

Cabinet

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



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Purpose of the Report

- 1 On 10 October 2012, 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 last report, the government has maintained its focus and emphasis on driving forward on the delivery of its major policy projects. The Cabinet reshuffle in the summer resulted in a slight change of emphasis in some areas for example transport, but the general direction of travel of government policy remains the same. In the period under consideration, there have been a number of detailed documents and consultations released. Service groupings continue to consider these and analyse and prepare for the specific impacts of these developments on the authority. As we pass the half way point for this parliament, there is a sense that we are about to enter a new phase, with the emphasis switching from policy development to implementation and delivery, with for example NHS and public health reforms, changes to welfare and the localisation of council tax support all becoming reality in 2013.
- 3 The most significant announcements since the last report to Members relate to the following, outlined in more detail below:
 - Autumn Statement;
 - Local government settlement;
 - Local government finance;
 - Welfare reform guidance;
 - New town and parish councils;
 - English Baccalaureate;
 - Baseline design for schools;
 - Regional and economic growth;
 - NHS and public health reform;
 - Social care reform;
 - Open data and transparency;
 - Reducing bureaucracy;
 - Police and Crime Commissioners.

- 4 The common themes of government policy around transparency, choice, community empowerment and more diverse patterns of public service provision are still evident. Localism still features, however Ministers have not refrained from issuing guidance or specifying how they expect local authorities to act on certain issues, for example the latest council tax 'freeze' offer and pronouncements in favour of weekly bin collections. In many respects, such advice or direction could be seen as reducing the ability of local authorities to determine local approaches to managing budget reductions in line with local priorities.
- 5 The government has continued to explain its approach to addressing the deficit, although the slow rate of economic growth has resulted in the Chancellor confirming that funding challenges will continue beyond the next election and that serious consideration will need to be given to removing further resources from the welfare budget in future years.
- 6 Clearly, the various policy changes will have major implications for the council and the steps it is taking to develop an 'altogether better Durham'.
- 7 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.
- 8 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report and the actions taken to anticipate and respond to the government's reforms.

Background

- 9 Cabinet has considered a number of periodic reports on government policy since the general election in 2010, the most recent report being on 10 October 2012. Where necessary, Cabinet has also received further policy reports on specific topics, such as the Localism Act, changes to the NHS and health and social care and welfare reform. This document builds upon these previous briefings.

Update

- 10 The most significant policy announcements since the last report to Members in October 2012, relate to the following, which are outlined in more detail below:
 - Autumn Statement;
 - Local government settlement;
 - Local government finance;
 - Welfare reform guidance;
 - New town and parish councils;
 - English Baccalaureate;
 - Baseline design for schools;
 - Regional and economic growth;
 - NHS and public health reform;
 - Social care reform;

- Open data and transparency;
- Reducing bureaucracy;
- Police and Crime Commissioners.

Autumn Statement

- 11 On 5 December 2012, the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered his Autumn Statement in which he set out further details of spending plans in 2015/16.
- 12 He forecast that the deficit would start to reduce by 2016/17 (rather than 2015/16 as initially planned) and announced that the government will operate on the principle that departmental resource budgets will continue on the same trajectory in 2015-16 as over the period of the 2010 Spending Review and that the government will continue with its deficit reduction strategy of 80 percent being achieved through spending reductions and 20 percent through tax increases.
- 13 He announced that he intends to continue with the existing strategy of protecting funding for health, education and international development and that spending reductions of a further £6.6 billion are to be raised from cuts to administration budgets of government departments over the next two years.
- 14 On departmental expenditure, he announced that departmental resource budgets will be reduced by one percent in 2013-14 and 2 percent in 2014-15. This measure is expected to save £980 million in 2013-14 and £2.4 billion in 2014-15, which will be reprioritised to fund additional investment in infrastructure and support for businesses.
- 15 Local government will be exempt from the additional one per cent reduction in 2013-14 as local authority budgets have already been reduced by a comparable amount through the decision to allow local authorities to hold council tax down in that year, should they accept the government's council tax freeze grant which is based upon a one per cent uplift in council tax yield. Government is encouraging local authorities however, to invest in reform in order to deliver further savings by consolidating back offices and transforming service delivery as demonstrated by the 'Whole-place Community Budget' pilot. Local government will face a two percent reduction in 2014-15 in line with other government departments. The estimated impact on the council from this two per cent reduction is a further cut in funding of around £4.5 million.
- 16 On regional or local pay, the government published the report of the independent Pay Review Bodies on local pay and announced that they intend to accept the bodies' recommendations that there should be no new centrally-determined local pay rates or zones, but that there should be greater use of existing flexibilities. The Schoolteachers' Review Body recommends much greater freedom for individual schools to set pay in line with performance, a recommendation which the government intends to support. There will however be no centrally-imposed changes to the geographical structure of pay in the Civil Service.
- 17 In relation to business, the Chancellor announced a further one percent reduction in corporation tax from 2014 and the extension of small business

rate relief to April 2014. The tax rate for small companies is to be reduced to 20 percent and annual capital investment allowances are to increase from £25,000 to £250,000 to encourage capital investment.

- 18 In addition, the Regional Growth Fund is to continue with investment of a further £350 million.
- 19 The Chancellor also announced that in the next spending review, which is expected in the first half of 2013, he will outline details of how departmental budgets will be aligned to create a single funding pot for local enterprise partnerships to administer, in line with the recommendations of Lord Heseltine's Growth Review.
- 20 On infrastructure, he announced £5.5 billion of investment in road and rail improvements, new homes, the expansion of broadband in small cities, scientific research and further education and free schools and academies.
- 21 As reported to Cabinet on 19 December 2012, on welfare reform the Chancellor announced a further £3.7 billion is to be saved in the welfare budget in 2015-16, mainly through limiting the uprating of a number of benefits to one percent per year over the next three years.
- 22 On schools, the government intends to invest an additional £980 million in schools in England by the end of this Parliament. This will include enough funding for 100 new free schools and academies, as well as investment to expand good schools, in the areas experiencing the greatest pressure on places.
- 23 An additional £270 million will be spent on capital investment in further education colleges in England, £58 million of which will be re-directed from existing funds.

Local government settlement

- 24 On 19 December 2012, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the annual settlement for local government for 2013/14 and 2014/15. The implications for the council are included in a separate medium term financial plan report on this cabinet agenda.

Local government finance

- 25 Since the last report to Members, the government has published a number of detailed documents relating to the introduction and management of local council tax support schemes.
 - a) *Localising support for council tax: Transitional grant scheme* (18 October 2012);
 - b) *Localising support for council tax: Explanatory note on re-stated default scheme universal credit provision* (29 October 2012);
 - c) *Localising support for council tax: Re-stated default scheme universal credit provisions* (29 October 2012).

