

CABINET AGENDA

Tuesday, 16 April 2024 at 10.00 am in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

Item Business

1 Apologies for absence

2 Minutes (Pages 3 - 10)

Cabinet is asked to approve the minutes of the last meeting held on

3 Declarations of Interest

Cabinet members to declare an interest in any particular agenda item.

Key Decisions

4 Council Tax Premiums (Pages 11 - 16)

Report of the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital

5 Energy Grants for Swimming Pools (Pages 17 - 24)

Report of the Interim Strategic Director Economy, Innovation and Growth

6 Generalist Home Care - Recommissioning of New Contracts (Pages 25 - 34)

Report of the Strategic Director of Integrated Adults and Social Care Services

7 Proposals for School Term Dates 2025/26 (Pages 35 - 40)

Report of the Strategic Director, Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning

8 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (Pages 41 - 44)

Report of the Interim Strategic Director, Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities

Recommendations to Council

9 Climate Emergency Update, Environmental Policy update and Biodiversity Duty (Pages 45 - 60)

Report of the Interim Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth

Non Key Decisions

- 10** **Communities and Volunteering Service** (Pages 61 - 66)
Report of the Chief Executive Officer
- 11** **Home Energy Conservation Act Report 2023** (Pages 67 - 72)
Report of the Interim Strategic Director Economy, Innovation and Growth
- 12** **Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates - Transfer of Uncollectable Amounts**
(Pages 73 - 78)
Report of the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital
- 13** **Exclusion of the Press and Public**
The Cabinet may wish to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) on the grounds indicated:
- | Item | Paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 |
|------|--|
| 14 | 3 |

Key Decision

- 14** **Project funding for Gateshead Energy Company** (Pages 79 - 84)
Report of the Interim Strategic Director Economy, Innovation and Growth

Contact: Democratic Services

Email: democraticservicesteam@gateshead.gov.uk

Date: Monday, 8 April 2024

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING

Tuesday, 19 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor M Gannon

Councillors: C Donovan, J Adams, M Brain, A Douglas,
G Haley, J McElroy, M McNestry and B Oliphant

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors: C Buckley, G Kasfikis, L Kirton and R Beadle

C127 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Green.

C128 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

C129 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

C130 **CAREGIVERS SERVICES RECOMMISSION**

Consideration has been given to the approval to procure a new all-age Caregiver service in Gateshead, jointly commissioned by Gateshead Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), with the Council leading procurement.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the service model and associated costings to support the implementation of new Caregivers services in Gateshead be endorsed.
- (ii) That progression to the next project procurement stage be approved.
- (iii) That Cabinet note the contracts will be awarded by the Service Director, Corporate Commissioning and Improvement, following the tender process in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules and the approval given by Cabinet in December 2023.

The decisions above have been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To enable the delivery of a new Caregivers service from 1 September 2024, when existing contracts will expire.
- (b) To meet local need and align services to strategic priorities across the

local health and social care system.

- (c) To enable an integrated commissioning approach across Health and Social Care, which prevents duplication of funding and resources, and maximises existing infrastructure.

C131 **CORPORATE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY**

Consideration has been given for the endorsement and recommendation to Council for the approval of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to approve the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To demonstrate the Council's commitment to tackling inequality in Gateshead, whilst ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

C132 **WORKFORCE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY AND STRATEGY**

Consideration has been given for the endorsement and recommendation to Council for the approval of a new Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Policy and Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to approve the Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Policy and Strategy.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To demonstrate the Council's commitment to ensuring equality at the Council, delivery of the Workforce Strategy, Thrive, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Corporate Plan whilst ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.

C133 **SENIOR OFFICER PAY FRAMEWORK**

Consideration has been given for the recommendation to Council for the approval of a revised Senior Officer pay framework which will enable a better, more sustainable and positive approach to recruitment and retention to roles at this Senior level.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to agree:

- a. The amended Senior Officer Pay Framework to address the recruitment difficulties experienced.
- b. The date for implementation of the changes be from 1 April 2024.
- c. The Senior Officers affected by the proposed changes be engaged with immediate effect.
- d. The Pay Policy be amended to reflect the changes to the Senior Officer Framework.
- e. That all interested stakeholders including Trade Unions, Senior Officers, Payroll, HR, Finance etc. be updated on the changes to the pay framework.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To enable a better, more sustainable and positive approach to recruitment and retention to roles at this Senior level.

C134 **LOCALISM ACT 2011 – PAY ACCOUNTABILITY: PAY POLICY STATEMENT - 2024/25**

Consideration has been given for the recommendation to Council for the agreement of a revised Pay Policy Statement 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2024-25.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

C135 **HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY**

Consideration has been given for the recommendation to Council for the approval of the Health & Safety Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to approve the Health & Safety Strategy.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To support the Council to achieve its aim for improving standards and culture of health and safety across the workforce.

C136 **TREASURY POLICY STATEMENT AND TREASURY STRATEGY 2024/25 TO 2028/29**

Consideration has been given for the recommendation to Council for the approval of

the Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to approve the Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To ensure that the Council fully complies with the requirements of good financial practice in Treasury Management.

C137

INFORMATION SECURITY FRAMEWORK AND POLICY

Consideration has been given for the recommendation to Council for the approval of a new Information Security Framework and Associated IT Security Policy and the approach to implementing the new framework approach and associated policies.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council be recommended to approve a new Information Security Framework and Associated IT Security Policy and the approach to implementing the new framework approach and associated policies to safeguard the Council's Information Assets and Technologies.

The above decision has been made for the following reason:

- (a) To preserve the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Council's information assets enabling services to deliver the Thrive Agenda and the Council Plan, and protecting those whose information we hold.

C138

GATESHEAD ADULTS CAREGIVERS STRATEGY 2024-2029 AND DELIVERY PLAN

Consideration has been given for the approval of the Gateshead Adult Caregivers' strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet approves the Integrated Adults Caregiver's Strategy and Delivery Plan.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To ensure Gateshead place has an up-to-date and relevant strategic approach to improving support for Adult Caregivers.
- (b) To ensure the implementation of the aims and objectives set out in the strategy by relevant stakeholders.

C139

MISCELLANEOUS INCOME – TRANSFER OF UNCOLLECTABLE AMOUNTS

Consideration has been given for the approval of the Gateshead Adult Caregivers' strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet approves the Integrated Adults Caregiver's Strategy and Delivery Plan.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To ensure Gateshead place has an up-to-date and relevant strategic approach to improving support for Adult Caregivers.
- (b) To ensure the implementation of the aims and objectives set out in the strategy by relevant stakeholders.

C140

**RENT ARREARS FOR FORMER TENANTS AND SUNDRY ACCOUNT DEBTS –
TRANSFER OF UNCOLLECTABLE AMOUNTS**

Consideration has been given for the approval to transfer out of the Council's Accounts outstanding balances in excess of £500 from miscellaneous income accounts, Housing Benefits overpayments and Council tax Court Costs, where all possible recovery action has been taken and the balances are now considered to be uncollectable.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet agrees to the transfer of balances on 96 Sundry Debtor accounts, amounting to £335,837.67, 49 Housing Benefits overpayment invoices totalling £135,100.62 and 8 Council Tax accounts court costs totalling £4,421.96.
- (ii) That Cabinet notes the action taken under delegated powers to transfer out of the Council's accounts the identified amounts that are deemed uncollectable.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To ensure the effective management of the Council's resources.
- (b) To ensure that the Council Accounts accurately reflect the correct financial position.

C141

**UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) - GATESHEAD COMMUNITY CHEST
FUND**

Consideration has been given to support the recommendations of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPP) and to approve the transfer to the Community Foundation

to distribute the funding.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet supports the recommendations of the UKSPF Community Fund Panel.
- (ii) That Cabinet approves the transfer of £348,555.71 to The Community Foundation to distribute the funding, subject to the successful organisations agreeing to the terms and conditions contained in an offer letter.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) The UKSPF Panel and Culture, Sport and Leisure Portfolio agree that the recommendations meet the funding criteria and will benefit the residents of Gateshead.
- (b) The release of the money will allow projects to start and spend the Levelling Up Money allocated to this funding project.

C142

GRANT OF A LEASE – FORMER THOMAS HEPBURN SCHOOL SITE, SWARDS ROAD, FELLING

Consideration has been given to approve the grant of a 125 year lease in relation to the property at the former Thomas Hepburn School site to XP School Trust Ltd.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet approves the grant of a 125 year lease of the former Thomas Hepburn School site to XP School Trust Ltd.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To manage the asset in line with the Councils Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.
- (b) To make savings for the Council.

C143

GATESHEAD COUNCIL RESPONSE TO SOUTH TYNESIDE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN: REGULATION 19 CONSULTATION AND FELLGATE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AREA SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT SCOPING REPORT CONSULTATION

Consideration has been given to the notice of Gateshead Council's response to South Tyneside Council's Draft Local Plan Consultation (Regulation 19), and Fellgate Sustainable Growth Area Supplementary Planning Document Scoping Report.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet approves the consultation responses to be submitted to South Tyneside Council.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To provide comments on cross-boundary issues.
- (b) To engage with neighbouring authorities.

C144 **NOMINATION OF A LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL GOVERNOR**

Consideration has been given to the request to nominate a Local Authority Governor to a school seeking to retain their Local Authority governor in accordance with The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet approves the nomination for reappointment of a Local Authority Governor.
- (ii) That Cabinet notes the term of office as determined by the schools' Instrument of Government.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To ensure the School Governing Body has full membership.

C145 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

C146 **GATESHEAD QUAYS - AMENDMENTS TO LEGAL AGREEMENTS AND ACCEPTANCE OF NORTH EAST MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY (NEMCA) CAPITAL REGENERATION FUNDS**

Consideration has been given to approve amendments to all existing legal documents between the Council and Ask Patrizia for the Gateshead Quays development - The Sage: an Arena and International Conference Centre (ICC), Linear Park and Hotels reflecting the phased approach to the development.

Consideration was also given to accept £3.5m funds from the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) Capital Regeneration Fund for investment in Gateshead Quays (£3m) and Railway Quarter (£0.5m).

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet delegate to the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance and Strategic Director, Resources and Digital authority to amend the legal documents as necessary, in line with approved changes to the phasing of the scheme.
- (ii) That Cabinet note the Funding Conditions and approve the acceptance of £3.5m NEMCA Capital Regeneration Fund subject to confirmation of the final Terms and Conditions of the grant.
- (iii) That Cabinet delegate the acceptance of the NEMCA Capital Regeneration Fund grant and associated funding conditions to the Strategic Director, Economy Innovation and Growth in consultation with the Leader and the Strategic Directors, Resources and Digital, and Corporate Services and Governance.

The above decision has been made for the following reasons:

- (a) To bring forward the regeneration of Gateshead Quays, which supports the Council's aspiration of making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives.
- (b) To reaffirm the commitment to invest in the local economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation and growth across the borough.
- (c) To maintain momentum on the scheme, signal confidence in the local economy which is important as part of the delivery of the Economic Development Strategy.

Copies of all reports and appendices referred to in these minutes are available online and in the minute file. Please note access restrictions apply for exempt business as defined by the Access to Information Act.

The decisions referred to in these minutes will come into force and be implemented after the expiry of 3 working days after the publication date of the minutes identified below unless the matters are 'called in'.

Publication date: 21 March 2024

Chair.....

TITLE OF REPORT: Council Tax Premiums

REPORT OF: Darren Collins, Strategic Director, Resources and Digital

Purpose of the Report

1. This report asks Cabinet to approve the legislative Second Homes Premium provided for in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which billing authorities may charge.

Background

2. Council Tax is a source of funding for local government and is primarily based upon the capital value of domestic dwellings. The Council tax charge is based upon two elements which comprise:
 - Property which accounts for 50% of the charge.
 - Person which accounts for up to a further 50% of the charge.
3. The current Council Tax scheme provides domestic dwellings with a valuation band which ranges between Band A and Band H. Charges are set for each band and the amount paid is determined by the occupancy of the property by reference to both the property and person element. Unoccupied dwellings may qualify for exemptions which reduce charges to nil for specific periods of time.

Premiums

4. On 26th October 2023 Government, through the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, changed the existing legislation relating to Council Tax. Section 80 of the Act introduces a change which allows a Council Tax Premium to be charged against dwellings that are known as “second homes”. The Second Home Premium that can be applied is up to 100% of the Council Tax liability. The Act also amended the definition of the duration of a “long-term empty dwelling” from two years to one.
5. Second homes are no one’s sole or main residence and are furnished and, for example, could be a property occupied as a holiday home or when working away from the household’s main home.

Exceptions

6. On 11 March 2024, Government published proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the Council Tax Premiums. Details of the guidance can be found [here](#). This included:
 - a) exceptions to both Long-Term Empty and Second Homes Council Tax Premiums
 - for properties undergoing probate and
 - properties being actively marketed for sale or let

- b) exceptions to the Long-Term Empty Property Premium for
 - empty properties undergoing major repairs
- c) exceptions to the Second Home Premium for
 - annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of the main dwelling or
 - job related dwellings,
 - occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings and
 - seasonal homes where year-round or permanent occupation is prohibited or has been specified use.

