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All Members of the
Council

Contact: Democratic Services,
E-mail: democraticservicesteam@gateshead.gov.uk

Date: Wednesday, 13 March 2024

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

You are summoned to attend a meeting of Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Gateshead Civic Centre, at **2.30 pm** on **Thursday, 21 March 2024** to transact the following business:

1 To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held 22 February 2024 (Pages 3 - 8)

2 Official Announcements

(announcements may be made by the Mayor, Leader of the Council or the Chief Executive)

3 Petitions

(to receive petitions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10)

4 Questions from Members of the Public

(to consider any questions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 7)

5 Appointments to the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Pages 9 - 12)

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

- 6 **Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** (Pages 13 - 44)
- 7 **Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy** (Pages 45 - 88)
- 8 **Senior Officer Pay Framework** (Pages 89 - 100)
- 9 **Localism Act 2011 - Pay Accountability Pay Policy Statement 2024-25**
(Pages 101 - 122)
- 10 **Health and Safety Strategy** (Pages 123 - 142)
- 11 **Treasury Policy Statement & Strategy 2024/25 - 2028/29** (Pages 143 - 180)
- 12 **Information Security Framework and Policy** (Pages 181 - 224)

MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

- 13 **Notice of Motion** (Pages 225 - 226)
(to consider any notices of motion submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1)
- 14 **Questions**
(to deal with any questions submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.1)



Sheena Ramsey
Chief Executive

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 22 February 2024

PRESENT: THE MAYOR COUNCILLOR E MCMASTER (CHAIR)

Councillors: J Adams, V Anderson, R Beadle, D Bradford, M Brain, L Brand, C Buckley, D Burnett, P Burns, L Caffrey, P Craig, W Dick, S Dickie, P Diston, C Donovan, A Douglas, D Duggan, J Eagle, S Gallagher, M Gannon, A Geddes, F Geddes, J Gibson, B Goldsworthy, M Goldsworthy, T Graham, J Green, S Green, G Haley, M Hall, K Henderson, G Kasfikis, H Kelly, L Kirton, P Maughan, J McCoid, J McElroy, M McNestry, J Mohammed, L Moir, R Mullen, B Oliphant, A Ord, C Ord, M Ord, I Patterson, S Potts, D Robson, S Ronchetti, J Simpson, J Turnbull, J Turner, K Walker, J Wallace, D Weatherley, H Weatherley, D Welsh and A Wintcher

APOLOGIES: Councillors: B Clelland, K Dodds, P Elliott, L Green, S Hawkins, K Wood and Ramsey

CL76 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET AND HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to:

- The Housing Revenue Account budget for 2024/25;
- The proposed rent changes from 1 April 2024, in line with the Government's policy on rent setting;
- The detailed proposals for the 2024/25 HRA fees and charges;
- The proposed Housing Capital Programme for 2024/25 and the indicative programme for the period 2025/26 – 2028/29.

COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Housing Revenue Account, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.
- (ii) That the 7.7% rent increase from 1 April 2024, as detailed at Appendix 3 of the report, be approved.
- (iii) That the HRA service charges as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report, be approved.
- (iv) That the Housing Capital Programme for the five years 2024/25 to 2028/29 as set out in Appendix 5 of the report, be approved.

CL77 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 TO 2028/29

Consideration was given to the Capital Programme for the next five years to provide significant investment within the Borough to support the Council's strategic approach to Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives.

COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) That the capital programme for 2024/25 be approved.
- (ii) That the provisional programmes for 2025/26 to 2028/29 be approved.
- (iii) To note the provisional capital financing required for the programme, as set out in Appendix 3, and to delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Resources & Digital to enter prudential borrowing which is consistent with the requirements of the Capital Programme and Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

CL78 FEES & CHARGES 2024/25

Consideration was given to the level of fees and charges across all Council services for 2024/25.

COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) That the fees and charges, as set out for 2024/25 in Appendix 2, be approved.
- (ii) To authorise the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital to make any necessary adjustments to correct any errors in the schedule of Fees and Charges.
- (iii) That the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital be delegated to set revised charges for Adult Social Services in consultation with the Strategic Director, Integrated Adults and Social Care Services and the Adult Social Care Portfolio Holder.

CL79 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX LEVEL 2024/25

Consideration was given to the Budget and Council Tax level for 2023/24. As part of the Council Tax setting process approval was sought for the prudential indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Statement.

COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) To approve the recommendations as set out in section 30 of the report.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 20.4, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

Councillors for the recommendation: - A Douglas, A Geddes, B Goldsworthy, B Oliphant, C Buckley, C Donovan, D Bradford, D Burnett, D Robson, D Weatherley, E McMaster, F Geddes, G Haley, G Kasfikis, H Kelly, H Weatherley, J Adams, J Eagle, J Gibson, J Green, J McCoid, J McElroy, J Simpson, J Turnbull, J Turner, K Henderson, K McCartney, K Walker, L Caffrey, L Moir, M Brain, M Gannon, M Goldsworthy, M Hall, M McNestry, P Burns, R Mullen, S Dickie, S Gallagher, S Green, S Potts, S Ronchetti, T Graham, W Dick.

Councillors against the recommendation: - A Ord, A Wintcher, C Ord, D Duggan, D Welsh, J Wallace, I Patterson, L Brand, M Ord, J Mohammed, P Maughan, P Craig, P Diston, R Beadle, V Anderson.

The recommendation was duly carried.

Cabinet made the following recommendations to Council:

- 1) That Gateshead's Band D council tax for 2024/25 is increased by 4.99% (including a 2% adult social care precept charge) to £2,173.77.
- 2) The revenue estimates of £306,277,247 for 2024/25 are approved.
- 3) The budgeted use of £6.834 million Earmarked Reserves in 2024/25 be approved (comprising of £0.299 million Financial Risk and Resilience, £1.535 million Thrive, and £5 million Budget Sustainability).
- 4) That the proposed budgets and the indicative schools funding, including the summary of budget cuts presented in Appendix 2 be agreed.
- 5) That the outcome of budget consultation outlined in Appendix 4 be noted.
- 6) To note the conclusions of the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital in respect of the robustness of budget estimates and adequacy of reserves outlined in Appendix 5.
- 7) That the prudential and treasury indicators set out in Appendix 7 to this report be agreed.
- 8) That the method of calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 8 be approved.
- 9) That it be noted that at its meeting on 23 January 2024, Cabinet agreed the following amounts for the year 2024/25 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011:
 - (a) 54,041.1 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, as its Council Tax base for the year.
 - (b) 1,227.7 for Lamesley Parish being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amount of its Council Tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which special items relate.
- 10) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31A,31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011 ('the Act'):

- (a) **£600,799,616** being the aggregate total of the expenditure amounts, which the Council estimates for the items, set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act taking into account the precept issued by Lamesley Parish Council.
- (b) **(£483,314,228)** being the aggregate total of the income amounts, which the Council estimate for the items, set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
- (c) **£117,485,388** being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year including Lamesley Parish Council.
- (d) **£2,174.0007** being the amount at (c) above, all divided by the amount at (9)(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year including Lamesley Parish Council.
- (e) **£12,467.00** being the aggregate amount of all special items (Lamesley Parish Council) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (f) **£2,173.7700** being the amount at (d) less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by the amount at (9)(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item (Lamesley Parish Council) relates.
- (g) Part of the Council's area: Lamesley Parish
£2,183.9248 being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at (9)(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items (Lamesley Parish Council) relate.

(h)

Valuation Band	Lamesley Parish £	All other parts of the Council's area £
A	6.77	1,449.18
B	7.89	1,690.71
C	9.02	1,932.24
D	10.15	2,173.77
E	12.41	2,656.83
F	14.66	3,139.89
G	16.92	3,622.95
H	20.30	4,347.54

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at (f) and (g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken

into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- 11) That it be noted that for the year 2024/25, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below: -

Valuation Band	Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria £	Tyne and Wear Fire Rescue Authority £
A	121.23	63.41
B	141.43	73.97
C	161.64	84.54
D	181.84	95.11
E	222.25	116.25
F	262.66	137.38
G	303.07	158.52
H	363.68	190.22

- 12) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (10) (h) and (11) above, the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2024/25 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below: -

Valuation Band	Lamesley Parish £	All other parts of the Council's area £
A	121.23	63.41
B	141.43	73.97
C	161.64	84.54
D	181.84	95.11
E	222.25	116.25
F	262.66	137.38
G	303.07	158.52
H	363.68	190.22

- 13) That under section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), the Council's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2024/25 is not excessive in accordance with the principles determined under section 52ZC of the Act.

Mayor.....

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

Appointments of the North East Combined Authority

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the report is to seek Council's approval for Gateshead Council's appointments to the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority, once established.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Subject to the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024 coming into force, approves the following appointments to the North East Mayoral Combined Authority:

Constituent Council Member	- Cllr Martin Gannon
Substitute Constituent Council Member	- Cllr Catherine Donovan
Substitute Constituent Council Member	- Cllr John Adams

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TITLE OF REPORT: **Appointments to the North East Combined Authority**

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to seek Council's approval for Gateshead Council's appointments to the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority, once established.

Background

2. The North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024, laid in Parliament in February 2024, provides for the creation of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority on 7th May 2024. The first meeting of the Combined Authority's Cabinet is also expected to take place on that date, which precedes this Council's Annual Meeting, due to be held on 17 May 2024. Therefore, approval is sought at today's meeting for the Council's appointments to the new authority.
3. Under the terms of the Order, each Constituent Council must appoint one of its members to be a member of the Combined Authority, together with two substitute members, either of whom may act in the absence of the appointed member. Other appointments to the committees of the new Combined Authority (e.g. Overview & Scrutiny and Audit & Standards) will be recommended at the Annual Council meeting.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council:

- i. subject to the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024 coming into force, approves the following appointments to the North East Mayoral Combined Authority:

Constituent Council Member	- Cllr Martin Gannon
Substitute Constituent Council Member	- Cllr Catherine Donovan
Substitute Constituent Council Member	- Cllr John Adams

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

Corporate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the report is to approve the new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy attached in appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Approves the new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy attached in appendix 2.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to endorse and recommend the Council to approve a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Background

2. The Council has had an equal opportunities policy in place since 2000, which has been regularly reviewed since then.
3. This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy would replace the current equal opportunities policy and has been developed to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and deliver on our Public Sector Equality Duty. It also has been developed to reflect the priorities of our strategic approach, Thrive and our new Corporate Plan 2023-28.

Proposal

4. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between different groups.
5. Councillors, as decision makers, are accountable to the people of Gateshead for delivering improved outcomes for equality, diversity and inclusion and for discharging the Council's public sector equality duty.
6. This policy has been designed to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the Council to all areas of equalities work, with a commitment to making EDI a shared responsibility and priority, with a policy review every three years.

Recommendation

7. Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy attached as Appendix 2.

For the following reason:

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

CONTACT: Rachel Mason extension 2069

Policy Context

1. The Council's strategic approach Thrive and the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy has outlined the challenges faced by Gateshead in terms of inequality. This proposed EDI policy will support delivery of making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives and delivery of our Corporate Plan, the strength of Gateshead is the people of Gateshead, in particular its priorities of Customer experience and Inclusivity.

Background

2. This EDI Policy has been developed to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and deliver on our Public Sector Equality Duty.
3. The main elements of this policy are to:
 - outline the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and what we mean by this
 - describe the vision of the policy and the commitments the Council wishes to deliver against the themes from the local government association's equality framework for local government; Leadership, Services, Communities and Workforce
 - make clear the contributions and responsibilities of managers, employees, elected members and service providers towards the implementation of the policy.
4. The vision and commitments within this policy relating to a Diverse Workforce are taken directly from the proposed Workforce EDI Strategy. The Workforce EDI strategy will support delivery of our Workforce Strategy 2022-25, and will be responsibility of the Service Director for Human Resources and Workforce Development.

Proposal

5. This policy demonstrates our commitment to improving equality, diversity and inclusion, as a leading local employer, service provider and commissioner of services for Gateshead residents.
6. EDI will be our shared responsibility and priority, so that everyone at the council, across all levels and services, works to tackle the inequalities faced by people in our communities.
7. We will work with all council services to develop an action plan demonstrating how the policy commitments will be delivered, and report progress against this work and the impact it has made to residents in our published Equality and Diversity annual report.

8. Following the approval of the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy which agreed to adopt the voluntary Socio-Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010, this policy includes a leadership commitment to implement the duty across the council.
9. We will work with council services to develop new corporate equality objectives for 2025, including how we support our most vulnerable residents, such as care experienced children and young people.

Consultation

10. A public consultation on the proposed EDI policy took place from 15 January – 18 February 2024. Internal and external engagement took place during this consultation. Over 200 responses were received to the consultation with strong levels of support for the proposed vision and policy commitments. **Appendix 3** of this report shares the full consultation feedback and a You Said, We Did summary of proposed actions following consultation analysis.
11. Consultation has taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, as well as the Support Cabinet Member for Diversity and Equalities.

Alternative Options

12. There are no alternative options with regard to the report as the recommendation supports the Council's specific duty to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Implications of Recommended Option

13. Resources

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
- b) **Human Resource Implications** – The vision and commitments relating to the workforce will support the Council's ability to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

14. **Risk Management Implications** – There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

15. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The policy has been developed with the aim of improving the lives of Gateshead's residents with protected characteristics. An integrated impact assessment has been developed for this policy and is attached as **Appendix 4**.

16. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising directly as a result of this report.

17. **Health Implications** – There are no direct health implications arising directly as a result of this report.

18. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - There are no direct climate emergency or sustainability implications arising directly as a result of this report.

19. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no direct human rights implications arising directly as a result of this report.

20. **Ward implications** – There are no direct ward implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Background Information

21. The following background papers have been used to inform this report:

- Gateshead Council Equal Opportunities policy 2019
- Making Gateshead a Place where everyone Thrives 2019
- Gateshead Council Corporate Plan 2023-28
- Workforce Strategy 2022-25

Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy



Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (EDI) sets out our commitment as a council to achieve better outcomes for everyone in Gateshead.

This policy is for all Gateshead residents, our employees and our councillors. It applies to all council services, including those using volunteers or delivered by other organisations on behalf of the council.

Specific policy guidance for our employees is available in our Workforce EDI strategy.

Context:

As a council, we have a legal duty under the Equality Act (2010) to;

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- promote good relations between different groups of people

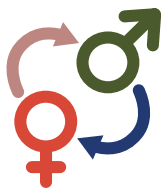
This legal duty covers nine protected characteristics:



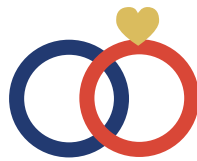
age



disability



gender reassignment



marriage and civil partnership



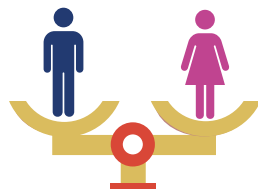
pregnancy and maternity



race



religion or belief



sex



sexual orientation

This includes discrimination against people on the grounds that they are associated with a person who shares a protected characteristic or are perceived to share a protected characteristic.

We also have duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (2012) to consider the needs of all individuals, including our employees, in service delivery and policy development. We publish annual information to show how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and agree Equality Objectives every four years to work towards improving outcomes for Gateshead residents.

We will make sure that we comply with these duties, however we want to do much more, both because it will help us achieve our vision and it is simply the right thing to do.

Our strategic approach, Thrive, has the ambition of making Gateshead a place where everyone can thrive. Our Thrive pledges include; to tackle inequality so that everyone has a fair chance and to put people and families at the heart of everything we do.

We know inequalities exist within Gateshead, and between our residents with different protected characteristics. As a council, we have a leadership role to challenge inequality and promote equality of opportunity in all of our services and in our decision-making. This policy is our clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality, diversity and inclusion.