- 26 To support the introduction of the local council tax support schemes, the government announced a new £100 million support scheme, for authorities who adopt schemes which comply with government criteria to protect low income households from excessive increases in their council tax liability in 2013-14. The scheme will also provide support to councils who wish to explore more sustainable approaches to minimising the financial impact on vulnerable taxpayers.
- 27 Applications for support need to be made by 15 February 2013, with payments made in March 2013. Because the council has agreed to protect all council tax benefit claimants in 2013/14, the council will qualify for £1.094 million from this grant allocation.
- 28 Following on from council tax freezes in the last two years, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has made £450 million available to support a further freeze in 2013/14. The terms of the support grant are less favorable than in previous years, based on an increase of 1 percent (for a Band D equivalent property) as opposed to 2.5 percent in previous years. The government has also announced that the threshold at which a referendum would need to be held on a proposed council tax increase has been reduced from 3.5 percent last year to 2 percent in 2013/14.
- 29 The Local Government Finance Bill includes provisions that will allow a billing authority to charge an empty homes premium to provide a stronger incentive to get homes back into productive use. The application of the premium on long term empty homes of more than two years will be the responsibility of local authorities, who will be responsible for designing their own schemes. The government in its consultation '*Technical reforms to Council Tax- Determining the circumstances in which dwellings should not be liable to the empty homes premium*' has indicated that there are a number of categories (in addition to the current exemptions) which it believes should be exempt from any premium. These are:
- a) a dwelling which is genuinely on the market for sale or letting;
 - b) a dwelling which is the sole or main residence of a member of the armed forces, who is absent from the property as a result of such service;
 - c) an annex deemed unoccupied because it is being treated by the occupier of the main dwelling, as part of that main dwelling.
- 30 The government has also consulted on the '*Technical reforms to Council Tax- Empty homes premium- Calculation of council tax base*'. This consultation deals with the treatment of the empty homes premium in relation to the council tax base. The government believes that this approach would, if applied in line with the proposals in this consultation, see an increase in the council tax base, which would ease the financial pressure on councils and reduce the need to increase council tax to fund the provision of services.
- 31 In July 2012, the Government confirmed its intention to introduce local retention of business rates with effect from 1 April 2013 and published a technical consultation paper setting out how it might implement the scheme,

subject to the passage of the Local Government Finance Bill, which is expected to secure Royal Assent next month.

- 32 To enable business rates retention to be implemented for 1 April 2013, the government intends to make the necessary secondary legislation early in the New Year subject to parliamentary approval.
- 33 Cabinet agreed a local council tax support scheme for 2013/14 on 19 December 2012. The impact of the reforms to local government finance outlined above are considered in more detail in recent and forthcoming reports to Cabinet on the council's next medium term financial plan for 2013-17.

Welfare reform guidance

- 34 Since the last report to Cabinet, the government has made a number of announcements in relation to welfare reform, many of which relate to the changes to welfare and benefits which will come into effect in 2013:
 - a) pilots and guidance and draft regulations relating to the introduction and operation of Universal Credit;
 - b) guidance and indicative funding allocations for 2012/13 to 2014/15 to replace the Social Fund;
 - c) proposed assessment criteria and guidance for Personal Independence Payments and policy proposals relating to the future of the Independent Living Fund;
 - d) consultation on Discretionary Housing Payments and proposals relating to the removal of subsidised rents from high income households living in subsidised social housing ('Pay to Stay');
 - e) Benefit Cap guidance for local authorities.
- 35 Cabinet considered a more detailed report on the various changes to welfare at its meeting of 19 December 2012.

New town and parish councils

- 36 In line with its policy to open up public services, on 31 October 2012 the government published '*Making it easier to set up new town and parish councils- discussion paper*', setting out its proposals to improve and simplify the process of setting up new councils.
- 37 Specifically, the government sought views on:
 - a) amending guidance to improve the current process, by for example specifying a shorter timescale for considering a request to form a new town or parish council and setting out the terms of reference of a constitutional review, specifying what criteria and should be considered in a review and the balance between whole-area and community-specific considerations;
 - b) changing the law to:

- lower the threshold for a community governance review by halving the numbers required for a valid petition;
 - limit the scope of a local authority's consideration of issues in a community governance review, operating from the presumption that a parish council would be effective and convenient, unless consultees presented evidence to the contrary;
 - shorten the timescales for a community governance review to be undertaken, such that decisions are made within six months or nine to 12 months of receipt of a petition;
- c) making it easier for neighbourhood forums to start the process for creating a new parish council by removing the requirement for a designated neighbourhood forum which has had a neighbourhood plan passed at referendum, to submit a petition if it wanted to trigger a community governance review. Instead, it would just submit an application to the local authority in the same manner currently prescribed for a petition - setting out the area to be covered by the new parish council. This would trigger a community governance review in the same way as a valid petition.

38 Members considered the issue via the Constitution Working Group on 17 December 2012 and submitted a response to the consultation, highlighting the need to allow sufficient time for clear proposals to be developed for residents and electors to consider as part of community governance reviews.

English Baccalaureate

- 39 On 17 September 2012, the Secretary of State for Education announced proposals for amending Key Stage 4 qualifications from 2015 to introduce the 'English Baccalaureate' (Ebacc).
- 40 Whilst not a qualification in itself, the term 'baccalaureate' is applied to the achievement of GCSEs at grades A* to C across a core of academic subjects including English, maths, history or geography, the sciences and a language.
- 41 In the consultation document '*Reforming Key stage 4 qualifications*', the government proposes to move away from the current competition between different awarding organisations in the EBacc subjects and instead to appoint a single awarding body to deliver qualifications in each subject.
- 42 A consultation has also been launched on the characteristics and implementation of English Baccalaureate Certificates (EBCs). Once introduced, only EBCs will count towards the EBacc measure. Until EBCs are introduced in each subject, the qualifications that currently count towards the EBacc will continue to count. This may mean that a combination of EBCs in English, mathematics and sciences, and existing qualifications in history, geography and languages will count toward the EBacc measure during the phased transition to the new qualifications.

Baseline designs for schools

- 43 On 4 October 2012, the government published new information on baseline designs for schools, which were recommended initially in the '*Review of Education Capital*' in April 2011.
- 44 The baseline designs provide a set of standardised drawings and specifications for new school buildings which are to be applied across a range of educational facilities.
- 45 The designs are not mandatory, however local authorities and schools will not be able to spend more on a new build project, than the cost of the baseline specification or design.

Regional and economic growth

- 46 The government has made a number of announcements to stimulate regional and economic growth, which along with deficit reduction has become a key policy priority.