The Government has confirmed it will legislate to bring the exceptions into effect before the 2025/2026 financial year and will issue guidance in due course.

7. The Government's previous guidance stated that "the intention behind the decision to provide billing authorities with the power to charge a premium was not to penalise owners of property that is genuinely on the housing market for sale or rent".
8. There is a requirement that councils must make a determination at least one year in advance of introducing the Second Home Premium. The earliest that the council can introduce the Second Home Premium is therefore May 2025.
9. A review of all empty and furnished properties (second homes) shown on our records will be undertaken which will include the impact of the new exceptions when these are introduced by Government during 2024-25.
10. A review of the impact of reducing the definition of the duration of a "long-term empty dwelling" from two years to one will also be undertaken so that this can be considered as an option for change from April 2025.

Proposal

11. It is proposed that the Council implements the new additional 100% Second Home Premium from May 2025 in line with legislation. The proposed implementation of this measure is consistent with other councils in the region.

Recommendations

12. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees to:
 - (i) the application of the Second Homes Premium from May 2025

for the following reason(s)

- (i) Application of the Second Homes Premium will deliver additional council tax income for the council and its precepting bodies.
- (ii) It will further discourage the holding of empty properties.

CONTACT: Patrick Scullion extension: 4779

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The proposals in the report are consistent with Council priorities and in particular ensuring that effective use of made of Council resources to support the framework for “Making Gateshead a Place where Everyone Thrives”.

Background

2. Council Tax is a source of funding for local government and is primarily based upon the capital value of domestic dwellings. The Council tax charge is based upon two elements which comprise:
 - Property which accounts for 50% of the charge.
 - Person which accounts for up to a further 50% of the charge.

Single adult occupancy may benefit from a reduction of 25%. Certain types of residents may also be disregarded in respect of the person element.

3. The current Council Tax scheme provides domestic dwellings with a valuation band which ranges between Band A and Band H. These valuation bands are based upon capital valuation of the dwelling. Charges are set for each band and the amount paid is determined by the occupancy of the property by reference to both the property and person element. Unoccupied dwellings may qualify for exemptions which reduce charges to nil for specific periods of time.

Premiums

4. Following budget consultation 2023/24, the Council agreed the application, from 1st April 2024, of the additional “Long-Term Empty Homes Premium” consistent with legislative changes set out in the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018. Specifically, the following premiums were to be applied from 2024:

A premium for long-term empty properties, these are defined as unfurnished properties left empty for longer than 2 years:

- 100% premium if empty for 2-5 years which would be a charge of 200%
- 200% premium if empty 5-10 years which would be a charge of 300%
- 300% premium if empty for 10+ years which would be a charge of 400%

5. On 26th October 2023 Government, through the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 changed the existing legislation relating to Council Tax. Section 80 of the Act introduces a change which allows a Council Tax Premium to be charged against dwellings that are known as “second homes”. The Second Home Premium that can be applied is up to 100% of the Council Tax liability. The Act also amended the definition of the duration of a “long-term empty dwelling” from two years to one.
6. Second homes are no one’s sole or main residence and are furnished and, for example, could be a property occupied as a holiday home or when working away from the household’s main home.

Exceptions

7. On 11 March 2024, Government published proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the Council Tax premiums. Details of the guidance can be found [here](#). This included:
 - a) exceptions to both empty and Second Homes Council Tax Premiums for properties undergoing probate and properties being actively marketed for sale or let
 - b) exceptions to the empty property homes premium for empty properties undergoing major repairs
 - c) exceptions to the Second Home Premium for annexes forming part of or being treated as part of the main dwelling or job related dwellings, occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings and seasonal homes where year-round or permanent occupation is prohibited or has been specified use.
8. The Government's previous guidance stated that "the intention behind the decision to provide billing authorities with the power to charge a premium was not to penalise owners of property that is genuinely on the housing market for sale or rent".
9. There is a requirement that councils must make a determination at least one year in advance of introducing the Second Home Premium. The earliest that the council can introduce the Second Home Premium is therefore May 2025.
10. A review of all empty and furnished properties (second homes) shown on our records will be undertaken which will include the impact of the new exceptions when these are introduced by Government during 2024-25.
11. A review of the impact of reducing the definition of the duration of a "long-term empty dwelling" from two years to one will also be undertaken so that this can be considered as an option for change from April 2025.
12. The proposed implementation of these measures is consistent with other councils in the region.

Consultation

13. The Leader of the Council has been consulted on this report.

Alternative Options

14. No alternative options are proposed.

Implications of Recommended Option

15. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – An increase in the amount of Council Tax payable in the year 2025/2026. The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that changes will be taken into consideration in the calculation of the Council Tax base for 2025/2026.

b) **Human Resources Implications – Nil**

c) **Property Implications - Nil**

16. Risk Management Implication - There is a risk that the additional payments will not be made.

17. Equality and Diversity Implications - Nil

18. Crime and Disorder Implications – Nil

19. Health Implications - Nil

20. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications - Nil

21. Human Rights Implications - Nil

22. Ward Implications – Council Tax covers the whole of Gateshead

23. Background Information: Nil

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TITLE OF REPORT: Energy Grants for Swimming Pools

REPORT OF: Anneliese Hutchinson – Interim Strategic Director
Economy, Innovation and Growth

Purpose of the Report

1. To report an Urgent Decision which accepted a grant of £0.356m from Sport England for energy improvement works at Dunston Leisure Centre
2. To request grant approval for £4.148m grant to install low carbon heat pumps at Dunston Leisure Centre and Blaydon Leisure and Primary Care Centre
3. To request approval to award design contracts to Equans Ltd for low carbon heat pumps

Background

4. The Council has committed to reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.
5. The Council has been successful in grant funding applications made to Sport England and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Round3c to support the installation of low carbon technology at various swimming pool sites in Gateshead

Proposal

6. It is reported that the Council took an Urgent Decision to accept a 100% grant of £0.356m to fund the following energy saving works at Dunston Leisure Centre
 - a. 175kW of ground mount solar PV outside Dunston Leisure Centre
 - b. Full LED lighting replacements

7. It is proposed that the Council accepts a £4.148m grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Round3c, to fund the following works
 - a. Air source heat pump installation at Dunston Leisure Centre
 - b. Minewater heat pump installation at Blaydon Leisure and Primary Care Centre

This will require an additional £0.395m to be added to the capital programme.

8. NEPOs Retrofit and Decarbonisation Framework has been selected and the most cost effective and efficient means of procuring the heat pump installations, and the Council proposes to award design contracts initially to the lead bidder of the relevant Lot, Equans Ltd.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that:
 - (i) Cabinet note the Urgent Decision taken to accept a £0.356m grant from Sport

- England for energy efficiency works to Dunston Leisure Centre.
- (ii) Approval is given to accept the grant of £4.148m towards energy works at various swimming pools
 - (iii) Approval is given to add £0.395m to the 2024/25 and 2025/26 capital programme, to provide the required 12% match funding
 - (iv) Approval is given to appoint Equans Ltd as the contractor to undertake both the detailed design work for energy works at various swimming pools, at a budgeted cost of £0.475m
 - (v) Delegated approval of final terms, conditions and costs of the design contract is given to the Strategic Director of Economy, Innovation and Growth, in consultation with Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance.

For the following reason(s):

- (i) To improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions of the swimming pools in question
- (ii) To support the future viability of swimming pools in Gateshead,
- (iii) To support the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan to achieve net zero emissions by 2030

CONTACT: Jim Gillon, Service Director, Energy and Design extension: 3923

Policy Context

1. The proposals here continue to contribute to the delivery of many targets within the Corporate Plan, Thrive and the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. specifically:
 - Supporting the ongoing viability of leisure centres, under their new management arrangements, to ensure communities continue to receive health and activity benefits
 - The heat pumps will ensure these leisure centres – some of the Councils largest gas consumers – are on a path to have zero carbon emissions

Background

2. In October 2023, the Council submitted two speculative capital grant bids to two funding schemes. Leisure facilities were prioritised for both applications, to maximise the cost and carbon saving opportunity for leisure facilities.
 3. The Council has received two grant offers:
 - a. Sport England - £998k was requested for energy savings works to 5 swimming pools. A 100% capital grant has been received for £356k for works to Dunston Leisure Centre (solar PV, LED lighting) - no funding was received for other 4 pools.
 - b. Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Round 3c (PSDS3c) - the Council received the full grant offer requested, of £4.15m towards £4.73m of scheme costs (88% grant). To install heat pumps at Blaydon, Dunston and Birtley pool sites, as well as some smaller energy savings measures.
 - i. For Dunston / Blaydon, the Council would be responsible for that element of the grant, and any match funding
 - ii. For Birtley, the grant has been offered to Birtley Aquatics (community asset transfer organisation seeking to take on operation of Birtley Pool) with them taking on risks of delivery and match funding.
 4. This report updates Cabinet on a recent Urgent Decision taken to accept the Sport England grant, due to grant deadlines, and presents the business case for accepting the PSDS3c grant.
 5. It is noted that the Council is midway through a procurement exercise to find a third-party operator of leisure centres. Three bidders are now going through a second stage selection process, via open dialogue procurement route, which aims to appoint an operator by Autumn 2024, for 10 years, with an option to extend to 15 years.
- grant**
6. The £356k grant, at 100% funding, offered from Sport England is to fund the following:
 - a. 175kW of ground mount solar PV outside Dunston Leisure Centre
 - b. Full LED lighting replacements

7. The grant had some significant terms associated, the most significant being that the Council remains liable for grant clawback should Dunston Leisure Centre not remain operational for 15 years.
8. This risk is being addressed as follows:
 - a. No grant needs to be spent for 2-3 months, while projects delivery is set up, after which time Council will have greater certainty that operators believe the site to be viable.
 - b. Prospective operators will be provided details / benefits of grant, to inform the procurement of the new operator
 - c. When operators appointed, it will be for 10 – 15years, same duration as the grant clawback period.
 - d. Funder may take into account extra-ordinary circumstances should the site cease to operate, to not apply clawback.
9. However, the Council cannot be sure the site will remain operational for 15 years and some risk remains. On balance, it was felt the grant investment will improve the viability of the site, and its low carbon credentials, and with the risk management approach above, the Council took an Urgent Decision to accept the grant, to meet the acceptance deadlines imposed by Sport England.

PSDS3c grant

10. The Council has received a grant offer of £4.148m, providing 88% of the cost of the following projects:
 - a. Dunston Leisure Centre – new air source heat pump, and minor energy efficiency works
 - b. Blaydon Leisure and Primary Care Centre – new minewater heat pump, and minor energy efficiency works
 - c. Birtley Swimming Centre - new air source heat pump, and minor energy efficiency works
11. These grants offer a significant opportunity to put two Council sites - Dunston and Blaydon pools – on a path to being net zero emissions. These sites are the 2 largest gas users of the Council – accounting for 10% of total gas demand.
12. The grants to Birtley Swimming Centre have been offered to Birtley Community Aquatics Centre (BCAC), the voluntary organisation seeking to operate the pool under a community asset transfer, under the same terms as offered to the Council.
13. All the sites have gas boilers and gas combined heat and power plants that are end of life, in need of replacement, which was a key criteria of the grant.
14. **Birtley Swimming Centre.** Unfortunately, Birtley Aquatics are not in a position to take on the grant for a number of reasons
 - a. Their immediate priority is to replace existing boiler plant, which is end of life. This will invalidate the grant offer
 - b. The heat pump installation would not be complete until summer 2025. However, it is unlikely the current gas plant will last the next winter.

- c. The risk of taking on a £1.2m construction scheme, including the risk of funding any cost increases, is too great.

15. Options were put to the funder, including diverting grant to other energy efficiency measures, but these were not compliant with the grant rules.

16. **Blaydon Leisure and Primary Care Centre.** The following developments to the scheme have come forward.

- a. The scheme has switched from using air source to minewater, which will be a warmer, more efficient source of heat. Minewater currently flows into the adjacent Shibdon Pond, from abandoned mineshaft nearby. It is proposed to drill into these workings closer to the leisure centre, to access this water. This has been confirmed following feasibility studies by the Coal Authority, but remains subject to permits and planning applications.
- b. The scheme has in principle support from NHS Property, who lease the primary care centre. The Council requires an estimated capital contribution of £30k from NHS Property group, and ongoing recharges, which has to be paid to the Council with the lease agreement. We await their internal approval.

17. **Dunston Pool.** The main development is that the site has received the Sport England funding for solar PV and lighting improvements. This will provide site savings, and additional power generation, to support the operating costs of the heat pump (which remains an air source heat pump).

PSDS3c Financials

18. The cost estimates of the works have been provided by Equans Ltd, who are the lead contractor for heat pumps on NEPO's Low Carbon Framework, and who have installed multiple heat pump schemes in pools (including several for Newcastle City Council). Equans have provided a design stage contract proposal, with budget cost of up to £0.475m to cover design, preconstruction and survey stage. Approval is requested to enter contracts with Equans up to this contract value, with the exact value to be agreed through delegations.