Diversity in Gateshead:

Gateshead - what we know

Gateshead's population is **196,100**



51% are female



49% are male



89,000 households



Gateshead has an ageing population. **20.3%** of our residents are **65 and over**. An **increase of 12.9%** since 2011. 21.7% are aged under 20 (in England it is 23%).



The largest **religion** in Gateshead is **Christian 50.8%**, followed by **Muslim 2.1%** and **Jewish 1.5%**.

No religion was the **second most common response, 40.1%**, up from 23.9% in 2011

Declining number of people in Gateshead identifying as Christian.



For the first time the census asked people (aged 16 or over) about their sexual orientation and gender identity.

3.4% of the population **identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual** or other (non-heterosexual) sexual orientation, similar to the England figure of 3.2%.

In Gateshead, **0.2%** answered no to the voluntary question "is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?", **compared to 0.2% in England.**



race

People from a **Black, Asian, mixed or multiple or other ethnic background** in Gateshead is small but **increasing** (3.7% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2021).

0.1% identified as **Gypsy or Traveller** in the 2021 census.

The most common languages spoken by Gateshead residents after English are; **Polish, Arabic, Kurdish and Romanian.**



In Gateshead **42.3%** of the population aged 16 years or over were **married or in a civil partnership** in 2021. This is down from 44.7% in 2011, reflecting national trends.

4.5% of our residents are **Armed Forces Veterans**



22% of people in Gateshead **identified as disabled**, just over 1 in 5, higher than the 17% in England.




1 in 10 of the population identified as **providing unpaid care** in 2021, across England it was 1 in 8.




94 of our residents use **British Sign Language** as their primary language.

Our workforce (data declared at 31 March 2023- excludes school employees)

Gateshead council has
4448 employees
(excludes school employees)

 **61%** are female

 **39%** are male

Across all local authorities the split average is 70:30

44%

The council's workforce age profile shows **44% are aged 50+**, **11.6% are aged 60+**


There are lower numbers of younger employees

14% aged 30 and under,
1.4% aged 19 and under

 **Disability**
The proportion of council employees who declared a disability

- 2.7%** identify themselves as disabled
- 61.7%** do not have a disability
- 35%** of our workforce have not provided any information around disability

Religion or belief

 **28%** of employees declared they are **Christian**
26% say they have **no religion**.
43% have **not declared** any religion

Race

 **2.75%** of employees are from a Black, Asian, mixed ethnic background or another ethnic group

Sexual orientation

 **1.7%** of employees identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual

We have no employees who have declared that their gender identity is different to the sex they were registered with at birth.

Marriage and civil partnership

 **41%** of workforce is **married**
0.3% in a **civil partnership**
13% of employees did not provide this information

Gender pay gap

- Top two tiers in the council have eight roles, **3** are held by **females**, **5** by **males**
- Almost **twice as many females are employed than males** at Gateshead Council, with over **66.67%** of those females being employed in the lower two quartiles (on the lower rates of pay)
- Our mean gender pay gap in March 2022 was 4.56%, reduced from 2021.
- Median gender pay gap was 5.28%, reduced from 2021.

What we mean by EDI:

Equality is about fairness. A society where individuals or groups of people are not treated less favourably, and where everyone can participate and have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

However, we know that equality is not always enough. For some individuals we recognise there are difficulties to them being able to access opportunities fairly. In order to achieve **equity**, we must develop an equitable approach to do more and provide additional support to remove the barriers that some people face.

Diversity is about recognising and respecting the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but is not limited to; national origins, language, race or ethnicity, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, and family structure. Diversity also includes diversity of thought and life experiences.

Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed, respected and valued for who they are as an individual or groups.



Our Vision:

We want to make Gateshead a place where everyone can thrive, no matter who they are or their background or experiences.

We will make EDI our shared responsibility and priority, so that we all work to tackle the inequalities faced by people in our communities.

We will treat everyone as an individual, to meet their needs fairly and equitably, in order to help everyone to thrive.

We will embrace equality, value diversity and advocate inclusion for all our residents and our communities.

We will be an employer who embraces and welcomes diversity, who is truly inclusive, and who demonstrates equality for all. We will do this because it is the right thing to do and it makes for better outcomes for the Council, the community we serve and our people.

Commitments:

Our commitments are based on the themes within the Equality Framework for Local Government.

We will:

Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment –

- Make EDI a shared responsibility and priority for everyone, at all levels of the Council: leaders, councillors, managers and employees.
 - Embed EDI in all our policies, procedures and ways of working so it is visible in our everyday work.
 - Embed EDI into all of our decision-making processes, using our Integrated Impact Assessments approach.
 - Implement the voluntary Socio-Economic Duty within the Equality Act, as agreed in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy, so that we pro-actively consider socio-economic impact to inform our council decisions.
 - Demonstrate inclusive leadership and treat everyone - customers and colleagues, with dignity and respect, in a fair and equitable way.
 - Actively challenge any unacceptable behaviour or attitudes which go against the principles in this policy.
 - Prioritise Inclusivity as pledged in our [Corporate Plan 2023-2028](#).
-

Responsive services and customer care –

- Put EDI at the heart of the design and delivery of our services, policies, systems, procurement, commissioning and facilities, so that they are fully accessible and inclusive, removing any barriers faced by our residents.
 - Recognise our residents are individuals and provide services to meet their needs, in some cases this will mean doing more to support those individuals who are disadvantaged by who they are or their experiences.
 - Communicate in accessible ways and provide information, advice and guidance about our services in appropriate formats, in order to fully meet the needs of all our residents.
 - Deliver our customer commitment to listen, be flexible and respond appropriately with reasonable adjustments, to always meet the needs of all our customers.
 - Improve our customer knowledge and understanding through data collection, to improve access to and take-up of our services.
 - Prioritise Customer Experience as pledged in our [Corporate Plan 2023-2028](#).
-

Understanding and working with our communities –

- Listen to our residents and learn from their experiences, to improve our knowledge and understanding of the needs of all our diverse communities across Gateshead.
- Actively involve and enable our communities, including our employees, in inclusive consultation and in our decision-making processes.
- Co-design and collaborate with partners where possible, to deliver for local communities.
- Actively work with our diverse communities to improve our insight and build effective relationships.

Diverse and Engaged Workforce –

- Have a leadership culture where all our people are truly inspired, regardless of their characteristics.
- Develop a work experience where people love coming to work knowing that being an individual is something to be proud of.
- Build a brand which is recognised by our future employees as an employer that wants them to bring their best selves to work, knowing that they'll feel valued and welcome, because what they do and how they do it is all that matters to us.
- Ensure we have an environment where our people feel able to be themselves, challenge poor behaviours and encourage everyone to be accepting, welcoming and at home at Gateshead Council.
- Have inspirational leaders who role model what great looks like, being inclusive, treating everyone as equals and applauding diversity.
- Establish ways of working that ensures that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our ambition to be an exemplar for equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Provide opportunities for people to grow, learn, develop, and help others.
- Aim to have a workforce which is representative of the community we serve and achieve significantly more diverse representation across each level of job role in our workforce.
- Design ways of working that are aimed at removing unintended barriers which hinder and/or prevent individuals from challenged socio-economic backgrounds from entering, retaining and progressing their employment.

Further detail on our commitments to our employees can be found in our Workforce EDI strategy.

By adopting this policy and delivering our commitments we want to achieve a place where everyone feels safe, included, valued and respected, to help all Gateshead residents and our workforce to thrive.

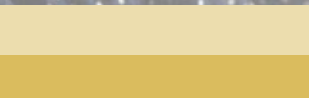
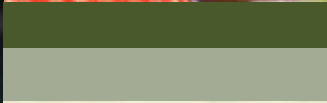
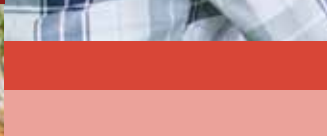
Responsibility for implementation

At Gateshead Council we all have a responsibility for ensuring that our services comply with this policy and that we work together to deliver the commitments for our residents and employees

We will report on progress made against our corporate Equality and Diversity work programme, using the Equality Framework for Local Government, in our Equality and Diversity annual report.

We will review this policy every three years, or earlier should related policy or legal requirements change.





Consultation Report – Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Gateshead Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy ("the policy") describes our vision and commitments to our residents to deliver better outcomes and help everyone to thrive in Gateshead.
- 1.2. We have consulted on the draft policy and the results of the consultation will feed into a refreshed policy, which will be considered by Cabinet in March 2024 and recommended to Council for approval.
- 1.3. This report sets out the findings from the consultation.

2. How We Engaged

- 2.1. During the consultation process we used the following methods to reach as many people as possible:
 - Public online survey on Gateshead Council's consultation portal – anyone with an interest in the policy was invited to respond to the consultation on the portal, and 205 people completed the survey. We shared information about the consultation in the following ways:
 - Emails to over 40 key partners and EDI groups across Gateshead
 - Publicised via 2 x social media posts on facebook and twitter
 - Publicised via 2 x email newsletters – Gateshead Now to over 33,000 subscribers
 - Email alerts to 2000 viewpoint online members, the council's online residents panel
 - Meetings with partners, including Gateshead Unison branch committee, Housing EDI group, Public Health Making Every Contact Count group
 - Staff were invited to complete the consultation survey via the internal newsletter. We also attended the Employee Equality Network and Group Management Teams.
 - Councillors were invited to attend a members seminar in February and received a councillor briefing when the consultation launched.

3. Public Consultation

- 3.1. The public consultation on our online survey opened on 15 January and closed on 18 February 2024.
- 3.2. 205 respondents accessed the consultation survey, the findings are summarised below.

Respondent Profile

3.3 Analysis of the respondent profile in Table 1 shows that demographics are broadly aligned with what we know about the population of Gateshead ([Census 2021](#), ONS) and in our [Gateshead Equality Profile](#), although of those, people with disabilities and care-givers are over-represented and young people are under-represented.

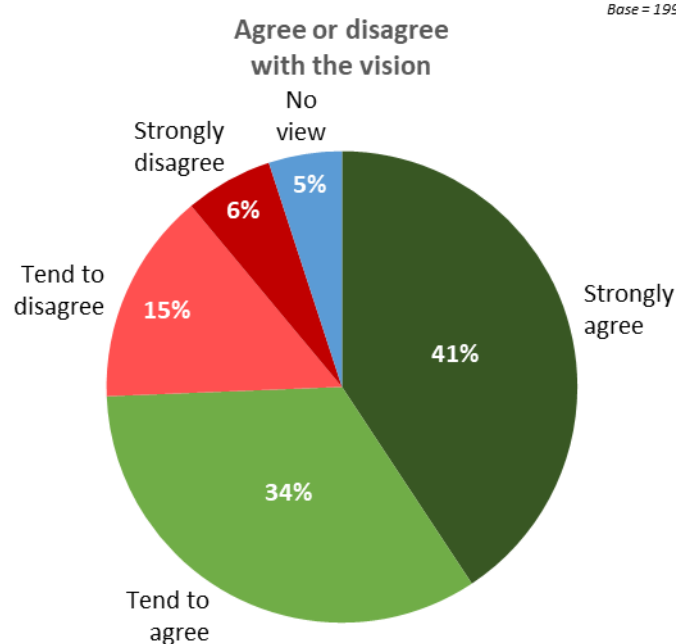
Table 1 – Summary of Respondent profile

45% Female 47% Male 8% prefer not to say	132 Responses from Gateshead postcodes	87% identified as White 1.5% mixed ethnicity 2% Asian 0% Black 1.5% other 8% prefer not to say
42% had a long-term health condition and/or disability 49% did not	82% identified as heterosexual/straight 5% as gay, lesbian or bisexual 11% prefer not to say	
0% aged under 25 11% 25-44 years 49% aged 45-64 years 30% aged 65 or over 10% prefer not to say	93% said that their gender identity was the same as their sex 1% said they were non-binary	29% look after or support other people with long term health conditions or due to old age
9 organisation responses	78% were Gateshead residents 16% were service users 25% were council staff 4% represented an organisation 1% were councillors	44% Christian 39% No Religion 1.5% Jewish 1% Muslim 1% Buddhist 1% Hindu 1% other religion 11.5% prefer not to say

NB. % may not add up to 100% as respondents could prefer not to say. Not all respondents shared their personal data with us as questions were voluntary.

4. Our Vision

4.1. Consultees were asked if they agreed with the vision set out in the policy. 199 respondents answered the question, with 75% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed vision

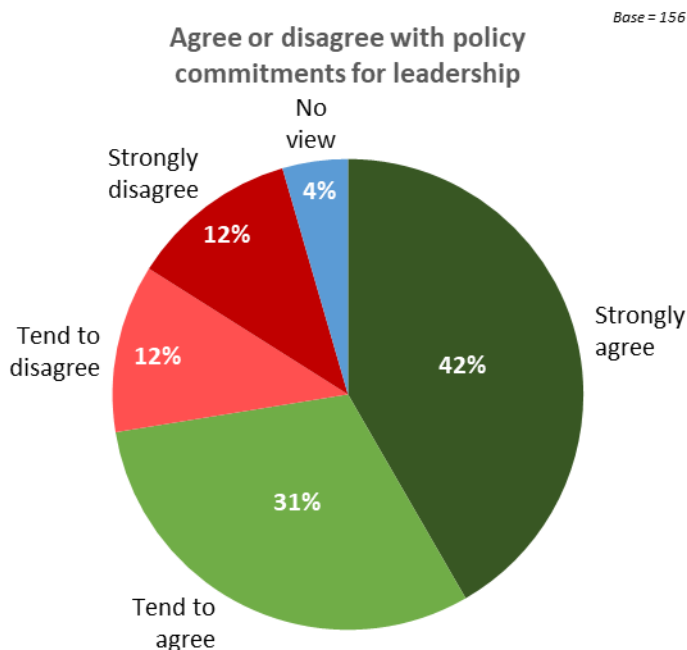


5. Policy Commitments

5.1. Consultees were asked if they agreed with the commitments set out in the policy. Each theme within the policy received strong support for the commitments proposed.

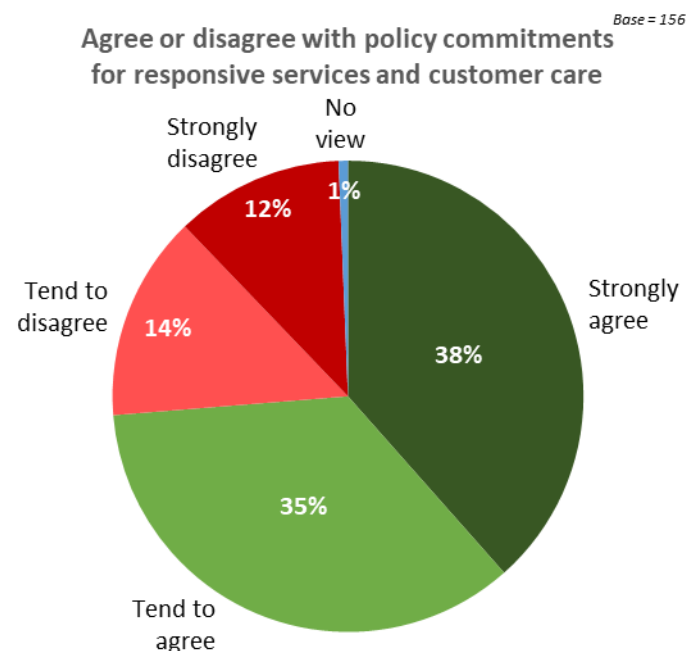
5.2. Leadership, partnership and organisational

155 respondents answered the question, with 73% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed Leadership policy commitments.