Regional Growth Fund

- 47 On 19 October 2012, North East England was awarded 25 projects and programmes in the third round of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). The North East received the most awards of any region in the country, to the value of £105 million, which in financial terms was the second highest regional allocation in England.
- 48 In the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) area, three programmes were allocated funding:
 - a) Seaham-based Let's Grow, which is led by Trinity Mirror North East, the Business and Enterprise Group and UNW chartered accountants, will offer grants of between £50,000 and £1 million to North East companies. It aims to create up to 2,000 jobs, at least 1,200 of which will be in the NELEP area;
 - b) Northumberland County Council's Arch Limited, for the South East Northumberland Business Growth Programme which has been developed in response to the closure of the Rio Tinto Alcan aluminium smelter in at Lynemouth;
 - c) An infrastructure fund managed by the North East LEP has been allocated £30 million to target projects with the greatest economic return. It aims to create at least 2,300 new jobs over 10 years.
- 49 Specific projects in County Durham which were allocated funding include:
 - a) Ebac Group of Newton Aycliffe, which will establish a new production facility to manufacture a range of domestic washing machines and refrigerators, creating more than 200 jobs;
 - b) Actem (UK) Limited of Peterlee which will invest in capital equipment to allow production of low level waste nuclear containers;

- c) Caterpillar Peterlee which will expand its manufacturing capacity of articulated trucks;
- d) CAV Aerospace of Consett which is investing in research and development and new production equipment;
- e) NSK Bearings Europe which will invest in new production lines, a new furnace and an extension to an existing warehouse, creating 45 jobs.

City Deals Round 2

- 50 On 29 October 2012, the Deputy Prime Minister invited 20 areas, including Sunderland and Tees Valley, to bid for City Deals. This follows the establishment of City Deals between the government and eight of the largest cities in England (including Newcastle) in summer 2012.
- 51 The deals allow cities and urban areas to take advantage of a number of tax and other incentives, designed to boost economic growth including the creation of new jobs and apprenticeships. However, the government is not guaranteeing that all cities will be able to secure a deal as part of this second wave. The 20 selected cities had until 15 January 2013 to submit a bid, outlining how they will meet a range of criteria including improved governance and greater private sector investment.

Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee Review of Apprenticeships

- 52 The Business, Innovation and Skills Committee reported in early November 2012 on apprenticeships following an 11 month review. The report concludes that standards need to be improved and schemes need to be better monitored in order to provide the skills needed to boost economic growth. The government invested £1.2 billion in the apprenticeship programme, with 457,200 people starting training as an apprentice. However, the report states that there is room for improvement and recommends a number of reforms, including a clearer government policy on the purpose and goal of apprenticeships, as well as closer monitoring of their funding and effectiveness.
- 53 The report also recommends that the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) should have a statutory responsibility to raise awareness of apprenticeships for students within schools, along with producing a robust methodology for valuing employers' contributions in future.

Local Transport Bodies

- 54 In September 2012, the government published '*Devolving local major transport schemes: Next steps*', setting out its approach to local transport funding, following consultation earlier in the year.
- 55 The government confirmed that in the future, funding for local major transport schemes would be allocated locally according to population on a per capita basis, with priorities for investment being decided by the newly established Local Transport Bodies, which will be made up of local transport authorities, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and others with a key interest. In making decisions on the use of the devolved funding, the local transport bodies will be

expected to demonstrate to local stakeholders and central government that the schemes they will carry forward, provide good value for money.

- 56 The earlier consultation set out an ambitious timetable for implementation, to which the government has confirmed it intends to adhere. This included a deadline of December 2012 for Local Transport Bodies to set out their proposals for governance, financial management and assurance frameworks, and April 2013 for them to publish an initial list of prioritised schemes for funding from 2015.
- 57 From 2015 onwards, the government will provide funding directly to the accountable bodies of each LTB. Currently no final details of the funding which will be available to the LTBs for the period 2015 to 2019 is available, although it has been estimated initially at about £1.1 billion. Given the uncertainty around levels of funding at this stage, in planning for future transport investment, the government has also advised that in developing a prioritised pipeline of schemes, it would be prudent for LTBs to make contingency plans for one third above or below their local planning assumption figure.
- 58 The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development has been working with other local authorities and strategic partners on the establishment of a LTB covering the North East LEP area.

Business, Innovation and Skills Retail Strategy

- 59 On 9 October 2012, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published the BIS retail strategy, to set out where the government feels it can support the retail sector at international, European, national and local levels.
- 60 At an international level, the government has identified growing markets, particularly for British and luxury products, and opportunities to help British retailers access them. In Europe, the strategy recognises a need to encourage greater coordination and regulation and increase confidence in e-commerce.
- 61 At national level, the government highlights the retail sector as a significant employer and aims to improve regulation in order to lower the costs and improve business conditions for retailers. The strategy also recognises the importance of research and design in the retail sector and aims to improve knowledge transfer within the retail sector as well as across to other business sectors.
- 62 At the local level, the strategy recognises that retailers need business support and better access to finance and information and re-iterates some of the outcomes of recent initiatives such as those from the 2011 Portas Review. It also sees a potential role for LEPs in understanding the role of the retail sector in their areas and supporting the retail sector alongside their other interests.

Lord Heseltine Review: 'No stone unturned in pursuit of growth'

63 On 31 October 2012, Lord Heseltine published *'No stone unturned in pursuit of growth'*, his review of economic growth in the country. His report sets out a comprehensive economic plan to improve the UK's ability to create wealth.

64 In all, the report makes 89 recommendations which aim to inject stability into the economy, create the conditions for growth and maximise the performance of the UK. At the heart of Lord Heseltine's proposals, are measures to rebalance responsibilities for economic development between central and local government, and between government and the private sector, in order to unleash the potential of local economies and leaders and enable every part of the UK economy to raise its game. Key recommendations include:

- a) the government to set out a clear and comprehensive national growth strategy (responsibility for which should lie with a designated minister) steered in its implementation by a National Growth Council;
- b) from 2015/16, the creation of a five year single budget pot, worth £49 billion over 4 years or £59 billion over 5 years, bringing together central government budgets and funding streams for significant parts of skills, infrastructure, employment support, housing, regeneration and business support;
- c) local enterprise partnerships should then develop their own tailored economic plans to compete for a share of the single national pot to support growth in their local area over a five year period, with government allocating £250,000 to each LEP over the next two years to do so;
- d) the government should work with local authorities to identify and publish details of all surplus/derelict public land so that LEPs and local authorities can collaborate to bring this land back into use to support local economic strategy and priorities;
- e) the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) must set out a clear statement explaining how they and other government agencies will work with LEPs and the devolved administrations to better connect national strategy with local initiatives;
- f) the government and the private sector should work together to strengthen the existing network of local Chambers of Commerce which should have an increased role, building a stronger relationship between businesses and LEPs in their area;
- g) local authorities should have a new overarching legal duty to have regard to economic development in the exercise of all their activities and functions and should be required to collaborate on economic development;
- h) the government should consider the effectiveness of Local Development Orders and extend their use after consultation and consider using Special Development Orders to speed up specific planning decisions of strategic significance;

- i) business engagement should be incorporated far deeper into the school curriculum and in all boards of governors in secondary schools;
- j) each LEP should incorporate skills needs within their local economic plans and all further education learning providers must consult and agree their provision with LEPs to ensure that the courses they offer to 16-18 year olds reflect local labour requirements;
- k) LEPs working with local authorities, employers and other local partners should develop proposals for reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (so-called NEETs) as part of their local economic plans.

