



**Implications for Durham County Council
of the Government's policy programme**

**Report of Corporate Management Team
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Purpose of the Report

- 1 On 14 December 2011, Cabinet considered the most recent report on the implications of the Coalition Government's policy programme. This report provides Cabinet with an update on the major policy developments and announcements since then and analyses the implications for the Council and County Durham.

Executive Summary

- 2 Since the beginning of the year, the Government has made a number of policy announcements, which progress its initial policy proposals set out in *The Coalition: our Programme for Government* and subsequent bills and white papers. In addition, a number of proposed pieces of legislation have been revised following further consultation and debate and consideration by Parliament.
- 3 The most significant announcements since the last report to Members relate to the following, outlined in more detail below:
 - Deficit reduction;
 - Economic growth and planning reform;
 - Engagement and economic participation;
 - Education standards and inspection;
 - Local Government finance;
 - Welfare reform;
 - NHS and public health reforms;
 - Late night drinking and hate crime;
 - National alcohol strategy;
 - Open data and transparency;
 - Open Public Services;
 - Waste and recycling;
 - Electoral reform;
 - E-accessibility.
- 4 The common themes of Government policy such as transparency, choice, community empowerment and more diverse patterns of public service provision are still evident.

- 5 Clearly, the various policy changes will have major implications for the Council and the steps it is taking to develop an 'altogether better Durham'.
- 6 The Council and its partners are continuing to analyse the impact that Government policy will have on local communities and on our ability to deliver the sustainable community strategy and wherever possible, are working together to respond proactively to the Government's policy changes.
- 7 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report and agree the action being taken to anticipate and respond to the Government's policy reforms.

Background

- 8 Cabinet considered a report on 15 September 2010 on the emerging policy statements made by the Government. Initially, the most comprehensive policy statement was the *'The Coalition: our programme for government'* which set out the Government's proposals to tackle the deficit and transform the relationship between citizens and the state, under the watchwords, of 'freedom', 'fairness' and 'responsibility'.
- 9 Since then, the Government has published its Comprehensive Spending Review and a number of white papers and bills, which provided more detail on its policy proposals. These have been the subject of reports to Cabinet on 2 November 2010, 26 January 2011, 25 May 2011, 14 September 2011 and 14 December 2011. Where necessary, further policy reports have been prepared on specific topics, such as the Localism Bill/Act, changes to the NHS and health care and proposed reforms to the planning system.

Update

- 10 The most significant policy announcements since the last report to Members in December 2011, relate to the following, which are outlined in more detail below:
 - Deficit reduction and public expenditure;
 - Economic growth and planning reform;
 - Engagement and economic participation;
 - Education standards and inspection;
 - Local Government finance;
 - Welfare reform;
 - NHS and public health reforms;
 - Late night drinking and hate crime;
 - National alcohol strategy;
 - Open data and transparency;
 - Open Public Services;
 - Waste and recycling;
 - Electoral reform;
 - E-accessibility.

Deficit reduction and public expenditure

- 11 The Government has maintained its strategy to reduce the deficit, principally by reducing public expenditure.
- 12 This is to be achieved by departmental spending reductions across Government, with the largest percentage reductions to be made in Communities and Local Government, Work and Pensions, Environment and Rural Affairs and Transport.
- 13 In his Autumn statement, the Chancellor announced continuing public sector pay restraint for a further two years, limiting pay increases to one per cent a year. In addition, pay review bodies were to be established to review differences between wage levels in the public and private sectors in different parts of the country, with a view to considering the introduction of regional as opposed to national pay policies. In the 2012 Budget, the Chancellor confirmed his interest in introducing regional pay, publishing his economic evidence for such a move and announcing that some government departments will have the option of negotiating regional pay settlements for civil servants when the current civil service pay freeze ends. It is expected that the approach will be rolled out to other parts of the public sector in due course.
- 14 The Chancellor also announced that to maintain departmental budget reductions at current forecast levels, it would be necessary to achieve a further £10 billion reduction in welfare savings by 2016, based on reduced unemployment forecasts. This would be in addition to the £18 billion reduced spending on welfare included in the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010 and the 10 per cent reduction in the costs of Council Tax benefit support.
- 15 Each year, the Government publishes public expenditure statistical analyses which give an indication of the distribution of public spending between regions.
- 16 The analyses for 2010/11 highlight that for total identifiable public expenditure on services per head in real terms, expenditure per head in the North East was 0.34 per cent less than the national (England) average increase of 11.31 per cent between 2006/7 to 2010/11, whereas that in East Anglia was 9.57 per cent more than the national average. In the more recent period since the CSR, the reduction in expenditure per head in the North East was 42 per cent more than the 'national average', while the expenditure reduction per head for East Anglia was 56 per cent less the national average over the same period. East Anglia was in fact one of four regions including the East Midlands, the South West and the North West where the percentage expenditure reductions per head were below the national average.

Economic growth and planning reform

- 17 Alongside the 2011 Budget, the Government published its Plan for Growth to articulate its measure to promote long term economic growth. This contained 235 measures to encourage investment and exports as a route to a more balanced economy, make the UK the best place in Europe to start, finance

and grow a business, create a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe and create the most competitive tax system in the UK.

- 18 To coincide with the 2012 Budget, the Government published a progress report against the plan and the subsidiary National Infrastructure Plan. Progress was being made against 74 per cent of actions with a further 25 per cent completed.
- 19 A major element of the Government's strategy for economic growth is reform of the planning system. Central to this is the consolidation of national planning policy statements and guidance into a single National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Cabinet considered a report on the Government's draft proposals for reform at its meeting of 12 October 2011.
- 20 The draft Framework was subject to considerable debate by different interests and lobbies and on 27 March 2012, the Government published the final National Planning Policy Framework, which came into immediate effect.
- 21 Transitional arrangements allow local authorities and inspectors, for the next 12 months, to continue to give full weight to 'relevant' policies adopted since 2004 even where there is a 'limited degree of conflict' with the NPPF. However, the arrangements also allow "due weight" to be given to relevant policies in existing plans beyond this 12-month period, depending on their degree of consistency with the framework. Decision-makers may also give weight to emerging local plan policies, according to the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which there are unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of policies with the NPPF.
- 22 The NPPF is intended to refocus planning policy to better support growth by introducing a presumption in favour of sustainable development to underpin all local plans and decisions, and to localise choice about the use of previously developed land, ending nationally and regionally imposed targets.
- 23 In addition to reforming national planning policy, the Government announced that it intends to introduce further measures to deregulate and simplify the planning system, for example consulting on reducing information requirements and on proposals to amend the Use Class Order and the associated permitted development rights to make changing the use of buildings easier, for implementation by April 2013.
- 24 A more detailed assessment of the NPPF, its implications and the support the Government has pledged to local authorities to enable them to get their plans up to date quickly is the subject of a more detailed report to this meeting of Cabinet.

Engagement and economic participation

- 25 On 25 November 2011, the Deputy Prime Minister launched the £1 billion Youth Contract scheme to provide new opportunities for young people, including apprenticeships and work experience placements. The announcement was billed as marking a substantial increase in the support and help available to young people through the Work Programme, Jobcentre Plus and sector-based work academies.