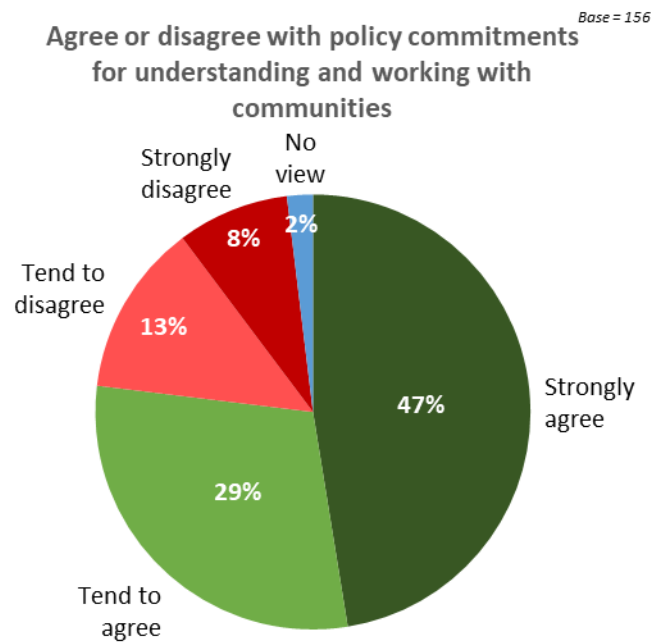
5.3. Responsive services and customer care

156 respondents answered the question, with 73% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed Services policy commitments.



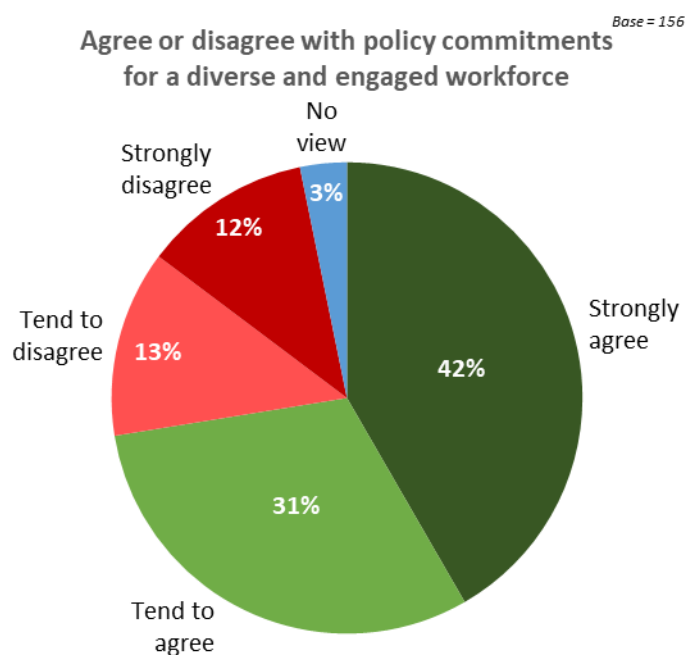
5.4. Understanding and working with our communities

156 respondents answered the question, with 76% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed Communities policy commitments.



5.5. Diverse and engaged workforce

156 respondents answered the question, with 73% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed Workforce policy commitments.



5.6. Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments or suggestions on the commitments. 83 respondents provided one or more comments in relation to their views on the commitments.

5.7. Themes emerging from the feedback on the policy commitments included;

- Negative comments made about not understanding or agreeing with the need for an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy or concerns that council resources would be allocated to this agenda at the expense of greater priorities to residents;

- Positive support for the vision and the policy, with comments supporting that this is something the council should be leading on and delivering across all services;
- Workforce – concerns raised that there could be a focus on positive action / positive discrimination which could prevent the best person being employed; as well as support for improved workforce diversity and respect and support for employees as individuals;
- Leadership – support for the commitment to challenge negative behaviours, recognition that more needs to be done to demonstrate EDI in leadership at all levels;
- Questions raised about how the policy will be delivered and progress reported on. What will success look like?
- Communities - Support for a focus on inclusion across all communities and groups. Desire to see real co-production and co-design in our service design and delivery to engage with service users with lived experience.
- Services – comments on accessibility and making this real for a range of residents who need support to access council services; physical or language barriers or additional support to overcome issues faced.

6. Next Steps

6.1. The feedback from the consultation has been analysed and a set of proposals to amend and improve the policy developed. This is outlined in Table 2: **“You Said, We Did”**.

6.2. The proposed policy document will be considered by Cabinet in March 2024.

Table 2: You Said... We Did – Summary of Proposed Changes to the draft Corporate EDI Policy following consultation

Section	You Said...	Response	We Did...
<i>Our vision for equality, diversity and inclusion</i>	<p>The majority of respondents (75%) agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed vision.</p> <p>Respondents who did not agree with the vision made in the strategy largely did so because they thought the strategy was unnecessary and/or there were more important issues for the Council.</p> <p>There were also concerns that some of the Council's actions appeared to contradict the stated commitment (e.g. closing leisure facilities).</p> <p>Positive comments were made about the council's vision and ambition to improve EDI for Gateshead residents, service users and employees</p> <p>Some comments related to ability to deliver the strategy and clarity on how this work would be taken forward.</p>	<p>The policy vision for equality, diversity and inclusion will remain unchanged.</p> <p>We strongly believe that Gateshead Council has a leadership role to challenge inequality and promote equality of opportunity in all of our services and in our decision-making. This policy and our stated vision is our commitment to this.</p> <p>Decisions made by the Council will be assessed for their impact on different groups and communities in Gateshead. Given the challenging financial climate, it will not always be possible to eliminate all negative impact, but we will ensure that these are understood and mitigating actions are taken where necessary.</p>	<p>We will amend the Equality and Diversity webpages on www.gateshead.gov.uk to expand on the <i>Responsibility for Implementation</i> section of the policy to include further detail on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the council will work to develop an action plan to deliver the policy commitments; and • how EDI performance and achievements will be assessed and reported. <p>We will include hyperlinks in the published EDI policy document online so that you can navigate to the webpages for further information on delivery and performance reporting.</p>
<i>Diversity in Gateshead</i>	<p>Only comment received in relation to data was keeping the definition of sex as a protected characteristic and reporting gender identity separately to sex.</p>	<p>We have used the Census question wording (ONS) when reporting sex and gender identity for Gateshead population data.</p>	<p>No changes proposed to our published population or workforce data</p>

Section	You Said...	Response	We Did...
<p><i>Leadership Commitments</i></p>	<p>There was strong agreement with the policy commitments.</p> <p>However, a number of comments indicated areas where objectives could be strengthened, and these are set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A few comments did not understand the reference to Integrated impact assessments (IIAs) <p>There were some negative comments made stating that Equality should not be a shared priority or responsibility. Either because the respondents disagreed with the need for a policy or thought this should be self evident across all ways of working with no need for an explicit commitment.</p> <p>Small number of objections to use of equitable language.</p>	<p>No change to the commitments were proposed.</p> <p>We strongly believe it is important to raise the profile of EDI across all council services with our leadership committing to making EDI a responsibility for all council employees when delivering services to support our residents.</p> <p>We know for some customers and residents we need to do more to support them to overcome barriers they face to accessing council services. This is in line with our strategic approach Thrive and we will commit to working equitably to those who need it.</p>	<p>We will amend the Equality and Diversity webpages on www.gateshead.gov.uk</p> <p>These will be updated to include information on how we embed equalities considerations in our council decision-making processes, using Integrated Impact Assessments.</p>

Section	You Said...	Response	We Did...
<p><i>Services commitments</i></p>	<p>Fewer comments were made about the commitments for Responsive services and customer care than across other themes.</p> <p>Comments centred on issues relating to access and inclusion for service users. Generally supportive of the commitments relating to these but more concerned that commitments translate into action and consistency in service delivery.</p>	<p>No changes to the objective were proposed.</p>	<p>The Equality and Diversity annual report as part of our performance reporting will include information on what the council is doing to improve accessibility and inclusivity for our service users.</p>
<p><i>Communities commitments</i></p>	<p>Comments were mainly supportive of the commitments.</p> <p>Some respondents requested that diverse community groups and their leaders are proactively included in decision-making and partnerships going forward.</p> <p>Requests that co-design and co-production work is meaningful and truly collaborative.</p>	<p>EDI commitments on communities will be taken into account by the council's leadership as reviews of partnerships and service design, development and delivery take place.</p> <p>No changes to the policy commitments for communities are proposed.</p>	

Section	You Said...	Response	We Did...
<i>Workforce commitments</i>	<p>There were a mix of comments received, some favourable to the commitments and the difference this could make to employees.</p> <p>Comments agreed that training and development for employees would be needed to put this into practice.</p> <p>Some respondents noted there are a large number of Workforce commitments and was this too many to tackle at once.</p> <p>Some comments were negative about the need for increasing workforce diversity or made assumptions that this would lead to positive action / positive discrimination which could impact on prospective or existing employees.</p>	<p>Whilst no changes to commitments are proposed at this point, the HR&WD service will work with council's leadership to develop an action plan to deliver the Workforce EDI strategy.</p>	<p>Workforce EDI Strategy is going to be considered by Cabinet in March 2024.</p>
<i>Other comments</i>	<p>Comments showed that respondents wanted to see more detail about how the policy would be delivered through actions and funding, and some were sceptical of the Council's ability to deliver.</p>	<p>The policy will be delivered by a supporting work programme with all council services committing to undertake activity appropriate to their service users and workforce.</p> <p>Progress against the commitments will be published in our Equality and Diversity annual report.</p>	<p>We will amend the Equality and Diversity webpages on www.gateshead.gov.uk to expand on the <i>Responsibility for Implementation</i> section of the policy to include further detail on work programme, delivery and progress against the policy commitments.</p>

Section	You Said...	Response	We Did...
Throughout document	Resources were raised as a concern – either about the Council’s ability to find the funding to do this work properly, or conversely that this could take funding away from other more important priorities and everyday service delivery.	<p>This policy will apply to all council services and employees. Commitments will be delivered using existing resources. There is no additional resource ask.</p> <p>This may mean the commitments take longer to be delivered, but EDI is a long-term undertaking and work will be prioritised to use existing capacity.</p>	No action needed

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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>Title of proposal:</p> <p>Corporate EDI Policy (March 2024)</p> <p>Gateshead Council EDI policy – to reflect the Council’s statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of the policy is to confirm the Council’s commitments as a leader, an employer and provider of services, to promote equality and to tackling discrimination. It is intended to inform the work of the Council’s groups and services.</p>	Age	Race	Sex	Gender reassignment	Disability	Religion or Belief	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sexual Orientation	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Description of potential mitigation
<p>Equality impact: (✓ all that apply. The assessment should also consider impact on council employees and carers where applicable)</p> <p>Description of impact:</p> <p>The policy provides a clear vision and outlines the Council’s commitment to improve EDI outcomes for Gateshead residents, service users and employees.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>P</p>	<p>P = positive impact N = neutral impact</p>



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>This policy is for all Gateshead residents, our employees and our councillors. It applies to all council services, including those using volunteers or delivered by other organisations on behalf of the council.</p> <p>The policy includes the latest data (Census 2021, ONS) on what we know about diversity in our Gateshead population Appendix 2: Equalities profile of Gateshead (January 2023) - Gateshead Council</p> <p>It also includes what we know about our council workforce (non-schools based employees), taken from our workforce profile for 2023. Appendix 1: Gateshead Council equalities data - Gateshead Council</p> <p>Our residents, service users and employees will include people with all protected characteristics (PCs). This policy can have a positive impact across all PCs if we deliver against the policy commitments.</p> <p>This policy seeks to protect and support all those who; work for Gateshead</p>											
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>Council, use our services or the services provided by a third party on our behalf and who live in our communities.</p> <p>An action plan will be developed for each theme within the policy, all council services will contribute to delivery of the policy commitments. This will be monitored and progress reported on annually through the E&D work programme and published in our annual report.</p>											
<p>Health impact: (eg physical, mental health, wellbeing, substance misuse)</p> <p>There should be a positive health impact on our residents and service users, as the policy identifies a range of commitments which will support improved access to council services and customer experience;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing barriers to accessing council services • Providing accessible information, advice and guidance and communications • Prioritising customer experience and inclusivity • • Co-design and collaborate with partners where possible, to deliver for local communities <p>There should be a positive health impact on our employees, as the policy identifies a range of commitments which will support and develop our workforce including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for people to grow, learn, develop, and help others • Establish ways of working that ensures that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our ambition to be an exemplar for equality, diversity, and inclusion. 											
<p>Socio Economic impact: (eg neighbourhood, ward, area of deprivation, household group, income, wealth)</p>											



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>The policy has been developed to support the Thrive agenda and other corporate strategies e.g., Health & Well-being Strategy, Workforce Strategy, and our Corporate plan.</p> <p>There should be a positive socio-economic impact on our residents and service users, as the policy identifies a range of commitments which will improve how we embed EDI into our council-decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the voluntary Socio-Economic Duty within the Equality Act, as agreed in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy, so that we pro-actively consider socio-economic impact to inform our council decisions. <p>There should be a positive socio-economic impact on our employees, as the policy identifies a range of commitments which will support and develop our workforce including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design ways of working that are aimed at removing unintended barriers which hinder and/or prevent individuals from challenged socio-economic backgrounds from entering, retaining and progressing their employment. 	
<p>Environmental impact: (does the proposal impact on climate change and the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030? Is the proposal in line with the Council’s Environmental Policy? Does the proposal increase natural resource use? Does the proposal increase waste? Does the proposal increase pollution? Does the proposal impact on wildlife? Does the proposal increase car use? Does the proposal increase energy use?)</p> <p>N/A</p>	
<p>Cumulative impact: (consider impact based on successive budgetary decisions relating to the proposal or is the proposal part of wider budgetary considerations that may collectively have an impact on service users, and is potentially at odds with the Thrive agenda)</p> <p>The proposal directly supports the Thrive Agenda and our Corporate plan priorities.</p>	



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

This policy will have to be delivered within existing council resources – budgets and staffing capacity, so a leadership commitment is to make EDI a shared responsibility and priority for everyone at Gateshead Council. All council officers, leadership and councillors will contribute to its delivery.

- Make EDI a shared responsibility and priority for everyone, at all levels of the Council: leaders, councillors, managers and employees.

**Summary of consultation/data/research undertaken to inform the assessment:
(eg feedback and engagement with service users, trade unions, employees, partners, public, benchmarking, case studies)**

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Councillor Champion for EDI have been consulted and are supportive of the Corporate EDI Policy.

Trade Union colleagues have been consulted on the proposed policy and are supportive of it.

A public consultation on the draft policy ran from 15 January – 18 February 2024. 205 responses were submitted to the survey.

78% were Gateshead residents
16% were service users
25% were council staff
4% represented an organisation
1% were councillors

A summary of the consultation feedback is in Appendix 2 of the cabinet report. Equality analysis (voluntary questions) of the consultation respondents is included in the feedback report.

Consultees were asked if they agreed with the vision set out in the policy. 199 respondents answered the question, with 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed vision.



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Consultees were asked if they agreed with the commitments set out in the policy. Each theme within the policy received strong support for the commitments proposed;

- Leadership, partnership and organisational - 155 respondents answered the question, with 72% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Responsive services and customer care - 156 respondents answered the question, with 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing;
- Understanding and working with our communities - 156 respondents answered the question, with 77% agreeing or strongly agreeing; and
- Diverse and engaged workforce - 156 respondents answered the question, with 72% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Signed: (completing officer) Rachel Mason, Office of Chief Executive
Date: 01/03/24

Service Director: (approved) Iain Burns, Office of Chief Executive
Date: 01/03/24



COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy and Strategy

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the report is to approve the new Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy in appendix 2 and strategy in appendix 3.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Approves the new Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy and strategy as set out in appendix 2 and appendix 3.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy

REPORT OF: Mike Barker – Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to endorse and recommend the Council to approve a new Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Policy (**Appendix 2**) and Strategy (**Appendix 3**).