19. The table below shows the scheme cost breakdown, and the amount of match funding required by the Council for Blaydon and Dunston.

20. The spare grant available from Birtley, which cannot be spent at Birtley, is shown for information. We are in discussions with the funder to determine if the Council can use this to fund additional works at Blaydon / Dunston, or fund zero carbon heating installations at other public sector sites in Gateshead.

Cost element, £m	Dunston	Blaydon	Spare
Design	£0.197	£0.202	
Install	£1.100	£1.390	
Fees / contingency	£0.185	£0.366	
Total	£1.482	£1.958	£1.273
Match funding required	£0.178	£0.235	£0.153

Total Grant	£1.304	£1.723	£1.121
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21. The table below summarises the revenue cost implications of progressing PSDS schemes at Dunston and Blaydon. Key points are as follows
- An additional £0.395m (after deducting NHS contributions) of borrowing is required, which is not currently in the capital programme, which creates additional financing costs.
 - The heat pump provides some financial savings, on current energy pricing
 - It is noted that Government policy commits to rebalancing gas and power tariffs, as early as end 2024 to move green levies from power to gas, reducing power tariffs while increasing gas tariffs, specifically to support the viability of heat pumps. This increases the expected savings.
 - The project savings are then compared to the business as usual scenario, where costs increase due to stopping the current gas combined heat and power (CHP) plant, which is end-of-life.
22. Under current pricing, the revenue cost increase of the project is similar (£15k/yr vs £22k/yr) to the business as usual, but achieves a far greater carbon saving, making a significant contribution to the Council's net zero emission targets. With the expected rebalanced gas/power pricing, the project generates net savings compared to business as usual, after financing costs.
23. The project and savings need to be considered within the appointment of a new operator of the leisure facilities, to ensure savings are retained to recover Council finance costs firstly, as well as supporting the ongoing operation of the facilities
24. In addition to the financial business case, creating net zero swimming pools will increase the attractiveness of these sites to operators and future customers, supporting the ongoing viability of these leisure facilities.

	Business as usual (stop CHP plant)	PSDS3c scheme
Summary		
Capital investment, £	£0	£395,460
Finance cost (10yrs)		£57,342
<i>Current tariffs</i>		
Operating cost change, £/yr	£14,674	-£35,215
Net Cost, £/yr	£14,674	£22,127
<i>Rebalanced tariffs</i>		
Operating cost change, £/yr	-£430	-£99,162
Net Cost, £/yr	-£430	-£41,820
Carbon savings, tonnes/yr	- 62	- 749

Delivery / next steps

25. Next steps for the Sport England grant are as follows:
- Commence project planning / procurement of works (process to be confirmed, with LED lighting expected to be delivered by Construction Services. Solar PV

will be procured through the Council's Dynamic Purchasing System, or potentially through the same contractor as heat pumps below)

- Communicate opportunity to bidders on leisure centre operator procurement
- Review grant risks within 3 months, prior to contracting works
- Works need to complete by end March 2025

26. Next steps for the PSDS3c grant are as follows:

- Agree principles of participation with NHS Property
- Commence permitting process with Environment Agency / Coal Authority
- Seek revision to scope of works from funder, to invest in additional energy efficiency works with spare grant
- A review of available procurement routes has indicated the best available is the NEPO Retrofit and Decarbonisation Framework, with specific lots for heat pump installation. Equans are the lead bidder on the Framework, and can be appointed through direct award. Approval for this route is included in this report recommendations
- Following award of design contract, an outline programme is as follows:
- In contract by May 24, design / planning to run until Nov 24
- Pilot borehole drilled June 24 at Blaydon
- Approvals / costs received by Dec 24, with further cabinet approval for construction contracts.
- Jan 25 start on site
- Dunston heat pump complete by May 2025
- Blaydon Heat pump complete by Oct 2025
- Grant funding spend deadline is March 2026

Alternative Options

27. Not accept the grant funding: While this option is lower risk in the short term, it is still expected to increase costs, and longer term it forgoes the opportunity to receive significant grant funding to make these sites net zero emissions, and will increase costs in the long run.

Consultation

28. The Culture, Sport and Leisure Portfolio, as well as Housing and Economy, and Environment and Transport portfolio has been consulted on these proposals and supported recommendation to Cabinet.

Implications of Recommended Option

29. Resources:

- a) Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that this scheme will add an estimated £0.058m per annum of capital financing costs to revenue.
- b) Human Resources Implications** – the construction scheme will be managed by Energy and Design Service, and its outputs will support the ongoing viability of leisure centres to protect those sites and personnel.
- c) Property Implications** - The scheme will provide low carbon heating

systems for the 2 largest gas consuming sites in the Council portfolio of buildings, supporting their ongoing viability and the procurement of new operators for these sites.

30. Risk Management Implication – There will be an element of risk in taking forward the PSDS scheme. Key risks, and how they are managed, are as follows:

- Energy tariffs change – sensitivity modelling shows that if prices increase, the net benefit remains similar as increased power costs are offset by gas savings. If energy tariffs decrease, savings will not be achieved. But this is unlikely, and if it did happen, any reductions will produce costs savings across the Council, to afford this scheme.
- Project costs overrun – the spare grant from Birtley will be requested to be used as additional contingency, if required, to mitigate cost overruns.
- Project spend delays – grant funding has to be spent before March 2026. Through the application process, funding allocations have already been revised, pushing more into 2025/26, to allow for spend delays, with healthy programme float in place
- Minewater source not confirmed – already feasibility has confirmed likely targets and temperatures. Project will progress permits needed to carry out pilot boreholes early in design phase.
- Delivery contractor – lessons learnt from previous PSDS project has led to engaging an experience contractor, Equans, through existing NEPO construction frameworks. Equans have delivered £20m plus PSDS funded schemes for other Councils in the region, so have far greater experience and knowledge. Equans are the lead contractor for heat pump and solar PV frameworks.
- Partners – scheme at Blaydon relies on acceptance by NHS Property. They supported the bid, but now are considering their small capital and revenue contributions, in line with the current lease agreement.
- Permits / planning – the minewater scheme will require Coal Authority / Env Agency permits for exploratory drilling, then abstraction / discharge. Planning approval will also require consultation / agreement with Natural England. Allowance in the programme has been made for extended approvals processes

31. Equality and Diversity Implications - None

32. Crime and Disorder Implications – None

33. Health Implications - supporting the viability of leisure centres, to continue providing health benefits to the communities and residents

34. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications - The project will reduce Council gas consumption and emissions by 10% from these 2 sites, which are the largest gas users across all Council buildings

35. Human Rights Implications - None

36. Ward Implications - the schemes are in Blaydon and Dunston / Teams Wards.

Background Information - None

TITLE OF REPORT: **Generalist Home Care – Recommission of New Contracts**

REPORT OF: **Dale Owens, Strategic Director of Integrated Adults and Social Care services**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to procure a new Generalist Home Care service in Gateshead, to meet current and growing future demands to achieve our 'Home First' vision.

Background

2. Current contracts are delivered under a spot framework which has allowed providers to join on an on-going basis, resulting in 18 providers working across Gateshead.
3. Whilst the current approach has many advantages, there are also many limitations that has at times created blockages and high waiting lists for people needing long-term Home Care services.
4. Our Market Sustainability Plan outlined our intention to invest Home Care services to improve workforce pressures being faced by the sector and increase the required capacity.
5. Following a review of our existing contract model and an engagement programme that gathered insights from over 300 key stakeholders including, service users and their representatives, professionals, Care workers, Home Care providers, hard to reach groups as well as potential future service users.
6. Our Future Generalist Home Care services must complement the new strategic direction of Gateshead Council in foregrounding locality-based and community-led support.
7. Gateshead Council has committed to the principles of the Unison Ethical Care Charter (ECC), Stages 1 and 2, ([On-line-Catalogue220142.pdf \(unison.org.uk\)](https://www.unison.org.uk/On-line-Catalogue220142.pdf)) and will be built into our future contracts.
8. The proposed model will:
 - Improve recruitment and retention levels in the market
 - Secure the capacity needed now and the future to meet the needs of the Gateshead Population
 - Achieve medium- and long-term savings for the Council
 - Have a focus on individual 'Outcomes' instead of the traditional 'Time & Task'
 - Improve the Quality-of-Care that people receive

Further detail of the model and associated costs can be found in the Appendices.

Proposal

9. A tender exercise will commence on 26th April 2024 and end on 29th July 2024.
10. Approval for the Service Director, Corporate Commissioning and Procurement to award the contracts following a tender process in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules.
11. New services will commence from 28th October 2024.

Recommendations

12. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) Endorses the new model and associated costings to support the implementation of new Generalist Home Care services in Gateshead.
 - (ii) Approves the project to progress to the next procurement stage.

for the following reason(s)

- (i) To support securing the required capacity to meet current and future demands for these services
- (ii) To achieve the ASC demand interventions included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy over the next five years.
- (iii) To enable to meet the ECC charter standards that will improve terms and conditions for Care Workers under these contracts.

CONTACT: Barry Norman

PHONE: 01914332369

Policy Context

1. As set out in section 5 of The Care Act 2014 local authorities have a duty to promote the efficient and effective operation of a market in services for meeting care and support needs, with a view to ensuring services are diverse, sustainable and high quality for the local population, including those who pay for their own care.
2. The Government white paper People at the Heart that outlined a 10-year vision that puts personalised care and support at the heart of adult social care. Implementation of the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund is one of the steps to achieving the right architecture to underpin and support the implementation of the 10-year vision.
3. This work also supports the delivery of the Integrated Adults and Social Care Strategy 2023-28 which commits to:
 - Home First – Want people to remain at home as long as possible.
 - Strength Based Practice – Using Community Assets for both prevention and to improve the wellbeing offer for people with support needs.
 - Workforce – Investment to achieve and empowered, enabled and skilled workforce.
 - Commissioning – Data driven, evidenced based approach which promotes innovation across the system to meet identified current and future needs, as well as any gaps in provision.

Background

4. Gateshead should be a place where people can be supported at home as long as possible and reduce the need to go into long-term Residential Care settings. The proposal outlines the need to develop a new delivery model for Gateshead that focuses on an Outcomes approach with local teams of Care Workers delivering Care and Support in local communities, understanding the needs of the local population as well as the community assets available to support people's Health & Wellbeing.

Future Demand

5. Our Home First approach will result in more people accessing Home Care services and less people receiving a Residential Care based setting. This will support the ASC demand interventions in the MTFS over the next 5 years.
6. We also have an ageing population with natural demand growth expected each year. Our prevention and Community Led Support approach will work on reducing demands to below 2% per annum.
7. The new model will secure the current and future growing capacity which will ensure a net reduction in long-term Residential Care placements. A target of one deflection per week along with the annual growth, will see a need to grow the

required care & support hours by 4,483 (35.08%) from 1st April 24 to 31st March 2028 as outlined below:

Year	Service Users	Forecast Delivered Hours	Demand Increase Service Users (2% per annum)	Demand Increase Hours (2% per annum)	Care Home Deflections	Additional Hours	Total Service Users	Total Hours
2023/24	907	12,093	18	237	26	448	951	12,778
2024/25	935	12,778	19	256	52	832	1,006	13,866
2025/26	1,006	13,866	20	277	52	832	1,078	14,975
2026/27	1,078	14,975	22	300	52	832	1,152	16,107
2027/28	1,152	16,107	23	322	52	832	1,227	17,261

Ethical Care Charter (ECC)

8. The proposed additional investment into the delivery Model will allow for the ECC standards 1 & 2 costs met by the contracted providers.
9. Care Workers will see improvements to their 'Terms & Conditions' and providers will cover the following:
 - All workers offered guaranteed/permanent contracts should they want them.
 - Workers paid on a shift basis with travel time and costs covered.
 - No call cramming due to 'Outcomes' model.
 - All eligible workers receive statutory sick pay.
 - Regular paid Training and Supervisions.
 - Ability for workers to regularly meet co-workers to share best practice and limit isolation.

Co-Production

10. We have gathered around 300 people's views on what is currently being delivered as well as a focus on co-designing our future approach. This included current and future service users, their representatives, care workers, existing and potential future providers, key professionals, and community groups.
11. Information gathered came from people who were new to the services as well as people who have used and worked in Home Care for over a year.
12. There were common themes across all stakeholders with three areas of focus 'Continuity of Care', 'Clear communication' and 'time for workers to encourage independence'.

Focus Group Statements

"Communication is key when caring for people"

"Communication about when the carers are coming".

"Familiar faces"

"Being able to do things for myself when I can. I want to remain as independent as possible"

"Being able to get out into the community with carers as I feel miserable stuck in the house all day"

"Communication, friendly and familiar faces are better than letting strangers into your home"

- 13. Home Care Agencies engaged with identifying current barriers to achieving the ECC standards and explored opportunities on how services could be redesigned to move away from Time & Task to an Outcomes model.
- 14. 90 existing workers gave us some valuable insight into their views and wishes. Some Key responses below:



Can you suggest one thing that would improve the home care service you and your organisation delivers?