- 26 Key measures include the provision of 160,000 job subsidies worth up to £2,275 each to business to employ an 18-24 year old through the Work Programme and an increase in the number of incentive payments worth £1,500 each for employers to take on young people as apprentices. In addition, an extra 250,000 Work Experience places over the next three years will be created so that every 18 to 24 year-old can be offered a work experience place, before they enter the Work Programme.
- 27 In addition, extra support is to be provided through Jobcentre Plus in the form of weekly, rather than fortnightly signing-on meetings, more time to talk to an adviser and a National Careers Service interview.
- 28 On 1 December 2011, the Government published *New Challenges, New Chances*, its response to the proposals to reform further education so that it is better able to provide people with the necessary skills and qualifications to secure employment and meet the needs of businesses and employers.
- 29 Key elements include:
- providing better access to comparative information on training providers and courses to enable students to make informed choices;
 - providing intensive support and intervening to tackle failing provision;
 - engaging business in qualification design, development and assessment;
 - a new independent commission on adult education and vocational learning will be established to promote excellence in teaching;
 - supporting the sector to capitalise on international demand for technician and higher level vocational skills training and qualifications;
 - ensuring that young people aged 19 up to 24 will be able to access a full range of programmes including, English and maths skills, to enable them to continue into further learning or move into employment. FE Loans will support those aged over 24 doing courses at Level 3 and above who want to re-train or up-skill to get a job or progress onto higher education;
 - a comprehensive Vocational Education and Training programme including Government funding to support Higher Apprenticeships, enabling employers, colleges and universities to deliver the advanced skills most critical for growth;
 - more freedoms and flexibilities for colleges to ensure the provision of high quality, flexible courses to meet the needs of their local areas.
- 30 On 15 December 2011, the Government outlined its wider plans to increase the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work. *Building Engagement, Building Futures* sets out the Government's strategy to improve the opportunities for young people, so they can succeed in education and training and gain the skills they need to secure an apprenticeship or employment. The strategy includes radical reforms to schools, vocational education, skills and welfare provision, focusing on five priorities for action:
- Raising attainment in school and beyond to ensure that young people have the skills they need to compete in a global economy;
 - Helping local partners to provide effective and coordinated services that support all young people, including the most vulnerable, putting the

country on track to achieve full participation for 16-17 year olds by 2015;

- Encouraging and incentivising employers to inspire and recruit young people by offering more high quality apprenticeships and work experience places;
- Ensuring that work pays and giving young people the personalised support they need to find it, through Universal Credit, the Work Programme and our Get Britain Working measures; and
- Putting in place a new Youth Contract worth almost £1 billion over the next three years to help get young people learning or earning before long term damage is done.

- 31 To deliver the priorities, the Government announced that it would provide £4.5 million over the next two years to give more 16-19 year olds access to work experience, prioritising areas with the highest proportion of young people not in education, employment or training for funding to test new approaches to work experience. The Department is also working with employers to cut red tape around work experience and has published a new myth-busting guide for schools, colleges and employers.
- 32 An extra 250,000 work experience places will be provided over the next three years for young unemployed people across the UK as part of the Youth Contract. This will come with an offer of a work experience place for every 18-24 year-old who wants one, before they enter the Work Programme.
- 33 Charities and businesses will be funded to help the most disengaged 16-17 year olds get skills and jobs. As part of the Youth Contract, £150 million will be available over the next three years to get the most vulnerable and disengaged young people back in education, onto an apprenticeship or into sustainable employment.
- 34 Following the Wolf review of vocational education, new 16-19 programmes of study will be designed to offer breadth and depth of qualifications to ensure young people have as many options as possible. This will include meaningful work-experience and a focus on English and maths.
- 35 Employers will also be encouraged to take on an 18-24 year-old from the Work Programme by making available 160,000 job subsidies worth up to £2,275 for each business, to cover an employer's National Insurance contributions for taking on a Work Programme employee.
- 36 The subsidies are part of wider reforms to the apprenticeships programme, which as part of the Youth Contract, include funding for at least 40,000 incentive payments for small firms to take on 18-24 year old apprentices.
- 37 The Government also reiterated its intention to join up the welfare and skills systems, so that the Work Programme and skills providers work together to offer basic skills training, training in sectoral/vocational areas needed locally, and work experience to best support young people with low skills levels.
- 38 In addition, the strategy confirmed the intention to launch a National Careers Service in April 2012 to provide information, advice and guidance about careers, further and higher education, apprenticeships and other forms of training.

- 39 On 20 January 2012, the Government launched a consultation on the practical implications of raising the participation age (RPA), under which young people are legally obliged to participate in education or training. From summer 2013, this will apply until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17, and from summer 2015 onwards until their 18th birthday.
- 40 The move was legislated for in the Education and Skills Act 2008 and will require young people to remain in full-time education, whether at a school or college, undertake an apprenticeship, or work full-time (for 20 hours or over per week and for at least eight weeks) while undertaking part-time study alongside (for the equivalent of a day a week).
- 41 The consultation seeks views on whether full time work should be extended to include unpaid voluntary work and internships alongside part time study and the financial penalties local authorities can levy on employers for breaching the legislation. Within this, it is suggested that local authorities should only be allowed to use the proceeds of fines for RPA enforcement and monitoring work. The outcomes of the consultation are expected later in the year when the draft implementation regulations and orders are published.
- 42 In a related step, in the 2012 Budget, the Chancellor announced plans to pilot additional loans for young people to set up and grow businesses under a new National Enterprise Allowance scheme.

Education standards and inspection

- 43 On 9 February 2012, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published outline proposals for reforming the approach to schools inspection. The clear aim is to raise the bar on school performance, by addressing the issue of 'coasting schools' which fail to strive for continuous improvement and by placing a priority on the quality, leadership and management of teaching.
- 44 In the consultation document *A Good Education for All*, Ofsted proposed that from September 2012 schools cannot be judged 'outstanding' unless their teaching is rated as 'outstanding' in an inspection, and that they will only be deemed to be providing an acceptable standard of education where they are judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding'. The judgement categories of 'satisfactory' and 'notice to improve' will be replaced by a single judgement of 'requires improvement' and where schools are judged as requiring improvement, they will be subject to a full re-inspection earlier than is currently the case. Where a school is judged as 'requires improvement' on two consecutive inspections, it will be deemed to require 'special measures'. In coming to a judgement on leadership and management in a school, inspectors will undertake an analysis of anonymised information, provided by the school, of the outcomes of the most recent performance management of all teachers within the school.
- 45 In addition, the consultation confirmed Ofsted's intention to undertake inspections without notice being provided to the school. Currently, no notice inspections are only undertaken where there is cause for concern about a school's performance or capacity to improve. Under the latest proposals they would be deployed more generally to test and drive up school performance.

Local government finance

- 46 On 3 October 2011, the Chancellor announced that he would provide a further £675 million support to English local authorities to enable them to freeze council tax for a further year in 2012/13. This was followed by the enactment of provisions in the Localism Act 2011, which in effect required any local authority proposing a council tax increase of more than 3.5 per cent in 2012/13 to put its proposal to a local referendum.
- 47 On 19 December 2011, the Government announced the outcome of the Local Government Resource Review, publishing its response to the consultation on introducing business rates retention and the localisation of support for council tax support. The two policy proposals were the key features of the Local Government Finance Bill which was introduced to Parliament that day.
- 48 Within the past fortnight, the Secretary of State has announced that councils will be allowed to retain 50 per cent of revenue generated from business rates, with the remainder being provided to central Government to redistribute to authorities through grants. To avoid disproportionate benefits being gained by councils with exceptionally large business bases relative to their baseline funding, the Government plans to share such gains via a levy aiming to assist vulnerable or less prosperous authorities. This is intended to provide a 'safety net' to guarantee that council incomes do not fall by over 10 per cent. In addition to these measures, local authorities will be allowed retain the entirety of business rates from new renewable energy projects.
- 49 We have also received a consultation document from the Secretary of State on indicative funding arrangements for the localisation of council tax support which is being evaluated and will be subject to a future report to Cabinet in the summer.
- 50 On 1 February 2012, the Government announced the New Homes Bonus allocations for 2012/13. Durham was allocated £1,299,616 as the second instalment from year one and a further £1,251,468 as the first instalment for year two of the scheme.
- 51 The financial implications of these announcements and proposals were included in the Council's medium term financial plan and budget for 2012/13 as approved by Council on 22 February 2012. In addition, Cabinet considered a further report on the introduction of localised council tax support at its meeting of 18 April 2012.
- 52 The Corporate Director, Resources will bring a further report to Cabinet on a proposed local council tax support scheme towards the end of this year.
- 53 In addition, in his 2012 Budget, the Chancellor confirmed that he will introduce a discount on loans from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) for local authorities that provide improved information and transparency on their long term borrowing and capital spending plans. It was also confirmed that the Government will work with the local authority sector to consider an independent body to facilitate the provision of PWLB lending at a further reduced rate where authorities demonstrate quality and value for money.