Background

2. The Council has had a corporate equal opportunities policy in place since 2000, which has been continually reviewed since then. It addresses how the Council will approach ED&I as an organisation, considering both our customers and our workforce in that approach.
3. An ED&I workforce policy and strategy is needed that sets out our vision and commitments to the employees in regard to being an equal opportunity, diverse and inclusive employer.
4. Our approach to achieving equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion in our borough will have many similar themes, but the strategies we adopt and programmes of work we undertake for our workforce will differ due to our legal obligations as an employer.
5. To date, the Council has not had a Workforce ED&I Policy or Strategy which is focussed solely on achieving a workforce and working environment where equity is prevalent, equality is demonstrated, our demographic is diverse and representative of the community we serve and where all employees feel included.

Proposal

6. This policy and strategy set out the Council's commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between different groups.
7. Councillors, as decision makers, are accountable to the people of Gateshead for delivering improved outcomes for equality, diversity and inclusion and for discharging the Council's public sector equality duty.

8. This policy has been designed to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the Council to all areas of equalities work, with a commitment to making EDI a shared responsibility and priority, with a policy review every three years.

Recommendation

9. Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council the Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy as set out in appendices 2 and 3.

For the following reason:

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

Policy Context

1. The Council's Workforce Strategy, Corporate Plan, Thrive and the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy seek for the Council to be an employer that promotes and encourages equality, diversity and inclusion and provides a workplace where employees thrive. In order for our workforce to help our community thrive there is need to help them thrive also.
2. The workforce Strategy seeks for Gateshead to be an employer of choice and being an equality of opportunity, diverse and inclusive employer supports and underpins this ambition.
3. The Policy and Strategy will support delivery of making the Council a place where its workforce thrives and where people want to come and work and stay.

Background

4. This Workforce EDI Policy and Strategy have been developed to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and deliver on our Public Sector Equality Duty.
5. We currently use the Local Government Association's Equality Framework (2021) to structure how we develop and report progress against our corporate Equality and Diversity work programme which includes a specific workstream for workforce.
6. The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, along with other public sector organisations, to comply with the Equality Duty, which came into force in April 2011.
7. The main elements of the strategy are:
 - Outline the Council's vision for ED& I and what that means.
 - Define what we mean by ED & I.
 - Set out our equality statement.
 - To outline whereas an ED & I employer where we are aiming to be i.e., 5 steps to success.
 - To set out our strategic approach; to Engage, Enable, Educate, Empower, Encourage, Embed, Evaluate and Evolve.
 - What our plan and priorities are.
8. The main elements of the policy are:
 - Make clear who the policy covers.
 - What the commitments of the policy.
 - Make clear the responsibilities of the Council as the employer and the workforce as employees of the Council.
 - Make clear what action an employee can take if they believe that they have been treated differently due to a protected characteristic.

Proposal

9. The strategy and policy demonstrate our commitment to improving equality, diversity and inclusion at Gateshead Council, as a leading local employer and service provider.
10. ED&I will be a shared responsibility and priority, so that everyone at the council, across all levels and services, works to tackle any issues or concerns that arise due to ED&I that impact negatively on an individual or groups of individuals that are employed by Gateshead Council and/or affect our aim to be an employer of choice.
11. Following the approval of the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Strategy which agreed to adopt the voluntary Socio-Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010, the strategy and policy will look to ensure that there are commitments to implement plans to ensure we meet our obligations within it.
12. We will engage key stakeholders in the development of action plans to deliver the strategy.

Consultation

13. Consultation has taken place with various stakeholder groups including SMG, Ways of Working Group, the Workforce ED&I Network and Trade Unions.
14. Consultation has also taken place with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, as well as the Support Cabinet Member for Diversity and Equalities.

Alternative Options

15. There are no alternative options with regard to the report as the recommendation supports the Council's specific duty to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.

Implications of Recommended Option

16. Resources

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
- b) **Human Resource Implications** – The vision and commitments relating to the workforce will support the Council's ability to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

17. **Risk Management Implications** – There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

18. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The policy has been developed with the aim of improving the employee experience and demonstrate that Gateshead Council is

an employer of choice who takes steps to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion for those with protected characteristics. An integrated impact assessment has been developed for this policy and is attached as **Appendix 3**.

19. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising directly as a result of this report.

20. **Health Implications** – There are no direct health implications arising directly as a result of this report.

21. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - There are no direct climate emergency and sustainability implications arising directly as a result of this report.

22. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no direct human rights implications arising directly as a result of this report.

23. **Ward implications** – There are no direct area and ward implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Background Information

24. The following background papers have been used to inform this report:

- Gateshead Council Equal Opportunities policy 2019
- Making Gateshead a Place where everyone Thrives 2019
- Gateshead Council Corporate Plan 2023-28
- Workforce Strategy 2022-25
- Corporate Plan

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Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Our Aims

We believe that diverse perspectives and experiences are the heartbeat of innovation and change, this is why we want to build a culture of belonging. Our commitment to a culture of equality. We believe our future workforce is an equal one, enabling change so everyone can contribute equally.

To drive reinvention, innovation must be at the forefront, which requires us to attract, recruit, develop and retain talent. As part of our Strategy ([add hyperlink to Strategy once uploaded onto intranet](#)) we aim to recruit and develop people who have different backgrounds, different perspectives, and different lived experiences. These differences ensure that we attract diversity to deliver a variety of perspectives, observations, and insights.

To help achieve this we will set objectives, collect data to measure progress and identify disproportionately, and hold ourselves to account.

Our intention is to foster a culture and a workplace in which all of our people feel a sense of belonging and are respected and empowered to do their best work and be the best version of themselves. To achieve this, our ambition is to build confidence in our workforce and leaders by:

- creating a workplace where you can be you,
- developing leaders so you can feel supported,
- empower our workforce with education and understanding, and
- utilise data to make informed decisions.

Our strategic approach, Thrive, has the ambition of making Gateshead a place where everyone can thrive. Our Thrive pledges include to tackle inequality so that everyone has a fair chance and to put people and families at the heart of everything we do.

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2.0 Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all employees.

For schools where employees are appointed or employed by the governing body to work in a school, the responsibility for addressing cases of discriminatory/non inclusive behaviour lies with the governing body of the school.

The policy also applies to third parties who may undertake work activities on behalf of the Council.

3.0 Equality Statement

Gateshead Council are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion as we believe it is fundamental to ensuring that our people, the community we serve and our future workforce know that we respect and embrace a culture which is supportive, where everyone is treated equally and fairly and where our people are empowered to be the best version of themselves and truly respected.

We continue to build an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, diversity is valued, and where everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice, or discrimination. Every person in our organisation has a responsibility for making it a safe and inclusive environment where our people feel welcome and are able and supported to be who they want to be.

We want to help all our employees to not just thrive, but to flourish, prosper and succeed by putting people at the heart of everything we do. We'll recognise great behaviours and challenge poor ones to ensure that we continually build a culture which we're proud of and others want to be like.

4.0 Our Workforce Commitments

The Council commits to:

- Understanding our workforce through data and analysis.
- Developing our workforce to create an inclusive culture.
- Creating transparency and scrutiny to enable service improvement.
- Providing a clear and consistent approach to supporting our workforce through the development of supportive frameworks.
- Outlining guidance in relation to action that may be taken if a Council employee is alleged to or is proven to have acted in a manner which makes any employee feel that they are not equal, not included, or different.

- Ensuring that any form of unlawful direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment in employment practice and service delivery is unacceptable.
- Supporting the fair and transparent application of employment policies and procedures.
- Meeting our statutory Public Sector Equality Duty, which is a duty on public authorities to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

5.0 Definitions – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I)

Equality is about fairness. A society where individuals or groups of people are not treated less favourably, and where everyone can participate and have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

However, we know that equality is not always enough. For some individuals we recognise there are difficulties to them being able to access opportunities fairly. In order to achieve **equity**, we must develop an equitable approach to do more and provide additional support to remove the barriers that some people face.

Diversity is about recognising and respecting the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but is not limited to, national origins, language, race or ethnicity, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, and family structure. Diversity also includes diversity of thought and life experiences.

Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed, respected, and valued for who they are as an individual or groups.

It is important to recognise that people inclusion challenges that go beyond the protected characteristics outlined within the Equality Act 2010. Sometimes these cannot be seen or heard but can have a substantial impact. For example, caring responsibilities.

6.0 Responsibilities

Council Responsibilities

- We will ensure senior leaders ownership for our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy
- We will set Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives and measures through consultation with our workforce.
- We will build a culture that values individual contribution, fairness, and transparency.
- We will review this policy on an on-going basis to reflect changes in law and learning outcomes identified.

Everyone's Responsibilities

- Treat others fairly and in a way, they wish to be treated.
- Drive positive workforce change through a culture of learning.
- Welcome ideas different from your own.
- Call out and/or report incidents or actions you see that are unacceptable
- Become an ally.
- Demonstrate and promote and Inclusive leadership values and behaviours.
- Support and encourage a working environment that is free from discrimination.
- Raise awareness of diversity and inclusion through learning and communications.
- Ask for help if you help if you are unsure about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within the workplace and contact the HR Advice team.

7.0 Raising awareness and learning

Gateshead Council provides all employees and managers with the opportunity raise their awareness and understand the law relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

This policy will be promoted regularly to raise employee awareness.

8.0 Unwanted behaviours

There may be occasion when an employee feels that they have been treated less favourably than a colleague(s) and would like to take action to stop this alleged behaviour and/or to prevent a recurrence.

Should any employee feel they are being treated differently, then they can contact their TU representative and/or a member of the HR team who will talk them through the support they can access, and the formal processes open to them.

9.0 Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years unless there is a requirement to review it earlier, for example, in line with changes in legislation to ensure that the most relevant and up to date policy can be relied upon by Council employees and is an effective tool for managers.

10.0 Associated Policies

- Bullying and Harassment
- Sickness Absence
- Disciplinary
- Whistleblowing

- Code of Conduct
- Corporate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Leave of absence
- Capability

Gateshead Council’s HR and Workforce Development policies take into account current legislation, rules, regulations and best practice guidance from a range of professional and public bodies, including the following:

Gateshead Council’s HR and Workforce Development policies take into account current legislation, rules, regulations and best practice guidance from a range of professional and public bodies, including the following:



Author: Michelle Brown	Effective Date: November 2023	Review Date November 2024
This policy and procedure do not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Council may amend it at any time.		
Sign off:		
Remember – Attached your Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)		

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Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2023-2028

If you require this document in a different format and require assistance in completing it then please speak to a member of the HR Team.



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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our Vision

Our Vision

To be an employer who embraces, and welcomes diversity, who's truly inclusive and who demonstrates equality for all. We'll go the extra mile so that our approach is representative of the communities we serve and each other. What we'll do will set us apart from others and we'll encourage others to follow our lead, because it's not just the right thing to do, or because the law requires us to, it makes for better outcomes for the Council, the community we serve and our people.

Our Vision is About:

- Leading a culture where all our people are truly inspired, regardless of their characteristics because we respect individuality knowing that diverse talent brings creativity and innovation, which can only benefit us all.
- Ensuring we have a working environment that if everyone expects more, they can achieve more.
- Developing a work experience where people love coming to work knowing that being individual is something to be proud of.
- Building a brand which is recognised by our future employees as an employer that wants them to bring their best selves to work, knowing that they'll feel valued and welcome, because what they do and how they do it is all that matters to us.
- Ensuring we have an environment where our people feel able to be themselves , challenge poor behaviours and encourage everyone to be accepting, welcoming and at home at Gateshead Council
- Having inspirational leaders who role model what great looks like, being inclusive, treating everyone as equals and applauding diversity
- Establishing ways of working that ensures that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our ambition to be an exemplar for equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Providing opportunities for people to grow, learn, develop, and help others
- Ensuring that Gateshead Council is a great place to work where people want to come, and people want to stay

- Having a workforce which is representative of the community we serve
- Achieve significantly more diverse representation across each level of job role in our workforce
- Design ways of working that are aimed at improving opportunities for personal growth and progression
- Design ways of working that are aimed at removing unintended barriers which hinder and/or prevent individuals from challenged socio economic backgrounds from entering, retaining and progressing their employment
- Not only meeting our obligations in line with the Equality Framework for Local Government, but exceeding them
- Meeting our obligations and complying with our duties to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - advance equality and equity of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic, those who do not and those whose socioeconomic background creates unintended barriers for them; and
 - foster good relations - including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not



Defining Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equality

Equality is about fairness. A society where individuals or groups of people are not treated less favourably, and where everyone can participate and have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

However, we know that equality is not always enough. For some individuals we recognise there are difficulties to them being able to access opportunities fairly. In order to achieve equity, we must do more and provide additional support to remove the barriers that some people face.

Diversity

Diversity is about recognising and respecting the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but is not limited to; national origins, language, race or ethnicity, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Diversity also includes diversity of thought and life experiences.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed, respected and valued for who they are as an individual or groups.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are tangible things, and they are critical to our success as an organisation. The combination of the three give greater impact and change.

Equality – Equal outcomes, treatment, opportunities, health, and wellbeing etc. for all.

Diversity – Everyone is individual and different.

Inclusion – A sense of belonging, feeling accepted and valued for who you are; feeling supported as you bring your authentic self to work.



Our Equality Statement

Gateshead Council are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion as we believe it is fundamental to ensuring that our people, the community we serve and our future workforce know that we respect and embrace a culture which is supportive, where everyone is treated equally and fairly and where our people are empowered to be the best version of themselves and truly respected.

We continue to build an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, diversity is valued, and where everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice, or discrimination. Every person in our organisation has a responsibility for making it a safe and inclusive environment where our people feel welcome and are able and supported to be who they want to be.

We want to help all our employees to not just thrive, but to flourish, prosper and succeed by putting people at the heart of everything we do. We'll recognise great behaviours and challenge poor ones to ensure that we continually build a culture which we're proud of and others want to be like.

Thrive

Our strategic approach, 'Thrive' has ambitions to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, including our people, many of which live in Gateshead. It drives our major policy decisions, aiming to redress the imbalance of inequality and championing fairness and social justice.

Our Five Steps to Success: Gateshead's Maturity Model

Our strategy is themed around measurable outcomes based on our five steps to success, Gateshead maturity matrix which can be seen in Fig 1. Our matrix sets out where we want to be, which is underpinned by our strategic approach, and is where we'll focus our efforts.

Our action plan will set out the activities that we'll deliver to drive the changes needed so that we can evolve and mature as an employer, who's sustainable culture is one which welcomes diversity, is truly inclusive and has equality for all.



Fig. 1

LEVEL 1 **BASIC**

We talk about equality, diversity and inclusion, and, know it's important, but there are no strategies or plans that define our desired outcomes beyond those required by legislation.

LEVEL 2 **FAMILIER**

Being an employer who is inclusive, diverse and respects equality is increasingly seen as an organisational benefit by all. It's acknowledged as a culture which can unlock further success for our people and our communities. Initiatives are developed and rolled out.

LEVEL 3 **RECOGNISED**

Our leaders and managers sponsor, encourage and role model the right behaviours because they see the benefits for our people and the communities we serve. Being an equal opportunities, inclusive and diverse employer is becoming part of our DNA, how we do things around here.

LEVEL 4 **EMBEDDED**

Equality, diversity and inclusion practices and culture are embedded into day to day activities across the Council. Everyone is committed to creating an environment where our people can bring their best selves to work, feeling valued and welcome, because what they do and how they do it is all that matters to us.

LEVEL 5 **SUSTAINED**

Our culture is recognised as one where we are a role model to others. Everything we do to enhance our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is part of business as usual. The impact on the employee experience, customer satisfaction and organisational performance is evident.

Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Approach

Our approach will take account of our obligations in line with legislation, our workforce strategy, and what we want to do/have committed to so that we grow a sustainable culture which welcomes diversity, is truly inclusive and has equality for all. We'll do the right thing.

We'll deliver the change that's needed through focussing our activities on making sure that we engage, enable, educate, empower, and encourage our people work and think differently to ensure that Gateshead is an employer that consistently demonstrates equality, inclusion, and diversity. We'll work to embed these behaviours, ways of working etc, and we'll evaluate what we've learnt and evolve.

Fig. 2

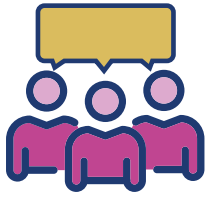


Our plan, our priorities

Everything we aim to achieve will be targeted at not only meeting our obligations in line with the Equality Framework for Local Government, we'll aim to go further and exceed expectations, which includes but is not limited to:

- Workforce diversity and inclusion
- Inclusive strategies and policies
- Collecting, analysing, and publishing workforce data
- Learning, development, and progression
- Health and wellbeing

Engage



We'll make it possible for people to know what we're trying to achieve and why by:

- Creating an employee communication plan that underpins what the strategy is aiming to achieve
- Participating in national inclusion campaigns
- Creating an engagement framework which allows employees to have a voice and influence what we do as an employer
- Conducting an employee survey
- Sharing our strategy, our vision, and our plan

Enable



We'll make it possible for our people to behave in a way that supports equality, diversity, and inclusion at work by:

- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in our people policies and procedures
- Training our people on how to use our policies and procedures
- Helping our managers be role models
- Supporting our leaders and managers to embed positive working practices that enable equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Keeping it simple

Educate



We'll provide opportunities for our people to grow and learn, using a blended learning approach because we recognise that how you learn is individual, like our people by:

- Developing a rolling program of key learning activities
- Delivering meaningful training and learning activities
- Helping our people know the law regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Explaining people's role and responsibilities
- Outlining the potential consequences of not treating all colleagues as individuals and with dignity and respect

Empower



We'll help our people feel confident and capable enough to make choices that positively impact on others by:

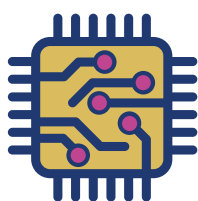
- Creating a culture where people have the authority to make decisions that have a positive impact on colleagues and customers
- Designing a framework which allows our people to contribute to decisions
- Allowing our people to take ownership and to organise their own equality, diversity and/or inclusion related activities/programme
- Developing a programme that recognises positive contributions/change
- Providing opportunities for our people to become equality, diversity and inclusion champions.

Encourage We'll help our people be more likely to do something, or to make something more likely to happen by:



- Removing perceived or real barriers
- Listening and hearing what our people are saying and act
- Inspiring our people to do the right thing
- Sharing great stories of when others have taken positive action
- Being open about what's gone well and what's not gone so well

Embed We'll ensure that being an equal opportunity, diverse and inclusive employer is integral to who we are as a public service employer by:



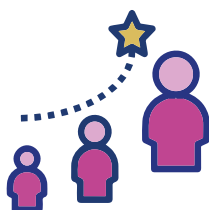
- Ensuring that EDI features in our Corporate Strategy and Service Plans
- Reviewing and auditing our strategic approach and action plan
- Encourage people to challenge poor behaviours and holding people to account
- Build EDI into our annual employee appraisal process
- Ensuring that every employee has been trained in the basic principles of EDI at Gateshead Council

Evaluate We'll check if what we've set out to do is having the impact we want by:



- Collecting relevant employee data in line with GDPR
- Checking our progress against our 5 steps to success
- Benchmarking against others
- Using the data to help inform decision making
- Reporting in line with our statutory requirements

Evolve We'll know what we need to change/do differently by:



- Checking what the data is telling us
- Understanding if what we're doing is making a difference
- Horizon scanning
- Listening to our people
- Working with our key stakeholders, partners and experts



Our Five Year Plan

We recognise that being a true EDI employer may take longer than five years and we also know that having a plan is how we'll understand what we've got to do and when. We also know that there's lots to do and embedding change takes time. We don't want our people to have change fatigue and not engage with what we're trying to achieve, so our plan will be measured and aimed at making incremental changes that allow people to learn and embed new ways of working, so that being an equal opportunity, inclusive and diverse employer is just something else Gateshead are brilliant at.





Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Title of proposal:										Description of potential mitigation
<p>Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy</p> <p><u>February 2024</u></p> <p>The aim of this Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is to assess the likely (or actual) effects of change/decision making, in relation to the newly developed workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy, on people in respect of protected characteristics and beyond those set out in the Equality Act 2010. It also looks for opportunities to promote equality that may have been missed or could be better used, as well as negative or adverse impacts that can be removed or mitigated where possible. If any negative or adverse impacts amount to unlawful discrimination, they must be removed.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p><u>Workforce ED&I Strategy</u></p> <p>Vision and Delivery: Gateshead Council are committed to ED&I it is fundamental to ensuring that our people, the community, service users and our future workforce know that we respect and embrace a culture which is supportive. Where everyone is treated equally and fairly, people are empowered to be the best version of themselves and truly respected.</p> <p>The Vision is to be an employer who embraces, and welcomes diversity, who is truly inclusive and demonstrates equality for all. To go the extra mile</p>	Age	Race	Sex	Gender reassignment	Disability	Religion or Belief	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sexual Orientation	Marriage and Civil Partnership	



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

so that our approach is representative of the communities and each other, setting us apart from others and encourage others to follow our lead, because it's not just the right thing to do, or because the law requires us to, it makes for better outcomes for the Council, the community, and our people.

The following documents will support delivery of the strategy vision.

- ED&I Workforce policy
- Strategic Commitments
- Objectives
- Delivery plan (against maturity matrix)

Action – review annually

Thrive

The Council's strategic approach, 'Thrive' has ambitions to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, including our people, many of which live in Gateshead. It drives our major policy decisions, aiming to redress the imbalance of inequality and championing fairness and social justice. The Council's ED&I corporate and workforce strategies underpins Thrive and seeks to address the ambitions of Thrive.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects from discrimination in the workplace and wider in society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand. Before the Act came into Force there were several pieces of legislation to cover discrimination including:

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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex Discrimination Act 1975 • Race Relations 1976 • Disability Discrimination Act 1995 <p>The Equality Act 2010 protects you from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain protected characteristics, of which currently there are 9.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Age 2. Race 3. Sex 4. Gender Reassignment 5. Disability 6. Religion or belief 7. Sexual orientation 8. Marriage or civil partnership 9. Pregnancy and Maternity <p>It is important to recognise that inclusion challenges go beyond the 9 protected characteristics outlined within the Equality Act 2010. Sometimes these cannot be seen or heard but can have a substantial impact. For example, caring responsibilities. With this in mind, it's important to consider all these elements in line with the strategy to support deliverables.</p> <p><u>Gateshead Council Workforce Data</u> Gender Pay Gap: We produce a range of people metrics to understand the demographics of the workforce. For example, GPG reporting - data as of 31 March 2022 shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mean hourly rate of pay for all male full-pay relevant employees is £14.41. 											
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

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<p>more about our people, services and support can then be tailored to better meet the needs of the workforce, thereby creating a more inclusive organisation. Whilst it is acknowledged that the D.O.B for each</p> <p>employee is known, further work is needed to understand the disposition of age throughout all services areas, and how our systems and processes may disproportionality impact particular age groups. As the workforce ED&I delivery plan evolves the strategy and maturity matrix model will follow suit.</p> <p>A number of meet and greet sessions took place with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors throughout December 2023 and January 2024 to understand ED&I challenges with particular service areas. A common theme throughout all was to introduce Support Networks in respective of subjects - age being highlighted - in particular at attraction, recruitment and retention employee lifecycle points.</p> <p>The following documents/data will support delivery of the strategy vision and to address adverse impact over the next 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED&I Workforce policy • Strategic Commitments • Objectives • Delivery plan (against maturity matrix) • Workforce data for age as of February 2024. <p>Disability:</p>											
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

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<p><u>February 2024</u></p> <p>Whilst there currently is no legislative requirement for organisations to report on the Disability Pay Gap, the Government consultation indicates reporting is likely to become mandatory soon. Therefore, consideration will be given in due course as to how this impacts the workforce ED&I strategy in-line with strategic commitments and objectives. The impact upon Disability Pay Gap is unknown at this time, the Council do not report on this set of data.</p> <p>Action - To be reviewed February 2025 or earlier if legislation or best practice suggests.</p> <p>It is clear from the personal information held by the organisation in relation to disability is not a fair representation of the workforce, with personal data incomplete and/or out of date. Workforce data and analysis has been identified as a priority within the ED&I delivery plan to address data inconsistency, with the intention of increasing data reporting access and confidence in reporting.</p> <p>A number of meet and greet sessions took place with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors throughout December 2023 and January 2024 to understand ED&I challenges with particular service areas. A common theme throughout all was to introduce Support Networks in respective of subjects - Disability being highlighted.</p>											
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<p>The following documents/data will support delivery of the strategy vision and to address adverse impact over the next 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED&I Workforce policy • Strategic Commitments • Objectives • Delivery plan (against maturity matrix) • Workforce data for Disability as of February 2024. <p>Religion/Belief:</p> <p><u>February 2024</u> A number of meet and greet sessions took place with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors throughout December 2023 and January 2024 to understand ED&I challenges with particular service areas. A common theme throughout all was to introduce Support Networks in respective of subjects – Religion and Belief being highlighted.</p> <p>The following documents/data will support delivery of the strategy vision and to address adverse impact over the next 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED&I Workforce policy • Strategic Commitments • Objectives • Delivery plan (against maturity matrix) • Workforce data for Disability as of February 2024. <p>Sex.</p> <p><u>February 2024</u></p>											
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

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The Gender Pay Gap (GPG) is the difference between the average pay of men and women in an organisation. Any employer with 250 or more employees on a specific date each year must report their GPG data. It's also recommended that supporting narrative and appropriate delivery plan is produced. GPG reporting is based on sex characteristic for HMRC pay reporting, not gender identity. For clarify, the GPG is different from equal pay, equal pay is covered by the Equality Act 2010, and requires employers to pay men and women the same for work of equal value.

Action- Subsequent GPG reports in coming years will further analyse the pay gap and workforce demographic to inform the action planning and to address barriers identified.

A number of meet and greet sessions took place with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors throughout December 2023 and January 2024 to understand ED&I challenges with particular service areas. A theme throughout was a misunderstanding in relation to the meaning of Sex and Gender, alongside an understanding of what the GPG is. To address this learning gap work will continue with colleagues in Workforce development to address the matters raised.

Action: Review December 2024.

Workforce data for Sex as of February 2024 will support delivery of change. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Sex for each employee is known as this is a legal requirement for HMRC pay purposes, further work is needed to understand the disposition throughout all services areas, and how our systems, processes and employee

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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

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<p>lifecycle points may disproportionality impact. As the workforce ED&I delivery plan evolves the strategy and maturity matrix model will follow suit to understand and begin to address matters identified.</p> <p>The following documents/data will support delivery of the strategy vision and to address adverse impact over the next 12months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED&I Workforce policy • Strategic Commitments • Objectives • Delivery plan (against maturity matrix). • Workforce data for Race as at February 2024. <p>Race:</p> <p><u>February 2024</u></p> <p>Whilst there's currently is no legislative requirement for organisations to report on the Ethnicity Pay Gap, the Government consultation indicates reporting is likely to become mandatory soon. Therefore, consideration will be given in due course as to how this impacts the workforce ED&I strategy in-line with strategic commitments and objectives. The impact upon Ethnicity Pay Gap is unknown at this time, the Council do not report on this set of data. To be reviewed February 2025 or earlier if legislation or best practices suggests.</p> <p>Action – Review February 2025.</p> <p>The workforce data for Race as of February 2024. For clarity, a race is a group of people defined by colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can</p>											
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.</p> <p>A number of meet and greet sessions took place with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors throughout December 2023 and January 2024 to understand ED&I challenges with particular service areas. A common theme throughout all was to introduce Support Networks in respective of subjects - Race being highlighted – with a focus on leadership development and attraction of diversity to roles.</p> <p>The following documents will support delivery of the strategy vision and to address adverse impact over the next 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED&I Workforce policy • Strategic Commitments • Objectives • Delivery plan (against maturity matrix) • Workforce for Race as of February 2024 <p><u>February 2024</u></p> <p>Improved facilities within Council Estate, policies to support equal paternity and maternity time off/payment, alongside surrogacy and leadership development opportunities that are family friendly are some areas identified by the workforce for improvement during recent meet and greet sessions with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors (December 2023 and January 2024). Active allies are fundamental to increasing confidence and inspiring one another to change culture in relation to these matters. Learning opportunities to understand the importance of allyship/role modelling in the</p>																	
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

workplace is a great starting point to consider. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the delivery plan will evolve as the Council mature their approach to ED&I offerings (attraction and retention pinpoints). **Action** – review 2-year maturity matrix point.

February 2024

Extensive desk top research has been carried out this includes: The Workplace and Gender Reassignment, A Guide for Staff and Managers (Revised Edition); Gender Recognition Act 2004; ACAS guidance; Stonewall 'Changing for the Better'; Gender Identity Research and Education Society (Gires); Advancing transgender equality: a plan for action: HM Government; Unison Transgender Workers Rights; a:gender paper: Evidence Gathering in respect of transsexual people and issues; copies of other Force procedures.

The way in which our leaders, colleagues, managers and HR procedures operate in relation to supporting transgender colleagues will greatly influence the experience of an employee within the workplace. Employees undergoing or considering undergoing gender reassignment will be concerned with confidentiality issues and levels of support available which may hinder notifying management or HR of their intention to commence gender reassignment. Individuals may choose to leave the Council if support mechanisms/their needs are not taken into account. Therefore, a robust and supportive procedure is essential.

