Mr Henry then advised members on the legal position. He reminded members about the issues they needed to take into account in reaching their decision and gave them specific advice on a range of points. He set out the proposals before member, and detailed the statutory process involved in school closure which was in five parts:-

- Statutory consultation. He was satisfied that the consultation process followed in respect of the proposal satisfied the requirements of the applicable guidance.
- Publication. He confirmed that the proposal notice met the statutory requirements.
- Representations. The requisite 4 weeks had been given for representations to be both made and received.
- Decision Stage – currently before Policy Board.
- Implementation – this would depend on the decision taken.

Members then needed to take into account the factors set out in the guidance and take those factors into account in reaching their decision. Some of the factors outlined in the guidance were:-

- Standards and the effect on displaced pupils.
- Schools causing concern.
- Balance of denominational provision.
- Early years / Special Educational Needs provision.
- The impact on community services.
- Views of interested parties.

Finally, members’ attention was to the types of decision which could be made when considering proposals for a school closure as follows:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with a modification having consulted the local authority and/or the Governing Body or;
- approve the proposal (with or without modification) subject to certain conditions being met.

The Chair asked members whether they felt they had been given sufficient information to enable them to reach a decision. Members confirmed that they had.

Councillor Arckless made a number of points to members about the situation including:-
The issue had been given a great deal of consideration by members of both Scrutiny and Policy Board and he was very aware of the depth of feeling and the concerns of the families involved, and he respected those views. It was not an easy decision for anyone.

This was not part of a strategy to introduce two tier education in the County – there was no such strategy. The priority was standards not structures.

This was not just about Guide Post Middle School but about five schools and communities in the Bedlingtonshire area. The Ofsted inspection at the end of last year had initiated the current situation, judging Guide Post Middle School to be in the worst category in all but one area. The Authority had no option but to respond to that.

He acknowledged the improvement which had been made, but doubted that this could be sustained to ensure standards reached an acceptable level without continued support.

He stressed the very real difference which a good education could make to working class children, who often needed the most support.

He referred to the need for further consideration to be given to a number of issues such as transition, maintaining standards in first schools and safe bus journeys.

He recognised that change was difficult but good schools provided proper safeguards and appropriate support to ensure a good integration of different age ranges.

He moved the report’s recommendations, with an additional recommendation to ask officers to investigate the building solution for Ringway First School as discussed. This was seconded by Councillor Dungworth.

Councillor Jackson advised that he would abstain on the vote as he had concerns about the need for such a fundamental change in the area and about safe school journeys. He also felt that more time should have been allowed to develop the improvements already made.

Councillor Kelly referred to the misgivings expressed by parents about the proposals which were similar to those raised in previous situations. Experience had shown that many such fears proved groundless. The transition would be less traumatic than parents feared, and the children’s opportunities would be enhanced. His own experience of working both in two tier and three tier organisation had borne this out.

Councillor Dungworth reminded members that it was important to be clear that this issue was only about this particular partnership and not about wholesale change. She found the decision very difficult as a supporter of three tier organisation and middle schools, but felt there was no option other than that presented, and that it was incumbent on members to act quickly in the best interests of the children. She appreciated parents’ concerns but felt these could be overcome if the changes were managed in a positive way by parents and staff working together.

Further to the proposals from Councillor Arckless, Mr Clark suggested the following additional recommendation:-
“(5) officers investigate further an alternative building solution at Guide Post Ringway First School within the £362,000 funding envelope identified for this school in paragraph 30 of the report”.

On the amended recommendations being put to the vote there voted FOR: 7; AGAINST: 0; ABSTENTIONS: 1 (P. Jackson).

RESOLVED that:-

1) Policy Board note:
   • the Council’s linked proposal to close Guide Post Middle School;
   • the Council’s linked proposal to reorganise Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools to primary status;
   • the responses to the Statutory Proposals and the analysis contained within the report;

2) Policy Board note the impact and implications of the linked proposals as set out in the Statutory Proposal for Guide Post Middle School and the Statutory Proposal for Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools included with the Background Papers to the report;

3) Policy Board note that either all of the linked proposals should be implemented or none should be implemented;

4) In the light of all the information in this report and taking into account the latest Statutory Guidance from the DfE attached to this report at Appendix 7, Policy Board agree to:

   (i) approve the Council’s linked proposal to close Guide Post Middle School with effect from 31 August 2014; and

   (ii) approve the Council’s linked proposal to extend the age range of Mowbray and Stakeford First Schools from age 3-9 to age 2-11 with effect from 1 September 2014; and

   (iii) approve the Council’s linked proposal to extend the age range of Guide Post Ringway First School from age 4-9 to age 4-11 with effect from 1 September 2014; and

   (iv) increase the Planned Admission Number (PAN) into Years 7 and 8 of Bedlingtonshire Community High School from 75 to 165 and decrease the PAN into Year 9 from 150 to 40; and

   (v) retain the PAN of 30 at Guide Post Ringway First School to enable single age teaching, as strongly argued for during consultation; and

   (vi) agree to allocate 2.067m from the Medium Term Plan to accommodate the capital costs outlined in the report; and
(vii) approve the implementation of the preferred building options set out in paragraph 30 of the report; and

(viii) approve the capital investment of £57k from the Local Transport Plan to assist with the improvement of the walking routes from the Guide Post area to Bedlingtonshire Community High School.

all of the above conditional upon the granting of planning permission by 31 August 2014 in relation to the new building works at Stakeford First School;

5) officers investigate further an alternative building solution at Guide Post Ringway First School within the £362,000 funding envelope identified for this school in paragraph 30 of the report; and

6) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

The Chair then advised that there would be a short adjournment so the decision and the reasons for it could be confirmed. The meeting adjourned at 11.18 am.

On the meeting reconvening at 11.35 am (Councillors Jackson and Kelly did not return), the Chair read out the following statement:-

“The proposal to close Guide Post Middle School, extend the age ranges of Mowbray, Stakeford and Guide Post Ringway First Schools and increase the Planned Admission Number (PAN) into Years 7 and 8 of Bedlingtonshire Community High School and decrease the PAN into Year 9 should be adopted and implemented for the following reasons:-

1. Guide Post Middle School was placed in special measures in October 2013. In its previous 3 Ofsted inspections, the school had only achieved a judgement of ‘Satisfactory’, which under the new Ofsted framework would be classed as ‘Requires Improvement’. While the school’s action plan has been judged to be fit for purpose, it is unlikely that the school would be removed from Special Measures in less than two years from the date of the inspection. Any improvement would need to be sustainable without the additional support currently being given to Guide Post Middle School and the school’s prior history as a maintained school does not indicate that this would be likely. Furthermore, there would continue to be a significant demand on the limited resources of the School Improvement Team to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

2. Given the local circumstances of the schools in the Guide Post-mini-partnership, it is believed that the preferred solution to providing improved educational opportunities to the pupils currently educated in Guide Post Middle School and its three feeder first schools would be to close the middle school and to extend the age ranges of Mowbray, Stakeford and Guide Post Ringway First Schools to become primary schools. This would create a more coherent and effective school organisation system across the Bedlington Partnership.
3. The School Organisation Maintained Schools Guidance (Annex B: Guidance for Decision-makers) states that in relation to ‘Schools Causing Concern’, there is a presumption that closure proposals should be approved, subject to checking that there are sufficient accessible places of an acceptable standard available to accommodate displaced pupils and to meet foreseeable future demand for places in the area. As a result of these proposals, there would be sufficient accessible places of an acceptable standard through the extension of the age ranges of Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools and the increase in the Planned Admission Number into Years 7 and 8 at Bedlingtonshire Community High School.

4. While it is recognised that the closure of any school has an impact on the local community, these proposals would enable sustainable education within the Guide Post mini-partnership from age 2-11. Furthermore, there would be a capital investment of £2.06m in the school buildings within Guide Post partnership.

The consultation on this proposal has been appropriate, reasonable and robust”.

Councillor Ledger returned to the room at this point.

NON KEY DECISIONS

18. REGENERATION WORKING GROUP UPDATE: TOWN CENTRES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The report provided an update from the Regeneration Working Group regarding its main work programme. The report from the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services OSC was attached to the back of the report (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix G).

Councillor Johnstone, as Chair of the Working Group, detailed some of the background which had led to the production of the report and its interim recommendations. Final recommendations would be brought forward in the Autumn. Members raised pavement obstructions in town centres, such as advertising bollards, and pavement parking as issues of concern, and asked that the Working Group include these as part of its focus.

As portfolio holder, Councillor Hepple commended the valuable work of the Group thus far.

RESOLVED that the initial recommendations of the Working Group detailed below be endorsed, and the report of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services OSC be noted:

(a) Develop a Town Centre Prospectus outlining the Council’s overall role and approach to supporting growth and resilience in town centres. Also establish a regular monitoring process building on the Town Centre Benchmarking Project to assist both the Council and local partners in understanding performance and taking action.
(b) The Council should actively promote, encourage and support communities across Northumberland to develop Neighbourhood Plans to provide a local planning framework to help build and maintain sustainable communities and vibrant town centres in accordance with the growth strategy identified in the emerging Core Strategy. A review of resources to support an increasing level of Neighbourhood Planning activity will be undertaken. The Council’s Toolkits for Neighbourhood Planning and the Town Benchmarking Project along with the recent allocation of officers to specific areas of the County to assist with planning issues should all be publicised to further encourage Town and Parish Councils to get involved.

(c) Develop a pipeline of potential projects linked to the forthcoming new Northumberland Economic Strategy that could benefit from resources including the Local Growth Fund, European Programme, Rural Development Funds and other sources.

(d) Establish a working party to consider how local businesses and communities can be supported in developing Business Improvement Districts.

19. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – PLACE

(a) Review of Household Waste Recovery Centre Permit Scheme

Policy Board was asked to consider recommendations for proposed changes to the Household Waste Recovery Centre (HWRC) permit scheme and access controls following a review of this service by both of the Urban and Rural Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture Working Groups. Report from the Communities and Place OSC attached to the back of the report (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Paul Jones highlighted the main points of the report and the work done by the SIC Urban and Rural Working Groups, and Scrutiny, on this.

Councillor Swithenbank supported the need to prevent trade waste being deposited at HWRCs and felt that the proposals would protect facilities for ordinary families. He commended the arrangements and staff at the HWRCs and commented that costs could be significantly reduced if operatives continued to perform effectively.

Members agreed on the need for positive publicity on this.

RESOLVED that the following changes be made to the HWRC permit scheme and access controls :-

(a) Reduction in the allocation of HWRC permits issued to households to 12 per annum which can be used at any time within 12 months of the first permit being issued, but that households will only be allowed to deposit up to a single ‘transit van’ load (~6 cubic yards) of soil / rubble / plasterboard / builders waste, or an equivalent volume of waste from the removal of fixtures and fittings over a 12 month period.
(b) Those persons undertaking the refurbishment or renovation of domestic properties who are deemed to be property developers or private landlords by the Council will not be entitled to deposit any construction and demolition / DIY waste at HWRCs.

(c) Persons deemed by the Council to be private landlords or their agents undertaking the clearance of unwanted household items / waste from vacant domestic properties will not be entitled to deposit such waste at HWRCs.

(d) Implementation of a pilot scheme for the use of Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system at the two largest HWRC sites, namely Bebside and North Seaton in SE Northumberland to help identify suspected tradespersons.

(e) Support for further IT development work to reduce the cost of administering the scheme, increase the ability to ‘self serve’, improve access controls and management reporting.

(f) Agreement that the current level of usage by non-Northumberland residents does not warrant the inconvenience to residents and additional cost of introducing ‘residents only’ controls at the Council’s network of HWRC sites.

(g) The Executive Director of Place be authorised, in consultation with the Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment to make any necessary refinements to the HWRC permit scheme and access controls in light of operational experience and customer feedback; and

(h) the report of the Communities and Place OSC be noted.

(b) **Review of the Northumberland Town and Parish Council Charter**

The report sought approval of the revised Town and Parish Charter for Northumberland. It provided a summary of the process of developing the draft revised Charter and the feedback received. Report from the Communities and Place OSC attached to the back of the report (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was introduced by Councillor Ledger who thanked the Parish Liaison Working Group and the Chair of NALC for their efforts on this. Working relationships with town and parish councils were now much more positive.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the engagement undertaken to inform the draft revised Northumberland Town and Parish Council Charter be noted;

(b) the revised Town and Parish Council Charter (attached at appendix A) be adopted; and
(c) authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to make any non-material amendments to the final text of the document prior to publication.

20. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER


Councillor Ledger commented on the very positive nature of the report, with the move of the Fire Service to Local Services demonstrating clear benefits already.

The Chief Fire Officer drew members’ attention to the main points of the report and reassured members on the delivery of services in rural areas. Retained firefighters were members of the communities in which they served and this was a very important point to note.

Members spoke in support of the report which was very good news, and the professionalism of the service, which they felt was exemplary. It was agreed that a letter of thanks would be sent from Policy Board to all involved in the excellent peer review.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the areas of strength and areas for consideration as outlined in Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service Fire Peer Challenge Report November 2013 be noted;

(b) the Consultation Strategy and final report be noted;

(c) the final draft Fire & Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017 be approved; and

(d) the report of the Communities and Place OSC be noted.

21. REPORTS OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

(a) Write Offs 2013-14

The report detailed debt written off during the 2013-14 financial year. Report from the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services OSC attached to the back of the report (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).
Councillor Ledger highlighted the significant improvements made in debt collection in recent years.

Members asked for further information and clarification on the level of debts within the Transformation Group and non-domestic rates. Mr Mason agreed to provide this information.

RESOLVED that the content of the report, and the report of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services OSC, be noted.

(b) NEPO Transformation – Introduction of New Arrangements for the Leadership and Governance of the NEPO Service and Regional Collaborative Procurement

Policy Board was asked to consider and agree revised arrangements for the leadership and management of the NEPO Service and Regional Collaborative Procurement, and to note the implications for the Council (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

RESOLVED that:-

(a) approval be given, subject to ANEC’s formal agreement, to the revised governance structure and staffing arrangements as outlined in the report for the administration of the NEPO Service and future collaborative procurement on behalf of the LA12;

(b) Councillor D. Ledger be appointed to serve on the Collaborative Procurement Subcommittee of ANEC, with Councillor V. Tyler as substitute;

(c) full Council be recommended to make any consequential changes to its Constitution to give effect to these revised arrangements; and

(d) the Lead Executive Director - Corporate Resources, be authorised, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve such further changes to the agreements envisaged by the report as he may determine, and to complete them on behalf of the Council.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY BOARD

At a meeting of the Policy Board held at County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 24 July 2014 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Davey
(Leader of the County Council in the Chair)

POLICY BOARD MEMBERS

Arckless, G.R.          Ledger, D.
Dungworth, S.            Reid, J.
Hepple, A.               Switenbank, I.C.F.
Kelly, P.                Tyler, V.

OTHER COUNCILLORS

Dickinson, S.            Sambrook, A.G.
Gallacher, B.            Simpson, L.
Richards, M.E.

OFFICERS

Clark, J.              Head of Planning and Organisation
Cusack, M.              Passenger Transport Operations Manager
Hartwell, A.            Senior Manager, Safeguarding Education - Performance
Henry, L.               Legal Services Manager
Jones, P.               Head of Neighbourhood Services
Lally, D.               Executive Director – Wellbeing and Community Health
Mason, S.               Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings of the Policy Board, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair:-

(a) Wednesday, 4 June 2014
(b) Tuesday, 10 June 2014
23. **AREA COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

Members were asked to consider feedback from Area Committee meetings (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

**RESOLVED** that the report be received.

24. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – LOCAL SERVICES**

(1) **Review of Home to School Transport Policy**

The report reviewed the Council’s current home to school transport policy in two distinct areas. Firstly the provision of transport to schools chosen for reasons of religion or belief and secondly, the harmonisation of eligibility criteria for children attending schools within the two-tier educational system with those applied to children attending school within the three-tier educational system (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report from the Family and Children’s Services OSC on this matter was attached to the back of the report.

Paul Jones drew members’ attention to the main points of the report.

Councillor Swithenbank supported the proposed recommendations. The costs involved were relatively small, and did not involve any funding leaving the County. He suggested that it would be appropriate to establish a baseline now in order to monitor the exercise of choice between now and the proposed review of the policy.

Councillor Arckless commented that much had changed since this policy had been introduced by local authorities, and Northumberland now had only one Roman Catholic High School in the County. Account had to be taken of today’s multicultural society. He supported the proposal to review the situation in 2016/17 as there was a potential impact on the County’s high schools, which needed to be considered.

Councillor Kelly did not support the recommendations. He referred to the anomalies which existed in the current system whereby over 50% of the pupils at St Benet Biscop’s RC High School were not of Roman Catholic faith because of parents exercising parental choice, and he felt that such anomalies needed to be addressed first, before looking at equalities and human rights issues. He did not feel that delaying a decision until the next election was approaching was a wise course of action, and that the arguments for dealing with the situation now outweighed those for delaying it.

On the recommendations being put to the vote there voted FOR: 7; AGAINST: 1 (P. Kelly).

**RESOLVED** that:-
(a) the current free provision of transport for pupils in pre-16 education exercising a preference for a school on the grounds of religion or belief be maintained for the next two years and a further review carried out in 2016/17; and

(b) approval be given to the publication of the revised policy for home to school transport serving mainstream schools attached at Appendix 1 which:

- retains the current free transport arrangements for pupils attending a school chosen because of religion or belief, whilst they remain at that school;
- ends the anomaly currently in place whereby the two mile walking limit is applied for an extra two years for pupils attending a primary school.

25. REPORT OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

Performance Overview

The report advised elected Members of the position at the end of quarter 4 on key areas of the Council’s performance. As it referred to quarter 4 of 2013-14, it reported on the performance as per the Council structure in place during that period (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report from the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services OSC on this matter was attached to the back of the report.

Councillor Ledger highlighted the main points of the report and the findings of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services OSC report, which he felt demonstrated that Scrutiny was working effectively.

Councillor Arckless referred to three issues for children’s services:

- The level of overall progress in schools since the focussed Ofsted inspection was encouraging. This had been subject of a recent briefing to all members and work with members would continue as a key area of focus. He had been heartened by the level of cross party support in dealing with these difficult issues.
- The number of permanent exclusions from school, particularly involving younger children, was of great concern. Consideration needed to be given to the support provided to schools in dealing with some very challenging behaviour.
- The need for more foster carers and the financial impact of heavy dependence on independent fostering agencies had to be addressed. The Authority had to examine why independent fostering agencies appeared to be more attractive than the Council’s own, and what could be done to attract more foster carers, even if there was a financial impact from this.

Regarding the speed of decision making on planning applications, Councillor Hepple advised members that work was ongoing to address the issue and a report would come to Policy Board for consideration in the near future.
Councillor Kelly commented that some elements of the planning application process were outside officers’ control, such as consultee responses. Internal consultees needed to be made aware of the impact of late responses on the overall process. Also, the number of windfarm applications in the County involved a huge amount of consultation, which was not replicated to the same extent in other parts of the country.

Councillor Ledger felt that was an argument for such applications to be removed from the monitoring system as they distorted the overall figures. He would be discussing the position with the Portfolio Holder and Director of Planning, Economy and Housing, but reassured members that a lot of good work was already being done to improve the situation and to monitor effectively.

RESOLVED that the position be noted, and the work being undertaken to review reporting arrangements going forward be noted.

NON KEY DECISIONS

26. REPORT FROM THE POLICY BOARD WORKING GROUPS

The report informed the Policy Board of recent progress made by the Working Groups, since their establishment in June 2013 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

RESOLVED that the report be received.


Members were asked to consider the above report and any recommendations contained therein (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

Councillor Richards drew members’ attention to the amount of work which had been done.

RESOLVED that Policy Board endorse the recommendations detailed in the report.

OTHER ISSUES

Councillor Hepple was pleased to report to members the recent success of Homes for Northumberland in the National Federation of ALMO awards, where a number of awards had been achieved. Members agreed that a letter of congratulation should be sent.

CHAIR

DATE
At a meeting of the Economic Prosperity & Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF on Tuesday, 22nd April, 2014 at 09:30 am

PRESENT

A Wallace (Chair)
K Graham, L Grimshaw, J Riddle, A Sambrook, HGH Sanderson, A Tebbutt

OFFICERS

G Arnott Team Manager South, Facilities Management
S Atkinson Customer Development Manager
G Barnes Revenues and Benefits Manager
H Fox Democratic Service Officer
A Hartwell Senior Manager, Safeguarding & Education - Performance
P Leo Interim Head of Strategic Estates
D Lowes Lead Apprenticeship Officer
S Nicholson Scrutiny Officer
E O’Connor Senior Manager, Employability & Skills Service

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Hepple and Tyler

72. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Castle, Ledger and Nisbet

73. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 March 2014, as circulated, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

74. Forward Plan
The Scrutiny Officer advised that there was nothing further to add to the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the information was noted.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

75. Apprenticeship Provision in Northumberland and Raising the Participation Age of Young people in Education or Training

Elaine O’Connor, Senior Manager, Employability and Skills Service introduced the report and gave an update on the apprenticeship and NEET position since last October.

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the Local Authority’s statutory duties to the raising of the participation age of young people in education or training and to demonstrate how those duties were being met through implementation of the Apprenticeship Strategy.

The Government changed the law from the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year which required that all young people continued in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turned 17.

Ms O’Connor referred to the Northumberland NEET table figures on page 3 of the report and also to Appendix 1a which compared Local Authority Performance across other local authorities.

Appendix 1b showed the variance of figures by Ward in Northumberland.

The Employability and Skills Service took responsibility for the Apprenticeship Strategy from April 2013. A summary of performance was outlined at the bottom of page 3 of the report.

Appendix 3 gave a summary of performance against targets.

Ms O’Connor referred to the quarterly newsletter which gave details of forthcoming events, etc.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Were there any observations why contact was being lost with young people of the upper age limit and how much liaison was there with external providers (e.g., Barclays) for young people with no aspirations for an academic career?
- Was there anything the Authority could learn from neighbouring authorities?
- What range of outside bodies had taken on people with learning disabilities?
- A Member requested a breakdown of the Electoral Division for people currently employed by the Council;
- Were any targets set to concentrate on those levels with greatest need?
Ms O’Connor explained that she would answer the second part of the question first and advised that a lot of work was carried out with external providers. There had been a recent day conference with schools regarding the raising of the participation age. Since the decommissioning of Connexions, the responsibility had fallen on the school but not all schools had taken on that responsibility however, a lot of schools did encourage students to stay on at school in order to keep the most committed students. A representative from Barclays had attended the day conference and provided information about the apprenticeship programme.

Debra Lowes, Lead Apprenticeship Officer advised that the Employability and Skills Service worked with schools to encourage and enable them to understand the wider agenda for apprenticeship opportunities.

In response to the first part of the question, Mrs O’Connor advised that there was a significant issue with the loss of contact of young people. A lot of work had been carried out to reduce the Not Known figures for 16-18 year olds. However, it had become evident that had not been addressed for the 18 year olds and would be a priority for examination. She further added that young people living in Northumberland were going to Newcastle for employment and therefore contact would be lost.