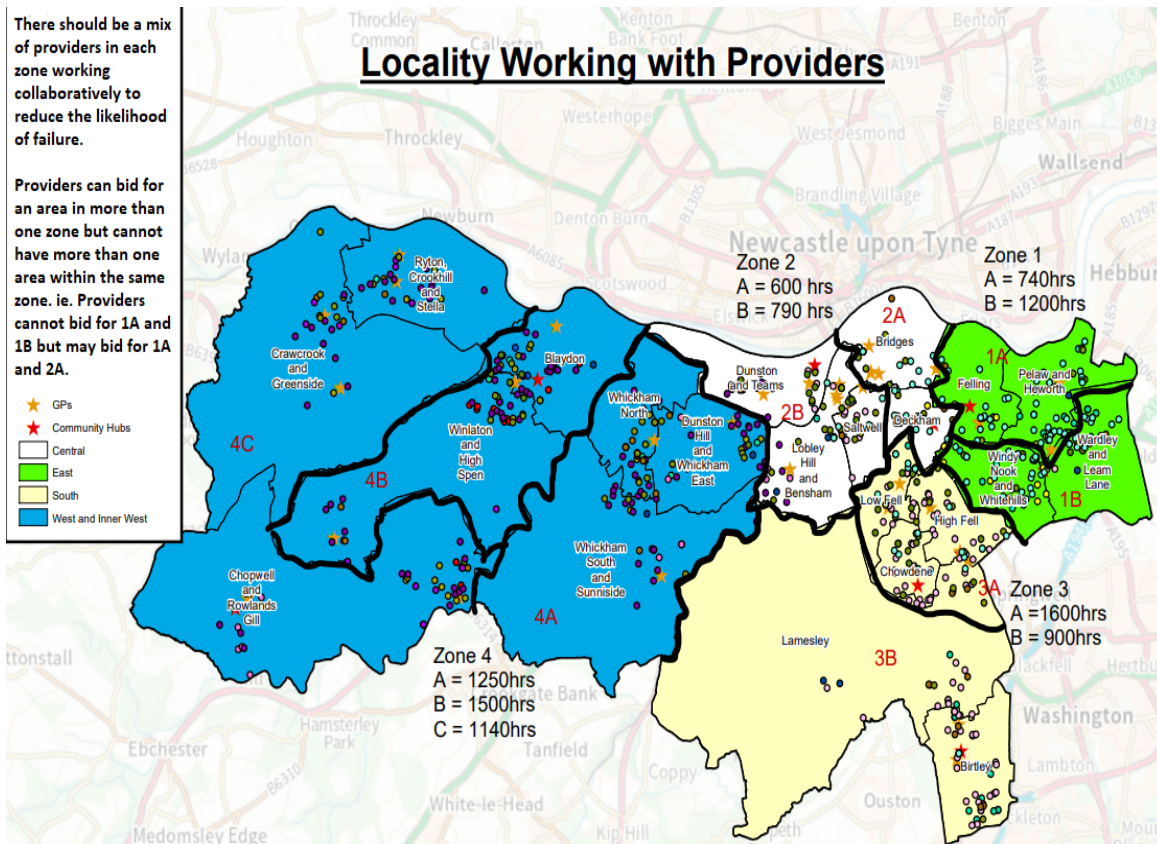


15. Information and feedback received has support the development of the proposed contract model and has given us the confidence to meet three common priorities (point 12) and make Home Care an attractive place for people wanting to work.

Proposed Model

16. As previously described, we need a new Model to secure the capacity to meet future demands. Consideration has been given as to how we achieve meeting the ECC standards along with the key priorities for all stakeholders. Overview of Model:
- Contracts will move to a focus on Outcomes and move away from 'Time & Task'
 - Zones created with less providers who work in localities, with only one provider in a sub zone
 - Zones will have a varied number of hours to encourage a range of different providers (small, medium & large) to bid
 - Provider(s) will be expected to deliver all current and future packages of care within their area, and recruit and retain a growing workforce
 - All Care Workers will be offered a guaranteed/permanent contract, with a minimum of 70% target of acceptance in year 1
 - The successful provider will be given an overall budget based on staffing hours required to deliver the outcomes within their sub zone
 - This will initially be based on those packages transferred on day one of the contract and will have the ability to increase/decrease where mutually agreed
 - Payments will be made on a block approach and not per individual packages
 - The provider will have a dedicated staff team that work on a shift basis, to support the outcomes required within their locality

- The proposal is to have zones across the 4 Localities, with 2 providers working in 3 of the zones, and 3 providers in Zone 4 (the West):



- There will be 9 contracts in total and depending on the outcome of the tender exercise, between 5 and 9 providers will deliver the future contracts.
- At the contract start date, all existing packages will transfer from the current providers to the new providers.
- A Communication plan is in place with regular ongoing contact for everyone that is impacted from the change of contracts.

Resources

- To meet the ECC requirements, an additional 8.75% is required on the budget from October 2024 onwards which will be funding by the Market Sustainability and Improvement Funding.
- The budget will also need to grow year on year to meet forecasted increase in demand, to support our approach to reduce residential care admissions.
- We have projected that a budget shift will take place and by the end of 2028/29, we will see an overall net reduction of £9.95m spend across Residential and Generalist Home Care services over the 5-year period.

Consultation

24. The Portfolio Holders for Children, Young People and Families, Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care have been consulted on this work.

Alternative Options

25. There is an option to continue with the existing spot purchase approach without the additional investment. This is unlikely going to support us achieving our Home First approach and we will continue to be an outlier on long-term admissions into residential care, and in turn not achieve the outline savings which will put pressure on other ASC and wider Council services.

Implications of Recommended Option

26. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that Gateshead Council's funding for the procurement of services can be met from outlined resources.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no Human Resource implications to Council employees. There may be staff who are eligible to transfer from existing providers to any potential new providers under TUPE arrangements, however that will be determined by the incoming and outgoing providers.
- c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising from this report.

27. **Risk Management Implication** – There is a risk that any delays to the procurement process would result in a reduction of savings being achieved.

28. Equality and Diversity Implications

The new approach will directly complement the commitments set out in our corporate policy:

- Implement the voluntary Socio-Economic Duty within the Equality Act, as agreed in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy, so that we pro-actively consider socio-economic impact to inform our council decisions (***reductions in residential care, balance between zero hours and contracted hours contracts, complements Ethical Care Charter commitments***).
- Put EDI at the heart of the design and delivery of our services, policies, systems, procurement, commissioning and facilities, so that they are fully accessible and inclusive, removing any barriers faced by our residents (***new model based on locality working, connecting providers better to local communities, encouraging employment of carers from within the locality***).
- Recognise our residents are individuals and provide services to meet their needs, in some cases this will mean doing more to support those individuals

who are disadvantaged by who they are or their experiences (**outcomes based rather than time and task will allow for flexibility to meet fluctuating need**)

- Deliver our customer commitment to listen, be flexible and respond appropriately with reasonable adjustments, to always meet the needs of all our customers (**outcomes based rather than time and task will allow for flexibility to meet fluctuating need**)
- Listen to our residents and learn from their experiences, to improve our knowledge and understanding of the needs of all our diverse communities across Gateshead (**coproduced commissioning model following extensive consultation with users, carergivers, carers and partners**)
- Actively involve and enable our communities, including our employees, in inclusive consultation and in our decision-making processes (**coproduced commissioning model following extensive consultation with users, carergivers, carers and partners**)
- Co-design and collaborate with partners where possible, to deliver for local communities (**coproduced commissioning model following extensive consultation with users, carergivers, carers and partners**)
- Actively work with our diverse communities to improve our insight and build effective relationships (**coproduced commissioning model following extensive consultation with users, carergivers, carers and partners**)

29. **Crime and Disorder Implications**

There are no Crime and Disorder implications arising directly from this report.

30. **Health Implications**

Approval of the model and associated funding will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of service users in Gateshead. The new model will support activity to reduce social isolation, improve their Health and Wellbeing, and connect individuals to other Community Assets.

31. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications**

There are no Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications arising from this report.

32. **Human Rights Implications**

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

33. **Ward Implications**

All wards are affected, as the services will be open to everyone across Gateshead with eligible needs

Background Information

Care Act 2014

People at the Heart of Care – Government White Paper

Market Sustainability and Improvement fund 2024 to 2025: Guidance 28th March 2024

Unison Ethical Care Charter

TITLE OF REPORT: **Proposals for School Term Dates 2025/26**

REPORT OF: **Helen Fergusson - Strategic Director, Children's Social Care
and Lifelong Learning**

Purpose of the Report

1. The Report asks Cabinet to approve the School Term Dates for 2025/26

Background

2. In order to allow schools, parents and other stakeholders to plan into the future, it is necessary to agree school term dates a significant period in advance.

Proposal

3. It is proposed that the calendar for 2025/26, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, be approved.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that

Cabinet agrees the dates set out in the School Term Dates for 2025/26 attached, for the following reason(s)

- (i) To allow future planning to take place.
- (ii) Make effective and efficient use of LA resources.

CONTACT: Julie McDowell extension 8644

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. This proposal supports the Council's new strategic approach of Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives, will support delivery of our Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Background

2. The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No. 3181) require schools to have at least 380 half-day sessions (190 contact days with pupils) and (195 days for staff) in each school year. This is consistent with the 195 days a year required by a teacher's statutory conditions of service: the additional five days are for continual professional development. The term dates for Community Voluntary controlled and Special Schools are determined by the LA whilst voluntary-aided schools and Academies are decided by the governing body of each school. This means that Governing Bodies of Voluntary Aided schools and Academies can depart from the LA term dates if they wish. Many Voluntary Aided schools can and do depart from those dates determined by the LA and there is no requirement to consult the LA however such schools are required to act reasonably when setting their dates.

It is possible that some academies may develop and determine different term date calendars. Whenever possible any such changes will be published by the LA.

3. The Local Government Association (LGA) Standing Committee on the School Year have previously circulated proposed School Term Calendar with a view to encouraging local authorities towards a degree of standardisation of dates. This is based on the following principles:
 - Start the school year on a September date as near as possible to 1 September.
 - Equalise teaching and learning blocks (roughly 2x7 and 4x6 weeks).
 - Establish a two-week spring break in early April irrespective of the incidence of the Easter Bank Holiday. (Where the break does not coincide with the Bank Holiday the date should be, as far as practicable, nationally agreed and as consistent as possible across all local authorities.)
 - Allow for the possibility of a summer holiday of at least six weeks for those schools which want this length of break.
 - Identify and agree annually designated periods of holiday, including the summer holiday, where Head Teachers are recommended not to arrange teaching days.
5. The proposed term dates in appendix 2 are the same as neighbouring Local Authorities to ensure a degree of consistency across the region.
6. The proposal starts the term on the 1st September 2025 which avoids broken school weeks and is in line with the term dates for all other Local Authorities. This also fixes the spring bank holiday in line with the Local Government Association strategy establishing a two-week spring break in early April which also covers two bank holidays. It allows 2 CPD days in term time requiring the 3 remaining training days to be completed as twilight sessions. It is important to achieve, as near as possible, a match with neighbouring LAs. Parents resident in Gateshead and who work in other LAs or have children in other LA

schools and vice versa can make better arrangements for their childcare and give regard to a wide range of personal and domestic requirements. Conflicting dates also work against the effective and efficient use of resources between LAs when collaborating on joint events or on the delivery of truancy sweeps.

Consultation

7. The proposed dates have been shared with other local authorities in the region, Gateshead Head Teachers, Gateshead Schools JCC membership, , the Diocesan Bodies and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

It is recommended that Appendix 2 be adopted as the term dates for the 2025/26 academic year.

Implications of Recommended Option

9 Resources

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Finance and ICT confirms that there are no financial implications as a result of this report.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** - advance notice of school term dates enables all stakeholders to consider a broad range of domestic and personal arrangements by allowing schools to plan their academic year.
- c) **Property Implications** - None

10. **Risk Management Implication** - None.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications –

Every effort is made in setting dates to take account of holiday requirements created and a result of faith.

12. Crime and Disorder Implications -

Evidence does show the potential for an increase in youth crime and disorder and antisocial behaviour during periods when young people are not in school. The Council seeks to address this 'risk' by collaborating with partners to offer activity programmes during common holiday periods.