65 In broad terms, the government has welcomed the thrust of Lord Heseltine's report and in his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor committed to establish the single funding pot and devolve more responsibilities to LEPs in the forthcoming spending review.

North East Independent Economic Review

- 66 Although not a government policy initiative, it is appropriate at this point to bring to Members' attention, the work commissioned by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP), to produce a strategic review of the North East economy, targeting productivity and employment growth in the period to 2030.
- 67 The review will be chaired by Lord Adonis, former Secretary of State for Transport and Minister for Schools. Other members of the review board include Will Hutton, chair of the Big Innovation Centre and principal of Hertford College, Oxford, Heidi Mottram, chief executive of Northumbrian Water and member of the CBI's national infrastructure panel, Lord Curry, leading businessman and chair of NFU Mutual, Bridget Rosewell, economist and chair of Volterra Partners and the Right Reverend Justin Welby, the Bishop of Durham (up until his appointment as the Archbishop of Canterbury elect).
- 68 Alongside an assessment of the North East economy in European and global markets, the review will call for evidence on a number of cross-cutting themes including labour markets and skills, infrastructure and land markets, finance and capital markets, private and social enterprise and the role of government and public governance.
- 69 After a public debate on the evidence base, the review will call sector and regional experts as witnesses and produce its final report early this year. The intention is that the report will be submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister and other Cabinet colleagues. Its recommendations will identify those actions to be put in place by the North East LEP and others to be taken forward with regional and wider partners, and actions that require central government involvement and intervention.
- 70 The Leader of the council, the Cabinet portfolio holder for economic regeneration, the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development have contributed evidence to the review.

NHS and public health reform

- 71 The government continues to provide guidance in relation to NHS reforms in order to set out the detail on how the new NHS system will work. Regulations will be laid in January 2013 on how health and wellbeing boards will operate from April 2013 when they become statutory boards. The Department of Health has confirmed that health and wellbeing boards will be a committee of the local authority. Sub-committee structures will be a matter for local determination alongside the political proportionality of the health and wellbeing board membership. The council's Constitution Working Group will consider the issue and a more detailed report on the county's approach to health and wellbeing boards will be brought forward to Cabinet in March 2013.
- 72 Healthwatch England, the new national, statutory consumer champion for health and social care in England, was launched on the 1 October 2012. The body will provide patients and the public with a voice, to air their views, suggestions and concerns to health and social care organisations.
- 73 The NHS Commissioning Board has been formally established. In April 2013 it will take on its full range of responsibilities, and over the next six months will be assessing proposals for authorisation from over 200 new clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). The key aim of the NHS Commissioning Board is to secure the best possible health outcomes for patients.
- 74 In October 2012, the Department of Health published *'Directors of Public Health in Local Government – role, responsibilities and context'* to describe both the statutory and non-statutory elements of the role. The document also outlines arrangements that are designed to allow local authorities to have confidence in the director of public health appointments they make, and to build on their own good practice while meeting national requirements. Again, Cabinet will consider a report on the process for appointing a Director of Public Health at its meeting in March.
- 75 Ring-fenced funding for local authorities' new public health responsibilities were expected in December 2012 as part of the annual settlement, however along with the education settlement, these have now been delayed until January. The Department of Health has stated that the public health allocations will be based on the 2010/11 base spend position, as updated for clarification on the treatment of some services/costs (such as prescription charges) and that this would only change in exceptional circumstances.
- 76 The first Mandate between the government and the NHS Commissioning Board, setting out the ambitions for the health service for the next two years, was published on 13 November 2012. The Mandate reaffirms the government's commitment to an NHS that remains comprehensive and universal and that is able to meet patients' needs and expectations now and in the future.
- 77 The Mandate is structured around five key areas where the government expects the NHS Commissioning Board to make improvements:
- a) preventing people from dying prematurely;
 - b) enhancing quality of life for people with long-term conditions;

- c) helping people to recover from episodes of ill health or following injury;
- d) ensuring that people have a positive experience of care;
- e) treating and caring for people in a safe environment and protecting them from avoidable harm.

78 Cabinet and Scrutiny committees receive regular reports on recent developments in relation to NHS and public health reforms including progress nationally and locally. Further details on NHS reforms and the public health transition are the subject of separate reports on this agenda for Cabinet.

Social care reform

79 On 12 September 2012, Cabinet considered a detailed report on the Reforming Care and Support White Paper and the draft Care and Support Bill.

80 On 26 October 2012, the Department of Health set up a £300 million fund to provide new and modernised homes designed to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities. Local authorities will be able to bid for money from the fund to build specially designed new homes and to modernise existing specialised housing to bring it up to standard. Over five years from 2013/14, £160 million capital funding will be made available by the Department of Health and this will be delivered through the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). This funding may be supplemented by up to £80 million further capital funding in the first two years of the programme. From 26 October 2012 providers were able to bid for funding to develop affordable homes for older people and adults with disabilities or mental health needs. Bids have to be submitted to the HCA by Friday, 18 January 2013.

81 Measures within the Social Care and Reform White Paper will impact upon local authorities and NHS organisations as housing needs and resources will need to be considered when assessing the needs of their local area. Where needs are identified and prioritised, local commissioning plans should take account of these. The government will also work to ensure that people obtain timely support in securing appropriate home modifications. The draft Care and Support Bill will set out new duties to be placed on local authorities to ensure that adult social care and housing departments work together.

82 On 18 September 2012, the Department of Health launched a new programme to help provide more choice and higher quality of care and support services across the country. The aim of the Developing Care Markets for Quality and Choice (DCMQC) programme is to help local authorities build their capacity to shape a diverse, vibrant and high quality market for social care services. The programme will improve choice, provide tailored care and focus care on the outcomes that matter to people.

83 Following the Dilnot Commission's recommendations on social care funding, the government has stated that they agree with the principles of the Commission's model, financial protection through capped costs and that an extended means test would be the right basis for any new funding model. However, the government has said that there remain a number of important questions to be answered on any reformed system and feel unable to commit to introducing the new system at this stage. Instead, the government has

committed to work with the Official Opposition to consider various options for a reformed system before coming to a final view in the next Spending Review.

Open data and transparency

- 84 Following the publication of the '*Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*' in September 2011, Ministers launched a consultation on 25 October 2012 on '*Improving local government transparency*', which proposes to extend the Code and to make it a legal requirement via regulations.
- 85 As part of the proposals, the government wants to add further datastreams to the Code, including:
- a) Trade Union facility time - authorities should publish the amount spent on providing support and facilities to trade unions within their workforces, and specify which unions;
 - b) Parking charges - authorities should publish revenue from off-street parking charges, revenue from on-street parking charges, the number of off-street parking places, the number of on-street parking places, the revenue from parking fines and the number of free parking spaces available (in line with The Portas Review);
 - c) Any payments made to councillors from the public purse;
 - d) Corporate charge cards, credit cards or procurement cards - spending on goods and services made via these types of cards should be identified as payments to the underlying merchant/supplier, not spending on the card company itself.
- 86 The government also intends to set dates by which all authorities are expected to have reached the two star status and then the three star level of compliance as outlined in the Code.
- 87 The Assistant Chief Executive responded to the consultation and the government's response is expected later this year.