Welfare reform

- 54 On 21 November 2011, the Government published proposals to extend data sharing between the Department of Work and Pensions and local authorities to better target welfare and simplify the process for people applying for support.
- 55 On 8 March 2012, the Government's wider welfare reforms contained in the Welfare Reform Bill received Royal Assent. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 as is it now known provides the primary legislation for the introduction of:
- Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit intended to ensure 'work always pays';
 - a stronger approach to reducing fraud and error with tougher penalties for the most serious offences;
 - a new claimant commitment showing clearly what is expected of claimants while giving protection to those with the greatest needs;
 - reforms to Disability Living Allowance, through the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment to meet the needs of disabled people;
 - a new approach to Housing Benefit, which will entail a transfer of administrative responsibility from local to central government and which is intended to be fairer, bring stability to the market and improve incentives to work;
 - measures to tackle abuse of the Social Fund system by giving greater power to local authorities;
 - reforms to Employment and Support Allowance to make the benefit fairer and to ensure that help goes to those with the greatest need;
 - changes to support a new system of child support which puts the interest of the child first.
- 56 When first introduced, as well as introducing a fairer welfare system which ensures that work pays, the reforms were also intended to save £18 billion from the welfare budget in line with the Comprehensive Spending Review. In his 2012 Budget, the Chancellor advised that to maintain departmental spending reductions at current levels it would be necessary to achieve a further £10 billion of savings from welfare by 2016.
- 57 A more detailed report on the implications of welfare reform will be considered by Members at this meeting of Cabinet.

NHS and public health reform

- 58 The Health and Social Care Bill received Royal Assent on 27 March 2012 and the Health and Social Care Act provides the primary legislation for the Government's NHS reforms.
- 59 The Government continues to provide guidance in relation to NHS reforms including its Vision for HealthWatch and clarification for local authorities in commissioning effective local Healthwatch organisations.
- 60 The Department of Health published *Developing Commissioning Support: Towards Service Excellence* to help commissioning support organisations

fully support Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in their new commissioning role.

- 61 A number of public health policy documents have recently been published by the Government, which provide further direction on the transition of public health functions from primary care trusts (PCTs) to local authorities. These include the Public Health Outcomes Framework, guidance on public health workforce matters and a planning support guide for local authorities and PCTs. A workforce strategy is expected in Autumn 2012.
- 62 Local authorities will receive a ring-fenced grant to deliver their new public health responsibilities from April 2013. Exact details are not expected until the end of 2012.

Late night drinking, community cohesion and hate crime

- 63 On 18 January 2012, the Government consulted on dealing with the problems of late night drinking, focusing on the measures in the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to introduce 'early morning restriction orders' (EMROs) to control alcohol-related anti-social behaviour and a 'late night levy' to help meet the additional costs of maintaining public order. The consultation sought views on the process of adopting an EMRO and/or the levy, categories of business which will be exempt from any EMRO, exemptions and the kinds of services a licensing authority may fund with the 30 per cent of net levy receipts it may retain from the net levy revenue.
- 64 On 21 February 2012, the Government published *Creating the Conditions for Integration*, which sets out their approach to achieving a more integrated society. The strategy document proposes that issues of social mobility, participation, responsibility, common ground and tackling extremism and intolerance are key factors which they believe contribute to integration.
- 65 The strategy outlines actions taken by the Government to challenge all forms of extremism and intolerance, some of which include a revised Prevent Strategy, establishing new standards for teachers, funding third sector organisations such as the Anne Frank Trust and establishing a working group on Anti- Muslim hate crime.
- 66 On 15 March 2012, the Government published *Hate Crime Action Plan: Challenge it, Report it, Stop it*, its blueprint to tackle hate crime, bringing together activity across Government departments and working with local agencies, voluntary organisations and an independent advisory group on hate crime. The strategy focuses on three key objectives:
- Preventing hate crime happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster hatred, and encouraging early intervention to reduce the risk of incidents escalating.
 - Increasing the reporting of hate crime that occurs by building victims' confidence to come forward and seek justice, and working with partners at national and local level to ensure the right support is available when they do.

- Working with the agencies that make up the Criminal Justice System to improve the operational response to hate crime. We want a more effective end-to-end process, with agencies identifying hate crimes early, managing cases jointly and dealing with offenders robustly.

67 The action plan outlined 23 detailed measures, many of which will be implemented during 2012/13.

National Alcohol Strategy

68 On the 23 March 2012 the Government published an alcohol strategy which set out proposals to reduce 'binge drinking', including the proposed introduction of a minimum unit price for alcohol. The strategy outlines a multi-agency response focusing on the role of the health, police, local government and voluntary sector in tackling alcohol misuse.

Open data and transparency

69 On 29 November 2011, the Chancellor provided further detail on the open data measures announced in his Autumn Statement. The aim is to use data held by public organisations to drive economic growth, for example by making available NHS data to support research and development and innovation in the medical and life science industries.

70 Measures announced include linking primary and secondary healthcare datasets, publishing data on prescriptions and fit notes, train, and rail fares data, Civil Aviation Authority information, highways and traffic data, linking data on welfare including Universal Credit, publishing reference data from organisations such as the Met Office and Companies House and the establishment of an Open Data Institute to drive the realisation of the economic and commercial potential of publicly-funded data.

71 On personal data, it is proposed that all NHS patients will be able to access their personal GP records online by the end of this Parliament. In addition, the Government intends to publish a new procurement arrangement shortly for school information and learning services to improve parents' and pupils' access to education data and increase competition in the provision of learning services.

Open public services

72 On 17 October 2011, the Government published a prospectus for the next phase of community budgets. On 21 December 2011, 10 neighbourhood level community budget pilots were announced alongside four national pilots for whole area community budgets. Based on its experience of reorganising budgets during Local Government Reorganisation and its Total Place and Total Capital pilots, the Council was invited to join a learning and support network to act as a critical friend to the four whole area pilot authorities.

73 On 23 November 2011, the Government opened a call for evidence on the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) to assess their effectiveness and to explore whether they could be

improved and become less of a barrier to private and third sector organisations interested in taking on the delivery of public services.