13. Health Implications - None

14. Sustainability Implications – None.

15. Human Rights Implications – None.

16. Area and Ward Implications - All.

17. **Background Information-**



Gateshead draft Term and Holiday Dates Academic Year 2025/26

193 TERM DAY ENVELOPE

AUGUST 2025					SEPTEMBER 2025					OCTOBER 2025					NOVEMBER 2025					DECEMBER 2025					JANUARY 2026				
4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26			
5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27			
6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28			
7	14	21	28		4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	31	1	8	15	22	29		
1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	31	2	9	16	23	30		
2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	31			
3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25				

FEBRUARY 2026					MARCH 2026					APRIL 2026					MAY 2026					JUNE 2026					JULY 2026				
2	9	16	23		2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27			
3	10	17	24		3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28			
4	11	18	25		4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29			
5	12	19	26		5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30			
6	13	20	27		6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31			
7	14	21	28		7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25				
1	8	15	22	29	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26			

AUGUST 2026					SEPTEMBER 2026				
3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	
4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29
5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30
6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24	
7	14	21	28		4	11	18	25	
1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	
2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	

 School Holidays
 Bank Holidays

The number of term days shown is 193. Schools need to keep 1 day back from the 193 above until late in the summer term for possible election purposes (only if the school is used as a polling station and would need to close to pupils and staff leaving) 192 days in term. Schools will therefore need to identify 2 PD days from the term dates above and need to

determine a further 3 PD days from twilight sessions or designated holidays. (Pupils must be taught for 190 days (380 sessions))

TITLE OF REPORT: **Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment**

REPORT OF: **Kevin Scarlett, Interim Strategic Director, Housing,
Environment and Healthy Communities**

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on the results of the recent Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, and to seek approval to:
 - a. discontinue the provision of facilities for the travelling community at the existing site at Baltic Road.
 - b. demolish the buildings on site so that the land can be appropriated and managed accordingly.

Background

2. Councils are required to periodically review the need for permanent or temporary sites for use by members of the travelling community.
3. For several decades Gateshead has met those needs by providing a permanent site on East Gateshead Industrial Estate. The Baltic Road site has 18 pitches, each with an amenity block, and is managed by a warden. There is also a warden's bungalow on site.
4. Demand for traveller sites such as this has dramatically declined over the last decade and as a result many of our neighbouring councils have closed their sites.
5. Despite the significant reduction in the availability of council traveller sites in the region, demand for our own site has fallen to nil, with the last occupied pitch being vacated at the end of 2022.
6. Given there has been no demand from travellers wishing to occupy pitches for at least 2 years, the amenity blocks and warden's bungalow have been extensively vandalised. They are no longer repairable and need to be demolished.
7. As part of the new evidence base for the local plan a review of the need for traveller sites has been undertaken.

Findings of the Review of Traveller Needs

8. Consultants have carried out a gypsy and travellers needs assessment in accordance with guidance, carrying out their investigations and interviews in the spring of 2023. The assessment found that there was no longer sufficient demand to justify providing a large, fixed site in Gateshead, nor to provide more informal transit pitches in either Gateshead or Newcastle.

9. Additional contact was made with representative national, regional and local representative bodies during the Autumn, but with no response.
10. The summary of the review is here. [The Gateshead Plan - Gateshead Council](#)
11. As part of the Council's 2024/25 budget consultation exercise, the proposal to discontinue the provision at Baltic Road was put forward for public feedback, together with the potential redundancy of 1 employee. The results of the consultation were presented to Cabinet on the 20th February 2024 and confirmed:
 - 72% of respondents either strongly agreed or tend to agree with the proposal.
 - Following publication of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIP) 80% of respondents supported the proposal.

Proposal

12. It is proposed that the site be closed, the proposal for the redundancy is progressed, and that vandalised buildings be demolished prior to the site being transferred into the Council's land portfolio for disposal or alternative use.
13. The site will however be retained for a period to enable a flexible response to any unforeseen need for a basic site provision for travellers.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) Support the permanent closure, subject to Cabinet approval, of our travellers site at Baltic Road, Gateshead, conclude the proposed redundancy and subsequent cessation of service.
 - (ii) Request that the Service Director, Property and Assets take back the management of the land associated with the site.

for the following reasons:

- (i) There is no longer demand for the provision of temporary and permanent stopping facilities for travellers.

CONTACT: **Anna Tankerville** extension: 2358

1. Policy Context

- 1.1. The proposals referred to in this report support Gateshead's key strategies including Health and Wellbeing, Housing Strategy, Economic Strategy, and ultimately delivery of the Council's Thrive vision.

2. Background

2.1. Legal and National Policy Framework

- 2.2. The National Planning Policy Framework and its subordinate document Planning Policy for Traveller Sites set out planning requirements for traveller sites. This states that government's aims in respect of traveller sites include:

- (a) that local planning authorities should make their own assessment of need for the purposes of planning
- (b) that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites

- 2.3 The methodology used by Opinion Research Services has been developed to meet the requirements of the Planning Policy Framework, and has been used in over 150 local authority areas since the policies were revised in 2015.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 Consultation on the content of this report has been carried out with the Housing Portfolio Holder, and with the Leader. Those consulted have been supportive of the proposal.

- 3.2 This report has been informed by consultation undertaken as part of;

- a) the underlying Accommodation Needs Assessment that has included contact with representative national, regional and local representative bodies, other local authorities, officers and members of the community by way of telephone, written contact and interview.
- b) The Council's 2024/2025 budget consultation.

4 Alternative Options

- 3.1 No alternative options are proposed in this report. Occupancy of the site has diminished significantly over the last decade, and the site had one occupant in 2022, dropping to zero in 2023. No applications for pitches have been submitted for over 2 years.

4 Implications of Recommended Option

- 4.1 Resources:

4.2 **Financial Implications**

4.3 The vacant site is currently operating at a cost to the council of approximately £32,000/year.

4.4 Closing the site and removing the Warden post will create an annual saving of £32,000.

4.5 **Human Resources Implications**

4.6 One full time post will be made redundant as a result of these proposals. This was consulted on and supported as part of the budget savings for 2024/2025.

4.7 **Property Implications**

4.8 The vacant site will become an asset for the council to manage in the most effective manner.

4.9 Risk Management Implication

4.10 At present the vacant site is attracting fly tipping and vandalism, and continuous efforts are needed to keep it safe. Managing the site for an alternative use will remove the risk of injury to trespassers.

4.11 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.12 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed.

4.13 Crime and Disorder Implications.

4.14 No crime and disorder implications are created by this proposal.

4.15 Health Implications

4.16 There are no health implications.

4.17 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications

4.18 There are no climate and sustainability implications.

4.19 Human Rights Implications

4.20 There are no direct human rights implications.

4.21 Ward Implications

4.22 There are no direct ward implications arising from this report.

TITLE OF REPORT: **Climate Emergency Update, Environmental Policy update and Biodiversity Duty**

REPORT OF: **Anneliese Hutchinson, Interim Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth**

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is requested to;
 - a. Note the results of the independent environmental Audit
 - b. Note the carbon monitoring report summary
 - c. Note the ongoing activities that are progressing towards our climate and environmental sustainability targets (Appendix 2).
 - d. Note the Council's Biodiversity Duty and agree to a biodiversity report of the Council's activities
 - e. Recommend full Council approve the amended wording to the Council's Environmental Policy (Appendix 3).

Background

2. Following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 (Appendix 1), the adoption of the Climate Action Plan for council operations in 2021 and the adoption of the Climate Strategy for Gateshead in 2022 progress is being made to both mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing emissions and to protect our communities by making them more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Proposal

3. Environmental Policy

The Environmental policy for the Council was approved in February 2021. Following a review of the policy there is a proposal to make some amendments to better align the policy to the declaration of a climate emergency and the Climate Action plan (2021) and Climate Strategy (2022). The amended wording (set out in Appendix 3) primarily clarifies that the carbon reduction target relates to 'carbon neutrality' not 'net zero' which allows for carbon offsetting and that 'clean' energy refers to 'low-carbon' energy providing clarity to our ambitions.

4. Investors in the Environment Audit

Following the Climate Emergency Declaration made by Full Council on 23 May 2019, Cabinet agreed that officers should commence an environmental audit of the Council's activities. The first audit was carried out in 2020 and the 3rd annual review has been undertaken by consultancy firm Genee which concluded that the Council was still achieving silver level accreditation. The report will be published on the website and on this link <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Gateshead-Council-IIE-Accreditation-Report>

5. Carbon Monitoring

To align with best practice and get ready for new legislative requirements, the Council procured 'SmartCarbon' for carbon reporting in 2022. This tool measures both direct and indirect emissions which allows the Council to more effectively meet its commitments to reducing carbon and assess whether interventions are effective in reducing carbon emissions.

Data that is comparable to previous years monitoring demonstrates that the Council is continuing to reduce its carbon emissions, year on year, which has been the case since monitoring began in 2010.

Year	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Carbon Tonnes	22,265	18,137	17,481	15,295

The new monitoring system provided a new baseline, which takes account of more sources of carbon, including indirect sources of emissions.

The main new sources of carbon being monitored are;

- Supply chain emissions (procured good and services)
- Staff commuting
- Working from home (emissions arising from staff during work time)

Year	21/22	22/23
Carbon tonnes	91,667.40	82,063
% change	-	-10.5%

Steps are being taken to make this monitoring more accurate and robust over time, and the Council is working with other local authorities in the North East to establish best practice.

The Carbon report will be published online and can be found here.

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Gateshead-Council-Carbon-Monitoring-Report-2022-23>

6. Progress towards our targets

Appendix 2 provides details of progress over the last year against our targets. Work with schools and tree planting has been of particular note and progressed well. Whole Council employee training on climate change was launched and is providing a foundation of climate knowledge for the whole Council.

7. The Biodiversity Duty: First Consideration

The Council has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity (habitats and species) as set by the Environment Act 2021 and the amended Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act). This is known as 'the biodiversity duty'.

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has published guidance on purpose and compliance.

The Council, as a local authority, must:

- Consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on its consideration.
- Act to deliver its policies and achieve its objectives.
- Report on its biodiversity duty actions. (Defra has guidance on this.)

The Council must, as part of their strategic assessment of their functions, have regard to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs), Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Site Strategies (introduced in the Environment Act).

Practical actions to achieve objectives could cover the full range of relevant Council activities such as:

- land under its ownership or management;
- built asset management;
- corporate policies and practices e.g. for water and natural resources, waste, artificial lighting, sustainable procurement;
- community engagement;
- partnership working;
- development plans, planning advice and decisions (LPA activity);
- delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – separately both as LPA and landowner/developer.

Local authorities and local planning authorities must write and publish a biodiversity report. The end date of our first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.

It proposed Gateshead commence a Biodiversity Report of the Council's activities using a method that complies with national guidelines to report later in the year.

Recommendations

8. It is recommended that

- (i) Full Council approve the amended wording to the Council's Environmental Policy
- (ii) That work commences to produce the first Biodiversity Report by Winter 2024.

for the following reason(s)

- (i) To progress towards the Council's carbon neutrality commitment
- (ii) To fulfil the Council's biodiversity duty

CONTACT: Anneliese Hutchinson

extension: 3881

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. Gateshead Council declared a Climate Emergency at Council on 23 May 2019 which outlined the following commitments.

Item 1. The declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action.

Item 2. Make the Council's activities carbon neutral by 2030

Item 3. Achieve 100% clean energy across the Council's full range of functions by 2030

Item 4. Ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to decision making are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030

Item 5. Support and work with all other relevant agencies towards making the entire area carbon neutral within the same timescale.

Item 6. Ensure that political and chief officers embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing, as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities, ensuring that any recommendations are fully costed.

Item 7. Work with, influence and inspire partners across the borough to help deliver this goal through all relevant strategies, plans and shared resources by developing a series of meetings, events and partner workshops

Item 8. Request that the Council and partners take steps to proactively include young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future.

Item 9. Call on the UK Government to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible, and ask local MPs to do likewise.

Background

2. The Council declared a climate Emergency in 2019. The Climate Action Plan setting out how the Council will work towards carbon neutrality was published in 2021 and a Council wide Environmental Policy was adopted in 2021. The Climate Strategy for Gateshead was adopted 2022.

Consultation

3. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders for Environment and Transport were consulted in the preparation of this report.

Alternative Options

4. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

5. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications – None**

- b) **Human Resources Implications** – None
- c) **Property Implications** - None
- 6. **Risk Management Implication** - None
- 7. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - The actions supports equality and diversity
- 8. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None
- 9. **Health Implications** - The actions have positive health implications.
- 10. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - The actions have strong positive implications for climate and sustainability.
- 11. **Human Rights Implications** - None
- 12. **Ward Implications** - All

Background Information

Environmental Policy

[Appendix 5. Environmental Policy Feb 2021.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#)

Gateshead Council Climate Emergency Action Plan

[3336-MC-Climate_emergency_Action_Plan_v22.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#)

Climate Strategy

[Climate Change Strategy 2022 - Gateshead Council](#)

Council Budget

[Budget 2024-25 - Gateshead Council](#)

Carbon monitoring

1. On recommendation from the IIE audit, the Council expanded its monitoring of carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases to include scope three emissions in addition to the scope 1 and 2 emissions covered by previous monitoring. The Council had previously monitored only scope 1 and 2 emissions and very limited scope 3, which consist of direct emissions such as energy consumed or business vehicles. Scope 3 emissions are those that are indirect such as procured goods, staff commuting or working at home.
2. From the 2021/22 financial year, this broader monitoring system was implemented, with emissions reported through SmartCarbon. SmartCarbon is an emissions monitoring and reporting tool, and is used by some other local authorities in the North East as well as other public sector organisations, for example Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. The new tool will ensure that the Council is prepared for additional monitoring requirements going forward.
3. A large proportion of the data required for the tool is data that is already collated and monitored by the Energy Team in the Council, however there are additional monitoring indicators.
4. Data that is comparable to previous years monitoring demonstrates that the Council is continuing to reduce its carbon emissions, year on year, which has been the case since monitoring began in 2010.

year	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Carbon Tonnes	22,265	18,137	17,481	15,295

5. The new monitoring system provides a new baseline, which takes account of more sources of Scope 3 carbon such as staff commuting. This new base line from 21/22 was **91,667.40 tonnes**. This is the first year to monitor against the new baseline.