Reducing bureaucracy

- 88 On 19 November 2012, the Prime Minister gave a speech to the CBI Annual Conference in which he outlined further steps to reduce bureaucracy and speed up the machinery of government.
- 89 He outlined proposals to make it more difficult to mount judicial reviews of government policy decisions, reducing the time limit within which people can bring cases, charging more for reviews to prevent time-wasting and reducing the number of appeals allowed from four to two.
- 90 On consultations, he drew attention to the revised code of practice on government consultation, which has removed the recommendation that government should allow 12 weeks consultation on policies and proposals. Instead, Ministers are now allowed to decide how long a consultation should last, if one is needed at all.

- 91 He used equalities to highlight what he described as the ‘gold-plating’ of legislation, with supplementary reports and guidance, such as the requirement to produce equality impact assessments for every decision.
- 92 In future, he suggested that equality impact assessments would no longer be required, as long as equality issues have been properly considered while policy is made.

Police and Crime Commissioners

- 93 On 15 November 2012, elections for the new police and crime commissioners (PCCs) were held across England and Wales, with 41 police and crime commissioners elected. The role of police and crime commissioners is to ensure the policing needs of their communities are met as effectively as possible, bringing communities closer to the police, building confidence in the system and restoring trust.
- 94 In County Durham and Darlington, Ron Hogg was elected as PCC for the force area and has subsequently taken up his new post.

Consultations

- 95 Members have asked for an update on current and forthcoming consultation opportunities through which the council could help to shape government policy and an indication of where the council has submitted responses to consultations. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the main consultations announced by government since the last report to Cabinet and indicates where the council has submitted a response.
- 96 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

- 97 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 provide a commentary against the strategic themes of the Council Plan and County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy.

Altogether better council

- 98 The announcement in the Autumn Statement that local government is to be exempt from the additional one percent reduction in departmental spending in 2013/14 acknowledges that local authorities have already been subject to spending reductions of that amount through government controls on council tax. The council may also be affected by reductions in grant from other government departments, which are subject to the additional two percent reduction in 2013/14.
- 99 The medium term financial plan report on this Cabinet agenda sets out the financial implications for the council following the government’s financial settlement announcement on 19 December 2012.

- 100 The council's medium term financial plan will also need to anticipate and respond to further spending reductions, when the Chancellor brings forward his next spending review in the first half of 2013. Although at this stage we do not know the detail, it is clear that if the Chancellor maintains his strategy of protecting health, education and international development, as he has suggested he will, spending will continue to be reduced in other areas including local government into 2017/18.
- 101 The confirmation that the government will not be moving forward with the introduction of regional pay is to be welcomed, given the significance of public sector employment to the North East economy. It should be noted however, that the government plans to limit future public sector pay awards to one percent, which is below the current rate of inflation.
- 102 The local Council Tax Support scheme agreed by Cabinet on 19 December 2012 will ensure that all groups of benefit claimants, and not just pensioners are protected from excessive increases arising from the move from central to local support.
- 103 As such, the council is eligible for support from the additional funding the government has made available to support local Council Tax Support schemes and we estimate that this may be worth £1.09 million to the county. To put this into context, the county lost £5 million arising from the 10 percent reduction in the national budget for Council Tax Benefit before responsibility was devolved to local councils.
- 104 The council responded to the government consultation on 'Localising support for council tax- council tax base and funding for local precepting authorities' as we have concerns that there would be unintended consequences for the authority if the proposals were adopted. The council has decided to help protect local parish and town council precepting authorities by passporting their share of the local council tax support scheme grant although in total they are financially worse off by over £400,000.
- 105 More broadly, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has raised concerns regarding the late announcement of the new £100 million support grant, arguing that even with the extra grant, it will be difficult for most councils to design schemes that meet the criteria within the reduced funding intended for council tax support. The IFS has claimed that the scheme is designed to encourage councils to develop local support schemes which do not cut support as much as the funding reductions from central to local government, which in effect will leave local authorities to make up the shortfall from elsewhere in their budgets. The IFS has argued that it is difficult to reconcile this with a policy whose stated aim was to devolve responsibility.
- 106 It should also be noted that the Audit Commission and a wide range of local authorities have expressed concerns about the longer term financial sustainability of the scheme, when transitional support comes to an end.
- 107 This is a significant concern, which will compound the wider responsibilities and role the council is expected to take in the local implementation of the government's welfare reforms.

- 108 The proposals to simplify the process for creating town and parish councils are consistent with the government's open public services agenda and seek to speed up the creation of new town and parish councils by lowering support thresholds and limiting the criteria which can be considered in community governance reviews. As Members will be aware, the council has recently considered community governance reviews for two of the remaining unparished parts of the county and drew on this experience in responding to the consultation.
- 109 In relation to open data and transparency, the council is already working towards the principles in the 'Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency' and work is underway to identify what further action the council may need to take to comply with the proposals set out in the latest consultation. It should be noted however, that the government is becoming ever more prescriptive in its transparency requirements, which is somewhat at odds with its stated commitment towards localism and recognising the general competence of local government.
- 110 This increase in prescription, is in stark contrast to the government's stance on the 'checks and balances' in the public policy decision-making process. The proposals to make it more difficult to challenge decisions judicially, to reduce and simplify requirements to consult and consider the impact of policy proposals, are intended to speed-up decision-making and to enable the government to take more decisive action. However, they may also allow the government and other public agencies to make and implement policy decisions with less scrutiny and challenge of the impact of their proposals.

Altogether wealthier

- 111 The five approved Regional Growth Fund projects in the county are to be welcomed and the county stands to benefit from the North East LEP's infrastructure fund and the Let's Grow programme, both of which may help to stimulate business growth and job creation.
- 112 Building on the establishment of a Rural Growth Network (NEFRAN) and a successful bid for financial assistance, which were supported by NELEP, Durham County Council is exploring opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring rural authorities to boost rural economic growth and identify whether additional government support is necessary.
- 113 With regards to City Deals, the council is working with Sunderland City Council and the NELEP to explore the opportunities that a second City Deal in the NELEP area may offer. At this stage it is unclear whether smaller cities will be invited to make bids in the future, however the county has a sound evidence-base and joined-up strategies should an appropriate opportunity arise to make a bid.
- 114 Although the full policy implications and impact of Lord Heseltine's growth review are not yet known, the emphasis on promoting economic growth by decentralising powers is to be welcomed. In many respects, the review could strengthen the argument for the role of local government, partnership working and placed based approaches in stimulating local economic growth. The council will therefore continue to work with partners across the North East LEP to maximise opportunities for the county and wider region.

- 115 The Council and County Durham Economic Partnership will support the North East Independent Economic Review, working with businesses and partners to ensure that Durham's perspectives, priorities and evidence base are fed into the review.