- 74 The move is part of the drive to open up public services to more diverse patterns of provision and on 6 December 2011, the Government announced a £10 million Mutual Support Programme to provide business and professional services to existing mutual organisations and groups of public sector staff interested in taking over and managing public services under contract to their employing organisation.
- 75 On 4 January 2012, the Government published its response to the consultation on the *Future of Local Audit*, which includes proposals to outsource local audit work to the private sector and mutuals established by Audit Commission employees.
- 76 On 5 March 2012, the outcome of initial contract bids for the outsourcing of Audit Commission district audit work was announced.
- 77 Grant Thornton, was awarded contracts worth £41.3m a year for the North West, West Midlands, London (south), Surrey and Kent, and the South West. KPMG was awarded contracts worth £23.1m a year in Humberside and Yorkshire (except North Yorkshire), East Midlands, and London (north) and Ernst & Young won contracts worth £20m a year in East and South East England (except Surrey and Kent).
- 78 DA Partnership, a proposed mutual to be set up by Audit Commission staff was awarded only the contract for North East England and North Yorkshire and subsequently confirmed that the awards meant it had insufficient work to launch as a stand alone mutual. It now will become a wholly owned subsidiary of audit firm Mazars, with which it had been acting in partnership.
- 79 On 29 March 2012, the Government published its first progress report on its Open Public Services agenda outlined in the White Paper published last July. The update summarises a range of measures the Government has taken to improve performance, provide more choice and transparency and to open up public services to broader, more local and community driven provision. Many of the actions lie within other reform programmes such as the NHS reforms and the drive to encourage the establishment of academies and free schools
- 80 As part of the update, the Government launched a call to evidence on a new statutory 'right to choice', which would require public services to provide people with choice in the delivery of public services, such as a range of providers or delivery options. The move will be supported by an independent review of barriers to choice and a 'You have the right to choose' campaign.
- 81 'Choice champions' will be established to promote choice and provide independent challenge and scrutiny of public services and to support citizens in making effective choices in public services.
- 82 'Choice frameworks' will be created to raise awareness of the choices available in a number of individual public services and of the standards people should expect. As well as previously announced proposals to improve the effectiveness of public service ombudsmen, the Government has suggested that it may introduce a national 'one stop shop' for public service complaints to

make it easier for people to complain and to provide them with information if they feel that they need to escalate their concerns.

- 83 On commissioning, the Government advised that it intends to bring forward consultation proposals on the rights to appeal for providers if they feel they have been unfairly excluded from a commissioning process.
- 84 The Government also advised that it intends to consult shortly on proposals to make it easier to establish neighbourhood councils and to work with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) to develop model schemes for what powers, assets and roles and responsibilities could be devolved and managed at a more local level. This will also look at how neighbourhood councils could become more involved in local service delivery where there may be resistance from a principal authority.
- 85 In conjunction with the relevant portfolio holder, the Assistant Chief Executive is preparing a draft response from the Council to the call for evidence.

Waste and recycling

- 86 On 3 February 2012, the Government published guidance on its £250 million Weekly Collection Support Scheme. The fund, which was initially announced by the Secretary of State in September 2011 is open to bids from English local authorities that wish to introduce, reinstate or retain weekly collections of household waste and increase recycling.

Electoral reform

- 87 On 13 December 2011, the Government published a Draft Recall of MPs Bill to legislate for the introduction of a power of recall, allowing voters to force a by-election where an MP is found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing and having had a petition calling for a by-election signed by 10 per cent of his or her constituents.
- 88 The draft Bill sets out two triggers for a recall petition: firstly where an MP is convicted in the UK of an offence and receives a custodial sentence of 12 months or less, and secondly where the House of Commons resolves, through a vote by MPs, that a recall petition should be opened. The first trigger closes a gap in the existing legislation whereby MPs are only disqualified if they receive a custodial sentence of more than 12 months and the second trigger is an additional disciplinary power for the House of Commons, which will allow constituents to have their say in deciding whether their MP should stay in office.
- 89 On 9 February 2012, the Government published proposals to support the introduction of individual elector registration. In order to make it easier for people to stay registered and to make the electoral register more complete and up to date, 'data matching' will be used to retain up to two-thirds of those already on the electoral register. Under the data matching process, an elector's name and address would be compared against other public databases. If an individual's details 'matched' then they would not have to take any action to remain on the register. This would allow the Government to

focus efforts and resources on those electors whose details could not be confirmed and those people who are currently not on the register. In order to ensure that the electoral register is as complete and up to date as possible for the transition, the canvass scheduled for autumn 2013 will now take place in spring 2014.

E-accessibility

- 90 On 29 February 2012, the Government opened a consultation on the second release of its 'Gov.uk' website which is intended to provide access to all government on-line services and information. The development is part of the Government's e-accessibility action plan which focuses upon website regulation, accessible consumer technology and digital equipment, websites services, accessible content and electronic access awareness and promotion.
- 91 On 15 December 2011, the Government gave local authorities final deadlines for submitting satisfactory applications to Broadband Development UK for a share of £530 million of funding intended to provide 90 per cent of homes and businesses with access to superfast broadband and everyone with access to at least 2Mbps.
- 92 In his Autumn statement, the Chancellor outlined plans to invest £100 million to make core cities, including Newcastle-upon-Tyne 'super-connected' with superfast broadband and wi-fi enablement. This was followed by a further announcement in the 2012 Budget that a further £50 million would be available to do the same in smaller cities.

Consultations

- 93 Following the most recent policy implications report considered by Cabinet, Members asked for an update on current and forthcoming consultation opportunities through which Members could help to shape Government policy. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the main consultations announced by Government since the beginning of the year.
- 94 The Council constantly monitors consultations and calls for evidence and officers consider opportunities to respond via the Improvement Planning Group which meets on a fortnightly basis.

Implications

- 95 The Government's policy proposals have many implications for the County and the Council, its role and function and the way it works with and relates to local communities and strategic partners. Below, we sketch out the principal implications against the strategic themes of the Council Plan and County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy.

Altogether better council

- 96 As yet, the Council has not had sufficient time to consider the implications of the announcement in the past two weeks on the proportion of local business rates revenues which local authorities will be allowed to retain. In addition, it is yet to learn how much grant it would receive from the 50 per cent of

business rates revenue to be retained and redistributed by central Government.

- 97 As highlighted in the more detailed report on welfare reform to this meeting of Cabinet, one of the most challenging aspects of the Government's policy programme will be to respond to and manage the consequences of welfare reform changes in the County.
- 98 At the time of the Comprehensive Spending Review, it was announced that welfare spending was set to be reduced by £18 billion by 2014/15, however the Chancellor has now advised that to maintain current departmental spending targets, it will be necessary to reduce welfare spending by a further £10 billion by 2016/17. This is likely to put more pressure on local authority services from increased demand from people struggling to cope with further welfare cuts and changes. Alternatively, the Council as a whole and its strategic partners could come under further pressure, if the Government decides to make the savings from across a broader range of departmental budgets and not just welfare. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that if welfare spending is held steady rather than reduced by a further £10 billion by 2016/17, the rate of reduction in central spending on public services across government departments would need to increase from 2.3 per cent a year during the course of this Parliament to 3.8 per cent in the following two years, after inflation is taken into account.
- 99 If this is the case, Durham will need to continue its efforts to highlight the growing inequity in the distribution of the spending reductions. There is increasing evidence to suggest that North East England is being disproportionately affected by the reductions in public expenditure and there is growing concern that Government policy, such as the introduction of Business Rates retention will maintain current disparities between places as opposed to enabling growth-orientated but less competitive areas, such as Durham to catch up with more prosperous parts of the country.
- 100 The Council will also need to keep its spending plans under continuous review, working with its strategic partners to ensure that the needs of the County and its communities continue to be met and that the Council's financial strategy continues to anticipate and respond to the changing public sector funding landscape.
- 101 Although the Government's agenda to decentralise power and open up public services has not been implemented as quickly as it initially hoped, a number of the key legislative building blocks such as the Localism Act 2011 are now in place and we can expect the pace of reform to speed up. The long-awaited progress report on decentralisation, initially promised last summer will be published shortly.
- 102 Individual departmental plans to open up public services, initially flagged in last July's Open Public Services White Paper, have yet to be published, however the recent progress report published by Government highlights that a number of departments are moving to diversify provision, introduce competition and increase consumer choice. This is most evident in relation to schools (in terms of academies and free schools and measures to tackle

'coasting' performance) but also in the initial steps taken to support the development of staff mutuals within the public sector.