Year	21/22	22/23
Carbon tonnes	91,667.40	82,063
% change from previous year	-	-10.5%

6. This increased monitoring is best practice and allows the Council to more effectively meet its commitments to reducing carbon, although figures will also be reported for scope 1 and 2 as comparison with current and previous years reporting.
7. One of the Council's biggest sources of carbon emissions is through procured goods and services. The Climate team are working with the procurement team to start effectively monitoring these emissions, through the tool, in addition to working with our local supply chain to support them in reducing their carbon footprint.

8. Other new areas of monitoring for SmartCarbon include, staff commuting and working from home emissions. These additional sources of carbon that are being monitored will allow the Council to assess whether interventions are effective in reducing carbon emissions, such as the Council Travel Plan.
9. It should be noted that the report requires the use of assumptions, and these are explained within the report.

Investors in the Environment Audit

10. The Council maintained its Silver accreditation.
11. The report states that 'Gateshead Council continues to demonstrate their organisation's commitment to minimising their environmental impacts and meet their carbon neutral by 2030 targets.

... they are showing leadership in responding to the climate emergency in the region. They've made great strides in their carbon reduction, supported by their use of the SmartCarbon platform, and were awarded Best Carbon Reduction at the 2022 iiE awards as a result.'
12. The recommendations include;

- Review and update the Environmental Policy to ensure it is in line with other policies and targets.
- Recommend closely monitoring the impact that training for staff is having on the understanding of climate change, specifically related to their role and individual impact.
- Produce and implement a waste management plan for the organisations waste, ensuring that waste audits provide data on composition and volumes. The overall aim of this will be to minimise waste, increase recycling and identify awareness raising opportunities.
- Further development of Action Plans to drive improvements across the organisation and engage different departments in achieving improvements.
- Ensure there is a clear feedback process for staff to share ideas and become Green Champions within the organisation.
- Recommend writing and implementing an updated travel plan and strategy as this is key for the reduction of carbon.
- Look to include more scope 3 monitoring including supply chain data.

Progress in the last 12 months towards climate change

13. The Council continues to explore and implement projects that will contribute towards addressing the Climate Emergency while also complementing Thrive objectives. The activities listed below are among those that have been taken forward in recent months across different Council services, with co-benefits for decarbonisation;

Awards

14. The Council won 'Best Carbon reduction' Investors in the Environment Award in 2022.
15. The Council was 'highly commended' for 'leadership in climate change' at the MJ awards in 2023.

Human Resources

16. Climate Emergency and how this is the responsibility of all staff and teams within the Council has been included within the induction pack for new starters at the Council, in addition the A and D procedure now includes a question on how each member of staff is contributing towards combatting climate change. This is being supported by a compulsory e-module on climate change for all staff which commenced in September 2023.

Local Plan

17. The Local Plan review is underway and a consultation took place in 2023/24 on the 'Start of the Conversation: the Gateshead Plan.' Climate change is a key feature throughout the document, but in particular theme 2 'Tackling Climate Change and enhancing the environment' which seeks to 'ensure all new development is carbon neutral (as a minimum) and that our communities and the environment are adaptable and resilient to climate change and flood risks'.

Themes

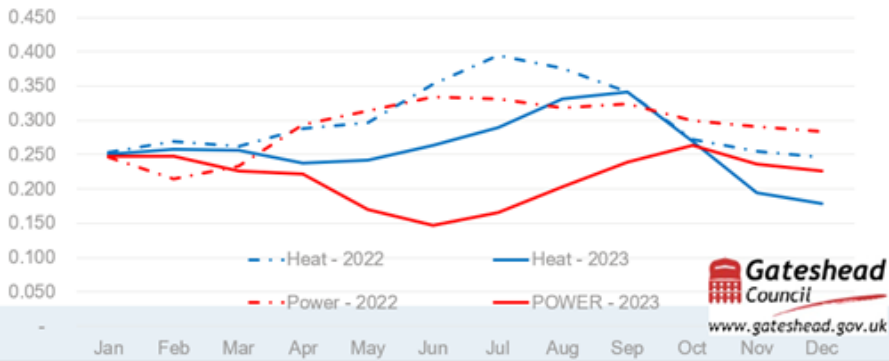
Energy

18. The heat network has recently been connected into the GRP new build site, Freight Village, off St James Rd, which over the next 4 years will see 270 new build homes (mix of private rent, social housing and open market homes) with low cost, low carbon heat. (houses are lifetime homes standard too)
19. On summer days the solar connects into the heat network and gives us a net zero heat network. Below are statistics around use of renewables in the network for 2023.

2023 – reducing network carbon emissions

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
% renewables - power	4%	9%	17%	31%	46%	50%	42%	42%
% renewables - heat	3%	3%	7%	8%	16%	20%	7%	0%

Monthly carbon factors, 2022 and 2023



20. We also received £280k funding from Innovate UK for the Fast Followers project – Engaging Gateshead with Net Zero, funding an officer for two years to support with overcoming non-technical barriers to net-zero.

Transport

21. Active and sustainable travel helps the climate, health and well-being and focuses on the most cost-effective way of travelling. It is a particularly effective way to make last mile journeys.

22. Transport North East are carrying out a refresh of the Transport Plan for the NE which will be finalised once the new combined authority mayor is in place.

23. In December last year the Joint Transport Committee adopted a regional Zero Emission Strategy which underpins the approach of Gateshead to EV charging. In Gateshead Electric vehicle charging infrastructure funding has been secured through LUF and UKSPF with a further bid for charging infrastructure being developed by Transport North East. This will equip more car parks.

24. The North East Enhanced Partnership (EP) came into effect in April 2023. Under the Partnership, funding is earmarked to Gateshead for public transport corridor improvements which will complement the upgrades to traffic signals which are underway currently funded through the Transforming Cities Fund. These will help journey times and enable public transport priority.

25. The £2 single bus fare has continued following extended support by government. In addition, the EP Partners have introduced new cheaper multi-modal day ticketing

across the region.

26. Officers are working with TNE to develop a programme of schemes to be implemented following the introduction of the combined authority, these will boost sustainable modes of transport.
27. Improvements to pedestrian access in the Quays have been carried out along with an improved pedestrian crossing at the end of the Tyne Bridge. Active travel events in Birtley schools resulted in reductions in home to school car use.
28. There are ongoing transport improvements underway, including the A167 cycle ways, the West Tyneside Cycle route and Metrogreen.
29. In addition, there is Active Travel England funding in Felling to improve cycle and pedestrian routes. Improved pedestrian crossing facilities have been introduced at the southern end of the Tyne Bridge as part of the work in the Quays. Whilst a social prescribing active travel project in East Gateshead is underway. The project is being implemented in conjunction with Edberts House, and Newcastle Gateshead CCG. The East Gateshead active travel schemes are an outcome of the LCWIP development and will complement the social prescribing activities.
30. Development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the borough is continuing following consultation last year. This identifies priorities for attention and will support the development of funding bid programmes. The development of the LCWIP has been funded through the Capability Fund administered by Active travel England.
31. The Council Travel Plan is being updated and will benefit from a forthcoming staff travel survey. Alongside existing travel plan measures (cycling facilities, business metro passes, discounted public transport fares etc.), engagement events have been held with staff to encourage changes to travel behaviour. This has included working closely across Council services in identifying specific needs raising awareness and holding events for staff to raise the profile of the travel plan offer.
32. The Council is engaging proactively in encouraging business travel plans. The Council Green Steps information for businesses to increase active and sustainable travel is now on the website. Stakeholder engagement has been held with businesses to increase awareness of the Tyne Bridge works and the opportunity to change travel behaviour to help mitigate its impact whilst reducing carbon emissions. Active and sustainable modes of travel are being promoted as alternatives to car travel during the restoration work. There will be engagement with businesses, staff and the travelling public through joint campaign along with Newcastle City Council and contractors Esh.
33. Our work with children in schools includes the introduction of the Be Cool toolkit to help schools encourage active travel. School engagement in travel planning is increasing and two projects in Gateshead were nominated for The Team Modeshift National Sustainable Travel Awards 2023. The Council and Living Streets were nominated in the 'Education Engagement Project of the Year' category for their collaboration on 'Be Cool Birtley', which brought together children from five schools

around to compete in a 'Walk of Fame' to see who could increase the number of people walking, cycling and scooting to school, and encourage more parents to park away from school to 'park and stride'. St Joseph's Catholic Primary School were separately nominated in the 'Best TravelWise Week Campaign - School' category for their efforts during TravelWise Week. We are delivering Bikeability and Child Pedestrian training to schools across Gateshead, with our team providing Child Pedestrian Training in six of the region's authorities.

34. Funding has also been used to investigate approaches for school streets. This sits alongside the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme to increase active travel measures, facilities and incentives including grants for business, scooter pods for schools and development of mobility hub facilities for car club, EV charging and cycling.

Food

15. In 2023 a Sustainable Food Partnership Coordinator was appointed who will help drive the food related priorities forward for Gateshead, including climate mitigation and adaptation. The North East are also taking part in a pilot 'Good Food Local'. Good Food Local is a project run by Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, with funding from Impact on Urban Health. Sustain has been working with local authorities in London for over 10 years to track data relating to the availability of healthy and sustainable food and wants to roll the scheme out nationwide, the North East has been chosen as the next region to roll out the scheme.

Economy and consumption

16. The Business Energy Savings Team (BEST) 2 project went live in October 2023. BEST is funded through the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme. The 18 month project will help SMEs achieve reductions in energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, thereby increasing business resilience and adaptive capacity to meet net zero targets and support regional economic growth. 30 businesses will access advice and be supported to undertake an energy audit. Financial assistance is available, subject to business case, to support the implementation of decarbonisation plans, expected to deliver 220 tonnes of greenhouse gas savings.

Adaptation

17. An internal flood group led by the Lead Local Flood Authority has been set up and meet regularly. Meetings have taken place between the Council and the Environment Agency to ensure collaboration. There is ongoing work in relation to Team Valley and Metrogreen flood alleviation.

Woodlands and nature

18. To assess some of the benefits of trees and woodland within the Borough, in helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change, a tree canopy survey was

commissioned for Gateshead. Key outcomes from this study included an average tree canopy cover across the borough of 23.6%, giving a total annual benefit from total carbon storage, annual carbon sequestration, annual pollution removal and annual avoided runoff of £14.2 million, with the Council's own woodlands and trees annual benefits totalling £2.2 m.

19. To facilitate the Council's targets for tree planting and woodland creation, a successful bid was made to DEFRA's Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund to fund the appointment of two woodland creation officer posts for two years. The post holders started work in June and July. Ten sites have been identified for tree planting/woodland creation across the borough this winter 23/24 with funding secured for the planting of over 13,000 trees including 2 'tiny forests' and 8 other sites, 4 in East Gateshead and 4 in West Gateshead. This builds on the total of over 23,000 trees already planted, since the target of 100,000 trees by 2030 was set by the Council in November 2019.
20. With the staff resources and external funding to cover the cost of planting and maintaining the trees now in place, there is an urgent need to secure the vacant possession of Council land to allow woodland creation/tree planting schemes to progress in the coming years. If this land is secured it should be feasible to meet the Council's tree planting target. However, to meet the target of creating 250ha of new woodland by 2050 it will be necessary for the Council to work with NGO partners to secure additional non-Council owned land to create woodland on. To achieve this the Council will need to take a proactive approach to acquiring the necessary land.

Waste

21. In December 2018, the government published the Resource and Waste Strategy (RaWS) setting out ambitious targets for increasing the level of recycling across England, whilst seeking to minimise waste growth and prevent waste from being disposed of by landfill. Specifically, within this strategy were three key legislative changes which Government sought views on through two rounds of consultations (in 2019 and 2021).

These being:

- Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (pEPR)
 - A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) on single use drinks containers
 - Consistency in household and business waste collections
22. The above are now often referred to as the Collection and Packaging Reforms (CPR) which are focused on ensuring that waste is reduced and recycling is increased.
 23. The Council is proud that no waste has been routinely sent to landfill in the past 10 years. Gateshead's residual waste is sorted for recyclables (and additional 2% recycling) including metals and wood, and the remaining waste gets taken to the energy from waste plant in Teesside. The garden waste is taken for composting and there is a good take up rate for this provision.