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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>Transitioning in the workplace through the gender reassignment process is a unique for each individual and may include any number of changes to a person’s life. There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to transition. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. There may be a variety of reasons including cost, time or simply not feeling the need to. Transitioning could also involve dressing differently, changing official documents, telling friends and family, or a number of other things.</p> <p>The Equality Act 2010 protects those trans people who are ‘proposing to undergo medical intervention’. This leads some employers to presume that only those who transition with medical intervention require support or those who are transitioning from male to female or female to male are protected. Many trans people don’t want to undergo medical intervention or don’t need to. They will still require support to transition at work. Similarly, some people, for example who identify as non-binary or gender fluid, may or may not propose to undergo medical interventions. They too require support.</p> <p>With this in mind, a good starting point for the Council is to develop a number of support frameworks - for example, policy/procedure, managers toolkits, support network and learning offerings. Documentation will evolve as the Council mature their approach to ED&I offerings.</p> <p>Action – review 2-year maturity matrix point.</p>											
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Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>Marriage/Civil Partnership:</p> <p><u>February 2024</u> In the set of circumstances been considered for this EIA, at this this time there appears to be no matters arising or negative impact identified. As the strategy develops the maturity matrix of deliverables will follow to ensure the needs of the workforce are reviewed and met accordingly.</p> <p>Sexual Orientation:</p> <p><u>February 2024</u> A number of meet and greet sessions took place with the Senior Adviser for EDI Wellbeing and Service Directors throughout December 2023 and January 2024 to understand ED&I challenges with particular service areas. A common theme throughout all was to introduce Support Networks in respective of subjects – Sexual Orientation being highlighted.</p> <p>The workforce data for Sex Orientation (LGB) as of February 2024 will help inform the delivery plan.</p>										
<p>Health impact: (eg physical, mental health, wellbeing, substance misuse)</p> <p><u>February 2024</u></p> <p>Health Impact: There is a positive health impact on our employees, as the strategy, objectvies, delivery plan etc. identify a range of commitments and objectives which will support and develop our workforce - providing opportunities for learning, development and growth, and establishing ways of working that ensures that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our workforce ED&I vision of making Gateshead Council a great place to work.</p>										



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

<p>Socio Economic impact: (eg neighbourhood, ward, area of deprivation, household group, income, wealth)</p> <p><u>February 2024</u> Socio Economic Impact: The Strategy has been developed to support the Thrive agenda and other corporate strategies e.g., Health & Well-being Strategy, Workforce Strategy, and our corporate plan. The strategy supports the workforce to delivery services to our residents and service users. A range of commitments will improve how we embed EDI into our council-decision making, through - designing ways of working that are aimed at removing barriers throughout the employee lifecycle and service delivery.</p>	
<p>Environmental impact: (does the proposal impact on climate change and the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030? Is the proposal in line with the Council’s Environmental Policy? Does the proposal increase natural resource use? Does the proposal increase waste? Does the proposal increase pollution? Does the proposal impact on wildlife? Does the proposal increase car use? Does the proposal increase energy use?)</p> <p>N/A</p>	
<p>Cumulative impact: (consider impact based on successive budgetary decisions relating to the proposal or is the proposal part of wider budgetary considerations that may collectively have an impact on service users, and is potentially at odds with the Thrive agenda)</p> <p>The proposal directly supports the Thrive Agenda and our Corporate plan priorities.</p> <p>This strategy will have to be delivered within existing council resources – budgets and staffing capacity, so a leadership commitment is to make EDI a shared responsibility and priority for everyone at Gateshead Council. All council officers, leadership and councillors will contribute to its delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make EDI a shared responsibility and priority for everyone, at all levels of the Council: leaders, councillors, managers and employees. 	
<p>Summary of consultation/data/research undertaken to inform the assessment:</p>	



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

(eg feedback and engagement with service users, trade unions, employees, partners, public, benchmarking, case studies)

February 2024

The following were invited to review and feedback their comments.

- Service Directors
- Senior Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Senior Adviser
- Members of the Equalities Network
- Health Advocates
- Trade Unions
- Inclusive Employers
- Gov.Uk
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD)
- British Swimming

Signed: (completing officer) Stephanie McGuigan, Senior Adviser Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing

Date: 01/03/24

Service Director: (approved) Michelle Brown, Service Director HR, Workforce Development and Health and Safety

Date: 01/03/24



COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

Senior Officer Pay Framework

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the report is to:
 - a) Share the challenges experienced when attempting to recruit to new Head of Function Roles across Integrated Adult Social Care (ASC) and Childrens Social Care & Lifelong Learning (CSC & LLL).
 - b) Approve a revised Senior Officer, pay framework which will enable a better, more sustainable, and positive approach to recruitment and retention to roles at this Senior level.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Amends Senior Officer, Pay Framework as set out in the report to address the recruitment difficulties experienced.
- ii. Dates the implementation of the changes be from 1 April 2024.
- iii. Engage Senior Officers affected by the proposed changes with immediate effect.
- iv. Amends the Pay Policy to reflect the changes to the Senior Officer Framework
- v. Update all interested stakeholders including Trade Unions, Senior Officers, Payroll, HR, Finance etc. on the changes to the pay framework.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Senior Officer Pay Framework**REPORT OF: Mike Barker Strategic Director Corporate Services and Governance**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to:
 - a) Share with Cabinet the challenges experienced when attempting to recruit to new Head of Function Roles across Integrated Adult Social Care (ASC) and Childrens Social Care & Lifelong Learning (CSC & LLL).
 - b) To request Cabinet to recommend Council approval for a revised Senior Officer pay framework which will enable a better, more sustainable and positive approach to recruitment and retention to roles at this Senior level.

Background

2. In August 2023 agreement was reached to amend the previous Senior Officer Pay Framework, changing from three Service Director level grades and removing the overlap in salaries between Grade A and Grade B to a revised framework which changed Grade A from Service Director to Head of Function (HoF) and removed the overlap in pay, between the Head of Function grade and Service Director Grade B.
3. Following an unsuccessful recruitment attempt to five HoF roles a proposal has been prepared to amend the Senior Officer Pay Framework further.

Proposal

4. It is proposed that in order to achieve an improved salary scale for the HoF role that the salary scale points be amended as follows (proposed senior officer pay framework can be seen Fig 1. Below):
 - a) The starting salary for HoF roles would move to £71,829 (currently the top of salary band for the HoF role)
 - b) There would be four scale points across all Senior Officer grades.
 - c) The top of the HoF grade would be increased to £81,365 (currently this is the 4th scale point of Grade B in the current Senior Officer Pay Framework)
 - d) The Service Director grade B starting salary would be £85,450 (this is currently the bottom salary scale point for a Grade C Senior Officer).
 - e) The top of the salary band for a Grade B Senior Officer would increase to £91,728.
 - f) The Service Director grade C starting salary would increase to £93,821 and the top of the salary band would remain unchanged at £108,731.
 - g) The Strategic Director grade starting salary would be £115,309 and the top of the salary band will remain as £130,953. Only four scale points would remain

- within this grade. There are fewer scale points; however, it still provides for incremental progression.
- h) The gaps between grades are broadened to make the transition between roles more attractive.
 - i) The proposed framework continues to provide for incremental progression.
 - j) Salary overlaps are removed.

Fig 1. Proposed Senior Officer Pay Framework

Grade	Scale Point	Salary	NI	Pension	Total
		£	£	£	£
HoF	1	71,829	8,657	13,676	94,162
	2	73,790	8,927	14,050	96,767
	3	77,481	9,437	14,752	101,670
	4	81,365	9,973	15,492	106,830
Senior Officer B	1	85,450	10,536	16,270	112,256
	2	87,542	10,825	16,668	115,035
	3	89,740	11,128	17,086	117,954
	4	91,728	11,403	17,465	120,596
Senior Officer C	1	93,821	11,691	17,864	123,376
	2	98,791	12,377	18,810	129,978
	3	103,761	13,063	19,756	136,580
	4	108,731	13,749	20,702	143,182
Strategic Director	1	115,309	14,657	21,955	151,921
	2	118,804	15,139	22,620	156,563
	3	124,817	15,969	23,765	164,551
	4	130,954	16,816	24,934	172,704

Rationale for change

- a) The current starting salary for a HoF role is at the level that the only HoF role we were able to recruit to would start at, i.e., £71,829, which is currently the maximum of the HoF Salary grade, indicating that the external candidate market is looking for salaries of at least this amount.
- b) A broader and more attractive salary framework is available for HoF roles.
- c) The Council retains the two Service Director level grades.
- d) It improves our ability to attract, recruit and retain.
- e) It supports talent management and succession planning.
- f) It removes overlaps in salary across all grades.
- g) This option supports the potential increase to the grade levels of the NJC Green Book pay framework beyond grade N to include possibly grades O, P and Q also etc. Therefore, having a HoF salary starting at a higher pay point increases the opportunity for the Council to expand its Green Book Pay Framework beyond Grade N, now and in the future.
- h) The National living wage continues to increase which will result in Local Authority Green Book Pay Frameworks increasing accordingly. This will result in all grades increasing overtime. A higher HoF starting salary future proofs this growth and avoids an overlap of Green Book salaries with Senior Management ones.
- i) The recent NJC pay award request is seeking at an award of £3000 on each NJC green book grade or 10%, whichever is greater. This would increase the top of the NJC green book grade N role to £60,248 and therefore further narrowing the gap between this role and the Senior Officer pay framework as it currently stands,

therefore restricting the Council's ability to amend the NJC Framework further to the job evaluation review programme underway.

j) No employee within the framework is negatively impacted.

Trade Union engagement

5. The unions have been made aware of the proposed changes and while understand that there is an evidenced based rationale for the proposal, they remain concerned that this is additional funding in leadership roles.

Recommendations

6. Cabinet is asked to recommend Council to agree:

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

For the following reasons:

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

Policy Context

The proposals to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

Background

1. In August 2023 agreement was reached to amend the previous Senior Officer Pay Framework to the one outlined in **Appendix 2**. The changes made were made to:
 - Achieve a framework that had only two levels of Service Director i.e., Grade B and Grade C instead of three (see Fig 1. below); and
 - To remove the overlap in salaries between Grade A and Grade B to a revised framework (Fig. 1 below).
2. The revised framework resulted in:
 - The job title for the role, Senior Officer Grade A i.e., Service Director being changed to the job title of Head of Function; and
 - The overlap in salaries between Senior Officer Grade A and Grade B being removed.

Issues arising from the new Senior Officer Pay Framework

Attraction to the role of Head of Function role (HoF)

3. Further to the current HoF Grade being approved, work began immediately with the Service Groups Integrated Adults and Social Care (IASC) and Childrens Social Care & Lifelong Learning (CSC & LLL) to create, job evaluate and recruit to six new HoF roles.
4. Given the urgency to recruit to these roles and the specialist areas within which they are required, Adecco were engaged to support a search for the roles within IASC and Gatenby Sanderson were engaged to support a search for the roles within CSC & LLL.
5. The adverts for the roles in CSC & LLL and IASC closed in November 2023.
6. The adverts yielded a less than positive response for CSC and while there was a shortlist of candidates to be interviewed for the roles in ASC, the feedback was that many strong candidates did not apply as the salary was not attractive enough.
 - ASC took the decision to proceed to a selection process based on the shortlist they had for their roles but were only able to identify one credible candidate who would only accept the role if the salary matched the current HoF salary i.e. £71,829.
 - Details of the shortlist for interview for each of the recruitment searches across ASC and CSC & LLL are outlined in **Appendix 3**.

Recruitment and Retention Allowances

7. The Council's Pay Policy allows for a recruitment or retention allowance to be applied to roles where we are either struggling to attract/recruit to the role or where we are at risk of losing key staff i.e., retain them. In these circumstances the recruiting manager can outline a business case with supporting evidence to have a temporary allowance paid of up to a 15% uplift on base salary.
8. While this policy approach could be considered for the HoF roles which we have struggled to recruit to, and only after having met all of the terms of the associated policy, which requires at least one more attempt at recruitment, there are other risks to adopting this approach which are:
9. The current Senior Officer Pay Framework is new and to apply a recruitment supplement to roles within it is acknowledging, that the salaries for HoF are not correct.
10. An uplift of 15% to the top of the current HoF grade would make the salary £82,603 which is midpoint of Service Director Grade B. i.e., HoF roles being paid Service Director salaries for a role that has been job evaluated as lower in value.
11. Recruitment or retention premiums should only be paid on a temporary basis and are subject to annual review as they are at risk of equal pay claims and therefore could be removed at any point in the future if the market changes.
12. A removal of a recruitment and retention payment will likely result in those in receipt looking to source alternative roles elsewhere.

Consultation

13. The Leader and Deputy Leader and Trade Unions have been consulted. The additional costs will potentially be received negatively by the Trade Unions and workforce.

Alternative Options

14. Alternative options considered included:
 - a) Do nothing which was discounted given the evidence outlined in the report linked to recruitment already attempted and failed due to the salary.
 - b) Continue to try and recruit and the apply a recruitment and retention premium the current salary framework which was considered and discounted for the following reasons:
 - The current Senior Officer Pay Framework is new and to apply a recruitment supplement to roles within it is acknowledging, that the salaries for HoF are not correct.
 - An uplift of 15% to the top of the current HoF grade would make the salary £82,603 which is midpoint of Service Director Grade B. i.e., HoF roles being paid Service Director salaries for a role that has been job evaluated as lower in value.

- Recruitment or retention premiums should only be paid on a temporary basis and are subject to annual review as they are at risk of equal pay claims and therefore could be removed at any point in the future if the market changes.

Implications of Recommended Option

15. Resources:

a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms:

- There are three Service Director Grade B role holders whose salary will increase as a result of the proposed changes.
- There are two Service Director Grade C role holders whose salary will increase as a result of the proposed changes. This increment would have occurred in line with pay progression.
- All HoF roles have an increased bottom of the grade starting salary.
- The costs have been validated by Finance and based on the proposed changes the following additional costs would apply:
 - Grade B role impact = £31,758
 - Grade C role impact = £6,293
 - Strategic Director impact = £0 as no change to individual salaries is required.
 - HoF roles impact = £120,178

Costs Summarised

Change to Salaries		
	No of Posts Impacted	£
Heads of Function	14	120,178
Grade B Senior Officer	3	31,758
Grade C Senior Officer	2	6,293
Total		158,229

b) **Human Resources Implications** –

There are no negative HR implications.

The implications are associated with timely communication and engagement with affected Senior Officers for the following reasons:

- There are three Service Director Grade B role holders whose salary will increase as a result of the proposed changes.
 - There are two Service Director Grade C role holders whose salary will increase as a result of the proposed changes.
- Communication
- If the proposal is agreed, affected employees would need to be consulted with to explain the changes, albeit the changes proposed would only result in a positive outcome.

- If the proposal is agreed the Trade Unions are informed of the agreed and revised pay framework.
- If the proposal is agreed all other relevant and appropriate stakeholders i.e., HR, Payroll etc. are informed.

c) Property Implications - There are no property implications.

16. Risk Management Implication -

There are no risk management implications other than difficulties to fill essential roles should the proposed changes to the Senior Officer Pay Framework not be implemented.

17. Equality and Diversity Implications -

There are no equality and diversity implications as the framework is applied equally to men and women.

18. Crime and Disorder Implications – There are no crime and disorder implications.

19. Health Implications - There are no health implications.

20. Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications - There are no climate emergency and sustainability implications.

21. Human Rights Implications - There are no human rights implications.

22. Ward Implications - There are no Ward implications.

Background Information

There is no further background information.

Current Senior Officer pay Framework

Grade	Point		Salary	NI	Pension	Total
					19.04%	
			£	£	£	£
Head of Function	1	11	65,158	7,736	12,406	85,300
	2	12	68,411	8,185	13,025	89,621
	3	13	71,829	8,657	13,676	94,162
Senior Officer B	1	21	73,790	8,927	14,050	96,767
	2	22	77,481	9,437	14,752	101,670
	3	23	81,365	9,973	15,492	106,830
	4	24	85,450	10,536	16,270	112,256
	5	25	89,740	11,128	17,086	117,954
Senior Officer C	1	31	89,330	11,072	17,008	117,410
	2	32	93,821	11,691	17,863	123,375
	3	33	98,545	12,343	18,763	129,651
	4	34	103,511	13,029	19,708	136,248
	5	35	108,731	13,749	20,702	143,182
Strategic Director	1	41	109,766	13,892	20,899	144,557
	2	42	115,309	14,657	21,955	151,921
	3	43	118,804	15,139	22,620	156,563
	4	44	124,817	15,969	23,765	164,551
	5	45	130,954	16,816	24,934	172,704

1. ASC Adverts for recruitment to four HoF Vacancies (Adecco feedback)

Role	No. of applications shortlisted
Commissioning	3 (1 is a maybe i.e., met some of the criteria but not all)
Performance & Service Development	5 (1 is a maybe i.e., met some of the criteria but not all)
Safeguarding	2 (these applied for this role and the Localities role so shortlisted for both)
Localities	23. (1 is a maybe i.e. met some of the criteria but not all)

1.1 Candidates who have been approached by Adecco have cited the following reasons for not making an application or withdrawing from the process:

- Geography: too far to consider even with hybrid working arrangements.
- Salary: less than the Head of Service level at most other Northeast Councils and even individuals at the level below, have stated that there is not enough salary scope to develop to make a move worthwhile.