- 103 The proposed statutory 'right to choice' if introduced would require the Council to review its approach to commissioning across services and to review the provision of alternative delivery options, where it is practical to do so. The proposed 'choice frameworks' will be an important area to understand as they will set out the standards of service that people should expect and will be at the heart Government public information campaigns to promote consumer rights and choice.
- 104 The move to establish 'choice champions' is intended to provide independent challenge and scrutiny of public services and to support citizens in making effective choices. The Council will need to understand how this relates to its democratic scrutiny functions and other existing and proposed methods of consumer advocacy and scrutiny, such as citizens advice bureaux and local healthwatch.
- 105 Within this, it is interesting to note that the Public Accounts Committee has expressed concern about accountability and scrutiny of public money when public services are decentralised and devolved. In its progress report on *Accountability for public money*, the committee commented that public sector reforms, such as increasing the number of foundation trusts and academy schools and introducing elected police commissioners, lacked 'clarity, consistency and completeness' and that current arrangements which seek to reconcile accountability and localism do not provide the necessary assurance on either probity or value for money.
- 106 As highlighted above, the Council is preparing a response to the current call for evidence on the right to choice. It may also wish to respond to the forthcoming consultations on the rights to appeal for providers in the commissioning process and the process for establishing neighbourhood councils.
- 107 This may have implications for the development of town and parish councils in the County as may the LGA and NALC work on service devolution and delivery models, if they receive Government backing.
- 108 It is interesting to note that access to lower cost borrowing for local authorities via the Public Works Loan Board will be contingent on transparency around long-term capital spending and potentially in the longer term, on demonstrating quality and value for money. Given the strength of its approach to medium term financial planning, the Council is well placed to respond to any opportunities this might provide, should it wish to increase its borrowing.
- 109 The development of the gov.uk website reflects the Government's desire to simplify access to public services and information online and to achieve significant savings in Government website costs. Information on and access to local authority services will be integrated into the new website and the Council will need to explore how this can be supported through its customer first and website strategies.

- 110 The proposal to use data-matching to facilitate individual voter registration (IVR) is intended to address concerns and reduce the risk that IVR may lead to fewer people registering to vote. However, pilots in 22 local authorities evaluated by the Electoral Commission found that the additional level of input required was not proportional to the benefits, with relatively few additions made to the electoral registers. The decision to postpone the autumn 2013 canvas until spring 2014 reflects the fact that electoral registration officers will need more time to prepare for the introduction of the new system.

Altogether wealthier

- 111 Alongside controlling public expenditure, the Government aims to balance the country's finances by stimulating economic growth and encouraging economic participation rather than welfare dependency.
- 112 In his Autumn statement and the 2012 Budget, the Chancellor announced a number of macro-economic measures to promote investment and growth and a series of announcements to support business start-ups and expansion.
- 113 Although there were no major infrastructure announcements directly benefiting the County, the Government did confirm funding of £7.79 million through the Broadband UK programme to support the Digital Durham project. This will enable the Council to increase broadband provision to at least 2Mbps across the County by 2014/15 and to up to 30Mbps by 2016/17. The project will also extend the provision of public access wi-fi through council and community buildings.
- 114 The key policy announcement for the county was the publication of the final National Policy Planning Framework, within which the County Durham Plan and all future planning decisions will work.
- 115 The draft NPPF attracted fierce criticism and the revised framework has sought to take account of the biggest concerns including:
- confirmation of the development plan as the basis for planning decision-making locally;
 - a fuller explanation of what is meant by 'sustainable development';
 - recognition of the "intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside" amongst the Core Planning Principles;
 - confirmation of the need for Local Plans to identify and maintain a rolling five year housing land supply, plus an additional five per cent. Councils that have a record of "persistent under delivery on housing" must earmark a five-year supply plus 20 per cent;
 - support for brownfield development (but no requirement for a sequential test requiring brownfield land to be used before greenfield);
 - stronger support for town centres and recognition that town centres should be the preferred location for office uses;
 - clarification of the relationship between local and neighbourhood plans;

- a 12-month, supported, timetable for implementation.
- 116 Transitional arrangements accompanying the NPPF allow "due weight" to be given to relevant policies in existing plans beyond an initial 12-month period, depending on their degree of consistency with the framework. This will inevitably be subject to interpretation. Given that the NPPF is now in force, as a matter of some urgency, the Council is undertaking an exercise to determine which 'saved' local plan policies are consistent with the NPPF and can therefore continue to be used in decision making until the County Durham Plan is adopted.
- 117 In relation to increasing economic participation, the Government's welfare reforms designed to 'make work pay' will now be implemented given that the Welfare Reform Bill has passed into law. In addition, schemes such as the Work Programme and the Youth Contract are now being implemented, although some major employers have expressed concern about young people being compelled to take up work experience opportunities or risk losing benefits.
- 118 The key issue for the County is whether the economy will be able to expand sufficiently to create enough jobs to meet the growing demand from people moving off welfare or out of the public sector.

Altogether healthier

- 119 Now that the Health and Social Care Act has been passed, rapid progress is expected to be made with the Government's NHS and public health reforms to ensure implementation from April 2013.
- 120 Work is progressing locally within County Durham to implement the NHS reforms and to transfer public health functions to the Council.
- 121 The Council has established a Public Health Transition 'Receiver' Group to manage the transition from NHS County Durham to the Council. A public health transition plan has been agreed between the two organisations to ensure that staff, functions and responsibilities are transferred by 1 April 2013.
- 122 To support this, a corporate risk assessment has been completed and due diligence is being carried.
- 123 The commissioning of Local Healthwatch in County Durham is making progress and the development and consultation on a model for Local HealthWatch is complete. Local HealthWatch will need to be procured by the Government deadline of 1 April 2013 and the County is currently on-track to achieve this deadline.
- 124 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment will be reviewed in August 2012 in order to inform the first Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for County Durham which will set out the priorities from which health and social care commissioning plans will be developed. A stakeholder event will be held next month to discuss and share the draft Strategic Objectives for 2013/14 (linked to the development of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy). The strategy will be considered by Cabinet by the end of this year.

- 125 The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis. The board's future work programme includes the approval of winter planning arrangements, consideration of an Operating Framework for Children's and Adult's Safeguarding and a review of existing joint commissioning strategies (including those for older people and people with learning disabilities).
- 126 Cabinet received a report on recent developments in relation to NHS reforms on 18 April 2012 and further detail on national and local developments will be reported to Cabinet on 11 July 2012.
- 127 The national alcohol strategy calls for action to be taken at a local level and highlights measures which will enable a more effective local response to binge drinking. Action on alcohol will be a key issue for the County's Health and Wellbeing Board and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 128 Within the Council, work is underway via the alcohol harm reduction group of the Safe Durham Partnership, to update the local alcohol strategy in the light of the national strategy. A strategy development day is being held to agree actions to be carried forward by a variety of agencies and council services.