24. The Council promote the waste hierarchy, including reduce and re-use and provide links on the website on how to achieve this. In addition the Campground HWRC site hosted a pop up re-use shop on the 25th November 2023 and is exploring ways to increase this provision. Cycle access to Household Waste and Recovery sites has been introduced.
25. A behavioural change campaign is ongoing in relation to effective recycling which seeks to improve the current recycling contamination rate of 20%.
26. There is also ongoing communications around the safe and responsible way of disposing of vapes which is a costly and dangerous hazard locally and nationally for the Waste Collection Services due to batteries and possibilities of fires. The Council is aware of, and in support of the proposed ban on single use vapes.
27. National policy and guidance is being introduced including deposit return schemes and legislation for packaging reduction.

Communities and communications

28. Work with schools has begun and includes a pilot Climate Action Plan at XP Gateshead which is being led by the students and includes an energy audit. Other schools within Gateshead are progressing their climate actions and plans including tree planting and active travel initiatives.

Communications with our stakeholders about climate change has been ongoing and includes;

[From the industrial revolution to a green revolution - Gateshead Council](#)

[Clean Air Zone - applications for grants set to open - Gateshead Council](#)

[Gateshead recognised with award for carbon reduction - Gateshead Council](#)

Mine water heat pump and DEN on Moneybox [\(25\) Post | Feed | LinkedIn](#)

BBC Sounds: [Money Box - Heating the homes of the future - BBC Sounds](#)

[Active travel competition for Birtley children - Gateshead Council](#)

[What can you do to help Gateshead go carbon neutral? - Gateshead Council](#)

[Gateshead wins vital funds to help expand innovative heat networks - Gateshead Council](#)

[Gateshead Awards - Gateshead Council](#)

[Climate pledges at Gateshead school - Gateshead Council](#)

[Gateshead awarded nearly £1m in funding for active travel - Gateshead Council](#)

[Gateshead school going the extra mile during TravelWise Week - Gateshead Council](#)

[Zero carbon power shows the way ahead - Gateshead Council](#)

Updated Environmental Policy

Gateshead Council's Environmental Policy February 2021 (updated 2024)

Gateshead Council recognises the importance of our natural environment. We are committed to reducing the environmental impact of our operations and will support residents and businesses to do the same.

A thriving natural environment can deliver considerable benefits to our communities. In the same way, action on climate change can provide many local benefits to health and well-being, economic growth, social equity and cohesion, and the resilience of our communities. In taking action to improve our environment and reduce carbon emissions, we will seek to optimise these wider benefits.

Key Principles:

Climate Emergency

• Reduce the Council's operational green house gas emissions to carbon neutrality by 2030 (scopes 1 and 2)

- Ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to decision making give consideration to a shift to ~~zero~~-carbon neutrality by 2030
- Support local organisations and our communities on the journey to reducing their carbon emissions by generating and sharing ideas, facilitating connections between groups and individuals, and providing an exemplar for other organisations to follow

Transport

- Work to further reduce the environmental impacts of staff travel, including reducing the need to travel, and promoting sustainable modes of transport
- Through specific initiatives, and through our strategic decisions we will support active travel, public transport improvements, and other approaches to decarbonise transport that will reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, and contribute to sustainable access for all

Waste

- Minimise waste generated by the Council's activities
- Encourage households and businesses to minimise the amount of waste generated across the borough
- Apply the waste hierarchy of prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery and (only then) safe disposal

Procurement and Investments

- Support a shift to a green and just economy by seeking to procure products and services in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible manner
- Consider carbon and environmental impact in spending decisions to support the transition to a green and just economy

- Procurement and investments will support local organisations and service providers wherever feasible, retaining value within the local economy

Energy

- Continue to expand the use of clean low-carbon energy and heat across all the council's operations
- Proactively support the development of new low-carbon energy technologies, taking advantage of energy infrastructure and opportunities specific to Gateshead

Property, Land and Grounds Maintenance

- Minimise carbon emissions associated with the council's property portfolio – striving to achieve carbon neutrality across commercial and residential properties
- Optimise the potential for the council's land holdings to support biodiversity and our natural environment
- Work with partner organisations to increase tree planting in Gateshead, and maintain tree cover - increasing total tree cover to 17% by 2050
- Prepare a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with partner organisations to address the biodiversity emergency

We will monitor progress against the key principles of this policy. Annual reviews and updates will take account of relevant changes in legislation and other factors.

The policy will be made available on the council's website, and will be communicated to all employees, including as part of the induction process for new staff.

Updated April 2024

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TITLE OF REPORT: **Communities and Volunteering Service**

REPORT OF: **Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive Officer**

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks to update Cabinet on the establishment of the Communities and Volunteering Service and to seek approval to move this service and its budget from Housing, Environmental and Health Communities to Public Health and Wellbeing.

Background

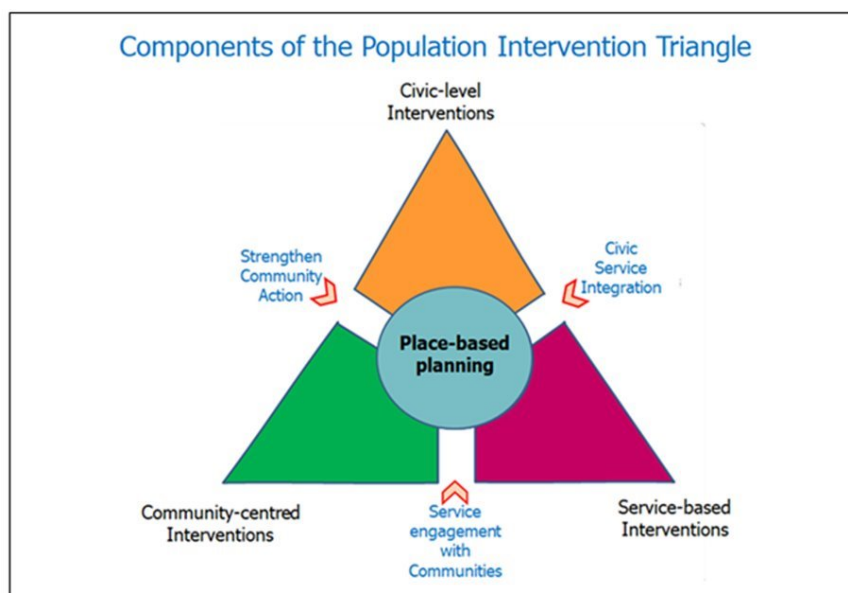
1. From 5 February 2024 as part of the reorganisation of the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) and the creation of the new Locality Service, Cabinet approved the transfer of those poverty related Borough wide activities that previously fell into NMT be placed with the Interim Director of Communities and Volunteering to create a new Communities and Volunteering Service. The budget for the service is £0.607m.

Communities and Volunteering Service

2. The work of the Communities and Volunteering service is focussed on the alleviation of poverty, inequality and disadvantage. The service supports the Council, its Elected Members, internal and external stakeholders by providing insight, research and expertise to aid the understanding of socio-economic disadvantage, its cause and effect, with a view to better understanding the lived experience of Gateshead residents, sharing good practice, influencing policy, process and ways of working to deliver upon the priorities set out in the Thrive policy framework and in support of the Council’s aspirations for locality working.
3. The activities currently underway as part of the Communities and Volunteering work plan include:
 - I. **Holiday Activity Programme** – this provides activities and lunch for Gateshead children during the school holidays. The target group is children who are eligible for benefits related free school meals, although other children do attend.
 - II. **Food poverty and sustainability** – this includes the development and support of the VCSE Food Network, an informal partnership of VCSE agencies providing emergency food, food pantries, and fair share markets. More recently, food sustainability has been added, this is about reducing food waste, increasing redistribution of good quality food and the environmental impact of food production.
 - III. **Fuel poverty and Warm Space Network** – this includes the development, constant evolution, and delivery of the Gateshead Fuel Poverty Action Plan,

within which is the advancement and sustainability of the Warm Space Network, the continual provision of energy roadshows and promotion of the Green Doctor scheme to aid household energy efficiency.

- IV. **Volunteering** – this includes the implementation and sustainability of the Independent Volunteer Centre for Gateshead and supports the Council’s environmental and corporate volunteering.
 - V. **VCSE relationships** – this includes supporting commissioning colleagues and others, led by Dale Owens, Strategic Director for Integrated Adults and Social Care Services to develop and strengthen our strategic approach to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and form commissioning intentions to aid their continual development and enhance our collective impact.
4. All of the work described above supports implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the place-based approach by strengthening the seams of the population intervention triangle below.



5. This proposal to move these services into Public Health and Wellbeing will allow the Interim Service Director of Volunteering and Communities to be supported with the resources and expertise within Public Health and Wellbeing and will allow the Council to broaden the activities and the impact of the Communities and Volunteering Service by taking on the priorities described in paragraph 7 below.
6. Adding to the work described in paragraph three above, and subject to the approval of Cabinet, the Communities and Volunteering Service will focus on:
 - A. Collaborating with Public Health and Wellbeing, Childrens Services and Education and others, to develop an anti-poverty strategy for Gateshead.
 - B. Lead the work set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure a health standard of living for all, in accordance with international law on economic and social rights.

- C. Increase oversight, understanding and accessibility of information, guidance, and self-help resources to better support our residents and frontline staff to get the right help, at the right time, and in the right way.
- D. Continue to collaborate with the locality team and support the development and implementation of the locality plans.

As the team integrates and embeds within Public Health and Wellbeing the work described above will evolve and adjust to reflect public health priorities.

7. Cabinet are asked to approve:

- (i) the proposal to transfer of the Communities and Volunteering Service from Housing, Environmental and Healthy Communities into Public Health and Wellbeing;
- (ii) an administrative virement of £0.607m, moving the budget for these services from Housing, Environmental and Healthy Communities to Public Health and Wellbeing;.
- (iii) the re-naming of the service, as Community, Health and Wellbeing.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Approves the proposed move of the Communities and Volunteering Service from Housing, Environmental and Health Communities to Public Health and Wellbeing.
- (ii) Approves the change of name for the service to Community, Health and Wellbeing.
- (iii) Approve an administrative budget virement of £0.607m.
- (iv) Notes the areas of work progressed to date, and the proposed priorities moving forward.

for the following reason(s)

- (i) To refocus our efforts around poverty, inequality and socio-economic disadvantage and support the Council to deliver its commitment to ensure a healthy standard of living for all, in accordance with international law on economic and social rights.
- (ii) To support the Director of Public Health as the responsibilities of this role broaden.

CONTACT: Alison Dunn

extension: 5011

Contributors:

Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities
 Public Health and Wellbeing
 Adult Social Care
 Childrens Services
 Finance

Policy Context

This proposal will support the Council to deliver the Thrive Policy Framework and the objectives set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Background

From 5 February as part of the reorganisation of the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) and the creation of the new Locality Service, Cabinet approved the transfer of those poverty related Borough wide activities that previously fell into NMT be placed with the Interim Director of Communities and Volunteering creating a new service to deliver key areas of work around the alleviation of poverty, known as the Communities and Volunteering Service.

This new service continues to support the alleviation of poverty, inequality and disadvantage which includes but is not limited to the provision and co-ordination of emergency food and the DfE Holiday Activity & Food Programme, tackling fuel poverty, developing the Warm Space Network and good quality volunteering opportunities for Gateshead residents as well as being a single point of contact for the Gateshead VCSE.

The service also supports the Council, its Elected Members, internal and external stakeholders by providing insight, research and expertise to aid the understanding of socio-economic disadvantage, its cause and effect, with a view to better understanding the lived experience of Gateshead residents, sharing good practice, influencing policy, process and ways of working to deliver upon the priorities set out in the Thrive policy framework and in support of the Council's aspirations for locality working.

Consultation

1. The Cabinet Members for Public Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Volunteering, the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Deputy Leader have been consulted on this report and are supportive of the recommendations.

Alternative Options

2. The Communities and Volunteering Service remains with Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities.

Implications of Recommended Options

3. **Resources** – The Strategic Director of Public Health confirms there are no negative resource implications.

Financial Implications – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report.

4. **Risk Management Implications** – There are no risk management implications.

5. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The proposal will support and enable our commitment to diversity and inclusion allowing us to better deliver on key priorities around poverty, inequality, and socio-economic disadvantage.
6. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None.
7. **Health Implications** – The proposals will have positive benefits around health and social inequalities, by allowing us to better share expertise, resource, and capacity to deliver our key priorities around poverty, inequality and socio-economic disadvantage.
8. **Sustainability Implications** – There Communities and Volunteering Service oversees a key piece of work around food waste and sustainability. Joining with Public Health and Wellbeing will bring additional impetus, expertise, and resource to this work.
9. **Human Rights Implications** – The proposals have no impacts on human rights.
10. **Area and Ward Implications** – The proposals will potentially benefit all wards.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Home Energy Conservation Act Report 2023

REPORT OF: Anneliese Hutchinson – Interim Strategic Director
 Economy, Innovation and Growth

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks Cabinet’s approval of the submission of the Council’s return to government in relation to the Home Energy Conservation Act (1995).