Regarding sharing of best practice, Mrs O’Connor advised that the previous year’s figures for Durham County Council had been low however, the Department of Education had provided funding and figures had since improved. She added that other authorities were geographically different to that of Northumberland.

In response to the query regarding supporting learners with difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD), the Lead Apprenticeship Officer advised that a full salary would be provided to a supportive employer to enable them to employ a young person with LLDD or a Care Leaver or an ex-offender for 12 months or longer to enable them to move onto further employment following their Apprenticeship. Whilst the funding was focused on priority age groups 16-24 years, learners over and above that age group would also be considered.

Ms O’Connor added that the position was quite positive as previously, that was not something that would be taken on board. She referred to a special school in Blyth and advised that the school worked hard to take on board young people with disabilities who could sustain long term employment.

In response to the query regarding the breakdown of information by Electoral Division, the Lead Apprenticeship Officer advised that the information was not carried out by division level as the information was grouped across Northumberland. She further advised that there were no ‘hot spot’ areas but there was information to target the lower levels.

It was requested that a revised version and update be brought back to Committee in November and that information be focused on major towns to get a better understanding and a more detailed picture.
RESOLVED:-

1) That Members consider the statutory duties around raising the participation age and the Local Authority’s performance in meeting those responsibilities;
2) That Members note the progress made on implementation on the apprenticeship strategy;
3) That a revision and update on the Northumberland NEET, Not Known and Participation figures be included in next year’s programme;
4) Members comments be incorporated into the Corporate Performance Review

76. Annual Complaints Report

Following a request from the Chairmen’s Group a report was presented by Sara Atkinson, Customer Development Manager on complaints received across the Council in 2013.

The report examined how complaints had been handled across the Council in order to support the agreed approach to measuring complaints performance, a new system had been and continued to be developed and was in use by the services in the former Transformation Group. Wellbeing and Community Health Services had their own systems in place to comply with statutory requirements in relation to Children’s and Adult Social Care.

It was noted that detailed breakdowns of LGO complaints would no longer be available from the LGO. That information would be collated from with the Council. Decisions from the LGO would, in future, be available via their website.

Planning had been the only area where a maladministration causing injustice decision had been received from the LGO. It was noted however, that that was in relation to a legacy case from Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council.

There were no emerging trends from the complaints data and the issues were wide ranging.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- A Member sought proof that less complaints were going to stage 2;
- There should be some sort of mechanism to record customer feedback;
- Customers should be asked if they were happy, whether the complaint had been dealt with and that should be captured;
- The importance of communication;
- Informal resolutions set the tone of the Council. Customer care and the way it was delivered were important. Information should be captured whether customers were happy or not;
- It was suggested that an automatic email be implemented which would request an automatic response from a customer;
- Spot surveys could be carried out to capture satisfaction earlier
The Customer Development Manager advised that a lot of development work was taking place in the management process of complaints. In response to the comment regarding customer feedback, that was to be taken forward and part of the development was that some type of customer survey could be introduced. Both, Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture Working Groups had considered the report and had also suggested examples of best practice in capturing positive feedback. An example suggested had been the use of a simple ‘smiley face’ system to show customer satisfaction levels.

It was hoped that informal resolutions would be examined quarterly and that customers would know how to make a complaint and what the difference was between a service request and a complaint. The Contact Centre was currently testing a telephone survey which would be rolled out fully. That survey would be voluntary and would ask customers about their experience following a call to the Contact Centre.

The query regarding the automatic email response could be examined.

RESOLVED that:-

(i) the report be received and the information be reviewed;
(ii) Members comments be incorporated into the Corporate Performance Review.
(iii) An update be brought back to the Committee in next year's Corporate Performance Review.

77. School Meals Service

Paul Leo, Interim Head of Strategic Estates provided an update on the Council’s School Meals Service.

School meals were being separated from other services and moving from Local Services to Children’s Services/Wellbeing. Schools would be consulted as to the desired level of future service provision offered by the Council.

Funding was available for both stated funded and voluntary aided schools in Northumberland and additional funding available for smaller schools to help implement the free school meals service in September 2014.

Gillian Arnott, Facilities Management advised that an audit had been carried out on equipment in every school in Northumberland to assess the demand for school meals.

Following the presentation of the report, Members raised the following questions and comments:-

- The quality of school meals and the presentation;
- What was the capital cost for the County?
- What percentage of capital would be used for dietary requirements?

Mrs Arnott advised that every school could choose which provider they used and it was the decision of each school what percentage would be used for
dietary requirements. She further advised that following the audit, capital criterion had been developed to prioritise capital funding available. The criteria were being examined by the Capital Projects Officer which would be presented to the Policy Board.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(i) the update be noted and a further update be brought back to the Committee in October 2014.
(ii) Members comments be included in the Corporate Performance Review.

78. **Performance Review**

A report was provided by Alan Hartwell. Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Education, Performance.

The report highlighted the key exceptions derived from the new Council wide dashboard. Pages 1, 2 and 3 summarised the key actions.

Mr Hartwell referred to the breastfeeding data on page 1 and informed Members that information was now available if Members wished to see it.

The key performance indicators were explained throughout the report.

Members raised questions and comments as follows:-

- Reference was made to page 14 of the report and it was queried who decided the indicator for SEN statement should be ‘smaller is better’?
- What training was available for Members?
- A Member requested statistics requested for people with LLDD employed by external providers;
- Since LGR, key indicators were always changing. Key indicators should be set and a user friendly system employed;
- Members should be able to see up to date performance in an easy to use on-line manner and be aware how the Council performed;
- The issue of fostering and the recruitment of foster parents;
- Planning indicators required improvement;
- Who decided what key performance indicators mattered, e.g., pot holes?
- Were the aims of foster carers too high?
- Whether foster carers would require retraining if they decided to re-start fostering?

Regarding the query about the Performance Indicator on page 14 relating to SEN statements, Mr Hartwell explained that the Department for Education had challenged Northumberland to reduce the number of SEN statements, hence the ‘smaller is better’ aspiration.

Mr Hartwell advised that a training document had been circulated to Scrutiny Members in December and January. At present, the Council did not have an
on-line system for Members to access the latest performance indicator results, however Members could ask Performance staff for information if needed, and the quarterly dashboards were available on line. In response to a query whether there were any plans to introduce training, Mr Hartwell advised that changes were about to happen to the framework and its management would move to the Corporate Resources group. He would advise the lead officer of the Member’s requests.

Sean Nicholson, Scrutiny Officer advised that there was to be a review of the process and could explore that with the Chair.

Mr Hartwell advised that a significant number of foster carers were retiring. In addition those people who decided to foster, once they received more information, sometimes decided that they no longer wish to. Foster campaigns were being carried out and the use of independent fostering agencies had increased. A significant number of checks were carried out against proposed foster carers and the increased focus about the foster carers’ role, e.g., schooling could put people off being foster carers.

In response to the performance indicators, Mr Hartwell advised that many of the previous key indicators had remained in place. He further advised that key performance indicators were benchmarked against those of other local authorities where possible.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a report would be presented to Communities and Place OSC in relation to winter performance which highlighted pot holes and other road works. In addition a report in relation to planning decisions/the speed of planning decisions would be presented to Communities and Place OSC in either June or July.

In response to the query regarding re-training, Mr Hartwell advised that he would query that with the Service Manager, Looked After Children.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that Family and Children’s Services OSC had examined the issue of fostering on a number of occasions.

RESOLVED that:-

(i) the report be noted.
(ii) Members comments be included in the Corporate Performance Review.

THEMED SCRUTINY

79. Progress Report

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the recent site visit to Rothbury landslip where Members observed the patching machine.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER
80. Economic Prosperity & Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a lot of new issues needed to be included in the future work programme which would be formulated into next year’s work programme. Any issues Members wished to be included should contact the Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION REPORTS

81. Policy Digest

Members were reminded that information reports would no longer be reproduced. Reports would be published on the Council’s website and if any member had any questions they wanted to put to the relevant Policy Board Member he/she should contact Democratic Services in order that the appropriate arrangements could be made.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY & STRATEGIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Economic Prosperity & Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF on Tuesday, 27th May, 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

A Sambrook (Chair)

G Castle, K Graham, L Grimshaw, K Nisbet, A Tebbutt, RJD Watkin

OFFICERS

D English Principal Planner
L Little Democratic Services Officer
C Logan Head of Financial and Customer Services
C Mason Customer Development Manager
S Nicholson Scrutiny Officer
T Palmer Head of Procurement
G Paul Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
R Strettle Principal Policy Officer
N Walsh Service Manager Cultural Heritage and Libraries

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors B Gallacher, A Hepple, T Johnstone, D Ledger and V Tyler
Public: 1

1. Membership and Terms of Reference

RESOLVED that the membership, terms of reference and appointment of Chair and Vice-chair confirmed at Annual Council on 7 May be noted.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Riddle, G Sanderson and A Wallace.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 April 2014, as circulated, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.
4. **Forward Plan**

   A revised Forward Plan was circulated at the meeting.

   **RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE POLICY BOARD**

5. **Regeneration Working Group Update: Town Centres and Neighbourhood Planning**

   The interim report introduced by Councillor T Johnstone, Chair of the Regeneration Working Group, R Strettle, Principal Policy Officer and D English, Principal Planner, provided a comprehensive update on the main work programme of the Working Group. Initial recommendations intended to add value to current work supporting town centres in the County were outlined along with the benefits of encouraging and supporting the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans across the County. Work would continue over the next quarter and a final report would be provided to the Policy Board upon completion. A draft example of a Northumberland Town Centre Prospectus was provided at Appendix A.

   Members welcomed the report stating that it was a very important initiative in the current economic climate. The need for local Member involvement in the development of each Town Centre Prospectus was highlighted along with the requirement to get other key people i.e. Chambers of Trade involved. It was confirmed that local Members would be provided with a copy of their town’s draft prospectus to ensure completeness prior to final publication. In the example provided Members considered that the proximity to Newcastle International Airport should be included along with Northumberland County Council as a key stakeholder.

   In response to a question regarding the future of Council owned buildings within Town Centres, A Hepple, the Strategic Board Member confirmed that work was ongoing on an asset management strategy for all buildings across the County.

   **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

6. **Write Offs 2013-14**

   The report which would be considered by Policy Board on 10 June, provided information on the debt written off during the 2013-14 financial year. It was clarified that this Committee received regular updates on the level of outstanding debt and write offs throughout each financial year. It was confirmed that the Council was unlikely to recover debts outstanding when businesses went into liquidation.

   **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.
7. **Procurement Shared Service**

The report which would be considered by the Joint Trust and Policy Board on Wednesday 4 June sought approval for the Share Procurement Business Case which included the recommended option for the shared service model for procurement services between Northumberland County Council (NCC) Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust and North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust. T Palmer, Head of Procurement introduced the report. She highlighted the background and context for a procurement shared service alongside the benefits that could be realised.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report. Information was requested in relation to improved opportunities for local suppliers as it was thought this was difficult to prove. The Deputy Leader stated that the launch of the Grow Northumberland Campaign demonstrated how the County had moved forward. Positive comments had been received from those businesses who had felt disenfranchised and initial evidence would be made available to Members. The need to involve local suppliers in a way in which they felt valued was highlighted and it was confirmed that if the proposal was agreed then a dedicated resource to focus on building relationships with suppliers would be provided.

In response to a question related to the future of NEPO it was confirmed that a report would be provided to all 12 authorities involved in the near future. In relation to staffing it was confirmed that no head count reduction would occur and resources could be moved to look at other areas still to be addressed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

8. **Impact and Value of Tourist Information Centres**

The report provided the Committee with information related to the impact Tourist Information Centres (TIC’s) had on the visitor experience in three key areas; value for money, visitor numbers and the impact of major events and their impact on businesses. N Walsh, Service Manager - Cultural Heritage and Libraries along with C Mason, Customer Development Manager were in attendance to introduce the report to the Committee. It was clarified that whilst the operating costs of TICs had reduced by £40,000 since 2009/10 there was still a net cost for providing the service in 2013/14 of £313,564 which equated to 50p per visitor.

V Tyler, the Policy Board Member highlighted the success of three organisations within Northumberland at the Visit England Awards with two achieving gold awards and the other a bronze award.

In response to a suggestion to open the TIC in Morpeth on all Bank holidays and Sundays throughout the year to attract more visitors, it was clarified that a cost analysis would need to be carried out on staffing. It was confirmed that volunteers were not used in TICS at the current time but this could be
something to be investigated in the future however consideration would need to be given on how to these would differentiate from paid staff.

B Gallacher requested that staff of the TICs be thanked for their assistance with the promotion of the free parking scheme within Northumberland. Their work in dealing with customers requesting parking discs was much appreciated and carried out well.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

9. Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer was to meet with Service Heads to identify any issues for the Work Programme, however a number of changes to staffing structures were still ongoing and therefore Officers whilst continuing within their present roles were unsure of their new responsibilities.

A discussion took place regarding monitoring of the proposed Post 16 Transport policy and the effect on pupils and schools. The Scrutiny Officer would request the Family and Children’s Services OSC to look at.

It was requested that as it was this Committee’s remit to scrutinise any budget implications, that following completion of the reviews into Post 16 Transport, the Youth Service and Children’s Services which were announced as part of the budget a report be provided at a future meeting to allow this.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION REPORTS

10. Policy Digest

Members were reminded that information reports would no longer be reproduced. Reports would be published on the Council’s website and if any member had any questions they wanted to put to the relevant Policy Board Member he/she should contact Democratic Services in order that the appropriate arrangements could be made.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY & STRATEGIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Economic Prosperity & Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 24th June, 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

A Wallace (Chair), K Graham, L Grimshaw, K Nisbet

OFFICERS

A Hartwell Senior Manager, Safeguarding & Education, Performance
L Little Democratic Services Officer
C Maddison Apprentice, Committee Services
S Mason Lead Executive Director, Corporate Resources
S Nicholson Scrutiny Officer

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors G Davey, B Gallacher, D Ledger, J Sawyer, E Simpson

11. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Castle, A Sambrook, HGH Sanderson and A Tebbutt.

12. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 May 2014, as circulated, were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

13. Forward Plan

A revised Forward Plan was circulated at the meeting a copy of which would be attached to the signed minutes. Additional items to be considered by this Committee were highlighted as Hard Facilities Management Re-Procurement on 22 July 2014 and Options for the Future of County Hall and Corporate Headquarters for 23 September 2014.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.
REports to be considered by the policy board

14. Joint Working with Durham County Council

Councillor Sanderson had requested that a written report be produced for this Committee in connection with Joint Working with Durham County Council (DCC). S Mason, Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources explained that it had been too early in the process for a written report to be produced but he would provide a verbal update.

Members were informed that as part of a restructure within Corporate Resources it had been agreed to explore joint working with Durham, who had similar characteristics to Northumberland, over a number of functions to develop greater capability and to deliver services at a lower cost, in order to protect front line services. Immediate benefits had been identified within Strategic HR, IT and Legal Services and work had been carried out by Heads of Services at both Councils to develop a work programme for an integrated structure. Each area would be explored over a period of months which would include benchmarking of each function. Early indications had been promising however it would be a number of months before any detailed proposals would be brought to Policy Board for consideration.

As there were no questions, the Chair thanked Mr Mason for his attendance and verbal update.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

15. Performance Overview

The report advised Member of the position at the end of quarter 4 of key areas of the Council’s performance. A Hartwell, Senior Manager Safeguarding & Education - Safeguarding was in attendance along with Councillor D Ledger, Deputy Leader who introduced the report to the Committee. He explained that this was the report for the full year and there had been few changes from the report considered by this Committee in April 2014. He confirmed that all key priorities were linked to the Council’s Corporate Plan.

Two issues specifically highlighted within Children’s Services were:

- The continuing and increasingly high number of looked after children placed with independent Fostering Agencies and the major implication this has on the Council’s budget
alongside the need for the Council to recruit and retain Foster Carers; and

- The increasing number of Permanent Exclusions from Schools – there was particular concern that a pattern was emerging that more Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils had been excluded compared to previous years.

The Committee requested that these two items be looked at further by the Family and Children’s Services OSC.

It was confirmed that a report on the speed of decision making on planning applications was to be considered by the Communities and Place OSC later that day. Councillor G Davey, the Leader of the Council highlighted the figures in relation to housing on page 31 and congratulated Housing Services for their work. In respect of the number of accidental dwelling fire injuries, it was confirmed that Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) would expand the use of Serious Case Reviews to include in depth analysis of all fires which involved a fire injury as well as a fire fatality. Information on the location of fires would be requested from the NFRS.

RESOLVED that:

1. Policy Board be informed that this Committee supported the recommendations contained in the report; and
2. Chairmen’s Group be asked to refer the two items outlined above to the Family and Children’s Services OSC for further examination.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

16. Working Group Reports

Reports had been provided by the Capital Works Programme Working Group and the Regeneration Working Group on the activities undertaken and recommendations made by each Working Group. Councillor J Sawyer, the Chair of the Capital Works Programme Working Group was in attendance.

The Chair thanked the Working Groups for their informative and in-depth reports.

RESOLVED that the reports be noted.

REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

17. Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014/15

The Scrutiny Officer reminded the Committee of the two additional
items for the work programme as had been identified earlier on the Forward Plan and informed Members that it was expected a date would be confirmed shortly for the meeting in respect of HMP Northumberland.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION REPORTS

18. Policy Digest

Members were reminded that information reports would no longer be reproduced. Reports would be published on the Council’s website and if any Member had any questions they wanted to put to the relevant Policy Board Member he/she should contact Democratic Services in order that the appropriate arrangements could be made.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Thursday, 3rd April, 2014 at 2:00 pm.

PRESENT

B Pidcock(Chair), E Burt(Vice-Chair), E Cartie, A Dale, RR Dodd, AH Murray, TN Thorne

OFFICERS

J Clark  Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions
D Lally  Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Health
L Little  Democratic Services Officer
T Mayes  Head of Early Years and Schools

ALSO PRESENT

P Cunningham - Church Representative
Rev. D. Lennox - Church Representative
C Dyson - Teacher Union Representative
R Lyst - Teacher Union Representative
R Woolhouse - Teacher Union Representative

94. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Foster, Rickerby and Smith.

95. Disclosures of Interests

Councillor Foster, although not present at the meeting had declared an interest as she had been appointed to the Interim Executive Board at Guide Post Middle School and was also a school governor at Stakeford First School, one of the first schools affected by the proposals.

Councillor Ledger, although not present at the meeting had also declared a personal interest as a member of his family worked at one of the schools affected by the proposals.

REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD

96. Outcomes of Consultation on proposals for part of the Bedlington Partnership.
The Committee were informed that the report (attached as Appendix A to the signed minutes) would be considered by the Policy Board on 8 April together with any comments made by this Committee. An extract of the points raised at the Petitions Committee on 3 April (circulated at the meeting and attached to the signed minutes) would also be taken into consideration by the Policy Board.

Mr J Clark, Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions, introduced the report to the Committee and detailed the process undertaken. Members were informed that the last recommendation had been omitted from the report circulated and should read:

Subject to agreement of Recommendation 4, approve the publication of a Statutory Proposal to close Guide Post Middle School with effect from 31 August 2014 and to extend the age ranges of Mowbray First School, and Stakeford First School and Guide Post Ringway First School, as set out in Recommendation 4(ii) and 4(iii), with effect from 1 September 2014.

In response to questions raised by the Committee the following information was provided:

- Following the Ofsted inspections, additional learning support had been provided to the school, some improvement in KS2 results had been achieved however not sufficient improvement had been achieved across the whole school.
- As it was considered the Governing Body had not held the school to account the delegated budget had been withdrawn and an Interim Executive Board had been appointed.
- Whilst the Local Authority could require Guide Post Middle School to become part of a Federation with other schools as it was under Special Measures, it had no power to force any other school to do this and no other school had come forward voluntarily.
- It was clarified that comments received on the proper consultation forms and those provided for the evaluation of the consultation process had been included in the report.
- However each form would be looked at again to provide assurance that this had occurred.
- Refurbished mobile classrooms were of a high standard and fit for purpose.
- Government Policy regarding Ofsted Categories and schools put in special measures had been revised and it was now expected that issues be tackled immediately either by closure or by becoming strong sponsored academies.
- Circumstances in respect of the proposed closure of Guide Post Middle School and proposed Convertor Academy solution in respect of the Alnwick Partnership were different with the best local solution sought in each case.

Concerns were raised by the Teacher Union Representatives regarding the inconsistent timescales set by Ofsted and the Department for Education and how the proposed closure was perceived by staff; issues surrounding the
recruitment of existing staff; the relationship between schools and the potential knock-on effects on the Bedlington Partnership.

Officers confirmed that decisions regarding staff redundancy and recruitment were unclear at the current time. It was expected that there would be fewer posts than currently due to falling pupil numbers in general. There was improvement work taking place regarding teaching and learning enhanced job opportunities; training in other schools and interview skills would also be provided. Whilst the Local Authority would assist where it could, it could give no guarantee as recruitment would be made by individual school governing bodies.

The Chair asked for assurance that the proposals would offer the best educational opportunities for children. Officers highlighted the success in other Partnerships where closures had occurred.

Councillor E Burt proposed that the Policy Board be informed that the Committee endorsed the recommendations as contained in the report and additional recommendation as outlined above which was seconded by Councillor Thorne.

RESOLVED that the Policy Board be informed that this Committee endorsed the recommendations as outlined in the report with the addition of the following recommendation:

Subject to agreement of Recommendation 4, approve the publication of a Statutory Proposal to close Guide Post Middle School with effect from 31 August 2014 and to extend the age ranges of Mowbray First School, and Stakeford First School and Guide Post Ringway First School, as set out in Recommendation 4(ii) and 4(iii), with effect from 1 September 2014.
97. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodd, Foster, Rickerby and Thorne, and from Ms Ferguson and Mr C Dyson.

98. **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** - that the minutes of the meeting of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 20 March 2014, as circulated as Appendix A, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to
them being amended to show that Mr Cunningham was not present but had submitted his apologies for the meeting.

99. **Forward Plan April to July 2014**

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of key decisions (April - July 2014). (Summary sheets enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B.)

**RESOLVED** - that the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period April to July be noted.

**REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD**

100. **Proposed Closure of St Cuthbert’s RC VA First School, Amble**

The report ( appended to the official minutes as Appendix C) outlined the results of the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School, Amble on their proposal to close their school and provided an analysis of the responses received during the statutory period. The committee was to pre-scrutinise the report before the Policy Board considered it on 29 April.

The Chair explained the process to be followed at the meeting; the officer would introduce the report, then objector Mrs McGarvey would speak, then the committee would debate and make a recommendation to the Policy Board.

The report was then introduced by Head of Education Tony Mays, who provided a background to the consultation, what the Governing Body had done so far and their recommendation to close the school, how the statutory notice had been published on 13 March and five representations received in response, the consideration of a petition against the closure by the Petitions Committee on 3 April, and how the Policy Board was responsible for the final decision. The report also covered the Council's commentary on the points made, issues regarding the implications for staff, the impact on the county, the children and those with special educational needs, and the position regarding the ownership of the building and the land.