Altogether safer

- 129 The measures in the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011 should help the Council and its community safety partners, including the incoming Police and Crime Commissioner to better manage alcohol-related anti-social behaviour and crime. We will however, need to await the outcome of the consultation on the detailed measures before being able to determine how they can best be deployed in the County. For the Council, this is most likely to be through the implementation of revised licensing policy.
- 130 The ability to direct proceeds from the late night levy will help partners to meet the costs of managing late night public order, however a balanced approach will be needed to ensure that legitimate and beneficial late night economic activity is not suppressed.
- 131 The Hate Crime Action Plan acknowledges the role of alcohol as a contributing factor of violence, including violence resulting from hate crime and points towards the Government's new alcohol strategy, which will focus on changing public behaviour towards alcohol and anti-social behaviour.
- 132 The action plan primarily focuses on Government-level actions and the Council and its partners will need to await the detail of detailed policy measures which are expected later this year.
- 133 The Government report on *Creating the Conditions for Integration* highlights that one of the key factors in achieving integration is to challenge extremism and intolerance. Within this, the Government states that it expects locally-led action partnerships to ensure that extremist narratives are challenged, groups and individuals who promote division and prejudice are not implicitly endorsed by engagement or use of public buildings and that vulnerable people are protected through early intervention.

- 134 In many respects, the Council and its community safety partners are already working in line with the Government's expectations through the Safe Durham Partnership. The partnership is currently reviewing its action plan and a progress report will be brought to the next meeting of Cabinet.

Altogether better for children and young people

- 135 The proposed new approach to the inspection of schools is intended to drive up teaching standards and the performance of schools.
- 136 The more general use of un-announced inspections will give schools less time to prepare for inspections and the introduction of the 'requires improvement' grading to replace 'satisfactory' highlights the importance the Government attaches to continuous improvement.
- 137 Achievement Services and schools in the County will need to prepare for the new approach which is expected to be introduced from September 2012, once the outcome of the current consultation by Ofsted is known.

Altogether greener

- 138 The presumption in favour of sustainable development enshrined in the new National Planning Policy Framework will have implications for the ability of the Council and its strategic partners to conserve and protect the County's natural assets and heritage.
- 139 Now that detail has been published on the Government's Weekly Collection Support Scheme, the Council is in a position to consider whether it can use the scheme to improve waste collection services in the County.
- 140 The Council is currently in the process of harmonising collection arrangements across the seven former district council areas and introducing alternate weekly collections throughout the County. An expression of interest under the Support Scheme has been submitted to for funding to augment the alternate weekly collection scheme by providing a weekly collection of segregated food waste on a trial basis in part of the County. The waste collected would be recycled at an anaerobic digestion plant in the County to provide electricity. If supported, the proposal would further increase the Council's recycling performance, removing biowaste from the waste stream, reducing treatment costs as well as providing a clean source of electricity generation.

Implications for partnership working

- 141 Given the scope, scale and pace of Government reforms it is imperative that the Council continues to work with partners to ensure that we work together to achieve the aims of the sustainable community strategy. This is particularly so in relation to health and social care, where we need to ensure that the new partnership and working arrangements which are being established, help the Council to deliver the health outcomes we have set out to achieve for local people.
- 142 As reported to Members in November 2011, the County Durham Partnership has reviewed its priorities in the light of the current and changing policy

context and considered how it could ensure that its operational arrangements continue to remain fit for purpose.

Conclusions

- 143 The common themes of Government policy around transparency, choice, community empowerment and more diverse patterns of public service provision are still evident although it appears as if the Government has not been able to implement some of its reforms as quickly as it initially proposed.
- 144 Clearly, the various policy changes will have major implications for the Council and the steps it is taking to develop an 'altogether better Durham'.
- 145 The Council and its partners are continuing to analyse the impact that Government policy will have on local communities and on our ability to deliver the sustainable community strategy and wherever possible, are working together to respond proactively to the Government's policy changes.

Recommendations

- 146 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report and agree the actions taken to anticipate and respond to the Government's reforms.

Background papers

Cabinet, 15 September 2010, Implications on Durham County Council of the Coalition Government's emerging policy programme

Cabinet, 26 January 2011, Implications on Durham County Council of the Coalition Government's policy programme

Cabinet, 9 March 2011, NHS Reforms

Cabinet, 25 May 2011, Implications for Durham County Council of the Government's policy programme

Cabinet 13 July 2011, NHS Reforms/ Health and Wellbeing Boards

Cabinet, 14 September 2011, Implications for Durham County Council of the Government's policy programme

Cabinet, 14 December 2011, Implications for Durham County Council of the Government's policy programme

Cabinet, 29 February 2012, Localism Act

Contact: Kevin Edworthy Tel: 0191 383 6514

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The Chancellor’s 2012 Budget identified the need to find a further £10 billion in welfare savings in order to maintain current departmental spending targets. Should unemployment levels not fall in line with Government forecasts, this may put further pressure on Council budgets if the Government seeks to achieve the savings from local government.

The Council’s MTFP and budget took into account the New Homes Bonus and the grant support to freeze council tax in 2012/13 and anticipated a number of proposals in the Local Government Resource Review. This will have significant implications for the way that local government services are funded in the future.

Implementing a number of the Government’s reforms, such as the National Planning Policy Framework and the Localisation of Council Tax Support will involve further costs from within fixed and restricted budgets.

If Durham is a designated qualifying council, the additional discount on loans from the Public Works Loan Board will reduce the cost of borrowing within affordable limits to fund designated schemes in the Council’s capital programme.

The late night levy may help to contribute to the Council’s costs in managing and dealing with the consequences of alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in town centres. Details are awaited on the proportion of the levy to be directed to local authorities. Likewise, details are awaited on the amount of ring-fenced grant the Council is to receive to deliver the public health responsibilities transferred from the PCT.

Staffing – The Council is continuing to plan for the transfer of public health staff from the PCT. The Government’s proposals to extend the Work Programme and introduce the Youth Contract may provide the Council with more support to offer young people employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Risk – Detailed risk assessments are undertaken for key projects undertaken by the Council to implement and respond to the Government’s reforms.

Equality and Diversity – *Creating the Conditions for Integration* (the Government’s cohesion strategy) and the Hate Crime Action Plan will need to be taken into account when the Council refreshes its equalities action plan and strategic approach to community safety.

Accommodation – There are no specific implications.

Crime and Disorder – The National Alcohol Strategy and proposals relating the late night drinking will support the Council’s efforts to reduce alcohol-related anti-social behaviour. The cohesion strategy and Hate Crime Action Plan recognise the role of local partnerships in tackling hate crime and preventing violent extremism.

Human Rights – The Human Rights implications of the policy proposals have not been assessed.

Consultation – The Council will be expected to consult service users and other local authorities in developing policy responses to a number of the Government's proposals.

Procurement – The drive to open up public services is increasing in pace, which will have implications for the Council's commissioning and procurement frameworks and the ability of potential providers to challenge the Council's procurement decisions if they are dissatisfied.

Disability Discrimination Act - The Disability Discrimination Act implications of the Government's reforms have not been assessed in detail but would be addressed in any equality impact assessments undertaken as the Council develops its own policy responses.

Legal Implications – With the National Planning Policy Framework coming into force, the Council will need to ensure that the draft County Durham Plan and the local planning policy framework are compliant to reduce the risk of legal challenge and appeals. The proposed statutory 'right to choice' may also increase the potential for legal challenge.