Altogether healthier

- 116 The Care and Support Bill has provided some clarity on the direction of government policy, but the key issue of the funding of social care within the context of an increasingly ageing population is yet to be addressed. National organisations including the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services have expressed concerns about the lack of a clear commitment on funding for social care reform in particular, and that any proposals should fully take into account the wider financial constraints impacting on councils. There are still a number of regulations to be developed, which will provide the detail on how the social care reforms will be implemented.
- 117 The government continues to provide guidance and regulations in relation to the NHS reforms and rapid progress is being made to implement the Health and Social care Act 2012. A separate report on the agenda for Cabinet highlights the progress made nationally and locally.

Altogether safer

- 118 The election of the first Police and Crime Commissioner for the County Durham area is a significant development which will change the crime and community safety policy landscape in the county. The new commissioner will be responsible for a number of existing funding streams, currently managed by the council and Durham Constabulary, such as:
- a) the Community Safety Fund;
 - b) the Home Office element of both the Youth Justice Grant and the Drug Intervention Programme;
 - c) the Positive Futures grant;
 - d) Victim Support funding; and
 - e) the Basic Command Unit Fund.
- 119 The transfer of these funds will have implications for a number of existing projects and programmes in the county and the former Durham Police Authority has developed funding transition plans and options for the incoming Police and Crime Commissioner to consider.
- 120 The Leader of the council and senior Members and officers have met with the new Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss priorities and joint working through the Safer Durham Partnership, in advance of the commissioner setting his first police precept and budget in 2013/14.

- 121 In addition, the new Police and Crime Commissioner has been invited to join the board of the County Durham Partnership to facilitate partnership working with the council and other organisations in the county.

Altogether better for children and young people

- 122 Commentators have raised several concerns over the proposals for the new English Baccalaureate qualifications, as they will not include course work as part of the assessment, with greater emphasis being placed on final examinations. There is a concern that this may disadvantage those students that do not perform well in examinations and may limit the depth of understanding that students can develop on particular subjects, as self-directed learning is reduced. There may also be unintended consequences for some students for whom the new examinations are too challenging. The Secretary of State for Education has announced that special provision will be put in place for such students, such as being able to sit the examinations at a later age (17 or 18), or being able to leave education, with a detailed record of achievement as opposed to formal (examination-based) qualifications.
- 123 With regard to the baseline designs, which have been introduced following the cancellation of the national Building Schools for the Future programme, Members may wish to note that whilst the council would not be required to adopt and adhere to such designs, the specifications would provide the financial parameters for any new school build projects in the county. Currently, we have five new schools approved for re-building under the Priority Schools Building Programme and the design proposals will need to come within the cost constraints of the new baseline specifications, unless the council is prepared to fund higher cost designs.

Altogether greener

- 124 There have been relatively few significant policy announcements which affect this theme since the last report to Members.

Implications for partnership working

- 125 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 stimulating economic growth and job creation, policing and community safety and health and social care, given the significant and profound nature of reforms in these areas and the emergence of new partners, with which the council will want to work.
- 126 The County Durham Partnership is currently in the process of reviewing its priorities as part of a refresh of the sustainable community strategy for the county. The refresh will take account of changing government policy and take on board changing local needs and priorities. A report on the review of the sustainable community strategy is expected to be brought to Cabinet in September this year.

Conclusions

- 127 Clearly, the various policy changes will have major implications for the council and the steps it is taking with partners to develop an 'altogether better Durham'. The council and its partners continue to analyse the impact that government policy is having on local communities and on our ability to deliver the sustainable community strategy. Wherever possible, we are working together to respond proactively to the government's policy changes.
- 128 Since the last report to Members, although there may have been minor changes in emphasis in some areas, the general direction of travel of government policy remains the same. A number of detailed documents and consultations have been released as the emphasis in government policy is switching from policy development to implementation. 2013 will be a key year as a number of government reforms, such as changes to local government finance, the reorganisation of the NHS and public health and changes to welfare, all take effect at points during the year.
- 129 The common themes of government policy around transparency, choice, community empowerment and more diverse patterns of public service provision are still evident. Although localism still features, Ministers have not refrained from issuing guidance or specifying how they expect local authorities to act on certain issues, for example the latest council tax 'freeze' offer and pronouncements in favour of weekly bin collections. In many respects, such advice or direction can be seen as reducing the ability of local authorities to determine local approaches to managing budget reductions in line with local priorities.
- 130 The government has continued to defend its approach to addressing the deficit, but the slow rate of economic growth has resulted in the Chancellor confirming that funding challenges will continue beyond the next election and that serious consideration will need to be given to further reducing spending on welfare in future years.

Recommendations

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

Background papers

[Cabinet, 29 February 2012, Localism Act](#)

[Cabinet, 10 October 2012, Implications for Durham County Council of the Government's policy programme](#)

[Cabinet, 19 December 2012, Welfare reform update](#)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The decision to further reduce public spending on local government in 2014/15 by an additional two percent is expected to lead to a £4.5 million reduction for the council, which may also be affected by grant reductions from other departmental budgets. The transfer of funding to the new police and crime commissioner could impact on current projects and programmes, depending on his budget and priorities. The council is likely to benefit from the additional support for the introduction of local Council Tax Support Schemes, although the amount of funding the authority is likely to receive does not compare with the reduction in funding for Council Tax Benefit in the county arising from the initial 10 percent cut in the national budget. As part of the MTFP process, consideration will need to be given to the latest Council Tax freeze grant and the possible options open to the authority.

Staffing – The announcement that the government no longer intends to pursue the introduction of regional pay removes an element of uncertainty around pay, although it should be noted that future public sector pay increases are to be limited to one percent.

Risk – Individual assessments of the risks associated with specific policy proposals are undertaken as a matter of course in council project planning and management.

Equality and Diversity – Individual impact assessments are undertaken where the council changes or develops new policies as a result of government reforms or new legislation. It remains to be seen how the government intends to reconcile its pledge ‘to call time’ on impact assessments, while still requiring policy makers to take into account the potential impact of their policy proposals on particular groups and sections of society.

Accommodation – The baseline designs and specifications for schools will set the financial parameters for new school build projects in the county. The development of a range of standard designs, may however help to reduce design costs if the council works ‘off plan’ and adopts the standard designs.

Crime and Disorder – The election of the first police and crime commissioner for the county and the establishment of a police and crime panel to hold him to account will have implications for the funding of community safety activities and programmes.

Human Rights – No specific implications have been identified.

Consultation – The relaxation of the code of recommended practice on consultation, will impact on the council’s ability to inform government policy development.

Procurement – not applicable.

Disability Discrimination Act – not applicable.

Legal Implications – Increasingly, the government’s reforms are coming into effect with new statutory regulations and duties being placed on local authorities. The council considers the legal implications of all decisions it takes.