Objector to the closure Mrs McGarvey then spoke. Her key points were:

- parents had come up with a plan as an alternative to closure but they had not been listened to
- the proposal supported the Governing Body's views but they had little evidence to back them up
- the Governing Body was not fit for purpose so why should they take the decision?
- the school had increased from the bottom 20% results to the top 20% and had a full and challenging curriculum
- Busy Bees nursery wished to move in to use space on the school’s premises, for which a feasibility study was being done
- it would cost £55,000 to keep the school open for two years or £110,000 to close it
- there had been a lack of transparency in the process.

Mr Mays responded by explaining that only six of the school's children were
practicing Roman Catholics, and they could choose to go to the next nearest Catholic first school in Alnwick. St Cuthbert’s had three children in year one, seven in year two, four in year three and six in year four. There were a number of spare places in other Amble first schools: seven in year one, 14 in year two, 16 in year three and 15 in year four. Other possible solutions had been considered but closure was considered the most appropriate. As there were few pupils, this skewed the performance figures, as for example there were only six pupils in year two, and this made it difficult to see clear evidence of trends and patterns. The Governing Body considered that August 2014 would be the best time to close the school.

Key questions from members and responses from officers were then as follows:

- in response to a question about the factual evidence for the proposals, members were advised that the decision on any sponsor for the school would lie with the Diocese, who did not want the school to be a sponsored academy
- a member commented on the impact of small numbers of children in skewing the percentages for results and how it could mean another small school possibly closing
- in response to a question about whether the Diocese considered federating with another school, members were advised that this had been looked at but the Diocese was against it. It was also considered that it was not feasible due to lack of appropriate other schools/personnel available to do it. Reference was made to other examples of federations in Cramlington and Seaton Valley
- regarding a question on the current headteacher arrangements, members were advised that an acting headteacher had been in post since December 2012 and a national leader of education had been seconded in to support the school, initially for one day a week and later increased to two days a week
- in response to Ofsted’s comment that the Council had put insufficient support in, officers did not agree with the judgement as sufficient support had been put in but it was not having the required effect
- replying to a question about the Governing Body finding a practicing Roman Catholic headteacher, a definition was provided about the definitions required but also the unlikely possibility of getting somebody able, willing and qualified to do the job
- asking if denominational schools were put into problems if their headteachers left, members were advised how each would be considered on their own merits, options were available including interim executive boards (IEB), and the rules for special measures had recently changed
- responding to a query about the possible different positions of the Department for Education (DFE) and Ofsted, members were advised that expectations were made clear to the Local Authority but they could take different positions on different schools which could cause confusion for staff and parents
- questions were asked about consideration of the Pupil Premium and whether new governors could have been sought, members were advised that the Local Authority and Diocese had approved additional governors; an IEB had been considered, but the governors understood the situation
following a request for additional information about the financial aspects for the proposed closure, members were advised that the level of funding received would be significantly reduced due to the small number of pupils. The school had high overheads as it was built for 120 pupils

a co-opted member expressed concern that an underlying problem was the school not being effectively run but work had not been done to get in people to assist sooner, which would have helped, and Ofsted had not been constructive

a member stressed the main concern was for the pupils and also concern about any redundancies.

Mrs Garvey then added further points about how she had resigned previously as a governor as the school was being badly run; there was too much inactivity and insufficient challenge and discussion about the issues. As Ofsted was very critical of the Governing Body, why were they still in their roles? Nobody had left and Busy Bees were going in.

Members then discussed it further, of which the key points were:

- a member stressed that it was a difficult situation and lessons could be learnt from what had happened to the school, but would follow the Diocese’s recommendation to close and move forward
- the important thing was getting the best possible education for the children, but as there was a small number it did not look likely to increase and long term it would be a small school in a large building
- would the educational results come up to the required standards quickly enough?
- best interests might be serviced by the children going to other schools that were already rated good; parents could also choose St Paul’s RC First School at Alnwick if they wished
- the standards were not low, other schools had been turned around before, and the school should be given a second chance
- the further reduction from 38 to 23 children would reduce the budget by over a third, and even if new children joined in 2015, a third of the budget would not be restored
- it felt drastic to close as there was a falling pupil roll elsewhere too in the county and the community wanted the school to continue
- every effort had been made to keep the school open but it seemed unlikely that the school could be still open in five years’ time.

The Chair then summed up the discussion and gave procedural advice about the committee’s next steps for its pre-scrutiny advice. Following this, Councillor Burt moved that the Policy Board be recommended to agree to note the first three recommendations, and to also agree for the fourth recommendation to approve the proposal without modification.

Councillor Cartie then moved that the first three recommendations be noted and the Policy Board be recommended to instead approve the proposal subject to a condition being met that all the school’s pupils get their choice of place at another school in Amble, if required. Councillor Burt then agreed to withdraw her motion so that the amended motion from Councillor Cartie could be voted on. It was then put to the vote and:
RESOLVED - that Policy Board be recommended to:

1) note the proposal from the Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RCVA First School; the consultation process they have undertaken and their response to the outcomes of that consultation; and the Statutory Proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2014 published by the Governing Body on 13 March 2014.
2) note the report from the Chair of Governors attached to the report at Appendix 1;
3) note the impact of the proposal set out in the Statutory Proposal attached at Appendix 3 of this report; and
4) taking into account the Department for Education’s (DfE) ‘School Organisation Maintained Schools: Guidance for proposers and decision-makers, January 2014’ and the ‘School Organisation Maintained Schools, Annex B: Guidance for Decision-makers, January, to approve the proposal subject to a condition being met that all the school’s pupils get an offer of a school place at another school in Amble, if required.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

101. Summary Report from Members Rota Visits to Children’s Homes (June 2013 to January 2014)

The report introduced the report by providing details of the key issues and examples of an overview of visits made to Children’s Homes in the specified period. The Client Relations Officer provided details and examples of how the visits provided a regular check on the quality of management of care and welfare of children and young people at the residential units; to check the general physical condition of the Residential Units of Northumberland County Council; to check Health and Fire Safety precautions and quality of hygiene, and to report any actions/recommendations and suggestions of improvement arising from the visits. Key points included how the interactions had been very positive, and attention was being paid to risk management.

A member commented on the importance of ensuring the visits to each home and the importance of all members contributing to the rota. The Client Relations Officer was thanked for her report and it was:

RESOLVED – that the contents of the report be noted.

102. Regulation 33 Summary Report (August 2013 to January 2014)

The report (appended to the official minutes as Appendix D) provided information to Members from the visits carried out by Officers to Children’s Homes in the three months August 2013 – January 2014. These were monthly visits carried out in accordance with Regulation 33 of the children’s Homes Regulations 2001, to report on the running of the Homes. The individual reports were attached with this summary report, for which the Client Relations Officer provided details of the findings of the visits carried out in this latest round of meetings, including key points about new changes to visits brought in in January 2014, the sensitive and pro-active approach of staff, the benefits from a new location for which the resident young people settling in well, and the opportunities for young people to raise issues.
The Policy Board member for Children’s Services commended the work of staff who deserved much credit, the level of involvement of the young people, and the thought given into the process and future aspiration. Another member was impressed with the new Coanwood premises and its new town based location. In response to a query it was confirmed that there was increasing independence from the process as per the Government’s approach but the Council would still accredit the properties and continued their reporting.

RESOLVED – that the contents of the report be noted.

103. Safeguarding Activity Trends Report

The report ( appended to the official minutes as Appendix F) provided an analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators. The report was introduced by the Senior Manager, Specialist Services who provided further details of the applications, including the allocation of cases, referrals and re-referrals, statistics of cases from January – March.

Key questions from members and responses from officers then included:

Detail could be provided in the report for the next round about the percentages of children taken into immediate care from being subject to pre-birth child protection plans. Regarding the recent increase in referrals for unborns, a range of sources and partner organisations were used to attain information on cases from referral, including historic social care information, information from the family, including extended family members, GPs, midwives, health visitors, police, probation and others. A multi-agency core group met every four weeks to check on plans and updates for unborns and children subject to child protection plans. The referral numbers were high in the county perhaps due to the various ways local authorities recorded contacts and referrals. Also, there was a need to take into account areas of higher deprivation, the impact on welfare reforms and the importance of promoting the early help offer to divert inappropriate referrals to social care locality teams. Benchmarking took place with other local authorities and there had been a 23% increase in child protection plans across the North East, and 24% in Northumberland.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

104. Performance and Finance Quarterly Report

The report ( appended to the official minutes as Appendix G) provided an overview of Children’s Services’ performance and financial position for quarter 3 of 2013-14. The report was introduced by the Senior Manager - Safeguarding & Education – Performance, who provided details of the areas where Northumberland’s Children’s Services continued to perform well, with notable areas of strong and/or improved performance, but also some performance indicators (KPIs) exceptions, for which details were provided of the actions being taken to address.

Key questions from members and responses from officers then included:

The increase in exclusions was across all age groups and schools; and information could be provided by school. It was important to monitor any areas with a
downturn in performance. Comments were made about exclusions and any reciprocal arrangements between schools, and how although exclusions were a last resort and good work was done to retain pupils, there were also issues regarding dealing with individuals and consideration for teachers under pressure, and the impact from difficult behaviour on other children. Members requested that good practice be provided regarding exclusions.

**RESOLVED** – that

(1) the report be noted, and
(2) good practice on exclusions be picked up amongst good practice issues for the report.

105. **THEMED SCRUTINY**

**Progress Report**

The Vice-chair introduced the report (appended to the official minutes as Appendix H). Members were advised that the employability theme was a portfolio for the new Combined Authority, and a discussion would be held by their leadership board, so would not proceed as themed scrutiny for this committee. A report detailing the impact of welfare reform was due to be completed shortly, so it was proposed and agreed that the Policy and Research Manager be asked to brief the Chair and Vice-chair about other possible remits within the poverty workstream, then a task and finish group be formed to consider it.

Discussion also took place about the membership of any task and finish group given there might be changes to committee membership following Annual Council on 7 May. It was agreed that appointments to any tasks and finish groups be made instead at the committee’s next meeting.

**RESOLVED** – that the update and actions be agreed.

**REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**

106. **Work Programme**

Members considered the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. (Report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix H.)

Members were advised that there was currently only one report due to be considered at the committee’s next meeting on 15 May, so it was agreed that that meeting would be cancelled and any business due for then would be deferred to the meeting arranged for 29 May at 10am which was due to consider the report on home to school transport. It was also noted that the committee would meet on 5 June at 2pm to pre-scrutinise a report about the reorganisation of part of the Bedlington Partnership.

As this was the committee’s last meeting of the municipal year, the Chair also took the opportunity to speak about the work of the committee over the past year and thanked everybody for their input.
RESOLVED - that the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be noted and the changes to the meeting schedule be agreed.

INFORMATION REPORTS

107. Policy Digest

The report, available on the Council's website, gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Thursday, 29 May 2014 at 9:00 am.

PRESENT

County Councillors:
B Pidcock (Chair), E Burt (Vice-Chair), E Cartie, A Dale, AH Murray, LJ Rickerby, JE Smith, TN Thorne

Teacher union Representative: R Lyst

OFFICERS

D P Allen Scrutiny Officer
S Aviston Capital Projects Officer (Schools)
R Bendell Acting Head of Sustainable Transport
J Clark Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions
M Cusack Passenger Transport Operations Manager
D Lally Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Health
K Norris Democratic Services Officer
B Rowland Executive Director - Place

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors RA Arckless, H Cairns, S Dickinson, L Grimshaw, A Sambrook, ICF Swithenbank

Member of the Public (1)

1. Membership and Terms of Reference

Members noted the membership and terms of reference of the Family and Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair as agreed at the annual meeting of the County Council on 7 May 2014.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.
2. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodd and Foster, Church Representative R Ferguson and Teacher Union Representative R Woolhouse.

3. **Minutes – 3 April 2014**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 3 April 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Minutes – 24 April 2014**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 24 April 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

5. **Disclosures of Interests**

Councillor Rickerby declared an interest as she was a school governor.

**REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD**

6. **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of Key Decisions (May to August 2014). (Summary sheets enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C.)

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

7. **Review of Post 16 Transport Provision**

The Chair explained the procedure to be followed. Officers would present the report (attached as Appendix C to the signed minutes), members would have the opportunity to ask questions, followed by discussion and then recommendations would be made to the Policy Board which would make a decision that afternoon.

Mr B Rowland, Executive Director – Place, gave a short introduction and acknowledged that it was a difficult issue to deal with. He stated the review had been carried out in the context of Government cut backs and the report recommended revisions to transport provision which would need to be published by 31 May 2014. Advantages and disadvantages of those recommendations were provided.

A public consultation had been carried out and details of the proposed options were set out in the report, along with details of exemptions. The
keys issues raised by respondents were highlighted and the Council’s responses were outlined in Appendix 4. It was noted that the Council was unusual in offering free transport for Post 16 students when comparing to other local authorities. It was also noted that 40% of students in Northumberland who currently benefitted from free transport at Post 16 level chose to attend out of county establishments which resulted in a loss of educational income for the Council.

Mrs R Bendell, Acting Head of Sustainable Transport referred to the consultation process and said it could have been shortened in order to give more time for the review, but officers had been advised that it was preferable to have a 12 week consultation period. Reference was made to a petition which had been presented to the Petitions Committee in April and had been considered in the consultation process. It was noted that the petition had not raised any issues which were not also covered within the consultation responses.

Mrs Bendell referred to the proposed options set out in the report and provided further details as highlighted on page 9 of the report.

Mr J Clark, Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions reiterated that budget issues were the driver behind the proposals. He stated that Northumberland’s High Schools and Secondary Schools offered a wide range of ‘A’ levels and some offered vocational courses, a list of which was provided on page 28 of the report. He referred to paragraph 15 on page 7 of the report and said every effort had been made to ensure that people were not disadvantaged. Work was on-going with schools and colleges to facilitate transport arrangements.

The Chair then invited questions and the following issues were raised:

- Northumberland County Council was different and it should not be compared with neighbouring authorities as the County had unique problems due to the rural aspect;
- The option of tutors and trainers travelling to different areas to teach students should be explored;
- An additional £10.6 m funding was to be provided and that could be used to improve the quality and quantity of courses in high schools. Financial constraints were acknowledged but there should be a balance to ensure the best education for young people;
- If more courses were provided students would study in Northumberland by choice rather than having no other option;
- What was the transport provision for children living in rural areas?

In response it was stated that the Council would continue to provide transport for children living in rural areas but it would not be free of charge. It was pointed out that Northumberland College had previously provided a bus to and from Berwick but numbers had diminished to the extent that the service was not viable and it had been terminated. With
regard to the issue of tutors and trainers travelling to different areas, the option was being looked by the college and a decision on the way forward lay with them. Berwick Academy was at the forefront of expanding and improving courses but with regard to the extra £10.6 m funding, the government had made it clear that was intended for Reception through to Year 11 and not for post 16 education.

In response to further questions, the following information was provided:

- If Policy Board agreed the recommendations, the Council would meet the minimum statutory requirements with regard to subsidy over the next 3 years;
- The Council would encourage schools and sixth forms to expand courses and would monitor the situation closely. It was acknowledged, however, that there would need to be sufficient students wishing to enrol in order for funding to be provided;
- It was the school’s responsibility to organise timetables and overlaps around the children;
- If a child lived in an area where there was public transport available then they would use public transport. If there was no public transport, the Council would provide transport at a charge of £600 regardless if their nearest appropriate educational establishment was in or outside of the county;
- The current policy had not been an incentive for Post 16 students to carry on with their studies, numbers had declined since 2008 despite free transport;
- If the recommendations were carried through, the Council would work very closely with schools to note the effects;
- The vast majority of courses were available in Northumberland establishments;
- The push away from vocational education had been mainly for the pre-16 age group;
- With regard to NEET figures, the number was never zero and students would be encouraged to study the subject of their choice in the nearest educational establishment;
- It was possible there may not be a big impact on the number of students as, in the past when transport had been provided at a charge, there had been little difference in the number compared to it being free.

The Chair expressed concerns regarding people in poverty and asked if the bursary support fund was an adequate substitute for young people not on job seekers allowance but on other benefits. In response it was stated that people who met the criteria for free schools meals (pre 16) would be covered, but there could be potential difficulties for lower income families who earned a little bit more than the threshold. Bursaries were deployed in context but the criteria used could change and the Council would liaise with schools about how support for transport provision could be offered to children from families in financial difficulties.

In response to a question regarding how the policy linked to the
Corporate Plan, it was stated that priorities would need to be determined within the Corporate Plan to protect other front line services.

The Chair referred to the extent and coverage of the 16–18 transport duty set out in Section 509AA, paragraph 5, on page 43 of the report and asked if officers could comment. In response it was stated that, in rural areas where there were no facilities, the Council would continue to provide facilities. The £600 charge was considered to be a reasonable cost and was based on average public transport costs. It would provide a place on a bus to an educational establishment and include feeder transport.

Discussion ensued regarding the future viability of Kirkley Hall and it was noted that this would not be threatened.

Further questions followed and responses were as follows:

- Following the expanded curriculum at Berwick Academy, some young people from Berwick would be able to study there, some could study at the college in Berwick and some would travel to Ashington at a cost of £600 – alternatives would be available;
- With regard to courses at Northumberland college, the curriculum was a matter for the college but it was hoped that more students would attend to sustain courses;
- If parents chose not to pay for transport provision, their children would have to attend their local school;
- With regard to school to school inter-establishment courses, it would be expected that the school would provide transport,
- A range of costs had been considered - £600 was in line with costs of average commercial services, the cost in rural areas was significantly more.

At that point the Chair asked the Chair of the Petitions Committee, if the views of petitioners had been fed into the consultation process. In response it was stated that the report covered the views of petitioners and there were other educational providers in addition to schools and colleges who could deliver qualifications and skills so it was not felt there would be a considerable impact on choice.

The Vice Chair acknowledged that it was a difficult issue to consider. There was no statutory requirement to provide Post 16 Transport and the current situation was not sustainable because of government cuts. Discussion ensued and the following comments were made:

- Travel should be as limited as possible;
- A charge of £600 for people with limited earnings could make the difference between young people being educated or not;
- The Council should continue to subsidise students until courses in Northumberland were expanded and there were equal educational opportunities for young people in the county;
- It was not an easy decision, the people who would suffer most were the working poor but cuts had to be made;
- Free transport for Post-16 students had only been in place for a few years and there was a bigger picture to consider;
- The Council and schools should be working together to consider the whole county and there should be a closer working relationship with agencies who delivered the Post 16 curriculum to provide outstanding education within Northumberland;
- Post 16 education should be more attractive and more effort should be made in improving the offer of 6th forms and Northumberland College.

Councillor Burt said the Council could not wait for schools to catch up on the process and proposed that the Committee support the recommendations to Policy Board, with the inclusion of comments made by a member that the Council should work together with all other providers of Post 16 education in order to provide first class education in Northumberland.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Cartie.

Councillor Dale proposed an amendment that the committee should recommend to Policy Board that the charge required for transport provision should be £450 and not £600 as stated.

The amendment was not seconded and therefore fell.

Councillor Murray then proposed an amendment to the second point in the recommendations and stated that the current free Post-16 Transport Scheme should only be removed when there were equal educational opportunities across the county.

It was pointed out by Mr Clark that the authority was obliged to publish a scheme by 31 May.

Councillor Smith seconded the motion.

At that point a member queried if the Scrutiny Committee was allowed to change recommendations stated in the report. In response the Scrutiny Officer clarified that the Scrutiny Committee could recommend to Policy Board whatever it felt appropriate for it to consider.

Upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that the Policy Board be informed that the Committee endorsed the recommendations as outlined in the report with the exception of point 2 to remove the current free Post-16 Transport Scheme and that it be recommended that the scheme should only be removed when there were equal educational opportunities across the county.

8. Proposed Consultation on proposals for the Ashington Partnership
The Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions presented the report (a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix E). The report was based on an initiative which had been put forward by the Ashington Partnership who had a vision to create a two tier primary/secondary school organisation system across the entire Ashington Partnership of schools. The Partnership was seeking the Council’s support due to the requirement for some capital investment to allow the change to take place.

The Portfolio holder emphasised that the proposal had been made by the Ashington Partnership but said it fit in well with what the Council was trying to achieve in developing a consensus for the best way forward for schools.

It was noted that the Governing Bodies of all the schools, including Pegswood, had now agreed to the proposals.

The Chair referred to Appendix 3 – research, which he said was excellent and he looked forward to hearing reports of improvements in the future.

A member complimented the Governing Body saying that was an example of good, strong leadership and understood the needs of the children.

The Chair read out the recommendations and it was

**RESOLVED** that the Policy Board be informed that the Committee endorsed the recommendations as outlined in the report.

9. **Universal Free School meals for Infant Age Children**

Sue Aviston, Capital Projects Officer presented the report (a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix F). Members were informed of important changes happening in school lunch provision in state funded infant, first and primary schools from September 2014 and were asked to make recommendations to Policy Board to agree the basis for the allocation of capital funding to ensure Northumberland schools were able to deliver the policy.

Officers had been working with schools to gather information and collect necessary data to establish the needs of each school including meal take up, capacity issues, condition of existing equipment, building condition and current legislative requirements. Officers had set a deadline of 1 September and members were asked for their agreement in principle for Policy Board to authorise the Executive Director Wellbeing and Community Health to allocate the capital grant to schools as recommended in the report.

In response to questions the following information was provided:
- Officers would work with schools to ensure that dietary requirements were met; caterers did this on a daily basis and used specific equipment to ensure that those with allergies were not at risk;
- Schools with private contractors would be treated the same as schools with in-house catering staff;
- All children eating school dinners would be better for the children and for the school budget.

A member spoke against the policy stating that a lot of parents could afford to pay for school meals and they should only be free of charge for children whose parents could not afford them. It was acknowledged, however, that it was Government policy and also that it should not be assumed that parents who could afford to pay for meals always provided a sensible diet.

In response to a question regarding those who were currently on free school meals, it was acknowledged that there was a risk that some parents may not apply in future because of the new policy. Work had begun to encourage them to apply due to revenue funding and the link with free milk, residential trips etc. It was also stated that the Pupil Premium fund may be affected and the Government was to announce a mechanism to address that. Subsidy was not known without uptake and the level of income would be seen afterwards.

Councillor Burt proposed the recommendations as set out in the report and the motion was seconded by Councillor Dale.

**RESOLVED** that Policy Board be informed that the Committee endorsed the recommendations as outlined in the report.

10. **Themed Scrutiny Progress Report**

Councillor Burt referred to the report which stated that the Poverty themed project was to be refreshed, taking into account developments set out in the report (a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes at Appendix G). A briefing meeting would be held soon and it was hoped that more members would become involved.

Councillors Dale, Murray, Pidcock, Rickerby and Thorne expressed an interest in being part of the task and finish group.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

11. **Work Programme**

Members considered the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix H.)
RESOLVED that the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

12. Policy Digest

The report, available on the Council’s website, gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Thursday, 5 June 2014 at 2:00pm.