Appendix 2: Government consultations and calls for evidence announced in 2012

05/01/2012

Allocation of accommodation - Guidance for local housing authorities in England - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 30 March 2012 seeks views on new draft statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/allocationofaccommodation>

09/01/2012

Regulation of providers on the Early Years Register - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 6 April 2012 seeks views on proposals for a revised framework for the regulation and inspection of registered early years provision.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/regulation-of-providers-early-years-register>

10/01/2012

Inspection of adoption support agencies - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 3 April 2012 seeks views on proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of adoption support agencies. Ofsted seeks views from those who have an interest in, or expertise relating to, adoption to ensure that the inspection framework takes proper account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties. Above all, the framework must assure the quality of services for all those receiving adoption support and promote their continuing improvement.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-of-adoption-support-agencies>

10/01/2012

Consultation on proposed changes to the department's statistics - Land use change statistics, rationalised collection of local authority housing statistics and publication of regional statistics

This consultation, which runs until 2 April 2012 seeks views on options for changing the data collection for land use change statistics, proposals for a rationalised collection of housing data from local authorities and ceasing publication of departmental statistics at regional level.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/consultchangesstats>

11/01/2012

Social housing fraud - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 4 April 2012 seeks views on proposals to help landlords reduce tenancy fraud within the social housing stock. It includes measures that would greatly increase both the deterrent to tenants to commit fraud and landlords' ability to detect and prosecute those who do so.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/socialhousingfraud>

12/01/2012

Draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme allocation regulations - A consultation

The CRC is a mandatory scheme aimed at improving energy efficiency and cutting emissions in large public and private sector organisations. This consultation, which runs until 10 February 2012 seeks views on the updated draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme allocation regulations. They contain consequential changes from previous simplifications of the CRC scheme.

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/emissions/crc_efficiency/crc_efficiency.aspx

12/01/2012

Red Tape Challenge -Housing and construction

This is a site, designed for the public, to help the government cut unnecessary regulations. The site has been updated with information on the new red tape challenge on housing and construction.

<http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/home/index/>

16/01/2012

Personal Independence Payment - Assessment thresholds and consultation

This consultation, which runs until 30 April 2012 seeks views on the second draft of the assessment criteria for Personal Independence Payment. In particular it seeks views on the changes that have been made since the first draft, the proposed descriptor weightings and entitlement thresholds and the draft regulations.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2011/pip.shtml>

16/01/2012

Early years professional status standards review - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 23 March 2012 seeks views on the proposed draft early years professional status standards. The aim is to produce a revised set of standards for implementation by training providers' delivering the early years professional status from September 2012.

<http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/early-years/graduate-leaders-in-early-years/eyps-standards>

16/01/2012 09/03/2012 Amending the powers of local authorities regarding presentation of waste for collection - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 9 March 2012 seeks views on proposed amendments to Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which sets out the penalties which local authorities may apply to householders who present their waste incorrectly for collection. The amendments will abolish the criminal offence currently provided for in Section 46. A new, civil sanction will be put in place instead.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/01/16/household-waste-1201/>

18/01/2012

Dealing with the Problems of Late Night Drinking – A Consultation

This consultation, which runs until 10 April 2012 is about two measures in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 that will be implemented through regulations: early morning restriction orders ('EMROs') and the late night levy.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/late-night-drinking/>

19/01/2012

JSNAs and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies – Draft Guidance

Support for health and wellbeing boards and their partners in developing joint strategic needs assessments (JSNAs) and health and wellbeing strategies has been published in the form of draft statutory guidance, which is out for consultation until 17 February 2012.

<https://www.wp.dh.gov.uk/healthandcare/files/2012/01/JSNAs-and-joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategies-draft-strats.pdf>

20/01/2012

Raising the participation age regulations - A consultation

From summer 2013 all young people will be required to participate in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17, and from summer 2015 onwards until their 18th birthday. This consultation, which runs until 13 April 2012 seeks views on elements of how raising the participation age will work in practice.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1694&external=no&menu=1>

23/01/2012

Children's safeguarding performance information - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 16 April 2012 seeks views on the proposed children's safeguarding national performance information dataset, how the data is published and how the locally held information published in December 2011 is used.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1803&external=no&menu=1>

23/01/2012

Gambling Act 2005 - Legislative reform orders - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 16 April 2012 seeks views on two proposals: to remove restrictions on the employment of people under the age of 18 years at a track with a betting premises licence; and remove restrictions on the availability of entitlements to gaming machines at premises selling alcohol at airports.

http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/Under_18s_employment_on_tracks_consultation.pdf

24/01/2012

Climate change regulations 2012 and the scheme administration charges - Opportunities to comment

This consultation, which runs until 16 March 2012 seeks views on draft Climate Change Regulations 2012 and the scheme administration charges.

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/cc_regs_2012/cc_regs_2012.aspx

27/01/2012

Regulations for Healthwatch England membership - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 2 March 2012 seeks views on the development of the Healthwatch England membership regulations. It asks for comments on: the number of the member; suitability for membership; the process for appointing members; and the period of time a member should be appointed.

30/01/2012

Traffic orders - Simplifying the process - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 23 April 2012 seeks views on amending the requirements placed on traffic authorities when they propose and make traffic orders.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-06/>

30/01/2012

Getting it right for victims and witnesses - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 22 April 2012 seeks views on the government's proposed approach to ensuring that victims and witnesses get the support they need. It also seeks views on proposals to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme to protect compensation payments for those most seriously injured while removing less serious injuries like sprains from the scheme and restricting payments to those with criminal convictions.

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/victims-witnesses-cp3-2012.htm>

31/01/2012

Permit schemes for street works - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 25 April 2012 seeks views on proposals to give local authority applications more power to operate 'permit schemes' to better manage street works.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-02/>

31/01/2012

Proposed policy statement for part two of the Localism Act 2011 - A consultation

This consultation seeks views on a proposed policy statement for part two of the Localism Act 2011. Part two of the Localism Act is about incentivising public authorities to comply with European law, in order to avoid any financial sanctions in the first place.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/20750331.pdf>

31/01/2012

Devolving local major transport schemes - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 2 April 2012 seeks views on a new system for prioritising and funding local major schemes beyond 2014-15.

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-04/main-document1.pdf>

06/02/2012

Counter terrorism stop and search powers code of practice - A consultation

Home Office This consultation, which runs until 1 April 2012 seeks views on a draft code of practice governing counter-terrorism stop and search powers currently being considered by Parliament in the Protection of Freedoms Bill.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/consultation-ct-code/>

07/02/2012

Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 20 March 2012 seeks views on the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012. These regulations provide the legal basis for pupil referral units to become alternative provision academies.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1807&external=no&menu=1>

07/02/2012

Call for evidence on the European Commission's data protection proposals

This call for evidence, which runs until 6 March 2012 seeks views on new legislative proposals for data protection which were published by the European Commission on 25 January 2012.

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/data-protection-proposals-cfe.htm>

08/02/2012

Legislative changes to firearms control - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 8 May 2012 seeks views on whether to make changes to the sentencing framework for the illegal importation of firearms. It also seeks views on whether to introduce new firearms legislation targeted at individuals who supply firearms to the criminal market and asks what would be an appropriate sentence.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/firearms-legislation/>

09/02/2012

Mandatory consideration of revision before appeal - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 4 May 2012 seeks views on draft regulations for the implementation and operation of the appeals reform provisions in the Welfare Reform Bill.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2012/mandatory-consideration.shtml>

09/02/2012

A good education for all - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 3 May 2012 seeks views on proposals for amended inspection arrangements for maintained schools and academies, further education and skills and initial teacher education from September 2012.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-education-for-all>

09/02/2012

Open Standards - Open opportunities flexibility and efficiency in government IT

This consultation, which runs until 1 May 2012 seeks views on the definition and mandation of open standards for software interoperability, data and document formats in government IT.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/open-standards-open-opportunities-flexibility-and-efficiency-government-it>

10/02/2012

Remote communities - A call for evidence

The purpose of this call for evidence, which is open until 1 July 2012 is to seek the views of residents in remote communities to improve the Office of Fair Trading's understanding of how remoteness effects both consumers and businesses.