Appendix 2: Government consultations and calls for evidence

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Review of the Coastal Access scheme - Invitation to comment	Natural England	05/09/2012	31/10/2012	Comment is invited on the Coastal Access Scheme which sets out how Natural England are working to create the England Coast Path. This review will be completed by March 2013, and a full public consultation will be held following the report.		
Consultation	Fees and Frequency Regulations 2013-14 - A consultation	Department for Education	05/09/2012	05/10/2012	This consultation seeks views on proposed changes to the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the Fees and Frequency of Inspections Regulations.	Children and Young People	
Consultation	The next phase: Our Consultation on our strategy for 2013 to 2016	Care Quality Commission	06/09/2012	06/12/2012	This consultation document sets out the CQCs strategic direction over the next three years.	Children and Adults Services	

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Automatic enrolment earnings thresholds review and revision 2013-2014 - A consultation	Department for Work and Pensions	06/09/2012	17/10/2012	This consultation seeks views on possible revisions to the annual review of the automatic enrolment earnings trigger and the qualifying earnings band, and proposed rates for 2013-2014.		
Consultation	Technical reforms to Council Tax - Empty homes premium - Calculation of council tax base - A consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	11/09/2012	22/10/2012	This consultation sets out the government's proposals on how the council tax empty homes premium is to be included in the calculation of the council tax base.	Resources	Yes
Consultation	HM Revenue and Customs: VAT - Exemption of higher education provided by for-profit providers - A consultation	HMRC	12/09/2012	05/12/2012	This consultation is a consideration of the case to extend the education exemption to for-profit providers of Higher Education.		
Consultation	Bus subsidy reform - A consultation	Department for Transport	13/09/2012	12/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on how the subsidy proposals set out in Green Light for Better Buses, published in March 2012, are to be implemented.	Regeneration and Economic Development	Yes

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Welfare of animals at the time of killing - A consultation	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	13/09/2012	24/10/2012	This consultation seeks views on proposals to implement a Council Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing, in England, with effect from 1 January 2013.		
Consultation	Ending the employment relationship - A consultation	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	14/09/2012	23/11/2012	The consultation seeks views on ways to support the use of settlement agreements and changes to the compensatory award limit in unfair dismissal cases.		
Consultation	Employment Tribunal Rules - Review by Mr Justice Underhill	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	14/09/2012	23/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on recommendations in a review published on 11 July 2012 of the rules of procedure for employment tribunals		
Consultation	Environment Agency charges from 2013: A consultation	Environment Agency	14/09/2012	19/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on minor changes to the Agency's charges. This is due to new and emerging legislation called the Industrial Emissions Directive and phase III of EU Emissions Trading.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Ofsted's complaint handling functions: Proposed improvements to policies - A consultation	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills	17/09/2012	29/10/2012	This consultation seeks views on Ofsted's review of arrangements for the handling and investigation of concerns about their work and about the conduct of staff, as well as complaints received about schools.		
Consultation	The Financial Policy Committee's macro-prudential tools - A consultation	HM Treasury	18/09/2012	11/12/2012	Establishing the Financial Policy Committee within the Bank of England as a macro-prudential authority is a key element of the government's reforms to the UK's system of financial regulation, which will be enacted by the Financial Services Bill. This consultation seeks views on proposals for the Financial Policy Committee's direction-making tools.		
Consultation	Reforming Key Stage 4 qualifications - A consultation	Department for Education	18/09/2012	10/12/2012	This consultation sets out the government's plans to restore rigour and confidence to our examination system with the introduction of English Baccalaureate Certificates in English, maths, the sciences, history, geography and languages.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Fuel poverty - Changing the framework for measurement	Department of Energy and Climate Change	18/09/2012	30/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on the government's proposed changes to the way fuel poverty is measured in England, setting out a proposal for a new definition of fuel poverty and the implications of any change in definition for the fuel poverty target.		
Consultation	Renewable Heat Incentive - Proposals for a domestic scheme - A consultation	Department of Energy and Climate Change	20/09/2012	07/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on proposals for a subsidy scheme aimed at helping households replace their existing fossil fuel-based heating systems with renewable-based ones.		
Consultation	Renewable Heat Incentive - Expanding the non-domestic scheme - A consultation	Department of Energy and Climate Change	20/09/2012	07/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on the government's plans to expand the current non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.		
Consultation	Protocol on government intervention action on fire and rescue authorities in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	20/09/2012	15/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on guidance on statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England and Protocol on government intervention action for fire and rescue authorities in England.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Guidance on statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England	Department for Communities and Local Government	20/09/2012	15/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on light touch guidance on statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England.		
Consultation	Implementing Directive on combating late payment in commercial transactions - A consultation	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	20/09/2012	19/10/2012	This consultation seeks views on the UK's implementation of the Late Payment Directive. The Directive covers all debts incurred in commercial transactions. It applies to businesses and public authorities, whether the transactions are within the UK or effected across EU borders.		
Consultation	The new remand framework for children - Allocation of new burdens funding to local authorities - A consultation	Ministry of Justice	21/09/2012	16/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on funding proposals in relation to remands to youth detention accommodation.	Children and Adults Services	

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Developing the culture of compassionate care: creating a new vision for nurses, midwives and care-givers - A consultation	Department of Health	21/09/2012	16/11/2012	This is an opportunity to help create a new strategy for nursing, midwifery and care-giving that embeds a culture of compassionate care.		
Consultation	Regulatory fees - have your say	CQC	25/09/2012	21/12/2012	This consultation looks at the long-term strategy for CQC fees and the changes proposed from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.	Children and Adults Services	
Consultation	Fees for registered health and social care services - A consultation	Care Quality Commission	28/09/2012	21/12/2012	This consultation looks at the long-term strategy for the Care Quality Commission's fees and the changes they propose to make to them from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.		
Consultation	Technical reforms to Council Tax - Determining the circumstances in which dwellings should not be liable to the empty homes premium - A consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	28/09/2012	09/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on proposals on exceptions to the Premium - dwellings which may otherwise be liable for the Premium, but which are subject to circumstances which mean that it would not be appropriate for it to apply.	Resources	Yes