PRESENT

B Pidcock (Chair), A Dale, RR Dodd, AH Murray, JE Smith, TN Thorne

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

P Cunningham, Rev D Lennox

TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

C Dyson, R Lyst, R Woolhouse

OFFICERS

DP Allen Scrutiny Officer, Democratic Services
S Aviston Capital Projects Officer (Schools), Children's Services
M Bird Team Leader (Scrutiny/Regulatory), Democratic Services
J Clark Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions
L Fife School Organisation Officer, School and Early Years Commissioning
R Edwardson Head of Education Support
L Henry Principal Solicitor, Legal Services
D Lally Executive Director – Wellbeing and Community Health Services
T Mays Head of Education

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors S Dickinson, B Gallagher
Residents (3)

13. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Burt, Cartie, Foster and Rickerby, and from Ms R Ferguson.

14. Disclosures of Members Interests

In response to a member's query, it was confirmed that he did not need to declare an interest from being a governor of a school in his area.

REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD
15. **Proposals for part of the Bedlington Partnership**

The Chair introduced the item by explaining the process to be followed and the public speaking arrangements for the item.

Mr John Clark, Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions, firstly introduced the report. Key details of his presentation included:

- Guidepost Middle School had been inspected in October 2013, judged inadequate and put into special measures
- approval was given in December for consultation on the next steps, which ran from December 2013 to March 2014
- the report with the agenda papers provided details of the process and outcomes of the consultation
- the Secretary of State for Education expected a swift solution to the problem, and would not agree to delay a decision; the options were to close or become a sponsored academy
- 22 written responses had been received in response to the statutory notice; all were included in the report, as was a commentary on the themes raised
- reasons for why the recommendation for the proposed reorganisation should proceed.

Ms Margaret Coulson then spoke in opposition to the proposals. Her key points were:

- Guidepost was a unique rural village and the school suited the needs of the community
- the proximity of the First and Middle School meant safety and ease for children to walk there and no additional bus fare expenditure, and suited working parents
- Middle Schools enabled an easy environment for children to mature to High Schools, children were not ready at age 11 and should not be forced to grow up too quickly; the three tier system should be kept
- closure did not provide improved education options, for example in the Allendale reorganisation, and there were problems in Cramlington’s two tier system
- Guidepost Middle School had improved quickly, and the Department for Education (DFE) would work about a suitable sponsor if it didn't close. Closure should not be rushed as it was a big decision, and the costs
of reorganisation could instead be invested into the school

- views expressed during the consultation about the needs of the pupils had not been listened to

- the best solution would be for the Local Authority to work with the school.

Ms Christine Davidson also spoke in opposition with reference to government guidance about closure being the only solution if alternatives did not offer good options, and Bedlingtonshire Community High School was still in the 'requires improvement' category.

Discussion then followed in which committee members asked questions and officers responded, of which details were as follows:

A member queried how much time was available to improve the situation and the speakers saw the process as hurried. A key concern was the standard of education, and wanting schools to be as good as they could quickly. Members were advised that timescales were short as if schools went into these categories, the Council was questioned about its plans and the DFE expected alternative solutions as soon as possible, and had confirmed they were happy with the consultation undertaken and were prepared to wait until the Policy Board's decision. In response to whether this requirement was from the government or the Local Authority, members were advised that schools were autonomous but if they went into 'requires improvement' or 'special measures' categories, the Local Authority had additional responsibilities to provide for pupils. The proposals about possible closure had then been put together. Officers had met and discussed with DFE representatives; once in special measures schools could become academies immediately, however in earlier discussions Guidepost Middle School was not proposed for becoming an academy. This option might however have to be considered if the Local Authority did not close the school; different solutions would apply to different schools. However the school had inadequate achievements, teaching, leadership and management, and how long was it appropriate for schools to continue in such circumstances?

In response to a question about whether Guidepost Middle School could become an academy but wish to become a High School, members were advised that academies were independent but state funded but directly accountable to the Secretary of State (for Education) they could change their age range in the future if they had the Secretary of State's approval to do so.

A member suggested that the school needed more than one year to improve, as it concerned the standard of teaching rather than the numbers of children on the roll, and Ofsted were saying to keep it open for a year. Members were advised that there was a difference of opinion between Ofsted and the Secretary of State, with the latter not being prepared to wait for longer than was proposed. If the Local Authority decided to keep the school open, the Secretary of State would likely academise it within three - five months, and any responsibility of the Local Authority would be lost.

A member queried if Bedlingtonshire Community High School increased in size,
were officers satisfied that any potential parking problems had been looked into? Members were advised that Mowbray First School was adjacent to Guidepost Middle School and the numbers would be lower as years seven and eight would no longer be there. The Chair reported that he had visited Bedlingtonshire Community High School and observed traffic levels, and although it was busy, there was an etiquette in how vehicles entered and left the site. A question was asked about the inadequate teaching and what the Local Authority had done to address it? Officers advised that the long term solution had been discussed and an action plan had been put in place for whatever the decision made. An application was made to the Secretary of State for an Interim Executive Board (IEB) and an experienced headteacher had been appointed to work alongside the current headteacher; a series of packages had been put together about the types of support needed.

Regarding concerns about Mowbray First School, it was in the requires improvement category and work had taken place with Tyne Valley Teaching Schools to bid to the National College for funding. Regular inspections had shown an improvement of the quality of teaching at the school.

A question was asked about Option 3 in the report and the thanks expressed by the headteacher of Stakeford First School for working closely with them. Officers were grateful for the support of Stakeford First School and referred to an issue regarding Ringway First School's request for additional teaching space but also difficulties with possible extra financial costs.

A request was made for an update on the Allendale situation as it would be similar possibly to this situation and what experiences had been learnt from it? Members were advised that this might not add to this debate or the individual merits of this proposal, and officers would not have had the opportunity to arrange an update. Officers were asked if Middle School academies had been set up elsewhere and were they feasible. Members were advised that Northumberland had several converter academies, but no sponsored Middle School academies.

An issue was raised about sponsored academies not being considered, the opinions of the DFE and what the Secretary of State would do, given little public awareness or access to this level of detail of the discussions that had taken place. In response reference was made to the case of Bedlington Junior High School, as if it was to become a sponsored academy, any sponsor would want all the other schools in the partnership into a Trust so they could have full responsibility; there was nothing procedurally written about this.

A member commented that there had been conflicting views between Ofsted and the DFE, with their respective recommendations for five terms or a year. There had not been much improvement and it would be a big shift to take place within five terms.

It was queried whether anything had been confirmed in writing or just verbally about a solution being required by September 2014. Members were advised that the 31 August was the only feasible date for a school to close, so it needed to be either on 31 August in 2014 or 2015. Once the statutory notice had been published, the Local Authority had two months to make a decision. The DFE had
said that if the school was not to close, only then would a suitable sponsored academy solution be looked at. A decision was thus required by 7 July; the Policy Board would decide on 10 June. If the school was to stay open, the Secretary of State could say that 31 August 2015 was not fast enough.

In response to a question about discussions taken place, a number of meetings had taken place with DFE representatives, in October 2013, 7 March 2014, 23 April 2014 and 20 May 2014. The Executive Director of Wellbeing and Community Health met Ofsted every four to six weeks about any special measures schools. Ofsted had been very clear about Guidepost Middle School in what they expected, the improvement wanted and were satisfied with the arrangements. Progress was being made adequately in the context of a closure proposal. The Local Authority was taking all the actions required.

A member felt that 2014 was not giving the school the minimum time to improve, given the inspection was in October 2013 and this did not allow a full year. He felt it was being pushed through by Central Government in haste and parents and the community would feel aggrieved. Members were advised that there was no minimum time and within weeks of going into special measures discussions could be held about sponsored academies. The conversion process was rapid and happened nationally to most schools in special measures. Ofsted's advice was only guidance but they had to escalate the situation if improvements were not happening.

A member felt it was a difficult position as it took time to understand the problems and schools did not improve overnight. A member of the public queried the consultation done and what had happened recently, and referred to drawings of proposed changes to Ringway First School developed earlier in the year and either if the changes were being pushed through or if it represented good preparation for September? Members were advised that plans had been developed for the modification of the school to enable the necessary nursery spaces in the future. The drawings had been organised for contingency planning so it the changes were made then they would be in the position to do by the due date. The plans were draft only and if the proposals were not approved, the plans would not be implemented.

In response to a question about whether the changes were a means to make Bedlingtonshire High School more sustainable by increasing the feeder schools from three to six, members were advised that the pupils from the three Primary Schools were up to age 11 and Bedlingtonshire Community High School began from 13. Those pupils currently going at age 13 would now go at age 11. Debate then followed by committee members. Councillor Thorne spoke by acknowledging the comments of residents but support the officer recommendation as the school had not been performing at the level it should have been for a number of years and the teaching, leadership and governance were not sufficient. The problems were deep seated and would take a lot of changing, and even if allowed extra time that education might still not be adequate. He agreed that the proposal was the right way out of the problem and would support the recommendation. This was supported by Councillor Dale, who stated that the Local Authority worked well with schools and would like to see this input continue, and academisation could cause problems in future years. Councillor Murray indicated he would move an amendment, that an additional recommendation...
require the extension of the probationary period to setting up in 2015 and make the change then.

Further discussion followed with a point made that if it had been judged as having an inadequate level of education, it was concerning that the school should stay open. The objectors were questioned about whether they were getting a good enough education and their right to the best possible education, and it was important for getting good jobs and qualifications which could affect them for their lives, and on this basis enough had not been done and the school should close the sooner the better? Ms Davidson replied that they also wanted the best education for the children, and last year's 73% results were the best for years. Given time, their results would go above the Northumberland average of 76%. Her child had progressed well and taking the school away and the children out of their environment would be a backward step.

The Chair explained that the next steps would be for the Policy Board to take a final decision on the closure on 10 June, as today's meeting was about the committee advising the Policy Board before it took its decision.

Councillor Thorne then moved that the committee support the recommendation in the report to the Policy Board, which was seconded by Councillor Dale. Councillor Murray moved his amendment, which was then clarified to state that that an additional recommendation require the extension of the probationary period of the current school's set up and systems until August 2015. Members were advised that if delayed for another year the process would then have to begin again. Councillor Murray's amendment was not seconded so thus fell. Councillor Thorne's motion, seconded by Councillor Dale, was then put to the vote, passed and it was thus:

RESOLVED - that the Policy Board be recommended to:

1) note:
   • the Council's linked proposal to close Guide Post Middle School;
   • the Council's linked proposal to reorganise Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools to primary status;
   • the responses to the Statutory Proposals and the analysis contained within this report.

2) Note the impact and implications of the linked proposals as set out in the Statutory Proposal for Guide Post Middle School and the Statutory Proposal for Mowbray, Guide Post Ringway and Stakeford First Schools included with the Background Papers to this report.

3) Note that either all of the linked proposals should be implemented or none should be implemented.

4) In the light of all the information in this report and taking into account the latest Statutory Guidance from the DfE attached to this report at Appendix 7, agree to:
   i) approve the Council's linked proposal to close Guide Post Middle School with effect from 31 August 2014; and
   ii) approve the Council's linked proposal to extend the age range of Mowbray and Stakeford First Schools from age 3-9 to age 2-11 with effect from 1 September 2014; and
   (iii) approve the Council's linked proposal to extend the age range of Guide Post Ringway First School from age 4-9 to age 4-11 with effect from 1 September 2014;
and
(iv) increase the Planned Admission Number (PAN) into Years 7 and 8 of Bedlingtonshire Community High School from 75 to 165 and decrease the PAN into Year 9 from 150 to 40; and
(v) retain the PAN of 30 at Guide Post Ringway First School to enable single age teaching, as strongly argued for during consultation; and
(vi) agree to allocate 2.067m from the Medium Term Plan to accommodate the capital costs outlined in this report; and
(vii) approve the implementation of the preferred building options set out in paragraph 30 of this report; and
(viii) approve the capital investment of £57k from the Local Transport Plan to assist with the improvement of the walking routes from the Guide Post area to Bedlingtonshire Community High School.
all of the above conditional upon the granting of planning permission by 31 August 2014 in relation to the new building works at Stakeford First School.

CHAIR

DATE
FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Thursday, 26 June 2014 at 2:00 pm.

PRESENT

County Councillors:
B Pidcock (Chair), E Burt (Vice-Chair), E Cartie, JD Foster, AH Murray, RR Dodd, JE Smith, TN Thorne

Church Representatives: P Cunningham, R Ferguson

Teacher Union Representatives: R Lyst, R Woolhouse

OFFICERS

D P Allen Scrutiny Officer
R Bendell Acting Head of Sustainable Transport
J Clark Senior Manager, School Organisation and Statutory Functions
M Cusack Passenger Transport Operations Manager
R Edwardson Head of Service - Education Support
K Norris Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors R A Arckless

1 Member of the Public

16. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dale and Rickerby, Church Representative Rev. D Lennox and Teacher Union Representative C Dyson.

17. **Minutes – 29 May 2014**

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday,
29 May 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

18. Minutes – 5 June 2014

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 5 June 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

19. Disclosures of Interests

Personal interests were declared for item 6, Review of Home to School Transport Policy, as follows:

Ms R Ferguson as an officer of the Church of England Diocese.

Councillor E Burt as a practising Roman Catholic.

Councillor J Foster as a governor of Stakeford First School.

The portfolio holder for children’s services pointed out that he had taken legal advice due to him being a member of the Church of England and lay cannon of the church and had been informed that unless he had children at school he need not declare an interest.

20. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of Key Decisions (May to August 2014). (Summary sheets enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD

21. Review of Home to School Transport Policy

Ruth Bendell, Acting Head of Sustainable Transport, summarised the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix D.

The first issue to be considered was the provision of transport to schools chosen for reasons of religion or belief. The Council currently provided free transport to approximately 800 children, 70 to 75 in each year group, at a cost of almost £870,000 per year. To qualify, a number of conditions had to be met, details of which were set out in the report. Officers had looked at the situation nationally and a public consultation was held to seek views on providing transport on the basis of religion or belief to new applicants on payment of an annual charge of £360 per child. Cumulative savings were provided on page 10 of the report. There had been a good response rate of almost 50%, most of which expressed similar views and were not in favour of the proposal. The key issues and
feedback were highlighted in Appendix 3 on page 18 of the report.

The second issue related to harmonisation of criteria for walking distances. The Council currently arranged free transport for primary school children in years 5 and 6 if they lived more than two miles away from their nearest or catchment area school. There was an anomaly with children in the same age groups attending a middle school who only received free transport if they lived more than three miles from their nearest or catchment school. A public consultation therefore took place to seek views on changing the policy on transport for children in the last two years of primary school (years 5 and 6) so that the same policy would apply to them as already applied to children of the same age who attended a middle school.

Of the 180 responses received, feedback generally showed support for the proposal.

After considering all issues, it was recommended that the Council should continue to provide free transport to schools chosen for reasons of religion or belief but that a new school transport policy be introduced to harmonise the criteria for walking distances.

Questions were invited and in response the following information was provided:

- Harmonisation of walking distances would affect very few, it was an anomaly which existed and feedback had suggested there was general support to address the issue;
- With regard to charging, the recommendation was to maintain the status quo and provide free transport but, due to continuing financial challenges, a review should take place in two years’ time.

A member stated that savings could be made by reducing the amount of Council meetings. He referred to page 11 of the report and stated that information in the second bullet point regarding free transport to Roman Catholics was incorrect as this had been provided prior to 1975. He also questioned the wording on page 12 of the report and asked that it be amended to read “it was not clear that any child would be affected by the change proposed”.

A Teacher Union representative queried if parents wishing to send their children to a non-domination school would receive funding for travel the same as those choosing a religious school. In response it was stated that all requests would be considered on their merit and it would depend upon the basis of the application.

Councillor Burt moved the recommendations set out in the report which was seconded by Councillor Thorne. Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED that
1. the Policy Board be informed that the Committee endorsed the recommendations as outlined in the report.

2. the wording on page 12 of the report be amended to read “it was not clear that any child would be affected by the change proposed”.

THEMED SCRUTINY

22. Progress Report

Councillor Burt introduced the report (a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes at Appendix E).

She referred to a meeting which had taken place on 23 June when Janice Rose, Policy and Research Manager, had given a clear presentation on poverty in the county and region, particularly in relation to children. It had been agreed that three further meetings would take place to address particular issues such as supporting individuals through the process of welfare reform changes and supporting residents to manage their household income. It was stated that the key issues which made a difference to poverty were having a job and supporting people through education.

The first meeting was scheduled for 14 July with further meetings arranged for 4 August and 1 September. After it had been pointed out that 4 August was the centenary of the First World War with a number of events having been arranged for that day, the Vice Chair said the date of that meeting could be changed if necessary.

A member stated that in relation to employment and skills, the Youth Service would be a valuable contact. Reference was made to a survey currently being carried out in relation to youth services and it was noted that evidence from that consultation may be useful.

A member referred to an open day by Mary Ann Rogers who was an artist who had started off, many years ago, with a grant from the Council. A member felt that consideration should be given to providing encouragement through such means in the future.

In response to a question regarding the definition of poverty, it was stated that it was very difficult to define. Worklessness and low income were the key factors and the Chair stated that anybody earning below 60% of the average wage was considered to be living in poverty. In response to comments regarding Post 16 Transport charges, the Chair stated that the notion of the working poor had been emphasised in the debate and acknowledged that it was a very important issue.

Further discussion took place regarding regional and national income and it was noted that further information was available by contacting
Janice Rose, Policy and Research Manager. The Scrutiny Officer stated that he would send a copy of her presentation to all members of the committee for their information.

The Chair thanked the Vice Chair for her report.

**RESOLVED** that

1. that the information be noted.

2. Members be sent a copy of the report on poverty presented by the Janice Rose on 23 June.

**REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINITY OFFICER**

23. **Work Programme**

Members considered the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix F.)

The Scrutiny Officer stated that Policy Board received an update on performance across the authority on a quarterly basis. At a recent meeting of Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Scrutiny Committee it had been suggested that the following should be discussed by the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Continuing and Increasingly High Number of Looked After Children Placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (and the need for more NCC Carers) - as this has a major impact on the budget.

- Increasing Number of Permanent Exclusions from Schools – there was particular concern that a pattern was emerging that more Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils had been excluded compared to previous years.

It was noted that this would be put before Chairman’s Group on 8 July for referral to this committee.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

24. **Family and Children’s Services Annual Monitoring Report**

Reference was made to the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes at Appendix G.

The Chair referred to the Annual Report of the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) which had been presented at the meeting of the Family and Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
on 20 March 2014. Members had reserved judgment on the level of sufficiency of joint working arrangements until they had seen the Board in action and, as such, an invitation had been received for 3 members to attend their annual general meeting. Arrangements had been made for the Chair and Vice Chair to attend the meeting at the West Hartford Community Fire Station on 25 July so one further place was available. Councillor Murray expressed an interest in attending and it was agreed that he take up the third place.

A Teacher Union Representative referred back to the Work Programme and expressed concerns about employability in relation to the Post 16 Transport issue. He felt it important to have some monitoring done and said that, at some point, a review would be useful.

Discussion ensued and the portfolio holder stated that this had already been accepted by the Policy Board as the Leader of the Council had added a recommendation on the Post 16 Transport issue that the impact be monitored. There was also an issue that the Scrutiny Committee would be part of the monitoring process. However, he expressed concerns about employability and skills being transferred to schools.

The Head of Service - Education Support referred to a meeting the previous week with Heads of High Schools and Northumberland College who had agreed to monitor changes and look at the curriculum from September 2015 to see if offers met the needs of pupils.

With regard to IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance), all authorities were facing the issue of it being the responsibility of schools and it was felt that it should offer independent advice.

In response to comments regarding themed scrutiny progress reports, the Scrutiny Officer said that when a theme was adopted and, if at conclusion, it appeared there could be more work done, it would be carried out in stages. He said it was a sub group of the committee which reported to the committee.

Further discussion took place regarding the request of the Economic Prosperity and Strategic Services Scrutiny Committee for the Chairman’s Group to allocate the issues of the continuing and increasingly high number of looked after children placed with independent fostering agencies and the increasing number of permanent exclusions from schools. The Vice Chair stated that everyone was concerned about these issues.

In response to further comments, a member pointed out that an ex member of the committee had been very interested in exclusions and said it may be worth looking back at old reports to see what changes had occurred. The Head of Service - Education Support said the latest data showed significant increases and there were particular concerns that more primary school children were being excluded. Figures could be broken down but it was actually across the board.
A Church Representative pointed out that funding issues with academies were now stricter for exclusions.

**RESOLVED** that

1. the information be noted.

2. Councillor Murray join the Chair and Vice Chair at the annual general meeting of the NSCB on 25 July.

**INFORMATION REPORTS**

25. **Policy Digest**

The report, available on the Council's website, gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINy COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Thursday, 17 July 2014 at 2:00pm.

PRESENT

County Councillors:

B Pidcock (Chair), E Burt (Vice-Chair), E Cartie, A Dale, AH Murray, LJ Rickerby, JE Smith (part of meeting), RR Dodd (part of meeting), JD Foster

Teacher union Representative: R Woolhouse

OFFICERS

M Bird Team Leader (Scrutiny/Regulatory), Democratic Services
F Brown Acting Senior Manager, Children’s Services
S Day Safeguarding Standards Manager and Principal Social Worker
R Edwardson Head of Education Support
C Farley Senior Manager, EOTAS Service
A Hartwell Senior Manager, Education and Safeguarding – Performance
C Maddison Democratic Services Apprentice
S Nicholson Scrutiny Officer, Democratic Services

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor R A Arckless

26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Thorne, Mr Cunningham, Ms Ferguson and Reverend Lennox.
27. **Minutes – 26 June 2014**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 26 June 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

28. **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of Key Decisions (July – October 2014). (Summary sheets enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A.)

Members were informed that a special Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny meeting would take place on Thursday 2 October 2014, to pre-scrutinise a report on the outcomes of consultation on proposals for the Ashington Partnership, before the Policy Board considered it.

**RESOLVED** that the information be received.

**REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY**

29. **Care Proceedings Project – Quarterly Report (Sept-Jan)**

Fiona Brown, Acting Senior Manager – Children’s Services, summarised the report which provided data about care proceedings from September 2013 to end of January 2014, and included an update regarding Northumberland’s performance in care proceedings work. (Copy of report attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix B). The report had been prepared by Caley Banks, who was a Senior Manager and had been the manager for the care proceedings team. During the summary of the report, Ms Brown clarified that PLO was an abbreviation for Public Law Outline.

Several members expressed their praise towards the team for their dedication under pressure to ensure that targets were met. The first query related to the level of confidence that Ms Brown had in reducing the timescales to 26 weeks. Members were reassured that there had been a good analysis of past timescales so Ms Brown had confidence in how the team could reduce the timescales accordingly.

The second issue raised by a member related to workload and human resources. Members were informed that the team’s work was driven by good practice and legislation, and that the additional staff that had joined the team might be needed for longer to reach the benchmark timescale.

Another member raised a concern about quality of work if the team was under pressure due to reduced timescales, and that “fast-tracking” might lead to a breakdown in service. The member questioned whether there was an audit trail for any breakdowns, and if the team would be
penalised if the timescales were not met. Ms Brown reassured members that the team was working hard to avoid sacrificing quality, and was not aware of any sanctions in place for not meeting timescales, however questions were asked of the team if targets weren’t being reached.