<http://www.offt.gov.uk/OFTwork/consultations/remote-communities/>

17/02/2012

Transforming bailiff action - A consultation

This consultation, which runs until 14 May 2012 seeks views on proposals for transforming bailiff action and providing more protection against aggressive bailiffs. The aim of the proposals is to simplify and clarify the process, improve the accountability of enforcement agents and address unnecessary or inappropriate enforcement activity.

https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-bailiff-action/consult_view

17/02/2012 Red Tape Challenge

The red tape challenge on water and marine regulation has been launched.

<http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/themehome/water-and-marine/>

21/02/2012

Review of the barriers to institutional investment in private rented homes - A call for evidence

This call for evidence seeks comments to support the independent review of the barriers to institutional investment in private rented homes.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/prsreviewcall>

21/02/2012

Review of the barriers to institutional investment in private rented homes - Call for evidence

This call for evidence seeks comments to support the independent review of the barriers to institutional investment in private rented homes.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/prsreviewcall>

22/02/2012

Guidance to Support the Provision of Healthcare Public Health Advice to Clinical Commissioning Groups

From 2013-14, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will have access to public health advice, information and expertise in relation to the healthcare services that they commission, provided by local public health teams based in local authorities. The policy intention is to make it a mandatory requirement for local authorities to

provide this service to CCGs, but the detail of the arrangements will need to be planned locally.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/02/local-public-health-guidance/>

23/02/2012

Amending the Waste Regulations 2011 on the separate collection of recycling

Defra and the Welsh Government are seeking views on amendments we are proposing to The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 ("the Regulations").

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/02/23/waste-regulations-1202/>

24/02/2012

Review of compliance with the Irresponsible Lending Guidance

This consultation seeks views as part of a review of compliance with the Consumer Credit Act and the extent to which businesses in the pay-day sector are meeting the standards set out in the Office of Fair Trading's irresponsible lending guidance.

<http://www.offt.gov.uk/OFTwork/credit/payday-lenders-compliance-review/>

24/02/2012

Consultation on the Draft Legal Deposit Libraries (non-print works) Regulations 2013

This consultation seeks views on revised draft regulations and impact assessments for non-print legal deposits. The draft regulations are designed to ensure legal deposit libraries provide a national archive of the UK's non-print published material.

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/8878.aspx>

28/02/2012

Draft water resources planning guideline

This consultation seeks views on the draft new guidance for water companies to follow when completing their statutory water resources management plans.

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/portal/ho/waterres/draft/plans>

29/02/2012

Rare Diseases Consultation

This is a UK-wide consultation undertaken by the Department of Health on behalf of all 4 UK health administrations. The consultation on rare diseases has been launched following the European Council's recommendation that every member state of the European Union should develop a national strategy on rare diseases. Responses to the consultation will inform the final plan, which is due to be produced by the end of 2013.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/02/consultation-rare-diseases/>

29/02/2012

Second release of GOV.UK beta

The Government Digital Service is seeking views on phase two of the GOV.UK beta, 'Inside government'. The new area of the site is a space for people who are personally or professionally interested in the business of government to research how government works and what it is doing.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/second-release-govuk-beta>

29/02/2012

Delivering Dignity: Securing Dignity in Care for Older People in Hospitals and Care Homes - A Report for Consultation

The NHS Confederation, Age UK and the Local Government Association established the Commission on Dignity in Care for Older People in July 2011 to identify the underlying causes of persistent failings, and determine what must change to deliver dignity in the care system, focussing on hospitals and care homes. This draft report sets out 'what good looks like', based on evidence from hospitals and care homes that are already providing excellent dignity in care for older people. The report seeks to help hospitals and care homes identify how they need to change to deliver dignity for every person every time. It also sets out the changes that need to take place in the wider health and social care system to support hospitals and care homes in prioritising dignity in care.

<http://www.nhsconfed.org/Documents/dignity.pdf>

29/02/2012

Feedback on the Outpatient survey 2011

The CQC surveys team is interested in what people think about the information provided in the latest Outpatient survey published on 14 February 2012.

<https://webdataforms.cqc.org.uk/Checkbox/outpatientsurvey2011.aspx>

01/03/2012

Regulation of Health and Social Care Professionals

This consultation seeks views on how the regulation of health care professionals in the UK and social workers in England can be made clearer, simpler, more modern and more consistent. The Law Commissions are setting out provisional proposals for the structure of a new legal framework across the UK.

<http://lawcommission.justice.gov.uk/consultations/healthcare.htm>

01/03/2012

Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses

This consultation, which runs until 25 April 2012 seeks views on a proposed licensing scheme that would promote and safeguard the welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses in England. Under the proposals, operators of a travelling circus that failed to safeguard the welfare of their animals would face enforcement action.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2012/03/01/circus-animals-1203/>

05/03/2012

Revised Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance - A consultation

This consultation seeks views on the revised Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance for local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus when exercising their functions under the Childcare Act 2006.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1808&external=no&menu=1>

05/03/2012

Draft revised statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's wellbeing - A consultation

This consultation seeks views on draft revised statutory guidance on local authorities' duties to secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities for 13 to 19 year-olds to improve their well-being. This duty also requires local authorities to ascertain and consider young people's views and to publicise all activities aimed at these young people.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1811&external=no&menu=1>

06/03/2012

Responses to initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England - A consultation

This consultation seeks views on the responses to the government's initial proposals to reduce the total number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502 so that each constituency contains a similar number of registered electors.

<http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>

07/03/2012

Have your say on children and young people's health outcomes

This consultation seeks views on the health outcomes that matter most for children and young people and how the different parts of the health system will work together to deliver these.

<http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/children-say/>

08/03/2012

Rail fares and ticketing review

This consultation is designed to gather evidence to inform the government's Rail Fares and Ticketing Review.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-09/>

08/03/2012

Rail decentralisation: devolving decision-making on passenger rail services in England

This consultation seeks views on how to devolve, where appropriate, more accountability and decision-making related to local English rail services to sub-national bodies, such as local authorities and passenger transport executives.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-10/>

08/03/2012

Street works qualifications - A consultation

This consultation seeks views on proposals arising from the Red Tape Challenge to remove the current requirement for street works operatives and supervisors to hold specific qualifications, and instead allow employers to determine suitable training.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-05/>

08/03/2012

Code of Practice on Noise from Ice-Cream Van Chimes Etc. 1982

This consultation seeks views on the future of the Code of Practice on Noise from Ice-Cream Van Chimes Etc.1982. The code gives guidance on methods of minimising annoyance caused by the operation of loudspeakers fixed to ice-cream vans and similar vehicles used to sell perishable goods to the public.

22/03/2012

Call for evidence on the production of an appraisal tool for local speed limits - A consultation

This consultation seeks evidence on the impact of speed limit changes to support the development of an appraisal tool to help local authorities assess the full costs and benefits of local speeds.

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-12/evidence-appraisal-tool.pdf>

23/03/2012

Revised implementation proposals for workplace pension reform

This consultation seeks views on the changes to the automatic enrolment implementation timetable for employers with less than 250 **workers** in their PAYE scheme and to the arrangements for phasing of minimum contributions affecting all employers.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wpr-rev-implementation-consultation.pdf>