2. CSC & LLL Adverts for recruitment to two HoF Vacancies (Gatenby Sanderson feedback)

Role	No. of applications shortlisted	No. of applicants to interview
HoF CSC (Assessment)	1	1
HoF CSC (Care)	1	1

2.1 Candidates who have been approached by Gatenby Sanderson have cited the following reasons for not making an application or withdrawing from the process:

- Just not interested in a move at this time (either new in role or happy in current role or see this as a sideways move i.e., the salary and scope of the role are not different enough to where they are now) – c.50%
- Location – c.25%
- Salary – c.25%

2.2 In more recent weeks two attempts have been made to recruit to the role of Head of Communications and Engagement with neither yielding a positive outcome.

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

**Localism Act 2011 – Pay Accountability:
Pay Policy Statement 2024-25**

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the report is to:
 - a) Agree a revised pay policy statement as set out in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Agree the Pay Policy Statement 2024-25.

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TITLE OF REPORT: **Localism Act 2011 – Pay Accountability**
Pay Policy Statement 2024-25

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services &**
Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree a revised pay policy statement, for approval by the Council as set out at Appendix 2 to this report.

Background

2. Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to produce an annual pay policy statement. The policy must be approved by full Council before 31 March each year, but it may be amended by Council during the course of the year.
3. Whilst there is no set format to which the policy statement must conform, Chapter 8 of the Localism Act is prescriptive in determining the elements that must be included. It also provides for statutory guidance to be issued by the Secretary of State, to which authorities must have regard when preparing their policies.
4. The policy must be published on the Council's website and be applied particularly when the Council sets the terms and conditions for Chief Officers.
5. The Council's Pay Policy reflects the statutory requirements and in its development the guidance issued by the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government under Section 40 of the Act has been duly considered. It has been reviewed and updated since first agreed by Council on 22 March 2012, with the last amendments approved in March 2023.
6. Low pay continues to be a matter of focus and debate both nationally and regionally. The statutory National Living Wage (NLW) for employees aged 23 and over is £10.42 per hour with effect from 1 April 2023, rising to £11.44 on 1 April 2024 for those aged 21 and over. The UK Living Wage, as promoted by the Living Wage Foundation, rose to £12.00 per hour outside London with effect from September 2023.
7. The Pay Policy also sets out the Council's approach to applying market supplements to address recruitment and retention issues to ensure they are appropriate to the circumstances and their necessity is evidenced.

Proposal

8. The Pay Policy covers all elements of the legislation set out under main headings that are intended to demonstrate the consistency in the Council's approach to pay across the workforce and to highlight any differences. Those main headings are:
 - General principles regarding employee pay
 - Lowest paid employees and chief officers (and including the relationship between median pay and highest pay)
 - Governance arrangements and development of pay structures
 - Payment for additional duties and work outside the Council
 - Termination payments
9. The Pay Policy for 2024/25 has been updated to reflect all nationally agreed pay awards for NJC Green Book employees, JNC Chief Officers and JNC Chief Executives, as well as reflecting changes to statutory rates of pay from 1 April 2024.
10. The Pay Policy for 2024/25 has also been updated to reflect the proposed changes to the senior officer pay framework pending Cabinet approval on 19 March 2024.

Recommendation

11. It is recommended that the Pay Policy Statement 2024-25 is agreed by Cabinet and referred to the Council for approval at its meeting on 19 March 2024.

For the following reason:

To comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

Policy Context

1. The annual publication of a pay policy statement is a requirement of Chapter 8 of the Localism Act 2011, which aims to bring greater transparency to pay in the public sector.

Background

2. The Council's approach to pay has been determined by reference to collective bargaining structures, national and local agreements, and job evaluation in the context of its recruitment markets. The Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 incorporates the key principles which underpin these arrangements.

Consultation

3. The Council's recognised non-teaching trade unions have been consulted on the Pay Policy. Consultation is ongoing with the trade unions on further options to address recruitment and retention concerns linked to pay.
4. The Leader of the Council has been consulted on the Pay Policy Statement and is supportive of the recommendations.

Alternative Options

5. The publication of a pay policy statement is a legal obligation under the Localism Act 2011.

Implications of Recommended Option

6. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** - the Strategic Director, Resources & Digital confirms that any financial implications arising from the pay policy statement have been considered as part of revenue budget setting 2024/25 and cost implications will be further reviewed as part of the of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – the Council's Pay Policy and practice is designed to recruit, reward, motivate and retain as necessary employees with the skills and attributes required to deliver Council services. It is part of the Council's overall human resources policy framework, through which it aims to be an exemplary employer.
 - c) **Property Implications** – there are no property implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
7. **Risk Management Implications** - The changes in the Council's Pay Policy statement as recommended in the report are relatively minor and are not considered to introduce any new risk.

8. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – Fair pay and reward are fundamental to the Council’s approach to employment. The Council’s use of equalities-tested job evaluation schemes, Trade Union representation in collective bargaining, and application of consistent pay principles throughout the organisational structure ensure that equality and diversity issues are properly taken into account.
9. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications.
10. **Health Implications** - There are no health implications.
11. **Sustainability Implications** - There are no sustainability implications.
12. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no human rights implications.
13. **Area and Ward Implications** - There are no area and ward implications.
14. **Background Information** - Gateshead Council’s pay policies from 2013 to 2023/24.

Pay Policy Statement 2024 - 25

Links to Other Policies:

Redundancy Policy and Procedure

Retirement Policy

Effective date:

1 April 2024

Status:

This policy and procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Council may amend it at any time.

HR and Workforce Development Policy and Guidance in Gateshead Council

Gateshead Council's HR and Workforce Development policies take into account current legislation, rules, regulations and best practice guidance from a range of professional and public bodies, including the following:



UK Legislation



ACAS



CIPD Best Practice

Gateshead Council

Pay Policy Statement 2024-25

Introduction

1. This document sets out Gateshead Council's pay policy in relation to the remuneration of its staff in accordance with section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011. The policy reflects the Council's consideration of the Guidance issued by the former Department for Communities and Local Government under Section 40 of the Act and is subject to review and changes approved by the Council. The policy will be published on the Council's website as soon as reasonably practicable after approval or amendment.
2. The key principles of the Council's pay policy are set out below and are effective from 1 April 2024. The policy includes commentary upon:
 - The general principles that underpin the Council's approach to its pay policy;
 - Definitions of the 'lowest paid employees' and 'chief officers' for the purposes of pay comparison;
 - The relationship between the remuneration of chief officers, average pay, and the remuneration of the lowest paid employees; and
 - The re-employment of former employees who left the Council with enhanced retirement and redundancy benefits.
3. The policy also includes discretion for the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance, in the interpretation and application of nationally agreed terms and conditions of employment to Gateshead Council employees.
4. The arrangements set out within this document do not extend to those members of staff who are employed within schools, which are matters for the schools' discretion.
5. The salaries quoted in the pay policy reflect the current NJC Green Book Pay Award which was implemented with effect from 1 April 2023. The Council's current pay scale is shown at Annexe 1- Pay Award pending to be implemented from 1 April 2024.

General principles regarding employee pay

6. This pay policy provides a basis on which Gateshead Council can compete in labour markets at all levels and for all roles, enabling the Council to attract, retain, and fairly reward people with the knowledge, experience, skills and attributes that are essential to the effective delivery of services to residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in Gateshead.
7. Gateshead Council is mindful of its obligations as an equal opportunities employer, and wants to ensure that people are treated fairly and with respect in all its activities and processes. The Council aims to be an organisation that recruits and retains a diverse and skilful workforce from the local community and beyond, and its

approach to the pay and conditions of its workforce is intended to support this objective.

8. In supporting the aim of ensuring equality and transparency in its pay practices, the Council recognises the role of trade unions and employee representatives in consultation and negotiation within a process of free collective bargaining. It supports the national machinery for negotiation of terms and conditions of employment and applies the agreements reached in the various Joint Councils.
9. The Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, and (if deemed appropriate by him/her) having taken advice from the LGA and/or Employers' Organisation, has the discretion to interpret and apply national agreements if the subject matter is not specifically covered by the pay policy.
10. Gateshead Council's main (NJC) pay and grading structure has been developed by creating grades around the national 'spinal column' of salary points. The grades allocated to particular posts in Gateshead Council are determined by job evaluation (JE) of the posts, with jobs of the same JE size being allocated to the same grade.
11. The Council's graded pay structures include scope for service-based incremental advancement in every case except for the Chief Executive, who is paid a spot salary of £183,351 and employees at Grades A (SCP 3), B (SCP 4) and C (SCP 5), who are paid a spot salary of £22,737, £23,114 and £23,500 respectively, pay award pending from 1 April 2024. For all other employees, increments are paid on 1st April each year until they reach the top of their grade, subject to the following qualifications:
 - Increments may be accelerated within an employee's grade at the discretion of the authority (exercisable by the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance at the request of the employee's Service or Strategic Director) on the grounds of special merit or ability, subject to the maximum of the grade not being exceeded.
 - An increment may be withheld by a Service Director following an adverse report on an employee. Any withheld increment may be paid subsequently if the employee's services become satisfactory.
 - Employees with less than six months' service in the grade by 1 April are granted their first increment six months after their appointment, promotion or re-grading: except where their salary on the 1 April would be less than one SCP in excess of the salary they would have received on that day had they remained on their previous grade, when they will be entitled to their increment on 1 April.
12. New appointments are subject to the Council's recruitment and selection policies and will generally be made at the bottom spinal column point of all pay bands unless there are special circumstances that objectively justify payment at a higher level within the grade, as determined by the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance.
13. The Council operates a recruitment and retention allowances policy which is shown at annexe 2. This allows an additional supplement to be applied on top of basic salary in order to attract applicants of the right calibre, and to retain employees with necessary skills and experience. A recruitment and retention allowance or market

supplement can only be approved by the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance. All such allowances are subject to review.

14. In the event of any employee securing a higher-graded post via internal promotion/recruitment and there being an overlap of spinal column points between their current post and bottom point of the newly secured position, the Council will generally pay salary on a higher spinal column point.
15. Arrangements exist to protect for a limited period the basic pay of employees who are appointed for various reasons to posts with a lower substantive salary. These arrangements are set out in the Council's policies covering redundancy, re-structuring, redeployment, ill health and disability, and bullying and harassment.
16. There may from time to time be situations where employees are transferred into the Council from other organisations which have different pay and conditions. The employees' terms and conditions on transfer may be subject to protection under TUPE or TUPE-like arrangements, and as such may be outside the Council's main pay structure until such time as it is possible for them to be integrated.
17. Various pay enhancement arrangements are in place to reflect non-standard working patterns at a local operational level or in recompense for taking on additional duties and responsibilities.
18. The Council does not operate performance bonus payment schemes at any level of the organisation.

National Minimum Wage, National Living Wage, UK Accredited Living Wage:

19. The National Living Wage for employees aged 21 and over is £11.44 per hour from 1 April 2024.
20. The Council's lowest grade £11.79 per hour (pay award pending from 1 April 2024) is £0.21 less than the current UK accredited Living Wage rate outside of London of £12.00 per hour.

Lowest-paid employees:

21. 'Lowest paid employees' is defined as those full-time employees in jobs paid at Grade A at spinal column point 3. It excludes apprentices, whose pay remains subject to other regulations or conditions, and has specific treatment under this policy.
22. Spinal column point 3, at £11.79 per hour from 1 April 2023, is £0.35 per hour more than the National Living Wage and £0.21 per hour less than the UK Accredited Living Wage (outside London).
 - Annual salary at spinal column point 3 is currently £22,737 p.a. pay award pending from 1 April 2024.
 - The mode (i.e. most frequently used) salary for full-time employees falls within Grade D, the maximum of which is £24,294. The mode salary will be recalculated post pay award.

- The median salary for full-time employees, excluding overtime and any other additional payments, is £29,777 pay award pending.

Chief Officers:

23. 'Chief Officer' is defined in the Localism Act 2011 as:

- the head of the authority's paid service designated under section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- the monitoring officer designated under section 5(1) that Act;
- any statutory chief officer mentioned in section 2(6) of that Act;
- any non-statutory chief officer mentioned in section 2(7) of that Act; and
- any deputy chief officer mentioned in section 2(8) of that Act.

Under the above provisions, 'statutory chief officer' includes:

- the person having responsibility, for all statutory purposes (inc. section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972), for the administration of the authority's financial affairs;
- the Director of Children's Services appointed under section 18 of the Children Act 2004;
- the Director of Adult Social Services appointed under section 6(A1) of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (as amended by the Children Act 2004); and
- the Director of Public Health appointed under section 73A(1) of the National Health Service Act 2006.

'non-statutory chief officer' includes:

- a person for whom the head of the authority's paid service is directly responsible;
- a person who in relation to most of their duties is required to report direct or is directly accountable to the head of paid service and any person who similarly is required to report direct or is directly accountable to the authority or its committees.

24. The Council applies the terms and conditions of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Officers to all officers included in paragraph 23, above, and has therefore determined that the following roles identified in the Council's Constitution to be 'chief officers' for the purposes of this policy:

- the Chief Executive
- Strategic Directors
- the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
- Service Directors
- Heads of Function

25. The Chief Executive is paid on a fixed salary point of £183,351 p.a. pay award pending from 1 April 2024.

26. The current ratio of lowest paid employee to highest paid employee is currently therefore slightly more than 1:8.
27. Strategic Directors are all paid on the same pay band (pay award pending from 1 April 2024), which is:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
£115,309	£118,804	£124,817	£130,954

28. All other chief officer posts are paid on one of three pay bands (pay award pending from 1 April 2024) which are:

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Service Director Band 1	£93,821	£98,791	£103,761	£108,731
Service Director Band 2	£85,450	£87,542	£89,740	£91,728
Head of Function	£71,829	£73,790	£77,481	£81,365

29. Salaries in the pay bands at paragraphs 27 and 28 are subject to any general increase agreed at the JNC for Chief Officers, and in the case of the Chief Executive, the JNC for Chief Executives.
30. General increases for other employees are mainly determined by the National Joint Council, although different national bargaining arrangements are in place for a small number of occupational groups such as craft trades, youth & community workers and educational psychologists.
31. It is a recommendation of the DCLG¹ that Full Council should be offered the opportunity to vote before a salary of £100,000 or more is offered in respect of a new appointment. In Gateshead, all new appointments to chief officer posts are made in accordance with the pay bands identified within this statement, which includes those in excess of £100,000. Any proposed variation to the application of this policy in this regard will be reported to Full Council. Reporting of any recruitment and retention allowances is outlined in Annexe 2. Of those Chief Officer posts whose salary exceeds £100,000 the following arrangements apply under the Council's Constitution: the appointment of the Chief Executive is approved by Full Council, while Strategic Directors are appointed by the Council's Special Appointments Committee.

¹ Openness and accountability in local pay: Guidance under section 40 of the Localism Act (February 2012)

Apprenticeships (up to and including Level 3)

32. Rate for first year of Apprenticeship:

- £6.48 per hour irrespective of age (pay award pending)

From second year of Apprenticeship:

Non-Craft Apprentices:

- Aged 17 £6.48 per hour (pay award pending)
- Aged 18-20 £8.60 per hour
- Aged 21 and over £11.44 per hour

Craft Apprentices are paid the rate linked to the respective craft rate as set out in Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Craft & Associated Employees, Red Book.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (Level 4 and above)

33. Rate for first year of apprenticeship:

- £11.79 per hour (£22,737) p.a. (pay award pending), irrespective of age

From second year of apprenticeship, salary progression will be determined by the Council's established pay and grading method.

34. Schools will be advised that the apprenticeship rates at paragraphs 32 and 33 are the Council's position and they will be asked to apply these rates to school apprentices.

Governance Arrangements and Development of Pay Structures

35. The current pay structure applicable to NJC employees was determined following a comprehensive job evaluation exercise following the provisions and processes of the national JE scheme. Separate pay structures are in place for employees covered by the following agreements:

- JNC for Local Authority Craft and Associated employees
- JNC for Youth and Community Workers
- The Soulbury Committee
- School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (applies to centrally employed teachers)

36. The Contracts Committee comprises a cross-party group of elected members who oversee pay and conditions issues for all posts which attract Chief Officer pay and conditions. The Chair of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee has *ex officio* status on the Contracts Committee.