The viability of the 26 week timescale was questioned by the committee with regard to complex individual cases which required a longer timescale in order to complete and the extra pressures placed from national targets. Further to this query, it was asked how often adoptions got challenged. Another member believed that the timescales should depend on the individual circumstances of each case. It was explained that, although there were no figures currently available, the process was transparent which therefore ensured that all proceedings were fair, just and well informed. There was an opportunity for parents to appeal if a plan was agreed by the court for adoption. Ms Brown reported that the level of appeals against adoption plans decided in court was relatively small.

In response to further questions, Ms Brown explained the importance of the Children and Family Act 2014, which put children at the centre of the process and gave them the knowledge that they would have safety and security in their homes. It also helped to ensure that arrangements were determined quicker, so that children would have stability.

**RESOLVED** – that:

(1) the Care Proceedings Project continue to be reviewed and further information be provided for the committee;

(2) further updates be provided to members including a report focussing on the performance data from February – June 2014 and the impact of the work being completed to reduce delay for children and young people subject to Care Proceedings.

**30. Children Permanently Excluded from School**

Chris Farley, Senior Manager for the EOTAS (Education Other than at School) Service summarised the report which provided details about the increase in the number of permanent exclusions from Northumberland schools in the 2013-14 academic year. (Copy attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix D). Ms Farley added that the decision to permanently exclude a child from a school was a head teacher’s judgement and not taken frivolously. Close work took place with schools to identify any issues early and a range of processes and help were available to assist. If a child was permanently excluded, their parents could go to an independent review against the decision, and that if a child was permanently excluded from one school, they could still go to a different school, however this could be difficult as some schools might not want to enrol a child who had previously been permanently excluded. Ms Farley also stated that most of the permanent exclusions were due to
incidents of violence.

Several members expressed their concerns regarding the exclusions of such young children described in the report, and suggested some reasons for the increase in behavioural issues could include a background of poverty, stressful home situations and violent video games. Members felt that serious action needed to be taken to find out why children of such young ages were being permanently excluded, and to find a way to prevent this from happening. Ms Farley advised members that not all children who were permanently excluded were from poorer backgrounds and expected that the increases in primary and first school age permanent exclusions would be reflected in other regions of the country.

One member felt that investing money into preventative work could help children who were at risk of being permanently excluded, which could be beneficial to all involved. A discussion then followed regarding ideas for nurture units in first schools and putting more resources into preventative work, however these schemes would require funding. The Scrutiny Officer informed members that any consideration about funding would need to be debated by November in order to input into the budgeting process.

It was suggested by a member that looking into individual cases of permanently excluded children might produce a pattern which could help to prevent other children with similar patterns from being at risk of permanent exclusion.

A member referred to the Cambridge Review, which involved getting the best value for money when moving resources, and suggested that it might be beneficial to look into the results of the review.

Members were advised of strategies and also possible work on early intervention methods for trying to avoid exclusions including the provision of techniques for teachers.

It was also requested if any future update could provide a statistical analysis of any patterns for exclusions. Members were advised that there were also figures for persistent absences which were also an issue.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. Regular updates be provided regarding permanent exclusions so the committee can monitor them;

2. Officers develop a strategy to tackle the issue; and

3. An update to the committee be provided in three months’ time.

31. **Performance and Finance Quarterly Report**
Alan Hartwell, Senior Manager - Safeguarding & Education, provided a summary of the Children’s Services’ performance and financial position for the fourth quarter of 2013 – 2014. (Copy of the report attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix E.)

One member felt that the number of children who had been placed in independent fostering agencies was high. The member felt it might be worth reviewing the numbers, as having a third of the total amount in independent placements was not sustainable.

One member queried how Northumberland County Council compared to other Councils, and asked for a report about the underspend and if it was either a positive achievement or meant that there was room for improvement.

In response to the queries, Mr Hartwell advised that North Tyneside Council had recently released a report that included information on benchmarking, and showed how Northumberland County Council was performing in comparison to other Councils.

After considering all issues, it was agreed that a further report on the financial issues raised be provided for the committee’s next meeting, and it was:

RESOLVED – that the following issues be added to the committee’s work programme:

1) The education services underspend;
2) The children’s social care overspend;
3) The ratio of in-house foster carers to the number of children and young people in Independent Fostering Agency (ICT placements).

32. Safeguarding Activity Trends Report

The members of the committee were presented the report on Safeguarding Activity Trends by Steve Day. (Copy of the report is attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix F).

In response to a question, Mr Day reassured the committee that he would inform the committee of any problems that arose with the size of social workers’ workloads.

In response to a question, the committee were informed about a discussion which took place regarding how cases were managed, and of forums that took place in Northumberland for social workers; a positive response had been given with regard to working in Northumberland and praise expressed for the efforts of front line staff and Director of Children’s Services.
The chair requested that the committee’s appreciation and commendation was passed onto the social workers for all of their hard work for young people in Northumberland.

RESOLVED that a further update report be received within six months to include details of trends and figures.

33. Summary Report from Members Rota Visits to Children’s Homes (February 2014 – April 2014)

Reference was made to the report, which provided an overview of visits made to children’s homes in the specified period. (Copy attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix G.)

The Regulation 33 Summary report was also jointly introduced at this point, which provided information to Members from the visits carried out by Officers to Children’s Homes in the three months February 2014 – April 2014. These are monthly visits carried out in accordance with Regulation 33 of the children’s Homes Regulations 2001, to report on the running of the Homes. The individual reports are attached with this summary report (copy attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix G).

Members discussed and agreed that security checks, either CRB or DBS, were needed for visiting Children’s Homes, but should also be provided for all Councillors. It was acknowledged that this had already been raised as an issue, and the Policy Board would take it forward.

Councillor Arckless provided an update regarding the move from the Thornbrae home to The Limes, informing members that the move was now imminent.

Councillor Arckless thanked members for their involvement in rota visits.

RESOLVED that the reports be received.

34. Regulation 33 Summary Report

It was noted that this report had been introduced jointly with the children’s homes visits report earlier on the agenda.

REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

35. Work Programme

Members considered the Family and Children’s Overview and Scrutiny work programme (report attached to the signed Minutes as Appendix I).

RESOLVED that the information be received.

INFORMATION ITEMS
36. Policy Digest

The report, available on the Council's website, gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND WELL-BEING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Care and Well-being Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Wednesday, 23 April 2014 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

ME Richards (Chair), E Armstrong, C Cessford, A Dale, EI Hunter, T Johnstone, E Simpson

OFFICERS

DP Allen Scrutiny Officer, Democratic Services, Corporate Resources Directorate
M Bird Team Leader (Scrutiny/Regulatory), Democratic Services, Corporate Resources Directorate
J Bowie Head of Strategic Commissioning and Safeguarding, Well-being and Community Health Directorate

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor S Dungworth – Policy Board Member for Adult Care Public Health
J Brown - Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
L Prudhoe - HealthWatch Northumberland

85. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Parry and Sharp.

86. Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 March, as circulated, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

87. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Members were advised of the latest Forward Plan of key decisions for April - July 2014 (summary sheets enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED - that the Forward Plan for April to July 2014 be noted.

88. Health and Wellbeing Board Minutes

Members were presented with the minutes of the Health and Well-being Board meetings that took place on 12 February and 13 March 2014 (attached to the official minutes as Appendix B) for the scrutiny of any issues discussed at the meetings.

In response to a question about the ‘A Strategic Approach to Physical Activity in
Northumberland’ report considered on 13 March, the Policy Board member provided details of the work done by Northumberland Sport, Public Health and Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure focusing on physical activity and well-being rather than illness. This was part of a national trend looking at the impact of physical inactivity, and any links with cancers or mental well-being. Another local issue was how to enable people to access physical activity centres due to the cost and availability of public transport. Further work would focus on what could be done rather than what was being done.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes be noted.

**REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

89. **Northumberland’s Adult Social Care Local Account 2013**

The report (attached to the official minutes as Appendix C) summarised the purpose, content and planned promotion of Northumberland’s Adult Social Care Local Account 2013, “Our Annual Review”. The Adult Social Care Local Account was an important part of the Council’s arrangements for accountability to the people of Northumberland. The Annual Review of adult social services 2013 was their second Local Account and described how the council and its partners helped meet the health and wellbeing needs of residents; how much they spent and what they spent it on; what customers thought; and plans for 2014-15.

In response to a question about the 4% budget spending on preventative services, Ms Bowie advised members that there were a range of services and activities including Ageing Well, continuing inclusion, and initiatives with communities and organisations to increase capacity to assist people’s independence, control and increase their well-being. Regarding the benefits of initiatives like residential schemes with wardens, it was noted that consideration was being given to extending The Manors at West Wylam, and for a new scheme at Alnwick, and how a range of models were being considered to give people an opportunity to stay in their communities for longer and have a better quality of and longer life.

In response to further questions, it was noted that there were other successful examples of schemes such as Bell View at Belford, and that the document could also be made available to send to the service providers. The committee also expressed an interest in its next meeting taking place in Haltwhistle so members could see the services provided at that scheme. It was then:

**RESOLVED** - that

(1) the information provided about Northumberland’s Adult Social Care Local Account, the “Our Annual Review” at Appendix 1, be noted; and

(2) the arrangements for publicising the document described in section 3, be endorsed.

90. **Themed Scrutiny**

The Vice-chair introduced the update report about the committee’s themed scrutiny work (attached to the official minutes as Appendix C).

Reference was made to the Berwick Patient Care Task and Finish Group and
arrangements for meeting at 9.45am on 13 May, for which Councillor Dungworth submitted her apologies.

Reference was made to the scoping meeting held on 8 April about the Mental Health Model of Care and mental health service provision in Northumberland theme. It was anticipated that a group would be formed and begin considering this issue from June as the Berwick item was due to conclude in May. Members discussed how committee memberships might change at Annual Council on 7 May which might affect the group’s composition, but provisionally Councillors Armstrong, Cessford, Dale, Johnstone and Dale would all join if they remained members of this committee.

Further discussion followed about the forthcoming training toolkit for the application of the Human Rights Act in the commissioning of home care for older people and whether a Northumberland version could be used; an update on this would be provided at a later date for the committee after the training toolkit was issued.

Members also talked about another themed scrutiny topic, sickness levels in people aged 60 and above, which would begin at a later date in the year. A number of points were made regarding possible aspects to consider as part of this work including the impact of the raising of the retirement age, a lack of social inclusion amongst some people following their retirement, driver refresher courses, physical activity days, and consideration of other ways to work with communities.

**RESOLVED** – that the updates be noted.

**REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**

**91. Care and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme**

Members considered the Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme (report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix D).

Members were advised that the list detailed the 2013/14 year but included details of items due to be added to the work programme for 2014/15, including an item on Wansbeck maternity unit due for June’s meeting and a visit to a hospital in Newcastle to be arranged. It was also confirmed that the committee’s next meeting would take place on the originally scheduled 21 May date rather than on 28 May.

The Chair took this opportunity to thank Scrutiny Officer Mr Allen for all his work and support for the committee over the past year.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be noted.

**INFORMATION REPORTS**

**92. Care and Well-being Quarter 3 Performance**

The committee received a summary of the care and well-being performance figures for quarter three of 2013/14 (attached to the official minutes as Appendix D).

In response to a query about the relation of the targets to national figures, members were advised that there were also national and regional benchmarking figures, but this report contained local targets which were done by agreement rather than requirement.
An annual performance report was also provided for the committee.

Regarding indicator NI039, it was also queried whether the north east area had also seen a similar level in the reduction in the rate of hospital admissions for alcohol related harm as there had been nationally; this would be looked into.

Reference was also made to a low rate of breastfeeding in Northumberland and its continuation as a target, and the hope for success for the Big Lottery Funding bid and the benefits it would bring to the 11 selected areas.

RESOLVED – that the information be noted.

93. Policy Digest

The report, available on the Council's website, gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to members.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

94. Urgent Business (if any)

The Chair provided details about a concerning incident regarding how a call to the emergency services was handled by the operator; she would be discussing the issue with the North East Ambulance Service shortly. Some discussion also followed about the channels people had to complain about such incidents, including HealthWatch’s complaints advocacy service, what support people could receive, and how the Council could look at further pro-active signposting for people to where they could get support.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND WELL-BEING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Care and Well-being Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at Community Room, Greenholme Court, Haltwhistle War Memorial Hospital, Westgate, Haltwhistle NE49 9AJ on Wednesday, 21st May, 2014 at 2.00 p.m..

PRESENT

M E Richards (Chair) C Cessford, A Dale, A Sharp, E Simpson

OFFICERS

D P Allen Scrutiny Officer
H A Fox Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

J Bowie - Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning
S Brown - Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group
S Holmes - Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust
K Newbould - Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust
L Prudhoe - HealthWatch Northumberland
K Thompson - Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust
S Hanna - KCS Health
C Wardlaw - KCS Health
E Watson - Haltwhistle Partnership

01. Membership and Terms of Reference

Members noted the membership and terms of reference of the Care and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the appointment of Chairman (Councillor M.E. Richards) and Vice-chairman (Councillor E. Simpson) as agreed at the annual meeting of the County Council on 7 May 2014:

Quorum - 3

Membership: Councillors C Cessford; A Dale; B Flux; C Homer; I E Hunter; T Johnstone; K. Nisbet; M E Richards; A Sharp and L Simpson.

Functions:

Matters relating to the provision of:

• Adult Care and Social Services
• Mental Health and emotional well being
• Financial inclusion and fuel poverty
• Welfare of young people
• Carers well-being
• Independent living and supported housing
• Adult Health Services
Healthy eating and physical activity
Smoking cessation
Alcohol and drugs misuse

02. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Flux, Homer, Hunter, Johnstone and Nisbet.

03. Minutes

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the last meeting, held on 23 April 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman with the amendment at minute number 90 - Themed Scrutiny - Councillor Dale’s name is repeated and the second reference to Councillor Dale’s name should be amended to L Prudhoe.

04. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

RESOLVED - that the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for May to August 2014 be noted.

05. Pharmacy Application in Cramlington East

Christine Wardlaw, Superintendent Pharmacy/Director, KCS Health Ltd read out a statement concerning their pharmacy application in Cramlington East and referred to a letter which had been circulated to Members. (Statement and letter attached to the signed Minutes).

Following the statement, Members sought clarification on the pharmacy application. Ms Wardlaw explained that both Brockwell Medical Group (BMG) and KCS Health Ltd had made applications for inclusion in the pharmaceutical list to relocate their practices onto the new hospital site at Cramlington. Both applications had been refused and were now at the appeal stage. Mrs Wardlow further explained that the letter from the Chair had been included in BMG’s appeal as a support document.

Jane Bowie, Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning advised that the letter had been a capture of the discussion following a presentation given by BMG at the Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier this year.

The Chair confirmed that the letter had been taken out of context and the Committee had been impartial to both applications.

It was suggested that the Chair forward a letter summarising KCS’s presentation and subsequent comments made at Committee to the Appeals Unit.
Councillor Sharp moved the recommendation to support which was seconded by Councillor Dale.

In response to a request from Mrs Wardlaw, the Chair confirmed that a letter would be sent out in the next few days.

**RESOLVED** - that a letter be forwarded to the Appeals Unit in regard of KCS’s attendance at Scrutiny.

**REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

06. **Haltwhistle Integrated Scheme – Developing the Service**

Jane Bowie, Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning introduced the presentation with input from members of Northumbria Healthcare. (Presentation attached to the signed Minutes).

Following the presentation, Members raised queries and comments as follows:

- Reference was made to cash flow and the management fee and it was hoped that communal room could be utilised;
- Future proofing and the aging population
- The duration of a stay
- Was the care scheme working with local groups?
- Haltwhistle needed the facility and was welcomed
- What were the local criteria for the extra care flats?

The Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning advised that that there could be future projects developed together and further capacity released from the current scheme. In addition a model would be examined for the potential for virtual extra care and how that support could be provided.

In response to a reference to the health centre and doctors’ surgery, it was advised that the hospital was a consultant led unit with links to community-based district nurses and social services. It was further advised that the hospital would take a multi-disciplinary approach on decisions for patients’ welfare. In addition to the clinical care provided, a person would be assessed in collaboration with care managers.

In response to the query regarding duration of stay Kim Thompson, Northumbria Healthcare Trust advised that it would depend on individual needs, but would not be an extended period of time and if nursing care was needed a patient would go into a nursing home.

The Trust had a public governance body from across Northumberland and Tyneside which met with representatives from Haltwhistle. She confirmed that volunteers were involved in working with the hospital services.

A Member stated that the partnership between NCC and the Trust had been a great success. Thanks were expressed to Steve Russell, Daljit Lally, Jane Bowie and the residents of Haltwhistle and the Town Council who had brought the
scheme into reality. However he raised a concern in relation to the accommodation and referred to the Lettings Policy and to respite care.

The Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning advised that where the two 1 bedroom flats were included in the scheme - people under 65 would not be detrimental by the changes in Housing Benefit often called the "bedroom tax". Specialist housing advice had been taken and that was the reason for the one and two two bedroom numbers split, the latter could also be used for respite.

In response to the query regarding the local criteria for the extra care flats, it was advised that they had been circulated and it was hoped that there would be no vacancies.

A Member echoed the thanks and the success of the partnership and stated on the importance of people being looked after and supported to stay in their own communities as long as possible. She further stated that it was important that older people’s homes were fit for purpose.

The Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning stated that it was important that people were supported to remain in their homes as long as possible.

Ellen Watson, Haltwhistle Partnership referred to the Open Day and how delighted everyone was with the integrated care scheme. She referred to the loss of wardens from some sheltered housing schemes and stated that help of the wardens enabled some older people to stay in their homes longer. She also referred to the length of walk around the building which might cause problems for some patients.

RESOLVED - that the information be noted.

07. Themed Scrutiny

The Vice Chair updated the Committee on the Berwick Patient Care Task and Finish Group and advised that a report would be presented to the Committee in June.

She referred to the recent visit which had been very informative and conveyed thanks for the invitation.

Reference was made to a scoping exercise about the benefits and disadvantages of supporting people to work after the age of 60. The scope of the evidence would be:

(a) Benefits for individual/NCC/Community of remaining in employment after 60
(b) Detriment to individual/NCC/Community of remaining in employment after 60

The key focus would be what information was available to establish a baseline and how that related to current workstreams.
Members had also been asked to consider the process of Home Care Commissioning as a possible desk-top exercise.

Once Members had formed a Task and Finish Group for the over 60's in work project, a date would be announced shortly for its first meeting.

A suggestion from Councillor Simpson, that the project on a review of the Northumberland Mental Health Model of Care commence after the above short-term projects were completed, was noted by the Scrutiny Officer.

**RESOLVED** - that the information be noted.

**REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**

08. **Care and Well-being Annual Monitoring Report**

The Committee's annual monitoring report was presented to Members.

**RESOLVED** - that the information be noted.

09. **Care and Well-being OSC Work Programme**

Members considered the Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme (report enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix D).

Members were informed that a report on Welfare Rights programmed for June would be presented at the July meeting. In addition a report on the SAB Annual Report and Refresh could be delayed until later in the year.

**RESOLVED** - that the information be noted.

**INFORMATION REPORTS**

10. **Policy Digest**

The report, available on the Council's website, gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to members.

**RESOLVED** - that the report be noted.

11. **Urgent Business (if any)**

Paul Allen, Scrutiny Officer referred to the Performance Report which had been reported at the previous meeting of Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny and referred to the query regarding the rate of hospital admissions for alcohol related harm. An update had been received from Kath Bailey and a note would be circulated to Members by email.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND WELL-BEING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Care and Well-being Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at
Public Protection Meeting Room, Public Protection Offices, Loansdean, Morpeth on
Wednesday, 25 June, 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

M.E. Richards
(in the Chair)

COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Cessford, C.                  Johnstone, T.
Flux, B.                      Simpson, L.
Homer, C.

POLICY BOARD MEMBER

Dungworth, S.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Bailey, K.                  Acting Director of Public Health
Brown, J.                    Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust
Gay, A.                      NHFT
Brown, S.                    Northumberland Clinical Commissioning
                            Group
Blair, Dr. A.                 Northumberland Clinical Commissioning
                            Group
McNichol, J.                 Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust
Corlett, S.                  Senior Manager, Policy
Thompson, D                  Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bainbridge, V.               Deputy Director, Wellbeing and
                            Community Health
Allen, D.P.                   Scrutiny Officer
Bennett, Mrs L.M.            Team Leader (Governance/People),
                            Democratic Services
Maddison, C.                 Apprentice
12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Dale and A. Sharp.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 21 May 2014, as circulated were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

14. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

Councillor B. Flux declared a personal interest in the Welfare Rights Annual Report as his wife worked for the DWP and administered PIPS.

Councillor I.E. Hunter declared a personal interest in the Berwick maternity services presentation.

15. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for July to September 2014. (Report attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

16. MATERNITY SERVICES

Members received a presentation providing an update on maternity services work in Northumberland. (A copy of the presentation is attached to the signed minutes.)

After the presentation the following comments were made:

- There were concerns in the Berwick area that, depending on the outcome of the Scottish referendum, it may not be possible for women to use the Borders maternity services. Dr. Blair informed Members that currently Scottish women were not permitted to deliver in England, other than in an emergency. It would be necessary to await the outcome of the referendum and any resultant change in national policy.
- It was confirmed that the maternity unit at the new Cramlington hospital would open at the same time as the rest of the hospital.
- From January 2015, the Cramlington hospital would be available for women when identifying their preferred hospital for deliver. Documentation was being amended accordingly.

RESOLVED that the presentation and comments be noted.
17. WELFARE RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

Members were updated about the activities of the Welfare Rights Advisory Unit for the year ending 31 March 2014 and on key current issues about supporting people with benefits during an on-going period of major change to the system. (Report attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Members raised the following issues:

- There was concern that many claimants would not fully understand the changes to the system and what it may mean to them. It was crucial that advice services were available.
- Claim forms for disability benefits were large and difficult to fill in and there was a risk that many claimants may not mention important factors unless supported by someone with a good knowledge of the system.
- The work of the Welfare Rights Unit was bringing in substantial additional income for people in Northumberland, which is both important for the disabled people who need it and has a wider beneficial impact for the local economy.
- The number of cases referred to the unit for casework had fallen in the last year. This appeared to be related to the backlogs which had built up in the Department of Work and Pensions, which had also led to a fall in the workload of tribunals – in the longer term, when the delays in DWP have been addressed, workloads may rise.

RESOLVED that the presentation and comments be noted.

18. COMMUNITY HOSPITALS

Siobhan Brown, Transformation Director, NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group made a presentation to Members on Future Models of Care in Community Hospitals. (A copy of the presentation is attached to the signed minutes.)

Members welcomed the presentation and made the following comments:

- Support of the community hospitals in Northumberland was very welcome by the residents of the Berwick area. Concerns were being expressed in the area about the ability to use facilities in Scotland if the referendum voted for independence. It was confirmed that the situation was the same as for maternity services, in that the outcome of the referendum would be awaited along with any subsequent changes in national policy.
- The provision of the integrated scheme at Haltwhistle had been very well received, but there were concerns that some of the flats remained unoccupied as people were reluctant to pay the cost. It was commented that there was a waiting list for the flats. The reason for the unoccupied flats would be investigated.
- A number of care homes had been closed in the south east of Northumberland and they were unlikely to be replaced. It was beneficial for
people to be cared for in their own homes as much as possible and a similar provision to that at Haltwhistle should be provided elsewhere in the county.