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Claimant Count statistics for Universal Credit - A consultation	Department for Work and Pensions	03/10/2012	23/11/2012	This consultation is aimed at users of Claimant Count statistics.		
Consultation	Draft code of practice for youth conditional cautions - A consultation	Ministry of Justice	04/10/2012	11/11/2012	This consultation paper invites views from interested parties on the draft Code of Practice for Youth Conditional Cautions under Section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (that amends the Crime and Disorder Act 1998).	Children and Adults Services	
Consultation	Fair and transparent pricing for NHS services - A consultation	Department of Health	05/10/2012	21/12/2012	This consultation discusses the new arrangements for the National Tariff (covering the prices to be paid for NHS services) provided for in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. It should be considered alongside current consultations on a new licensing regime for NHS providers, and procurement regulations for NHS commissioners.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Electricity market reform - Call for evidence by the National Grid	Department of Energy and Climate Change	10/10/2012	03/10/2012	This consultation calls for evidence to inform the analysis that the System Operator (National Grid) will provide to Government in 2013 to inform the first electricity market reform delivery plan.		
Call for Evidence	Shaping a UK agri-tech strategy - Call for evidence	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	11/10/2012	22/11/2012	This call for evidence seeks views and information that will help shape a Government strategy to promote UK economic growth and international development by making best use of the science and technologies relevant to agriculture.		
Consultation	e-Lending in libraries - A consultation	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	15/10/2012	06/11/2012	An independent panel calls for evidence to inform a review on how libraries should respond to the challenges and opportunities that new e-Book technology presents.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Necessary Wayleaves regime - A consultation	Department of Energy and Climate Change	17/10/2012	28/11/2012	This consultation invites views from interested parties on possible reforms in England and Wales to the existing process for handling applications from electricity network operators for "necessary wayleaves" under Schedule 4 of the Electricity Act 1989.		
Consultation	Consultation on revision of fees payable for applications under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989	Department of Energy and Climate Change	17/10/2012	28/11/2012	This consultation invites feedback on changing the fees payable to the Government for applications under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, which have not been revised since the Act was implemented in 1990.		
Consultation	Consultation on amendment to the threshold for high voltages overhead lines (electric lines above ground) in the Planning Act 2008	Department of Energy and Climate Change	17/10/2012	28/11/2012	This consultation is on a proposal to amend the threshold in the Planning Act 2008 that defines an electric line above ground as a "nationally significant infrastructure project" (NSIP).		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Communities and Local Government Committee to hold inquiry on the on the implementation of welfare reform by local authorities	House of commons	18/10/2012	14/12/2012	The Committee invites submissions from interested parties covering the progress made to date on the implementation of welfare reform by local authorities.	Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Consultation	Changes to WaterSure as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	18/10/2012	30/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on changes to WaterSure as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit. The consultation is aimed at water customers, organisations representing customers, water and sewerage companies.		
Consultation	Consultation on implementing employee owner status	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	18/10/2012	08/11/2012	This consultation seeks views on how Government should implement the new employment status, "employee owner". This status will give businesses greater choice about the contracts they can offer to individuals, whilst ensuring appropriate levels of protection are maintained.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Consultation on national performers list for GPs, dentists and ophthalmologists	Department of Health	19/10/2012	14/12/2012	This consultation seeks feedback on the Department of Health proposal that, in future, there should be one national list of general practice doctors, dentists and ophthalmologists approved to provide NHS primary care services.		
Consultation	Consultation on how best to record crime outcomes	Home Office	19/10/2012	07/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on whether the way crime outcomes are recorded should be broadened to better reflect the work police officers do.		
Consultation	Consultation on new police pay review body launched	Home Office	24/10/2012	21/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on the Government's intention to establish an independent pay review body before the end of 2014, bringing police officers more in line with millions of other public sector workers.		
Consultation	Improving local government transparency: Consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	25/10/2012	20/12/2012	Following the publication of the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency in September 2011, Ministers are now minded to make the Code a legal requirement via regulations, subject to consultation.	Assistant Chief Executive	Yes

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Business Rates retention draft regulations - A consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	25/10/2012	23/11/2012	This consultation invites comments on drafts of the key regulations that will underpin the business rates retention scheme.	Resources	Yes
Consultation	Consultation on proposed increases to contributions for members of the teachers' pension scheme and removal of regulations governing scheme valuations	Department for Education	26/10/2012	21/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on proposed increases to contributions for members of the teachers' pension scheme and removal of regulations governing scheme valuations.		
Consultation	Inspection of Sure Start Children's Centres - A consultation	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills	29/10/2012	11/01/2013	This consultation seeks views on Ofsted's proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of Sure Start Children's Centres.	Children and Adults Services	
Consultation	Making it easier to set up new town and parish councils - Discussion paper	Department for Communities and Local Government	31/10/2012	09/01/2012	The Government wants to make it easier to set up new town and parish councils. This discussion paper presents a range of proposals that would help achieve this.	Resources	Yes

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	New safeguards to protect patients - Ensuring continuity of NHS services - A consultation	Department of Health	01/11/2012	31/01/2013	This consultation seeks views on new measures to protect the services that patients need, extending to NHS services provided by social enterprises and other companies.		
Consultation	Departmental advice on school attendance matters - A consultation	Department for Education	01/11/2012	31/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on revised guidance relating to pupil registers and attendance codes; the school day and year; and statutory guidance on education-related parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices		
Consultation	Technical review of planning appeal procedures - A consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	01/11/2012	13/12/2012	This consultation proposes changes to improve the planning appeals procedures.		
Consultation	Strengthening the NHS Constitution - A consultation	Department of Health	05/11/2012	28/01/2013	This consultation seeks views on proposals to strengthen the NHS Constitution.		
Consultation	Road user charging scheme regulations - A consultation	Department for Transport	05/11/2012	28/01/2013	This consultation seeks views on a proposal to provide for the fair and effective enforcement of road user charging schemes.		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Civil enforcement remedies - Extending the range of remedies available to public enforcers of consumer law - A consultation	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	05/11/2012	31/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on proposals to extend the range of remedies available to enforcers of consumer law.		
Consultation	Local Government Pension Scheme - Investment in Partnerships - A consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	06/11/2012	18/12/2012	This consultation seeks views on how to remove the barriers preventing local government pension scheme funds from investing in infrastructure projects and proposes two clear options for change.		
Call for Evidence	Government to care homes sector: help us improve enforcement of regulation	Department for Business Innovation and Skills	06/11/2012	16/12/2012	The Government is asking the adult care homes sector to tell it how the enforcement of regulation can be improved.	Children and Adults Services	

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Health Red Tape Challenge Launched	Department of Health	06/11/2012	11/11/2012	People are being invited to give their ideas on how to remove excessive burdens and reduce bureaucracy across the health and social care sector, to give health professionals more time to care for patients.	Children and Adults Services	
Consultation	Consultation on proposed amendments to individual pupil information prescribed persons regulations	Department for Education	06/11/2012		This consultation seeks feedback on proposals to amend regulations to enable the Department for Education to share extracts of data held in the National Pupil Database for a wider range of purposes than currently possible. Its aim is to maximise the value of this rich dataset.	Children and Adults Services	
Consultation	Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Revocation of the North East of England Regional Strategy: Environmental Report - A consultation	Department for Communities and Local Government	07/11/2012	10/01/2013	This Environmental Report is a consultation document on the likely significant environmental effects of revocation of the North East of England Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy (which together form the Regional Strategy).		

Category	Title	Government Department	Date released	Closing date	Summary	Council service planning to respond	Consultation response sent
Consultation	Consultation on draft legislation on ethnicity and fostering for adoption	Department for Education	08/11/2012	30/11/2012	This consultation invites feedback on the 2 draft clauses laid before Parliament on 7 November 2012 for pre-legislative scrutiny by the Select Committee on Adoption Legislation.		
Consultation	Department for Transport: Examining the speed limit for heavy goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes on single carriageway roads - A consultation	Department for Transport	09/11/2012	01/02/2013	This consultation seeks views on the effects on the economy, environment and road safety if speed limits were raised for heavy goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes on single carriageway roads.		