Background

2. The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) requires all local authorities (LAs) in England to submit biennial reports to the Secretary of State of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) demonstrating what energy conservation measures they have adopted to improve the energy performance of residential accommodation within that LA’s area. This covers measures to improve properties in the owner-occupier, private rented sector, and social rented sector. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero uses data submitted to inform policy thinking on energy efficiency, and to build an ongoing picture of local and national energy efficiency policy delivery.
3. The 2023/ 24 report format has changed to a survey. The strategy for future works is covered by other mechanisms such as the Zero Carbon Heat Strategy and the Asset Management Plan for social homes.
4. The 2023/ 24 HECA return captures information on the following key themes where response to questions is optional but highly encouraged:
 - I. Headline & Overview
 - II. Communication,
 - III. Social Housing Decarbonisation,
 - IV. Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards
 - V. Green Home Finance
 - VI. Fuel Poverty
 - VII. Government Funded Schemes,
 - VIII. Fuel Poverty, and
 - IX. Smart Metering.
5. Gateshead has successfully delivered energy efficiency measures for over a decade through the historical partnerships of Warm Up North, Warmzone, Warmfront and the Decent Homes through The Gateshead Housing Company (TGHC). Private sector investment has also seen significant works secured in the borough and in Housing Association stock. More recently, it has been prioritised to deliver area-based schemes to high rise dwellings managed by the Council while tackling other low rise, “hard to treat” non-traditional properties.

Proposal

6. It is proposed to submit the HECA report, as summarised in Appendix 2

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that
- (i) Approves the Home Energy Conservation Act Report.
 - (ii) Agrees to it being submitted to the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero following the Cabinet meeting
 - (iii) Agrees to the publication of Appendix 2 on the Council's website

for the following reason(s)

- (i) To meet the Council's statutory obligations under HECA (1995)
- (ii) To continue improving the energy efficiency of both housing and non-domestic buildings in Gateshead
- (iii) To reduce CO₂ emissions from the domestic sector

Policy Context

1. There are a few schemes and future proposals with the aim to deliver measures to improve the energy efficiency of the residential stock in the borough, reduce fuel poverty, lower carbon emissions, and improve housing conditions. Schemes are also proposed to improve non-domestic properties that the Council owns, and buildings owned by small to medium size enterprises (SMEs). Proposals contribute towards achieving many elements of Vision 2030, the Councils Corporate Plan and other council strategies and commitment as outlined below.

The Corporate Plan – Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives

2. Measures reported have helped to, and will continue to help to, make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives where people and families are at the heart of what the Council does. It will help to address the inequalities in housing standards by investment in sustainable energy solutions in the borough.

Climate Emergency

3. The Council declared a Climate Emergency in May 2019, which has been followed up by the preparation of Climate Emergency Action Plans. As part of the commitment, the Council commits to making its operations and estate Zero Carbon by 2030. The HECA Strategy plays a key role in supporting emissions reduction in Council Housing, which forms part of the Council's estate.

Economic Development Strategy

4. The Council adopted an Economic Development Strategy in November 2021. Works to delivery energy generation and conservation can potentially create growth in the green jobs sector which will link in with the aims of the Economic Development Strategy.

Background

5. Improving home energy conservation, tackling fuel poverty, and reducing energy use remain core priorities for national government, there have been many developments in recent years, which have led to a step-change in how energy schemes, grants and reducing energy bills are realised. These changes also shape future delivery.
 - **Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA)** - Using powers under this act, all Local Authorities are required to prepare reports every two years setting out the energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective, and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.
 - **Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding** - The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a government energy efficiency scheme in Great Britain to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty. The scheme began in April 2013 and the current round is ECO4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme, running until Mar 2026 – support is limited to one obligation named the

Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (HHCRO) which must promote measures which improve the ability of low income, fuel poor households to heat their homes and lead to financial savings on energy bills such as installing insulation or heating measures.

- **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund** – The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund is a government-backed scheme which provides grants to social landlords and social housing managers with social housing properties that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'D' or below. The scheme covers various upgrades including new heating systems (including district heating), energy efficient doors and windows and upgrades to insulation. The scheme also has a focus on clean energy, supporting social housing to decarbonise, improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.
- **Local Authority Retrofit Scheme** - £500m has been announced for low-income and cold Local Authority homes.
- **Housing Act 2004** – The Council can exercise powers under the Act in specific relation to the mandatory housing standard the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Excess Cold is one of the twenty-nine hazards a property must be free from. Homeowners or landlords can be compelled to improve the property to improve thermal comfort and energy efficiency.
- **Energy Price Caps** – Set by Ofgem twice a year Energy Price caps were introduced to ensure consumers pay a fairer price for gas and electricity. These caps apply to prepayment, default, and standard variable tariffs (SVT).

Historic Delivery 2021- 2023

6. Gateshead Council and its partners have delivered energy efficiency improvements to both private and social housing. Delivery has been limited for most of the period, due to the absence of grant funding for many residents and a step change in delivery mechanisms.

Future Delivery 2023 - 2025

7. A range of initiatives are in place outside of the HECA Reporting format. These include but are not limited to:
 - a. The Council continuing to progress its Zero Carbon Heat Strategy, which has a priority around heat network connections as the main source of zero carbon heat to 2030
 - b. Investment in energy efficiency measures to 120 homes across three Council high rise blocks
 - c. Connection of up to 271 new homes to the Gateshead District Energy Scheme, at the Freight Depot site
 - d. Development of further heat network connections, including an existing council housing estate of 550 homes
 - e. ECO4/Great British Insulation Scheme delivery with 2 energy suppliers targeting Gateshead residents
 - f. Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (part of regional award) to provide retrofit energy advice to North East and specifically Gateshead residents
 - g. Development of a Fuel Poverty Strategy and Action Plan in 2024

Consultation

8. The Cabinet Members for Environment, Housing and Economy have been consulted on 26th March 2024 and the Leader Deputy Leader have been consulted on this report.

Alternative Options

9. There is no alternative option. given that preparation of the report is a requirement under the Act and that publishing it provides transparency to the public.

Implications of Recommended Options

10. Resources

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources & Digital confirms that there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – None – all works to be managed within existing staffing resources within Gateshead Council.
- c) **Property Implications** – Capital works arising from the delivery of actions within the revised further report will improve the condition of Council homes or premises owned / managed by Gateshead Council. All other works will take place in private sector domestic properties outside Council control.

11. **Risk Management Implications** – Key risk remains the availability of external funding to support energy efficiency measures in homes and for residents.

12. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The works to be delivered have been prioritised on physical condition of the properties and business case.

13. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None.

14. **Health Implications** – The proposals will have positive health benefits, by installing modern, efficient heating systems and delivering fabric insulation improvements to homes thus reducing cold, mouldy, damp conditions which can cause respiratory illnesses and excess winter deaths.

15. **Sustainability Implications** – The proposals continue to deliver environmental benefits through reduced carbon emissions, reduced demand for grid electricity, social benefits through improved home comfort and health, as well as economic benefits by passing on fuel savings.

16. **Human Rights Implications** – The proposals have no impacts on human rights.

17. **Area and Ward Implications** – The proposals will potentially benefit all wards.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates – Transfer of Uncollectable Amounts

REPORT OF: Darren Collins, Strategic Director, Resources and Digital

Purpose of the Report

1. This report asks Cabinet to approve the transfer of outstanding balances from Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) accounts, where all possible recovery action has been taken and the balances are now considered to be uncollectable.

Background

2. Council Tax and NDR charges are levied in accordance with statutory legislation. Under the localisation of Non-Domestic Rates Business Rates, a proportion of monies collected by the Council are retained locally to form part of the core funding of the Council.
3. Charges which remain unpaid are subject to appropriate recovery action. Despite this action there remain some debts, which are considered uncollectable.
4. The amounts, which have been identified as uncollectable are summarised at Appendix 1. These balances represent the full amount identified as uncollectable at the end of the financial year 2023-24.
5. The Council takes all of recovery action available by law to enforce payment of an outstanding amount before considering a debt for write off. There is an increase in levels of Council Tax debt on a national basis and whilst the amount of uncollectable debt will fluctuate year on year the expectation is that this will follow an upward trend. The Revenues team will work with residents who are unable to pay and will provide help and support which includes flexible payment plans, breathing space and other bespoke assistance as the circumstances may require. We also have a unique process to allow our staff to transfer a telephone call from a resident direct to the Citizens Advice Gateshead for specialist debt and other help and advice.
6. Where a balance remains unpaid the Council will then take further recovery action to enforce payment which will include the following:
 - Reminder Letter
 - Second Reminder Letter
 - Final Notice
 - Court Summons
 - Notice of Liability Order
 - Attachment of Earnings
 - Attachment of Benefit
 - Arrangement Reminder Letter (if an arrangement made was not maintained)

- Enforcement Agent Warning Letter
- Enforcement Agent Referral
- Bankruptcy Warning Letter
- Charging Orders

When all efforts to recover a balance have been exhausted the debt is assessed and then recommended for write off. Write offs are then checked by our internal Audit team ensuring recovery action is initiated and recorded promptly and is appropriate and supported by documentary evidence.

Proposal

7. It is proposed to transfer the balance of 1,419 accounts to the value of £1,824,068.25 for Council Tax and 107 accounts to the value of £940,521.03 for Non-Domestic Rates.
8. In addition to this, balances of £500.00 or less on 5,626 individual accounts totalling £435,827.80 in respect of Council Tax and 72 accounts totalling -£63,245.39 for Non-Domestic Rates, have been transferred under delegated powers in accordance with Financial Regulation 8.10. Additionally, whilst a debt may be written off; if circumstances change, such as a dividend being paid from the winding up of a business, a reduction in the valuation of a property, measures are taken to reinstate debt to account for any additional income being received. This is the case for the Non-Domestic Rate balances under £500 where the write off reversed exceeds the balance written off.
9. The total proposed transfer of uncollectable balances is therefore £2,259,896.05 in respect of Council Tax and £877,275.64 in respect of Non-Domestic Rates.

Recommendations

10. It is recommended that Cabinet agree to:
 - (i) The transfer of 1,419 uncollectable accounts in respect of Council Tax balances totalling £1,824,068.25.
 - (ii) The transfer of 107 uncollectable accounts of Non-Domestic Rates balances totalling £940,521.03.
 - (iii) Note the action taken under delegated powers to transfer Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates accounts with balances of £500 or less identified in paragraph 8 of this report.

for the following reason(s)

- (i) To ensure the effective management of the Council's resources.
- (ii) To ensure that the Council Accounts accurately reflect the correct financial position.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The proposals in this report are consistent with Council priorities and in particular ensuring that effective use is made of Council resources to support the framework for “making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives”.
The Council is committed to taking all appropriate recovery action necessary before considering a debt for write off. This includes issuing recovery notices at the start of the recovery process, telephone and email engagement, and where necessary, legal service, court and enforcement action. Despite the Council’s best endeavours, it is inevitable that debt will not be collected and will ultimately have to be written off. The Councils financial policies ensure that an appropriate level of doubtful debt provision is maintained to finance these write offs.

Background

2. The transfer reflects Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates accounts where the recovery process has been exhausted and it is no longer cost effective to pursue the cases through the court process.

Details of Debts Included in Transfer

The tables below give details of the reason and the year that the debt was created.

Council Tax

Year of Debit	Deceased	Insolvency	No Trace	Irrecoverable	Other	Total
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Pre 2020	20	35	123	1,540	1	1,719
2020/21	7	21	66	5	1	100
2021/22	8	39	109	8	1	165
2022/23	12	69	98	9	2	190
2023/24	4	54	21	4	2	85

Total	2,259
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- Other – includes 1p rounding’s, small balances and uneconomical to collect debts.
- Irrecoverable debts – procedures are in place to attempt to recover all outstanding debts which can extend over a number of financial years. There are cases when every possible recovery option has been attempted and there is no realistic prospect of collection based on an individual’s financial circumstances and therefore the debt is recommended for write off.

Non-Domestic Rates

Year of Debit	Insolvency/Dissolved	Bankruptcy	Unable to recover	Other	Total
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Pre 2020	182	5	77	18	282
2020/21	49	0	13	2	64
2021/22	197	2	12	3	214
2022/23	196	4	3	1	204
2023/24	110	0	3	0	113
Total					877

- Other – includes 1p rounding's, small balances and uneconomical to collect debts.
- Irrecoverable debts – after all of our available recovery options have been exhausted, outstanding debts are reviewed to assess if there is a realistic prospect of collection based on the individual circumstance of the case, where there isn't the debt is recommended for write off.

Consultation

3. The Leader of the Council has been consulted on this report.

Alternative Options

4. No alternative options are proposed. A regular review of debt owed to the Council is an essential part of good recovery and accounting procedures.

Implications of Recommended Option

5. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the cost of the transfer of £2,259,896.05 for Council Tax and £877,275.64 for Non-Domestic Rates can be met from the bad debt provision within the Collection Fund.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – Nil
- c) **Property Implications** - Nil

Risk Management Implication - The transfers mitigate the risk of entries in the Council's statement of accounts being incorrect

6. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - Nil
7. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – Nil
8. **Health Implications** - Nil

9. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications - Nil

10. Human Rights Implications - Nil

11. Ward Implications - All Wards

12. Background Information: None

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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