- Accommodation for the elderly had close links to health care and it was important to allow the elderly to remain in their own homes with the appropriate care and support.

RESOLVED that the presentation and comments be noted.

19. THEMED SCRUTINY

(a) Themed Scrutiny Research Findings: Berwick Patient Care Task and Finish Group

Members were asked to consider the report of the Vice-Chair (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C)

Members welcomed the report. It was noted that further information about staffing levels for the birthing pool was not yet to hand.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations be referred to the Policy Board:

Maternity Services in Berwick

1. The Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update on the Berwick Maternity Unit in September 2014, following on from the recent six-monthly review of the service

Communications

2. Health and care services be promoted at locality level across Berwick, specifically to develop a comprehensive register of healthcare facilities within Northumberland and across its borders along NEAS transport routes, containing all relevant contact details and a patient-friendly list of available services. This should be done through cooperation of the healthcare agencies involved and advertised to all GPs and healthcare facilities for display and, when appropriate, communication to patients

3. Primary care providers and the new Berwick Community Hospital be encouraged to work in partnership to develop local services on a needs basis, subject to appropriate clinical safety

Transport

Recognising that transport issues for users of healthcare services in Northumberland have a universal impact:

4. Once determined and clearly defined by the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group, the eligibility criteria for patient transport appointments with all providers of ambulance services, including the North
East Ambulance Service, be advertised to all GPs and healthcare facilities for display and, when appropriate, communication to patients

5. A register of the full range of patient transport services available from the North East Ambulance Service and all known alternative patient transport arrangements, including costs, be produced through cooperation of the healthcare agencies involved. The register should:

(i) be advertised to all GPs and healthcare facilities
(ii) inform all patients of their transport choices where relevant
(iii) be brought to patients’ attention verbally on discharge when appropriate

6. Healthcare providers be invited to present updates on improvements later in 2014/2015, as suggested above.

(b) Progress of Reviews

Members received an update from the Vice-Chair (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D.)

Members were informed that a Member to represent the north of the County had been identified and would be approached with regards to joining the new Over 60’s in Work Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

REPORTS OF THE SCUTINY OFFICER

20. Care and Well-being OSC Work Programme

Members were asked to consider the Committee’s work programme. (Copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E.)

The following items were suggested for possible inclusion on the Committee’s work programme:-

- Effect on health care services in the Berwick area following the referendum.
- Employment practices of contractors building new hospital at Cramlington

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

INFORMATION REPORTS

21. Policy Digest

The report, available on the Council’s website, gave details of the latest policy briefing, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND WELL-BEING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Care and Well-being Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Wednesday, 23 July 2014 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

ME Richards (Chair), C Cessford, A Dale, EI Hunter, K Nisbet, A Sharp, E Simpson

OFFICERS

K Bailey - Acting Director of Public Health
M Bird - Team Leader (Scrutiny/Regulatory), Democratic Services
J Bowie - Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning
K Stubbs - Committee Services Manager, Democratic Services

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors R Arckless and S Dungworth
J Brown - Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust
L Prudhoe - HealthWatch

22. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Flux and Homer.

23. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 25 June 2014, as circulated, were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to being amended to read that Councillor I Hunter had been present.

24. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The committee considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for July to October 2014 (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A). An updated version was circulated at the meeting reflecting changes made to the document since the agenda for the meeting was published. The Treasury Management Annual Report for 2013/4 had been added to September’s Policy Board agenda and the Living Wage report added to October’s Policy Board agenda. Members discussed how members of this committee were involved in joint consideration of matters regarding the Living Wage with the Family and Children’s Services OSC’s Poverty Working Group.
RESOLVED that the information be noted.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

25. HealthWatch Northumberland – Annual Report 2013/14

A copy of HealthWatch Northumberland’s first annual report had been circulated to the committee (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B). In addition to the report, lead officer Liz Prudhoe provided a presentation which focused on:

- the commissioning of HealthWatch by the County Council and delivery of the services by Adapt (NE) from 1 April 2013; it was one of 152 HealthWatch bodies in the country
- Healthwatch’s NHS independent advocacy complaints advocacy service role, and its alignment with areas of complaints with the PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service)
- the recruitment of board representation from individuals representing four areas aligned with the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), including a young person, and voluntary sector involvement, including Carers Northumberland, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society
- working with partners in the health & social care liaison group, including inputting into the production of easy read versions of information leaflets, inviting and involving Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust staff and listening to historical concerns they had, and work with the CCG including commissioning independent involvement in the high risk patient pathway.

Regarding a question about progress in informing the public about HealthWatch’s work, its staff continued to make links which included the use of social media. Updates were sent to a distribution list of 272 groups. People got a quick resolution from using the service, meaning they didn’t need to go through the NHS complaints process. HealthWatch employed a young people’s worker who was currently leading a project in Prudhoe and Blyth. An update from the young people involved could be arranged for members in due course.

Replying to a further question, members were advised that volunteers were a mix of ages, however it was hoped to recruit additional young people for work including research tasks. A greater variety of people had become involved. Positive feedback had been received for the recent event at Alnwick. The process worked quickly and the next step would be to reach people who lived in other areas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and an update be provided later in the year.

26. Safeguarding Adults Annual Report – 2013/14

The report provided an overview of the work carried out under the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding adults in 2013/14 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C). The Policy Board Member for Adult Care and Public Health introduced the report, of which her key points were:

- referrals and notifications had increased but incidents had not, as a result of better awareness by the police and public. Of the six residential homes for which safeguarding concerns had been expressed in the year resulting in
the suspension of admissions, four had since reopened, one had been
decommissioned and one was working through an improvement action plan
• implementing Making Safeguarding Personal best practice
• good work with Newcastle and North Tyneside councils enabled consistency
  across the area
• procedures would need to be reviewed as a result of the new Care Act
• thanks were expressed to the outgoing chair of the Adult Safeguarding
  Board, Caron Walker. The incoming chair from September, Russell Pilling,
  was welcomed.

Regarding a member’s query about what was being done to highlight any issues
resulting from the increase in notifications, members were advised that there had
been a 45% increase in notifications, but a 13% increase in referrals and
subsequent investigations. Additional training and awareness-raising had led to an
increase in notifications, and intelligence was also received from several other
sources.

Following further questions, members were advised that an update would be
sought on the residential care home which was reported to have restriction on new
admissions. Discussion followed about telephone cold calling, as it could intimidate
many vulnerable older people. Members were advised of the methods for
restricting cold calling and an advice note available about how to set telephone
preferences, which could be published on the council website.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

27. Customer Experience: Joint Children’s and Adult Services Customer
Experience: Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2013/14

The report provided details about how customer experiences were sought, how
complaints were handled and statistical information from 2013/14, cases where
action was taken to improve a service following a complaint, any decisions made
by the Local Government Ombudsman, and other feedback from people who used
the services. The Policy Board Member for Children’s Services introduced the
report with reference to all members’ corporate parenting responsibilities, the
success and increasing take up of rota visits to children’s homes, the last Voices
Making Choices event, and how some complaints had to be expected as
processes such as adoption could be very difficult.

In response to a question, consideration would be given to the possibility of a
statistical analysis of the geographical breakdown of complaints in
Northumberland. Members were advised that complaints should be a learning tool
rather than considered negatively, but should be resolved early. Discussion took
place about the difference in the number of safeguarding notifications and
complaints received. It was difficult to compare as the complaints process was
different and separate to the adult safeguarding process: the former was long
established compared to that for adult safeguarding, and there was a difference
between complaints raised by service users and notifications from outside
agencies.

Further consideration could be given to the communication of the complaints
process and outcomes to the public. Congratulations were expressed for the reduction in the numbers of complaints upheld and thanks expressed for both the respective Policy Board members’ attendance.

**RESOLVED** that the content of the report be noted.

28. **Themed Scrutiny**

The Vice-chair introduced the report (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E) which provided information on the commissioning of home care as described in the guidance document ‘Top Tips for Directors.’

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the work on commissioning of home care be monitored as it goes forward.

**REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**

29. **Care and Well-being OSC Work Programme**

Members considered the latest version of their work programme for 2014/15 (attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

Concern was expressed about recent issues regarding ambulance service delivery and response times, particularly for rural areas and concern about the Scottish Borders ambulance no longer available for Berwick. It was discussed then agreed that the full committee should consider the issue rather than being a themed scrutiny topic. It was requested that the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) attend the committee’s next meeting on 24 September to give a presentation and answer questions, and for all members of Council to be invited. This request would be referred to the next Chairmen’s Group meeting.

Discussion also took place about the Haltwhistle joint scheme and the Homes for Northumberland award for joint working recently awarded, for which a report was requested for the following meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted and NEAS be invited to attend the committee’s next meeting, subject to Chairmen’s Group agreement.

**INFORMATION REPORTS**

30. **Policy Digest**

The report, available on the Council’s website, gave details of the latest policy briefing, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to members.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 22 April 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor J.A. Lang
(Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Cairns, H.                    Sawyer, J.
Gallacher, B.                Wilson, T.
Jones, V.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Asquith, A.                  Democratic Services Officer
McNaughton, S.               Strategic Transport Manager
Nicholson, S.                Scrutiny Officer
Rutherford, A.               Head of Highways and Neighbourhood Services

POLICY BOARD MEMBER

Swithenbank, I.C.F.          Streetcare and Environment

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Graham, K.                   County Councillor
Grimshaw, L.                 County Councillor
Hedley, S.                   Member of the Public
Nisbet, K.                   County Councillor
Richards, M.                 County Councillor
Tyler, V.                    County Councillor
Wallace, A.                  County Councillor

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W. Daley, G.W. Jones, T. Robson and J.A. Taylor.
70. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 25 March 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

71. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of key decisions (April – July 2014). (Summary Sheets enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

**RESOLVED** that the Forward Plan of Executive Key Decisions for the period April 2014 to July 2014, be noted.

72. **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS**

Councillor J. Sawyer disclosed a non registerable personal interest in item 5 (c) on the agenda (School Crossing Patrols in Northumberland) as he had a relative who was employed within the Service.

**REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

73. **REPORTS OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE GROUP**

(a) **Review of Highway Winter Services**

Members were provided with an update on the provision of winter service arrangements across the County during the winter of 2013/14. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Members made a number of comments on the report, which included:-

- A suggestion that a salt heap at Stakeford as well as Blyth would help ensure a speedier response time for gritting roads in the area.
- Does the Council ring-fence their budget for gritting and has the Service got permission to carry forward any surplus spend to the next financial year? It was confirmed that the Service would like the ability to do this although no discussions or decisions had taken place on this subject.
- It was conformed that a full review of the highway gritting routes used for winter service would commence during 2014. This would ensure that the service was delivered more effectively, including reviewing which locations were gritted by Council staff and those by sub-contractors in the rural areas.
- A comment that residential areas and pavements should be gritted otherwise there would be no access to the major roads. It was confirmed that during the winter months Northumberland County Council was required to focus its gritting resources on keeping the major roads in the county clear. In periods of severe weather it may not be possible for the gritters or operatives to treat minor roads or pavements in residential areas. However, by working together
with Town/Parish Councils and volunteer groups throughout the county it was hoped that a high quality and effective approach to the treatment of footpaths and residential areas would be carried out.

- Clarification was given regarding the Council’s commitment to salt bins purchased by Members.

**RESOLVED** that the report, be noted.

**(b) Devolution of Responsibilities to Town and Parish Councils**

The Committee were updated on progress made with the devolution of responsibilities to town and parish councils since local government reorganisation. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

It was reported that the outcome of consultation on the revised Northumberland Town and Parish Council Charter would be considered at this Committee on 27 May.

Members made a number of comments on the report, which included:

- Clarification on where responsibilities lay when erecting war memorial placards and the procedure for opting for an agency agreement.
- A query was raised regarding a play park in Ashington that was removed but not replaced although it was promised that this would happen. It was suggested that this be investigated by officers.
- Clarification was sought regarding maintenance to closed church yards.
- It was suggested that the Service needed a rolling review of bins to ensure they were in the correct locations, adequate for the purpose and were emptied regularly.
- The quality of bins provided and the durability of those erected needed to be of a good standard.
- Members thanked the staff employed for doing a valuable job in keeping the streets clean and free of litter.

**RESOLVED** that the report, be noted.

**(c) School Crossing Patrols in Northumberland**

The Committee were provided with a detailed review of how school crossing patrol sites were identified, introduced and managed across Northumberland. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

Members made a number of comments on the report, which included:

- It was confirmed that this topic would form a key element of the emerging Northumberland Road Safety Strategy Action Plan to ensure that this remained central to the overall Strategy.
- The need to improve recruitment and the attractiveness of school crossing patrol officer posts.
- It was suggested that the Council investigate how other Authorities recruited staff to these posts and maintained their workforce.
• Road safety including investigating traffic flows and illegal parking all needed addressed to help support the School Crossing Patrol officers.
• With regard to poor vacancy rates on sites, questions were asked as to the reasons behind the figures. Were the poor rates because of the hourly rate fee, the hours to be worked and/or the tightening of benefit criteria?
• An explanation on the formula used to establish a crossing site location was provided.
• The need for the Council to be proactive in highlighting potential problems before changes were made to routes such as the implications of the Morpeth Bypass for residents in and around the Bothal/Potland areas of Ashington.

The Committee were informed that this issue was still a work in progress and the provision of school crossing patrols would be a key element of the emerging Action Plan for Northumberland’s Road Safety Strategy.

RESOLVED that the report, be received.

THEMED SCRUTINY

74. Progress Review

The Committee were informed of progress made with the reviews. Members were informed that a Flood Alleviation Task Group would be meeting tomorrow. A review on Leisure and a Joint Task Group on Northumberland’s Transport Structure would also be commencing soon.

The Vice-Chair reminded all that Members were welcome to participate with Themed Scrutiny and individual reviews.

RESOLVED that the information, be noted.

REPORT OF SCRUTINY OFFICER

75. Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members considered the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (Work Programme enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

RESOLVED that the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, be noted.

INFORMATION REPORT

The following report was for information only and can be accessed through Northumberland County Council’s Web site. If a member of the Committee would like further explanation of the report, or has questions they wish to put to the relevant Policy Board Member, he/she should contact Democratic
Services Section in order that appropriate arrangements can be made.

76. Policy Digest

The report gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report, be noted.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At the Annual Meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 27 May 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Gallacher
(Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Cairns, H. Daley, W. Jones, G.W. Jones, V. Sawyer, J.

POLICY BOARD MEMBER

Ledger, D. Deputy Leader of the County Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Asquith, A. Democratic Services Officer
Brown, D. Fire and Rescue Service
Jones, P. Head of Fleet and Waste Management
Longlands, D. Locality Development Officer
Nicholson, S. Scrutiny Officer
Richards, S. Fire and Rescue Service

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Dickinson, S.J. County Councillor
Grimshaw, L. County Councillor
Hedley, S. Member of the Public
Nisbet, K. County Councillor
Richards, M. County Councillor
Sambrook, A. County Councillor
Simpson, L. County Councillor
Tyler, V. County Councillor
1. **MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The membership and terms of reference of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as agreed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council, held on 7 May 2014, was reported as follows:-

**10 Members (4:3:2:1)**

**Quorum - 3**

**Chair – B. Gallacher**  
**Vice Chair – J.A. Lang**

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<tr>
<th>Labour</th>
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<th>Liberal Democrat</th>
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**Terms of reference:**

(a) To create sustainable communities - places that offer everyone a decent home that they can afford in a quality environment in which they want to live, now and in the future

(b) To ensure that our communities have a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride and as such they feel safe, valued and respected

(c) To liaise with external partners and organisations operating in the area to ensure the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working

(d) To monitor, review and make recommendations about County Council services concerned with the following:

- Community Safety/Crime, fear of crime and crime reduction
- Antisocial behaviour and domestic violence
- Emergency services and Emergency planning
- Trading Standards
- Community Engagement and Empowerment
- Social Inclusion
- Equalities, diversity and community cohesion
- Support to VCS organisations
- Public service customer care/ neighbourhood services
- Housing
- Culture and Leisure (libraries, parks, open spaces and play areas)
- Streetscape and the local environment
- Environment (Development Plans, Conservation, Countryside, Waste management, )
- Land use planning
- Climate Change
- Biodiversity and landscape quality
(e) To review and scrutinise the performance of external organisations

RESOLVED that the information, be noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Campbell, J.A. Lang, T. Robson and J.A. Taylor. An apology for absence was also received from Councillor I.C.F. Swithenbank, Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 22 April 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

Councillors H. Cairns, G.W. Jones and W. Daley confirmed their registerable interests in item 7 on the agenda (Review of the Northumberland Town and Parish Charter) as Town or Parish Councillors.

5. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of key decisions (May – August 2014). (Updated summary sheets were tabled at the meeting and enclosed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of Executive Key Decisions for the period May 2014 to August 2014, be noted.

REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD

6. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Fire and Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017 Consultation

The Committee were presented with the Fire & Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017 consultation strategy, consultation report and the final draft Fire & Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

It was confirmed that although the response to the consultation was fairly low a combination of quantitative and qualitative consultation methods were used during
the process. The Service ensured that the consultation was clear, concise, widely accessible and met with the Council’s procedures.

The Chairman thanked the Fire and Rescue Service for their professional, concise and timely reports. The visits to the Fire Station Headquarters had been very interesting and well received. The Chairman, on behalf of the residents of Northumberland, also thanked the Fire and Rescue Service for their prevention, protection, response and civil contingencies arrangements.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the Fire & Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017 Consultation Strategy, be noted
(b) the Fire & Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017 Consultation Report, be noted
(c) the final draft Fire & Rescue Plan 2014 – 2017, be noted

7. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE**

**Review of the Northumberland Town and Parish Charter**

Members were provided with feedback on the engagement on the draft revised Town and Parish Charter and obtained input from the Members of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft revised Charter which had been amended following consultation and the endorsement of the Parish Liaison Working Group. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Members welcomed the progress that had been made on this issue and the improved working relationship with Town and Parish Councils.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) the engagement and comments received on the draft Northumberland Town and Parish Council Charter, be noted and

(b) comments and feedback on the revised draft Town and Parish Council Charter (attached at appendix A), in advance of it being referred to Policy Board, for adoption, be noted.

8. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE**

**Review of Household Waste Recovery Centre Permit Scheme**

The Committee considered the recommendations to the Policy Board over proposed changes to the Household Waste Recovery Centre (HWRC) permit scheme and access controls following a review of this service by both of the Urban and Rural Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture Working Groups. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).
A number of comments were made which included:

- It was confirmed that although hire vans registrations would be identified by the automated number place recognition system staff would be able to identify whether they were using the facility in accordance with the regulations or a suspected tradesperson.
- The Service had to be careful not to disadvantage the likes of small businessmen whose only vehicle available were vans from using the scheme, if for the correct reasons.
- It was reported that for those households that required permits in order to take large volumes of garden waste during the growing season a number of permits would be allocated. It was confirmed that the existing kerbside garden waste service offered collections once per fortnight over a 20 week period which indicated that an allowance of 12 permits would be sufficient to cover the growing season for the majority of keen gardeners. However, a Member questioned whether this allocation would be sufficient and not restrict households, who along with garden waste, needed to use the facility to dispose of other items. It was confirmed that the report was proposing to give delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment. Any necessary refinements needed to the HWRC permit scheme could be made and if the existing kerbside garden waste service was not working or the allowance of 12 permits not sufficient amendments could be made.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee recommend that Policy Board agree the changes to the HWRC permit scheme and access controls as follows:-

- a. Reduce the allocation of HWRC permits issued to households to 12 per annum which can be used at any time within 12 months of the first permit being issued but that households would only be allowed to deposit up to a single ‘transit van’ load (~6 cubic yards) of soil / rubble / plasterboard / builders waste or an equivalent volume of waste from the removal of fixtures and fittings over a 12 month period.

- b. Those persons undertaking the refurbishment or renovation of domestic properties who are deemed to be property developers or private landlords by the Council will not be entitled to deposit any construction and demolition / DIY waste at HWRCs.

- c. Persons deemed by the Council to be private landlords or their agents undertaking the clearance of unwanted household items / waste from vacant domestic properties will not be entitled to deposit such waste at HWRCs.

- d. Implement a pilot scheme for the use of Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system at the two largest HWRC sites, namely Bebside and North Seaton in SE Northumberland to help identify suspected tradespersons.
e. Support further IT development work to reduce the cost of administering the scheme, increase the ability to ‘self serve’, improve access controls and management reporting.

f. Agree that the current level of usage by non-Northumberland residents does not warrant the inconvenience to residents and additional cost of introducing ‘residents only’ controls at the Council’s network of HWRC sites.

g. Give delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment to make any necessary refinements to the HWRC permit scheme and access controls in light of operational experience and customer feedback.

THEMED SCRUTINY

9. The Committee received an update from the Chairman regarding progress made with the reviews. It was reported that the Morpeth Flooding project had now finished and Members were moving on to look at flooding issues across Northumberland. A briefing note updating Members on the Public Transport Themed Scrutiny review was also tabled at the meeting and enclosed with the signed minutes.

RESOLVED that the information, be received.

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

10. Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members were advised that the Chairman was meeting with the Heads of Service to discuss issues for the Work Programme. Along with the items highlighted from these meetings and Member requests a Work Programme would be created and presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

With regard to the waste report that was to be discussed at the next meeting a request was made to include a discussion on additional types of waste the Council could collect such as glass.

RESOLVED that the information, be noted.

INFORMATION REPORT

The following report was for information only and can be accessed through Northumberland County Council’s Web site. If a member of the Committee would like further explanation of the report, or has questions they wish to put to the relevant Policy Board Member, he/she should contact Democratic Services Section in order that appropriate arrangements can be made.
11. Policy Digest

The report gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report, be noted.

CHAIR

DATE
COUNCILLORS

Cairns, H.  
Campbell, D.  
Daley, W.  
Jones, G.W.

Jones, V.  
Lang, J.A.  
Sawyer, J.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Asquith, A.  
Jones, P.  
Maddison, C.  
Nicholson, S.  
Wilkinson, F.

Democratic Services Officer  
Head of Fleet and Waste Management  
Democratic Services Apprentice  
Scrutiny Officer  
Strategic & Urban Development Manager

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Cartie, E.

Chair of the Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture (Urban) Working Group

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T. Robson. Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor I.C.F. Swithenbank (Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment), A. Hepple (Policy Board Member for Planning, Housing and Regeneration), G. Castle (Chair of the Housing Working Group) and G. Webb (Chair of the Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture (Rural) Working Group.)
13. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 27 May 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

14. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of key decisions (June - September 2014). (Updated summary sheets were tabled at the meeting and enclosed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of Executive Key Decisions for the period June - September 2014, be noted.

**REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

15. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE**

*Kerbside Recycling Scheme*

The Committee were provided with an overview of the Council’s Kerbside Recycling Service, how it was currently performing and to highlight the key drivers for change that will need to be considered when reviewing the future direction of waste recycling activity. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Following on from the report, a number of comments and questions were raised, including:

- Members discussed the kerbside recycling services in operation in other Authorities and the different materials collected compared to Northumberland. The Committee were advised that the Council was already planning to undertake a review of its kerbside recycling service during 2014, including the options available for the collection of glass, in order to comply with the requirements of EU and UK law. The review would involve evaluating the technical, economic, environmental and practical options available for the separate collection of paper, metals, plastics and glass.

- It was confirmed that there were significant financial and legislative drivers to increase recycling performance. This included the potential to reduce the contractual payments made under the Waste PFI Contract, maximising income generation from sale of recyclables, and the risk of sharing the financial burden of meeting any EU fines, that could be passed on to local authorities by the Government, if the UK fails to meet its obligations to achieve a 50% recycling target by 2020.

- Members discussed the incentives used by other countries to influence the way people recycle and the potential benefit of introducing new schemes.

- Could the stickers used to inform the public of what to put in their recycling bins be looked at again and possibly for them to be reissued to keep reminding...
everyone of the instructions. It was confirmed that whilst there was already an active waste education and awareness raising programme in place, it was recognised that continual reinforcement of recycling messages and advice on what can and can’t be recycled was required to ensure the long term success of the recycling service.

- It was suggested that Council grass cutting machines could be fitted with a collecting box, which would help increase the recycling rates as this could be included within the green waste. However, it was highlighted that there are clear legislative definitions of what constitutes ‘Household Waste’ and that grass cuttings from the Council’s grounds maintenance activities could not be classified as household waste and would not therefore count towards the 50% EU recycling target.

- It was confirmed that garden waste collected for composting through the Council’s kerbside garden waste collection service and via Household Waste Recovery Centres would count towards the EU household waste recycling target. It was considered that the potential to meet the target by increasing the uptake of the garden waste collection service, and whether it was more financially attractive to the Council to offer a free collection service to boost uptake rather than risk incurring a proportion of any EU fine, should be considered during any review.

- The difficulties in introducing more materials into the collection service and balancing the effectiveness, financial and environmental advantages of any changes was discussed in detail. It was confirmed that plastic pots and tubs were not currently recycled by the Council as they were a mixture of different plastics for which there were very limited end markets in the UK and that these materials had no / very limited value at the present time.

- The need for the Authority to strive towards the 50% Government target as the financial consequences of not achieving could be great for the Council.

- Large supermarkets produce vast amounts of waste that cannot be recycled, over package items and still use unrecyclable carrier bags. Could the Council consider imposing a local supermarket levy?

- The need for the Council to be aware of the changing markets for products and adapt accordingly as they had done with the hard/rigid plastics collected at household Waste Recovery Centres. It was reported that after a drop in the market for hard/rigid plastics, the Council had resumed its collection of these items for recycling.

It was confirmed that compositional analysis work was being planned for 2014 to identify and quantify the amount and type of potentially recyclable materials that were present in general household waste bins. This information would be used to review the Council’s existing waste strategy and recycling arrangements and to develop an action plan to target specific materials and households in order to increase recycling performance. It was suggested that comments made today inform the review of the Strategy which would be considered by the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in due course.

Members were invited to visit the Energy from Waste Plant in Middlesbrough to see the work done at the plant and to better understand where and what becomes of Northumberland’s waste. It was confirmed that a site visit would be arranged and the invitation would include all Members.

RESOLVED that:-
(a) the report, be noted and

(b) comments made inform the review into the Waste Strategy and Recycling Arrangements which would be reported to the Committee, in due course.

16. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Development Management Performance report

Members of the committee had requested a report outlining the current position on speed of decision making on planning applications. This report detailed the performance indicators for 2013/14, the current position and also provided a summary of the changes which had been implemented to date and measure being put in place to deliver further improvements. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Committee was also provided with figures detailing the Development Management performance since 2009/10 (a copy of the document was tabled at the meeting and has been enclosed with the signed minutes).

The Committee was informed that overall performance on speed of decision making in all four categories continued to improve. Performance on major applications had improved slightly when compared to 2012/13 but was below target. Performance on ‘Minor’ applications had also improved compared to 2012/13, with more applications determined and more applications determined within target timescales, but performance remained below target.

Also performance on validating planning applications had seen a significant improvement during the year. Performance on householder applications had significantly improved and was above target. There had been an overall increase in the number of applications that had been determined and an increase in numbers of those determined within target timescales compared to 2012/13 period.

Members made a number of comments on the report, which included:-

- Disappointment that performance was still below targets set and improvements made since Local Government Reorganisation in 2009 had not been significant. It was reported that action had been taken by management to address performance issues and to date overall performance in the Service was improving along with an increase in the number of applications received. A number of changes have only recently been introduced and therefore the benefits were yet to be fully realised. However, the department were confident that performance should continue to improve over the forthcoming year. An Action Plan had also been drafted to help focus on improving the Service.
- A concern that the Council could potentially fall into the special measures category, if performance on major applications or minerals and waste applications was to reduce any lower. It was confirmed that Managers were confident that with the Action Plan in place and Service improvements
established the speed of decision making on these categories of planning applications would improve.

- Clarification was given regarding the number of applications deemed invalid and for at what point does a valid application activate the start of the timescale for determination.
- It was confirmed that resources, staff levels and levels of staffing expertise were being examined as part of the work that is being carried out by POSe for the Service.
- The visual management tool ‘Enterprise’ is being developed further to help the Service manage caseloads and performance in a proactive way.
- A suggestion was made for an independent review to be carried out as the Service was continuing to not meet targets. The Chairman suggested that the Committee allow the Service’s Action Plan to commence and review the situation in six months’ time, and noting the review that was being carried out of both Planning Committees and Development Management performance by External Audit and POSe.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the report and comments made, be noted.

(b) the Committee review progress made on speed of decision making on planning applications, in six months.

17. WORKING GROUP REPORTS

(Reports enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Committee received the following Working Group reports, and considered any formal recommendations contained therein:-

(a) Housing Working Group (Meetings of 11 February and 20 May 2014)
(b) Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture (Rural) Working Group (Meeting of 12 May 2014)
(c) Streetcare, Infrastructure and Culture (Urban) Working Group (Meetings of 5 March 2014 and 13 May 2014)

Following on from the reports a number of comments were raised, including:-

- In response to a query raised regarding tracking of reports and reporting back decisions. It was reported that a new system had been established to co-ordinate all those reports going through the decision making system in order to track the progress or otherwise. This would ensure Members and officers would know what stage reports were at and enable the reporting path for them to be defined.
- It was suggested that the Tree and Woodlands Strategy and the Street Lighting Modernisation Project both required more Member input and therefore should come to Scrutiny.
- Clarification of the income that could be generated with regard to the Tree and Woodlands Strategy was provided.
The Committee then discussed the problem of dog fouling and made a number of comments, including:

- Could there be more use of on the spot fines and cameras in the worst areas?
- Owners had to be caught in the act in order to be prosecuted.
- There was a need to continue to strive for a cultural change to make dog fouling socially unacceptable.
- There was a need to get the public on board to report offenders, who were often creatures of habit.
- Confirmation that discussions were ongoing to further improve the service including; more agile workforce, resources available from other services and the possibility of utilising staff already working in the locality.
- Traffic wardens now had powers to carry out fixed penalty notices.
- The Council needed to be proactive and publicise when culprits were caught and successfully fined.
- Why do dog wardens and other officers need to be in uniform when out on patrol?
- It was confirmed that a joint report from Local Services and Public protection was being drafted on this subject and would be brought before Members.

**RESOLVED** that the information reports and comments made, be noted.

**THEMED SCRUTINY**

18. The Committee received an update from the Vice-Chairman regarding progress made with the reviews (a copy of which has been enclosed with the signed minutes).

**RESOLVED** that the information, be received.

**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINITY OFFICER**

19. **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

Members considered the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (Work Programme enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

Members suggested the following issues for future consideration by this Committee or Themed Scrutiny:-

- Tree and Woodlands Strategy
- Street Lighting Modernisation Project
- Northumberland Advice Network
- Purchasing of small parcels of Council land
- Dog Fouling
RESOLVED that the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, be noted.

INFORMATION REPORT

*The following report was for information only and can be accessed through Northumberland County Council's Web site. If a member of the Committee would like further explanation of the report, or has questions they wish to put to the relevant Policy Board Member, he/she should contact Democratic Services Section in order that appropriate arrangements can be made.*

20. Policy Digest

The report gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report, be noted.

CHAIR

DATE
At the meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 22 July 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor B. Gallacher
(Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Jones, G.W. (part) Lang, J.A.
Jones, V.

POLICY BOARD MEMBER

Ledger, D.
Deputy Leader of the Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Asquith, A. Democratic Services Officer
Feige, D. County Ecologist
Maddison, C. Democratic Services Apprentice
Nicholson, S. Scrutiny Officer
Soderquest, P. Acting Head of Public Protection

One member of the public was also in attendance.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Campbell, H. Cairns, W. Daley, T. Robson and J. Sawyer. An apology for absence was also received from Councillor I.C.F. Switchenbank (Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment).
22. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 24 June 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

23. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members were advised of the latest published Forward Plan of key decisions (July to October). (Updated summary sheets were tabled at the meeting and enclosed with the signed minutes).

**RESOLVED** that the Forward Plan of Executive Key Decisions for the period July – October 2014, be noted.

**REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY POLICY BOARD**

24. **REPORT OF THE ACTING HEAD OF PUBLIC PROTECTION**

Food Service Plan 2014/15

The purpose of the report was to present to the Policy Board, for its consideration, the Food and Feed Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2014/15, together with a letter received from the Food Standards Agency in response to the completion of the service improvement plan that followed an audit in October 2012. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Following on from the report a number of comments were made, which included:-

- Confirmation that inspections were up to date and continued to be implemented through the programme set.
- There was not a dedicated sampling officer but the programme was maintained by the Port Health Officer and their time and resource to this post was managed accordingly.
- The Service could look into ways to further improve and update the food service pages on the Council’s website to make it easier for members of the public to get in touch with the Team.

The Committee congratulated the Team on the high level of progress made to comply and fully implement the Service Plan, the move towards good practice and the excellent comments made by the auditors on their visit.

**RESOLVED** to recommend that **Policy Board**:-

(a) consider and approve the Food and Feed Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2014/15, and  
(b) consider and note the content of the letter from the Food Standards Agency.
25. REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND HOUSING

(a) Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-19

A new five year Management Plan had been prepared for the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for 2014-19. The purpose of this report was to introduce the Plan and recommend that it was adopted by the Council. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Members discussed the Northumberland visitors’ guide that was produced to promote areas of the county and commented on other beautiful areas of the county that were not shown within the document. It was suggested that areas, particularly in the south east of the county, should be promoted better and should be included within the guide. A suggestion was also made for Members to receive a briefing on both the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to further understand the areas designated and the overall criteria to becoming an AONB. It was confirmed that an item would be placed on the Committee’s Work Programme for consideration at a future meeting.

RESOLVED to recommend that Policy Board adopt the draft Management Plan by Northumberland County Council as the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan for 2014-19.

(b) North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-19

A new five year Management Plan has been prepared for the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for 2014-19. The purpose of this report was to introduce the Plan and recommend that it was adopted by the Council. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

RESOLVED to recommend that Policy Board adopt the draft Management Plan by Northumberland County Council as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan for 2014-19.

THEMED SCRUTINY

26. The Committee received an update from the Vice-Chairman regarding progress made with the reviews (a copy of which has been enclosed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the information, be received.
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

27. Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members considered the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (Work Programme enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

RESOLVED that the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, be noted.

INFORMATION REPORT

The following report was for information only and can be accessed through Northumberland County Council’s Web site. If a member of the Committee would like further explanation of the report, or has questions they wish to put to the relevant Policy Board Member, he/she should contact Democratic Services Section in order that appropriate arrangements can be made.

28. Policy Digest

The report gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members.

RESOLVED that the report, be noted.

CHAIR

DATE
1. **Membership and Terms of Reference**

The membership, terms of reference and appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee, as agreed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council on 7 May 2014 were reported as follows:

**8 members (3:3:1:1)(1 Lab place to Ind)**

G. Castle  
P.A.M. Dale (Chairman)  
A. Hepple
Terms of Reference:

- To advise on the adequacy and effectiveness of the authority’s risk management arrangements, the control environment, corporate governance and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.

- Seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors. This may require the attendance of the responsible individual at the meeting.

- Be satisfied that the authority’s assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it.

- Provide an annual assurance to the County Council that its systems of governance are operating effectively through approval of the Annual Governance Statement.

- Approve (but not direct) internal audit’s terms of reference, strategy & plan, and monitor the performance of the function, ensuring compliance with best practice and an appropriate level of resourcing.

- Advise on the nature and scope of the external audit of the Council’s services and functions, the external audit fee, and the terms of engagement.

- Review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary.

- Receive the annual report of the Chief Internal Auditor, assessing the adequacy of the internal control environment.

- Consider and advise upon all significant reports of external audit.

- Consider and advise upon on any significant reports of inspection agencies where these have not been referred to a more relevant Scrutiny Committee.

- Ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies, and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.

- Review the financial statements, external auditor’s opinion and reports to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised and
recommendations made by internal and external audit, and other inspection agencies.

The Chief Internal Auditor has the right of independent access to the Committee and its Chair. The Committee has the right to require the attendance of any Council officers or members in order to respond directly to any issue under consideration.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Wallace and J.G. Watson and the Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 26 March 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. Disclosure of Members Interests

Councillor T. Reid disclosed a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any discussion which related to his position as the Chair of the Pension Fund Panel. He also disclosed a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any discussion which related to his position as a member of the Northumberland Pension Fund Panel.

Councillor A. Hepple disclosed a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any discussion which related to his position as a member of the Northumberland Pension Fund Panel.

REPORTS OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR

5. Northumberland County Council – Report to the Audit Committee on the 2013/14 Audit – Planning Report

A report was submitted which contained details of the External Auditor’s proposed audit plan for Northumberland County Council for the year ended 31 March 2014. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

Mr. P. Thomson and Ms D Wright of Deloittes, outlined the contents of the plan, including: the scope of work and approach to be adopted; the key audit risks; communication schedule; the value for money conclusion; and the changes in the code of practice on Local Authority accounting requirements and how this impacted on the Council.

The following issues were raised:

- Frequency of land and property valuations. It was suggested that more regular and broader valuations be carried out due to significant movements year on year. The approach and methodology of valuations was reviewed by the
External Auditor’s specialist valuer on a sample basis. It was noted that a revised asset management strategy had been approved.

- The review of papers for the value for money conclusion to include minutes of Senior Management Team meetings (page 22).
- The criteria for circumstances which would lead to a qualified value for money opinion.
- The review of planning processes in response to concerns regarding the number and costs of appeals. It was agreed that the chairs and members of the planning committees be notified of the review and the impact on the Council’s budgets.

In answer to a query, Mr. Thomson agreed to provide clarification regarding donations within grant income.

RESOLVED that the report be received.


A report was provided by Deloitte’s which set out the proposed audit scope for the Northumberland County Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2014. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B.)

Mr. P. Thomson of Deloitte’s confirmed that in accordance with regulations and guidance issued by the Audit Commission, the Pension Fund was treated as a separate reporting entity, with a separate audit plan and report. The plan had been reported to the Pension Fund Panel on 23 May 2014 and was also reported to the Audit Committee for completeness. The report set out the approach of the audit and identified the significant audit risks which related to: the calculation of contributions and benefits, valuation of investments and management override of controls.

Members discussed:

- The issue of ethical investments and concerns regarding investments in internet short term loan companies. Mr. Thomson agreed to incorporate within the audit the operation and controls in place to identify ethical investments and how this was communicated to investment managers.
- The selection of transactions to be tested. It was confirmed that the auditors varied the criteria regarding the selection of samples and that testing was not restricted to outliers.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

REPORTS OF THE LEAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – CORPORATE RESOURCES

7. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
The Head of Corporate Services gave a detailed presentation to explain the purpose and background of the Annual Governance Statement. (A copy of the presentation and report is attached to the minutes as Appendix C.)

The Head of Corporate Services explained that the statement had been updated to reflect the changes that had occurred throughout the year, including the abolition of the Constitution Working Group, changes to the organisation structure and personnel. The committee received an update on the governance issues that had arisen in the current and previous years.

The Audit Committee discussed the draft Annual Governance Statement, when the following issues were highlighted and a number of changes were suggested, including:

- The wording of the second paragraph on page 4 of the statement be amended to clarify the mechanism for monitoring of performance measures since the abolition of Performance Management Working Group and reference be included to benchmarking with similar local authorities.
- Page 15 Monitoring of section 106 agreements had improved from no assurance to limited assurance after a follow-up audit. Reservations were expressed regarding the transparency of agreements and it was requested that this issue remained open until the transparency arrangements were in place.
- Page 8 Engagement with stakeholders to be reviewed.
- Page 11 Deputy Section 151 arrangement to be included here
- Concern was expressed regarding the number of schools requesting licensed deficits. The financial position of one or two had worsened and discussions would be held with senior officers regarding whether additional financial controls were required by the Council.
- A reference be included on the Local Development Framework.
- Appropriate wording be provided by the External Auditor following their review of IT security reported at the previous meeting.
- An update be provided to Members regarding the dispute with SITA.
- Governance arrangements of the Arch Group. Reference was made to the joint review undertaken by External Audit and Internal Audit during the previous year and the recommendations made to strengthen existing arrangements.
- Clarification to be sought as to whether the Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources had filled the vacancy left by the resignation of the former Chief Executive on the Arch Board.
- Reword paragraph “Since 2009….” on page 3.
- The Chair suggested that the draft statement was circulated to the Chairs of the scrutiny committees.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Government Statement be approved, subject to the above amendments, prior to its inclusion within the financial statements for 2013-2014.
8. **2013/14 Opinion on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of the Framework of Governance, Risk Management and Control**

The purpose of the report was to provide an opinion from the Chief Internal Auditor on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control, taking into account, the expectations of the Senior Management Team, Audit Committee and key stakeholders. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Chief Internal Auditor highlighted areas of the report which had contributed to the 'satisfactory' opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control for the organisation. 56% of audit opinions of investigations undertaken by Internal Audit during 2013/14 had been classified as providing 'significant assurance' or higher. It was confirmed that this included the reports listed as pending. There had been no 'no assurance' reports issued. A number of areas were identified where controls could be strengthened further.

The Committee discussed:

- The implementation and use of an additional 'moderate' assurance level included within the framework of classifications. Opinions differed as to whether it would be helpful and it was agreed that use of the new category be kept under review.
- The improvement in the feedback received from clients which had improved significantly when compared to results a number of years ago.

**RESOLVED** that

1. The Chief Internal Auditor's 2013/14 'satisfactory' opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control, attached as Appendix 1, be noted.

2. The opinion be considered by the organisation when preparing the Annual Governance Statement for the period; and by the Audit Committee, as a source of assurance when the Annual Governance Statement is considered.

8. **Key Outcomes from Internal Audit Assignments (October 2013 - March 2014)**

The report summarised the outcomes of Internal Audit reports, finalised in consultation with management, and issued during the period October 2013 - March 2014. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B.)

The Chief Internal Auditor drew Members’ attention to the issues identified within the audit of Information Services Strategy and Expenditure Streams. The findings had been of concern given that the use of information technology underpinned all activities of the Council.

In answer to a question, the Group Assurance Manager agreed to verify the arrangements / level for managing risk.
RESOLVED that, as part of the Audit Committee’s on-going consideration of governance and control issues within the Council, the contents of the report be noted.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

9. Strategic Audit Plan 2013/14: Final Monitoring Statement

A report was submitted to provide the final monitoring statement of the Strategic Audit Plan for 2013/4. The statement reviewed progress achieved in each audit areas, key objectives and performance against the plan. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix F).

It was reported that the Internal Audit team had achieved 99.14% of productive audit days planned. Adjustments to the plan had been made to allow for ad-hoc requests, additional time for complex audits and changes to service priorities and levels of risk. Time previously spent supporting the work of the Anti-Fraud Consultant would now be carried out by the new Anti-Fraud Team.

In answer to questions, the Chief Internal Auditor confirmed that:

- Following the changes to staffing levels, the team was adequately resourced to meet the requirements of the Accounting and Audit Regulations 2011 to ensure that high priority areas were audited and that there were schemes of governance and controls in place. Review of audit practices had been carried out and different ways of working adopted including the continuous auditing of systems used in the ‘Procure to Pay’ audit were to be rolled out to other systems to identify unusual activity.
- The shared service with North Tyneside Council had allowed resources to be shared between the authorities where there was under-resource in one area, and to share specialist expertise.
- An exercise was to be carried out on petty cash and would be reported in due course.

RESOLVED that the information set out in the Final Monitoring Statement of the Strategic Audit Plan for 2013/14, be noted.

10. Corporate Fraud Team – Update of Fraud Related Policies

The report Audit Committee was requested to approve changes to the Anti-Money Laundering Policy, Whistle-Blowing Policy and Code of Conduct for Investigators which had been updated following the establishment of the new Corporate Fraud Team and changes to the Council’s management structure. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C.)

Members discussed the sections of the policies highlighted below and requested amendments to the wording of the following sections where stated:

Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Page 18 1st paragraph under ‘Failure to report money laundering offences’. Clarification was sought regarding the meaning and interpretation. It was suggested that it could be improved by removal of ‘(even if you did not actually
know or suspect)’ and add ‘or should have known or suspected’ (due to the role and duties of the employee).

- Emphasise the conclusion earlier in the document that an individual with any doubts should always consult an appropriate officer.

Whistle-Blowing Policy
The Chair reported that a list of reports was now kept by the Monitoring Officer in order to respond to freedom of information requests.

- Page 3, paragraph 12 – It was suggested that there should be an internal contact for concerns regarding all service providers. Individuals may not know the most appropriate person to contact.

- Page 3, paragraph 17 – It was suggested that the wording of the paragraph be amended. Whilst the Council wished to maintain confidentiality, and not discourage dissuade reports of incidents under the policy, there was no guarantee that the identity of individuals could be protected in every case as the Public Disclosure Act did not guarantee anonymity but required that the Council protect the individual from adverse consequences.

Code of Conduct for Investigators
- Page 3, paragraph 38 – The Committee discussed the procedures to be followed when interviews or discussions were to be recorded. It was agreed that where a recording of a conversation or of an interview is made, there would be a presumption that this recording will be made overtly (rather than covertly) so that those involved in the conversation / interview were aware that this was being recorded. The Committee requested that paragraph 38 be amended to reflect this.

RESOLVED that the Audit Committee endorse the following updated policies with amendments as specified above:

1. Anti-Money Laundering Policy
2. Whistle-Blowing Policy
3. Code of Conduct for Investigators
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD

At a meeting of the Health and Well-being Board held at Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 13th March, 2014 at 10:00 a.m..

PRESENT

S Dickinson(Chair), GR Arckless, G Davey, SE Dungworth, V Jones, K Bailey, A Blair, D Brown, R Cornall, D Lally, J Rose, J Ross, C Wild (Substitute)

OFFICERS

P Allen
Scrutiny Officer

J Bowie
Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning

L Little
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

B Ledger - Chief Executive (BVAL)
Public: 2

55. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor L Rickerby, C Atkin and J Mackey.

56. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014, as circulated, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

57. A Strategic Approach to Physical Activity in Northumberland

Councillor Susan Dungworth introduced the report and a presentation was provided by Bruce Ledger, the Chief Executive of Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure (copy filed with signed minutes). The Board were asked to consider and agree the vision and early priorities set out in the report to enable the development of a new Physical Activity Strategic Plan. It was acknowledged that a partnership approach was required to increase physical activity levels in Northumberland across the County Council, health providers and delivery partners. The barriers to accessing physical activity i.e. geographical spread, poor transport links etc. were highlighted however it was stressed that physical activity included cycling, gardening, walking which could be done locally and did not always require the use of a sporting facility. People’s lifestyles including employment, disability and time of life could all be factors in them not partaking in physical activity and Board Members were asked to consider their own levels of physical activity.

It was clarified that prior to reorganisation of Local Government, the active
people survey would have included data from 500 people from each District within the County however it now only used data from 500 people from across the whole of Northumberland. Other options to gather data included an expanded Residents Perception Survey to include a section on physical activity and it was also thought that information on physical activity collected in respect of patients with chronic diseases might be able available.

RESOLVED that:

1. the development of a new strategic plan for physical activity that aims to support communities in Northumberland to become more active, more often, making physical activity the easy choice be endorsed;
2. reducing levels of physical inactivity in Northumberland (those taking part in less than 30 minutes of activity per week) to help address health inequalities and achieve the greatest health gains be prioritised;
3. the commissioning of a new lifestyle survey to gain an in-depth understanding of physical inactivity and the barriers to leading an active and healthy lifestyle by communities in Northumberland funded from existing budgets be endorsed; and
4. regular reports on these issues be received by the Board.

58. Health and Wellbeing Board : Work Programme

In discussing the work programme it was agreed that the meeting scheduled for 10 April be cancelled and that items for discussion at the meeting on 15 May would include:

Autism Strategy (Winterbourne Plans)
Health and Social Care Plan
Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy Update
LGA Toolkit

The Leader of the Council requested that the Board at some point in the future receive a report on the effect on people working beyond the previous retirement age of 65. It was possible this could be investigated through Themed Scrutiny. It was suggested that the topic be broadened to include sickness levels, life expectancy and lack of social inclusion after retirement.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

59. Consultations

No consultations were reported.

60. Exclusion of Press and Public

The Chair stated that discussion of the following item could allow the identification of individuals due to the low numbers involved and it was
therefore

RESOLVED

(a) that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the Agenda as they involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of the Schedule 12(A) of the 1972 Act, and

(b) that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item 6 - Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A - information which would likely reveal the identity of an individual.

61. Specialised Commissioning - LD/ASD Patient Update (Winterbourne)

A private and confidential briefing note had been circulated prior to the meeting which provided details of patients (who had a learning disability and/or autism) that were recorded as the responsibility of Northumberland CCG as at 24 February 2014 (copy filed with the signed minutes). The pathway plans for these patients were managed by the mental health case manager within the specialised commissioning team. A formal multi-disciplinary review was undertaken in respect of each patient every six months. Additional information would be included in the Autism Strategy and Update on Winterbourne Plans to be considered at the next meeting of the Board.

A broader discussion took place in respect of the impact on mental health of welfare reforms and poverty; withdrawal of legal aid and length of time spent at bail hostels prior to appearance at Court; children remanded into care and the subsequent effects on families.

An update was requested to be provided to the Board in six months with clarification to be provided in respect of the additional patient with an unresolved CCG issue.

RESOLVED that:

1. the information be noted; and
2. a further update be provided to the Board in six months.

62. Next Meeting

The meeting scheduled for 10 April 2014 was cancelled therefore the next meeting would take place in May 2014.

CHAIR
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD

At the Annual Meeting of the Health and Well-being Board held Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 8 May 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor S.J. Dickinson
(Chairman, in the Chair)

BOARD MEMBERS

Arckless, G.R.                      Jones, V.
Bailey, K.                        Lally, D.
Blair, A.                       Mackey, J.
Brown, D.                        O’Hare, G.
Cornall, R.                  Prudhoe, L. (substitute for C. Atkin)
Davey, J.G.                   Rickerby, L.J.
Dungworth, S.                   Ross, J.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bowie, J.                  Head of Safeguarding and Strategic
                          Commissioning
Allen, D.P.                  Scrutiny Officer (observer)
Asquith, A.                  Democratic Services Officer

A member of the public was also in attendance

1. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The membership and terms of reference of the Board for 2014/15 was agreed at the County Council meeting on 7 May 2014, as follows:-

16 members

Chair – S.J. Dickinson

Vice Chair – C. Atkin (Healthwatch representative)

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Leader of the Council
Policy Board Member – Adult Care and Public Health
Policy Board Member – Children Services
Labour Group representative
One Conservative Group representative
One LD Group representative

Executive Director of Wellbeing and Community Health
Other officer representation as appropriate

Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group representative
Healthwatch representative
NHS Commissioning Board representative
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust Chief Executive
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive
Northumberland Local Medical Committee Chair

Terms of reference

To transform the way health and social care services are commissioned and provided to promote integration, improve the Health and Well Being of the population of Northumberland and reduce health inequalities.

a. To set out the strategic vision for health and wellbeing for Northumberland to provide a shared sense of direction for constituent organisations of the board.

b. To promote a shared transformational culture and set of key principles, across constituent organisations of the board, to drive positive change.

c. To improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Northumberland and increase the emphasis on early intervention and primary prevention.

d. To improve democratic accountability for health and wellbeing decision making.

e. To ensure that constituent organisations of the board, and other partner agencies, are cognisant of the role they play in promoting the health and wellbeing of the population and are able to maximise their contribution to this agenda.

f. To ensure the engagement of the public in determining needs and service commissioning.

g. To undertake regular reviews of the Board’s activity to ensure that it is achieving what it is setting out to do.

Statutory functions

a. To encourage all health and social care organisations which operate within Northumberland to work together in an integrated manner.
b. To provide all appropriate advice, assistance and support to encourage the development of formal partnership arrangements between social care and health services, making use of the powers provided by Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006.

c. To oversee the production of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Northumberland, covering all needs which either fall within the responsibilities of health commissioners, but could alternatively be met or significantly affected by local authority functions or vice versa.

d. To produce a joint health and wellbeing strategy (JHWBS) for Northumberland, on behalf of the Council and Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group.

e. To ensure that Healthwatch Northumberland and the people who live and work in Northumberland are involved in the production of the JSNA and the JHWBS.

Additional functions delegated by Council

f. To monitor performance against designated health and wellbeing outcomes as detailed in the Health & Well Being Strategy

g. To advise the Council and health commissioners on steps that they could take to reduce health inequalities within Northumberland and between Northumberland and England as a whole

h. To promote broader integration and partnership working between the NHS, social care, public health and other local services

i. Any other functions that may be delegated by the Council under section 196 (2) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

RESOLVED that the information, be noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from C. Atkin, Vice-Chairman of the Board.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Well-being Board held on Thursday, 13 March 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
4. **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS**

Councillor V. Jones disclosed a non registerable personal interest in item 5 on the agenda (Northumberland Autism Strategy and Winterbourne View Update) as she had a family interest in the subject.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

5. **NORTHUMBERLAND AUTISM STRATEGY AND WINTERBOURNE VIEW UPDATE**

The report outlined how key partners worked together to meet the needs of people with autism in Northumberland; proposals for an Autism Strategy, its policy background, main themes and monitoring arrangements; and updated the Board on the county’s response to events at Winterbourne View. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

With regard to the NTW Trust e-learning it was confirmed that a revision on the statistics recorded on the percentage of mandatory training completion figures would be provided to the Board.

In response to a question raised about the involvement of Children’s Services it was confirmed that the way in which the strategic links had been detailed within the Action Plan would be reviewed in order to ensure this work was summarised correctly.

A member raised a query regarding the link within the Action Plan to engage the criminal justice system with training and whether this included magistrates. It was also queried whether training within the employment agencies was included. It was confirmed that officers would add these groups to the Training Strategy (if already not included) to help further increase the knowledge of autism, related skills and diagnostic capacity within services.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- the Autism Strategy Development Group Action Plan to meet the needs of people with autism in Northumberland (Appendix 1), be noted;
- the proposal to use this work as the basis for a Northumberland Autism Strategy (paragraph 4), be noted;
- the Northumberland Autism Strategy and an update on progress with the Autism Strategy Development Action Plan in April 2015, be received, and
- the action planned in Northumberland in response to the issues raised by the scandal at Winterbourne View (Appendix 2), be noted.

6. **HEALTH AND WELLBEING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT TOOL NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL SELF ASSESSMENT – APRIL 2014**

Members received a report evaluating the Northumberland Health and Well-being Board’s position at the end of its first year. The Assessment had been completed
against the Local Government Association maturity model, measuring against characteristics of a 'young' HWB against six dimensions for an effective partnership. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B). A powerpoint presentation was also provided and has been enclosed with the signed minutes.

The Chairman believed that a more informal setting was needed to consider this self-assessment and for Board Members to discuss their views on the subject. It was also believed that this would be a good opportunity for Members to meet each other and share their views and ideas for how all partners in Northumberland could work better together to help improve the health and well-being of local people. Therefore, it was proposed that an informal development event on this subject to gather views on how Members had perceived the position of the Board at the end of its first year, discuss areas of progress and those still to be approved upon and plan the strategic approach going forward, be organised.

RESOLVED that a Development Event be arranged on the rising of the Board’s scheduled meeting on Thursday, 12 June 2014.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD – WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered the Health and Well-being Board’s Work Programme. A copy of the Work Programme was enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

It was proposed that the workshop event on 12 June 2014 be used to populate the Board’s Work Programme for forthcoming meetings.

In the meantime, a number of reports were agreed as discussion items for future meetings as follows:-

12 June 2014 Meeting - Health and Social Care Plan.


RESOLVED that the information, be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman advised members that due to the possible discussion of sensitive information regarding recent consultations on Pharmacy Licensing Applications the Board should move into private session. Therefore, the appropriate resolution would need to be passed to exclude the press and public for the item.

RESOLVED:-

(a) That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the
following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and

(b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)</td>
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The public interest in seeking this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because of the consequences for the Authority and others if the information should come into the public domain.

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

8. CONSULTATIONS

Members were informed of events that had followed on from a number of recent consultation documents being received by the Board.

The Chairman agreed to follow up the concerns raised regarding clarity of roles between Scrutiny and the Board.

RESOLVED that the information, be noted.

Following on from the update received the Board returned to public session.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 12 June 2014 followed by a Board Development Workshop.

CHAIR

DATE
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD

At a meeting of the Health and Well-being Board held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 12 June 2014 at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor S.J. Dickinson
(Chairman, in the Chair)

BOARD MEMBERS

Arckless, G.R.  Jones, V.
Atkin, C.  Lally, D.
Bailey, K.  O’Hare, G.
Blair, A.  Rickerby, L.J.
Cornall, R.  Riley, C. (substitute for J. Mackey)
Davey, J.G.  Ross, J.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bowie, J.  Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Commissioning
Rose, J.  Policy and Research Manager
Asquith, A.  Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Brown, S.  Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group
Nisbet, K.  County Councillor

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from D. Brown, S. Dungworth, and J. Mackey.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Health and Well-being Board held on Thursday, 8 May 2014, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

12. REPORT OF THE DRAFT NORTHUMBERLAND HEALTH AND CARE FIVE YEAR PLAN TO 2018/19 FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD DISCUSSION AND SIGN OFF

The report informed the Health and Well-being Board of the direction of travel for the five year Northumberland draft health and care plan and requested feedback and sign off. The submission date for the draft plan was 20 June 2014; with a final version due in the autumn of 2014 – date yet to be confirmed. (Report enclosed with the minutes as Appendix A). The Board also received a powerpoint presentation by S. Brown, Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (a copy of which has also been enclosed with the minutes of the Board).

It was reported that the five year health and care plan would provide a roadmap for the health and care system in Northumberland to 2018/19. While each organisation within the system was supporting the development of the plan, it was noted that each organisation remained responsible for delivery to its own accountable leadership. The plan was being developed with the buy in of health and care professionals, the public, patients and service users. It was supported by a wide engagement exercise and would be tested by an expert testing panel made up of service users, carers, professional and chaired by Councillor Dickinson.

Following on from the detailed presentation a number of comments were made, including:-

- Welcomed the focus on continuity of care, more localised community based services and access to primary care.
- An acknowledgement of the health predictions and the forecast regarding the increase in population predicted to have dementia by 2018/19.
- The link with a named GP was becoming weaker in some areas of the county.
- The diagnosis of patients’ needed to be quicker especially with regard to dementia.
- There needed to be a link between planning objectives and the expectations on delivery of contracts to fulfil the vision of the Plan. The Plan needed to recognise the financial context in order to deliver effective services that offered best value for money.
- Prevention along with social inclusion needed to be included within the Plan.
- Appreciated the proposal to include leisure, housing and transport within the Plan.
- The need to continue to have good communications with other services.

RESOLVED that comments made and the approach the Northumberland Health and Care system is taking to the development and content of the five year plan, be noted and agreed.
13. **NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, 10 July 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

CHAIR

DATE

COUNCIL
Date: 3 September 2014


Report of the Lead Executive Director – Corporate Resources

Policy Board Member: Councillor Grant Davey – Leader of the Council

Purpose of report
To consider the supplementary report of the Independent Remuneration Panel of August 2014, and to decide if its recommendations should be adopted.

Recommendations
Council is invited to consider the report and decide if its recommendations should be adopted.

Key issues
1. All councils are required to convene their Independent Remuneration Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their allowances scheme. They must ‘pay regard’ to the Panel’s recommendations before setting a new or amended Members’ Allowances Scheme.

2. A virtual Panel was convened in August 2014 for the purpose of considering the position of the Chairman of the newly established Leisure, Tourism and Arts Policy Board Working Group given the comments made by the Panel in their last full report of 2013 regarding the express limit specified in that report as to the number of Special Responsibility Allowances to be paid in respect of Chairs of Working Groups as referred to at paragraph 2 of the attached supplementary report. Its recommendations have been advertised in the local press.

3. The Panel recommended the following, namely that:
   - The Northumberland County Council Members’ Allowances scheme is amended to discontinue provision for the payment of an SRA (£1,350) to the Chair of the Constitution Council Working Group.
• The Chair of the a Leisure, Tourism and Arts Policy Board Working Group should receive an SRA of £4,005, backdated to the when the Chair was appointed but no further back than the date of the 2014 AM on 7 May 2014.

**Background**

The legislative framework and the proceedings of the Northumberland Panel are summarised in the Panel’s report at Appendix A.

**Implications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance and value for money</td>
<td>The Panel’s recommendations represent a marginal increase in the spend on members’ allowances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
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<td>Procurement</td>
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<td>Risk Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer Consideration</td>
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<td>Carbon reduction</td>
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<td>Wards</td>
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**Background papers:**

The Supplementary Report of the Northumberland County Council Independent Remuneration Panel – August 2014
Guidance on members’ allowances for local authorities in England – Communities and Local Government

**Report sign off.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Finance Officer</td>
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<td>Monitoring Officer/Legal</td>
<td>LH</td>
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<td>SF</td>
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<tr>
<td>I.T.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>SM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio Holder(s)</td>
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**Author and Contact Details**

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Tel 01670 623324 Email liam.henry@northumberland.gov.uk
A Review of Remuneration

For the

Chair of the Leisure, Tourism and Arts Policy Board Working Group

Northumberland County Council

A Supplementary Report

By the

Independent Remuneration Panel

August 2014

Terms of Reference: Leisure, Tourism & Arts Policy Board Working Group Chair

1. The Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel) for Northumberland County Council has been asked to consider the appropriateness of paying a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to the Chair of the newly established Leisure, Tourism & Arts Policy Board Working Group (or LTA WG) and if so, at what level should such an SRA be paid?

Regulatory Context

2. In its previous major review of allowances conducted over the summer of 2013 the Panel recommended (and the Council accepted) that until the Panel had an opportunity to review the work of the Working Groups in light of experience that:

"... the only SRAs paid to the Chairs of Working Groups are those specified in this review."\(^1\)

3. As the Council is seeking to add another WG Chair to its SRA schedule it is an amendment to the Councils' Members' Allowances scheme and the Council is required to seek independent advice from the Panel in accordance with Regulation 19.1., The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) (the 2003 Regulations). The Council is required to pay regard to the advice of the Panel before it makes a decision on the appropriateness of an SRA for the Chair of the Leisure, Tourism and Arts Policy Board WG. This requirement ensures that the Council will be making any decision for an SRA for the Chair of the LTA WG in an open and transparent manner.

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\(^1\) The eighth report by the Northumberland County Council Independent Remuneration Panel, September 2013, paragraph 131.
The Panel and Process

4. As the Panel is being asked to consider a minor amendment to the allowances scheme it met as a “virtual” Panel. This approach is within the spirit of the 2003 Regulations in that it is appropriate for the Panel to consider the evidence and agree its recommendations via electronic means where clarification and minor amendments are being sought that in turn do not result in significant changes to the Members’ Allowances scheme. To formally convene the Panel would not be an efficient use of Council resources as it would impose a disproportionate cost on the Council relative to the outcome required. Therefore the most pragmatic approach is the ‘virtual’ one.

5. All Panel Members were sent the relevant information regarding the remit of the LTA WG and why it was set up, with further information provided on request by Liam Henry (Legal Services Manager - the Officer responsible for Members’ Allowances) via email. The Chair took the lead on writing of the first draft of the report for comment and further amendment by other Panel members, only when the Panel agreed on the final recommendations was the report submitted to the Council for decision.

The work of the Leisure, Tourism & Arts Policy Board Working Group

6. At the 2014 Annual Meeting (AM) of the Council on 7 May 2014 the Council agreed to discontinue the Constitution Council Working Group and set up a sixth Policy Board Working Group for Leisure, Tourism and Arts. The terms of reference of the LTA WG are:

Functions and Purpose:
- To consider and make recommendations to Policy Board on:
  - The transition of the Council’s leisure facilities to the arms-length company.
  - The transition of leisure facilities returning to the Council from other providers.
  - How leisure provision is managed and operated to ensure delivery of the Council’s objectives.
  - Developing tourism in Northumberland to provide economic benefit to Northumberland residents and businesses.
  - The Council’s overall delivery of artistic culture.

7. The driver in establishing the new LTA WG is that the Council are currently looking to rationalise all of its leisure services including leisure centres under the one Council sponsored Council leisure organisation in order to deliver a better, more consistent and cost effective leisure service.
The Panel’s Recommendations

8. The Northumberland County Council Panel have unanimously agreed that at this stage the Chair of the LTA WG should be paid an SRA on par with that paid to the Chairs of the other Policy Board Working Groups, principally on two grounds:

- There is a clear *prima facia* requirement to establish a Leisure, Tourism and Arts Policy Board Working Group to help deliver the council’s policy objectives in this area and in particular ensure a smooth transition of the Council’s leisure facilities to an arms-length company.
- The workload and responsibility of the Chair of the LTA WG will not be materially different from that of other Policy Board WG Chairs, and to not recommend an SRA would simply be illogical and inequitable.

9. By remunerating the LTA WG Chair there will be no 'additional' SRAs paid (total number payable remains at 46+3) as the Constitution WG has been discontinued, with a savings of £1,350. The recommended SRA (£4,005) for the Chair of the LTA WG results in a marginal increase on spend on SRAs of £2,655, or just over 0.2% of the total annual spend on members’ allowances. The Panel will have the opportunity in due course to evaluate the (relatively) new allowances model in the round and in particular the SRAs for the Chairs of all the Working Groups; to assess whether experience of the new structures (since last summer) has met the expectations and the current Members' Allowances scheme is fit for purpose.

10. The Panel recommends that

- The Northumberland County Council Members' Allowances scheme is amended to discontinue provision for the payment of an SRA (£1,350) to the Chair of the Constitution Council Working.
- The Chair of the a Leisure, Tourism and Arts Policy Board Working Group should receive an SRA of £4,005, backdated to the when the Chair was appointed but no further back than the date of the 2014 AM on 7 May 2014.

   Shelly Allsopp  
   Craig Moore  
   Declan Hall PhD (Chair)  
   Richard Waters  

   Northumberland County Council Independent Remuneration Panel
Community Governance Reviews – Togston Parish Council and Horncliffe Parish Council

COUNCIL
Date: 3 September 2014

Purpose of report
To consider the outcome of Community Governance Reviews in the County.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Council

(1) agrees the outcome of the Community Governance Reviews for Togston Parish Council and Horncliffe Parish Council

(2) authorises the Democratic Services Manager to make, sign and seal the appropriate orders for the changes by virtue of the powers contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act.

Link to Corporate Plan
This report is relevant to the Stronger Communities and Families priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2013-2017.

Key issues
1. Two Community Governance Reviews have been conducted recently.

   Togston Parish Council

2. The Parish of Togston currently has 10 members and an electorate of 252. The Parish Council wishes to reduce the number of Parish Councillors from 10 to 7 and
has asked Northumberland County Council to carry out a Community Governance Review with the following terms of reference:-

‘To consider the electoral arrangements of Togston Parish Council with a view to reducing the number of Councillors from 10 to 7.’

3. Press releases were issued, notices displayed in the parish, and the ward councillor consulted. No objections have been received. Council is, therefore, requested to agree to the reduction in the number of Parish Councillors on Togston Parish Council.

Horncliffe Parish Council

4. The residents of Horncliffe Mill requested that the boundary between Norham and Horncliffe Parish Councils be amended. A plan is attached Appendix 1. This would enable their property to be returned to within the boundaries of Horncliffe Parish with which it has close links historically. Horncliffe Parish Council, therefore, asked Northumberland County Council to carry out a community governance review. The terms of reference of the review were as follows:-

‘To consider a review of the boundary between Horncliffe and Norham Parish Councils with a view to moving Horncliffe Mill from Norham Parish into Horncliffe Parish Council.’

5. A press release was issued, notices displayed in the parish, and the ward councillor consulted. No objections have been received. Council is, therefore, requested to agree to the amendment to the boundary between Horncliffe and Norham Parish Boundaries.

Background

1. Councils now have extensive powers delegated to them in relation to the creation of parishes, modification of boundaries and names changes by virtue of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. At the request of parish councils, the public or even on their own initiative they may conduct Community Governance Reviews. The aim of reviews is to improve the local governance in an area. The process is managed by principal councils with outcomes incorporated into formal orders.

2. Delegated powers have been granted to the Democratic Services Manager to conduct reviews subject to full council reserving the power to agree any formal orders arising out of reviews.

Implications

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None. There were no additional costs incurred in the community governance review other than officer time.

All the work can be carried out by existing employees who possess the necessary skill and expertise.

The items raised pose a minimal risk to the organisation.

The proposals should improve the governance of the local community.

Consultation

Press releases were issued, notices displayed in the parishes, and the ward councillors consulted.

Background papers:

Community Governance file

Report sign off.

Author and Contact Details

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