37. In considering pay structures and pay levels for Chief Officers, the Contracts Committee will seek external advice from an independent person or organisation with expertise in senior remuneration and benefits. It will take into account matters including:
- An assessment of the size and market value of a job by reference to an established job evaluation system that allows objective comparison to data bases of similar jobs
 - The affordability of the recommended outcome from the job evaluation and market reference exercise in the short, medium and long term
 - The prevailing markets in which the Council operates, and the risk being unable to recruit or retain senior officers with the ability to manage the Council's affairs to its best advantage
 - The relationship with the remuneration of the wider Council workforce and national negotiating frameworks
 - The Council's senior structure and planned or foreseeable future changes to these
 - The expectations of the community and stakeholders
 - The total remuneration package
38. Since 1 October 2012, all Strategic Directors and Service Directors have been employed on JNC Chief Officer terms and conditions.
39. The top three levels of the Council's organisation structure and their associated pay bands are published on the Council's website in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014. This information will be published annually, in addition to the requirement to publish the annual pay policy by 31 March.

Payment for Additional Duties and Work outside the Council

40. Chief Officers are not eligible for overtime and/or premium rates of pay for unsocial hours that apply to other groups of staff.
41. Contracts Committee will consider requests from the Chief Executive to undertake secondary employment or outside duties, whether remunerated or otherwise, to ensure there is no conflict of interest. In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees, requests from Strategic Directors are determined by the Chief Executive. For all other employees, requests to take up remunerated appointments are determined by the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance; unpaid appointments are determined by the relevant Strategic Director.
42. Employees may be eligible to receive payments for additional duties and responsibilities beyond their normal role with the Council subject to the approval of the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance. These payments may include honoraria, additional duties or responsibilities payments, acting duty pay or the use of accelerated increments. Payments may also be authorised for electoral Returning Officers or specific responsibilities where the Council is the Lead Authority and for which services are re-charged by the Council. The Contracts

Committee may approve the level and payment of such allowances to Chief Officers where they are not prescribed elsewhere.

Termination Payments

43. The Council operates a discretionary selective redundancy scheme which provides enhanced redundancy payments and a retirement policy that operates in accordance with the provisions of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Local Government Pension Scheme. The redundancy scheme implemented in January 2012 was reviewed in November 2012, and a further revised (reduced) Redundancy Payments Scheme was implemented with effect from 1 September 2013; in accordance with good HR practice, the scheme was reviewed in 2018/19 although no substantive changes were made to it.
44. Applications for voluntary redundancy from areas of the Council not 'at risk' of redundancy will only be approved where to do so would clearly support business planning and service delivery in the long-term, and wider strategic objectives as set out in the Council's Thrive Agenda. In order to reach a decision on whether or not to support an application, consideration will be given to the viability of a bumped redundancy where appropriate.
45. Whilst there is nothing to prevent employees who have received voluntary redundancy and/or early retirement pension payments from working for another organisation or for themselves, the Council's general practice is to not re-employ them. The clear intention is that individuals should not benefit from further employment with the Council when they have already been compensated for loss of their job and may be in receipt of enhanced redundancy payments or pensions in accordance with this pay policy statement and other associated policies. A similar principle applies to re-employment of employees who have previously taken early retirement with enhancements.
46. There should therefore be a minimum of 12 months' break before consideration is given to their return to employment within the Council in the circumstances outlined above. There may, however, be occasions when labour, skills or knowledge are required, and particularly in the case of employees who were made redundant, individuals will not be barred from applying for roles such as casual workers (NOMOs) if there is no direct link with their former job and is outside of the service they were previously employed in.

Publication and Access to Information

47. The Council's annual pay policy and any in-year revisions will be published in full on the Council's website. The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 also requires publication of certain organisational issues, and these overlap the pay policy in a number of respects; these will also be accessible on the Council's website.

Pay Spine from 1 April 2023 –Pay Award pending

Grade		SCP	Salary	Un-enhanced (Salary)
A		3	22,737	11.79
	B	4	23,114	11.98
C		5	23,500	12.18
	D	6	23,893	12.38
	D	7	24,294	12.59
E		8	24,702	12.80
E		9	25,119	13.02
E		10	25,545	13.24
E		11	25,979	13.47
F		14	27,334	14.17
F		15	27,803	14.41
F		17	28,770	14.91
F	G	19	29,777	15.43
	G	20	30,296	15.70
	G	22	31,364	16.26
	G	23	32,076	16.63
H		25	33,945	17.59
H		26	34,834	18.06
H		27	35,745	18.53
H	I	28	36,648	19.00
	I	29	37,336	19.35
	I	30	38,223	19.81
J	I	31	39,186	20.31
J		32	40,221	20.85
J		33	41,418	21.47
J	K	34	42,403	21.98
	K	35	43,421	22.51
	K	36	44,428	23.03
L	K	37	45,441	23.55
L		38	46,464	24.08
L		39	47,420	24.58
L	M	40	48,474	25.13
	M	41	49,498	25.66
	M	42	50,512	26.18
N	M	43	51,515	26.70
N		44	52,599	27.26
N		45	53,686	27.83
N		46	54,771	28.39

Recruitment and Retention Allowance Policy

Statement of Purpose

1. The Aim

In order to deliver high quality services consistently, Gateshead Council has to attract and retain high quality people. In some circumstances, such as market forces in the job market, may occasionally require the Council to consider exceptional payments in addition to the “rate for the job” which our internal pay structures would normally indicate. This policy outlines how the Council will assess whether a recruitment and retention allowance needs to be paid to attract and retain the right person for the job.

2. Definition of recruitment and retention allowance/market supplement

A recruitment and retention allowance is a separately identifiable sum paid in addition to the salary for a post in recognition that current levels of pay within the wider employment market are greater than the salary determined by internal pay structures which has resulted in recruitment and/or retention difficulties.

3. Who is covered by this policy

The policy applies to all employees of the Council, (excluding employees directly employed by schools), who hold posts which have been identified by management and Human Resources as having recruitment and retention difficulties, for example due to skills shortages and/or in comparison with current levels of pay within the wider employment market.

4. Additional Information

4.1 Other Council policies and procedures, which are relevant to this policy:

- Equal Opportunities Policy

5. Objective justification for payment of a recruitment and retention allowance

Where a manager considers there is a case for payment of a recruitment and retention allowance in order to either recruit or retain employees, it will be necessary to submit a portfolio of supporting evidence to their Strategic Director.

A portfolio of evidence should include the following:

5.1 In cases for recruitment

- For all posts below Service Director level, details of previous efforts made to fill the post. This may include advertising in different publications, changing the wording of the advert, redesigning the job etc. At least two previous attempts must have been made to recruit to the post.
- Number and quality of applicants.
- Cost of recruitment where applicable.
- Details of any offers of employment made and reasons why they were rejected.

In the case of Strategic Director and Service Director posts, the decision to award a recruitment and retention allowance will be determined by reference to prevailing market rates, alongside the above evidence where available.

5.2 In cases for retention

- Consideration of other issues that may not relate to pay, for example redesigning the job, job rotation and career development. This may be appropriate in cases where an employee is considering leaving the Council, for a more “challenging or interesting” role, or a role which would provide better promotional opportunities. Payment of a recruitment and retention allowance in these circumstances would not necessarily encourage the employee to remain with the Council. As an alternative, the service may look at ways of making their job more interesting, such as giving them specific responsibility for a project, which would develop skills in different areas. The service may also look at opportunities for secondment or a transfer to another section or job role.
- Analysis of exit interview data.

5.3 In all cases

- A copy of the job profile and structure chart
- Copies of at least five comparable job adverts from a variety of publications over the last six months including copies of job profiles/job descriptions and person specifications.

It should be noted that production of several higher paying job adverts which may not be representative of the whole market will not warrant the approval of a supplement.

The portfolio of supporting evidence should be submitted to the relevant Strategic Director who will assess the evidence to ensure there is objective justification to pay a recruitment and retention allowance. Should the Strategic Director not support the

payment of a recruitment and retention allowance, that decision is final. Where there is justification to pay, the Strategic Director will indicate the monetary value of the recruitment and retention allowance requested and forward the portfolio and their comments to Human Resources.

6. Procedure for approval of a request to pay a recruitment and retention allowance

Human Resources will quality check the information presented and seek any further clarification from the service concerned. It is the responsibility of the service to ensure that sufficient evidence is provided in each case to warrant the consideration of a payment.

Human Resources will review the request and:

- a) undertake further research using comparative salary benchmark data where available; and
- b) consider whether this causes significant recruitment and retention difficulties which are detrimental to operational activities; and ensure that payment of a recruitment and retention allowance is objectively justifiable and proportionate, and will not contravene equal pay legislation and the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy; and,
- c) check that the relevant service Finance Business Partner has confirmed that there is sufficient funding available to pay the recruitment and retention allowance.

Where Human Resources support the request, the portfolio of evidence will be referred to the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance who will make a final decision as to whether an allowance can be authorised. Any decision to award a recruitment and retention allowance must be clearly evidenced to ensure that the policy is applied fairly, consistently and is free from any bias.

In the case of Strategic Director and Service Director posts, any proposal to award a new retention allowance to retain an employee will be referred to Contracts Committee for a decision. The Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance will make a decision as to whether an allowance is offered as part of a recruitment process.

7. Value of recruitment and retention allowance

If the request to pay a recruitment and retention allowance is approved, Human Resources will determine the actual monetary value of the allowance using salary benchmark information and also the portfolio of evidence submitted by the service.

The recruitment and retention allowance will normally be paid at the equivalent of either the mean market salary or up to 15% of basic pay, whichever is lower. In very exceptional circumstances, the Strategic Director Corporate Services and Governance may approve a higher percentage.

8. Review of recruitment and retention allowance

To ensure that the payment of an allowance continues to be justified and proportionate, it is necessary to review the position regularly against the criteria that was applied to the initial assessment. It is essential that the rationale and supporting evidence for payment of a recruitment and retention allowance remains current and a review is documented.

For this reason, the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance will only approve payment of a recruitment and retention allowance for an initial period of up to two years subject to review. In exceptional circumstances this may be extended to up to five years in recruitment cases. Human Resources will assess the need to continue the payment using comparative benchmarking data. The decision to continue the payment rests with the Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance.

9. Conditions applicable to recruitment and retention allowance

- The payment will be expressly identified as a separate pay element and will be subject to the usual deductions for tax, national insurance and pension contributions.
- Employees working part time will receive any payment on a *pro rata* basis depending on their contracted hours.
- If a post holder in receipt of a recruitment and retention allowance moves to an alternative post within the Council, which does not attract a recruitment and retention allowance, the allowance shall cease from the date on which the post holder leaves the post which attracts the recruitment and retention allowance.
- A recruitment and retention allowance paid as a percentage of salary will be adjusted in line with annual pay increases.
- A recruitment and retention allowance will cease with immediate effect if (a) a recipient is subject to formal capability procedures i.e. formal capability action has been taken and the employee is subject to a capability improvement note or final capability improvement note and (b) where the employee is absent due to long term sickness (absent for 4 weeks or more), except where the employee's absence is directly related to a disability. The recruitment and retention allowance will be reinstated once the employee returns from long term sickness or is no longer subject to formal action under the capability procedure.

10. Record keeping

HR Advice will maintain a central record of any recruitment and retention allowances awarded and all supporting evidence.

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

Health and Safety Strategy

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is for approval on the updated Health and Safety Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Approve the revised Health and Safety Strategy as set out in appendix 2.

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TITLE OF REPORT: **Health and Safety Strategy**

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from Cabinet and Council for the Health & Safety Strategy.

Background

2. The Council has a Health & Safety Policy which sets out our general approach to health and safety. It states the aims and commitment of senior leaders for health and safety management and outlines roles and responsibilities.
3. The Council is a diverse organisation, and it is recognised that health and safety culture varies across different services.
4. To improve overall health and safety standards, there is a need to assess the health and safety culture and implement a strategy for how this can be improved. Good safety culture can improve safety performance which in turn prevents injury, reduces costs, and improves reputation.
5. The Council does not currently have a documented Health & Safety Strategy which links the goals of our Health & Safety Policy to our corporate action plan.
6. Consultation took place last year with the council's workforce on creating a health and safety vision statement. The aim of the vision statement is to describe what we want the health and safety culture within the council to ultimately look like. A strategy is required which sets out how we intend to achieve our vision.

Proposal

7. A five-year strategy has been developed setting out our areas of focus, direction, and ambitions. It sets out what we want to achieve and our vision for Gateshead Council's health and safety culture, based on the following six themes:
 - **Commitment and leadership** - We will ensure there is clear visible commitment and support from leaders for making sure people stay safe at work.
 - **Engagement and Participation** – We'll create an environment where it is easy for people to have open discussions about health and safety and to not be afraid to speak up when they see opportunities for improvements.
 - **Communication** - We'll make sure there are effective means for communicating health and safety information and news.

- **Learning and competence** - We'll ensure our people are suitably competent to carry out their roles. We will provide learning that impacts positively on people's motivation, H&S knowledge, behaviour, and perceptions.
 - **Monitoring and reporting** – We'll ensure that health and safety performance is measured and reported on, in a way that targets areas for improvement.
 - **Accountability** - We'll establish and maintain an environment in which people take responsibility not only for their own safety, but the safety of the team.
8. The strategy will be used to design an action plan of change, our plan to make a difference that will drive forward work across the Council helping to continuously enable good health and safety practices. It will form the basis for priorities and sets out the roadmap for improving the health and safety culture, which is the ambition of the Workforce Strategy approved by the Council in March 2022.
9. The strategy has been shared with various stakeholders for their consideration and amended in line with suggestions that enhanced the strategy.

Recommendations

10. Cabinet is asked to recommend Council to approve the Health and Safety Strategy as set out in appendix 2 to the report.

For the following reason:

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

CONTACT: Stephen Foggin

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Policy Context

1. To develop an overarching strategy for the Council to meet its obligations linked to health and safety. The proposed strategy supports delivery of the Workforce Strategy, which in turn enables Thrive and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Consultation

2. A number of individuals and groups were consulted in the development of the strategy including the Leader, SMG Services & Performance, the Corporate Health & safety Committee, Trade Union Colleagues, and others.

Alternative Options

3. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

4. Resources:

a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms there are no current financial implications. Resources may be required linked to activity required to deliver the strategy and when understood the request for finances will be made at that time.

b) **Human Resources Implications** – None

c) **Property Implications** - None

5. **Risk Management Implication** - None

6. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - None

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

8. **Health Implications** - None

9. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - None

10. **Human Rights Implications** - None

11. **Ward Implications** - None

Background Information

- Thrive
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Workforce Strategy
- Council Health & Safety Strategy

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Health & Safety Strategy

March 2024

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Our Vision Statement

Our vision is to have a culture where everyone's health and safety matters and where every colleague takes action to make it happen. We'll encourage and enable colleagues to work together, with our customers, in a way that creates an injury-free working environment to ensure that everyone goes home safe every day. We'll do this by taking responsibility for behaving safely, challenging unsafe behaviours and conditions when we see them, because our colleagues' and our customers' health and safety is a priority that must never be compromised.

Our people's health and safety matters - let's make it happen!

Our Vision is About:

- Visible commitment, leadership, and role-modelling from senior management.
- Creating a 'no blame' culture, where people learn from near misses and accidents and work hard to prevent recurrences.
- Having simple and easy to follow policies, procedures, and guidance documents.
- All colleagues role model great behaviours, applaud great ones and feel able to challenge unsafe ones.
- Creating effective processes for engagement, participation, collaboration, and communication.
- Everyone taking personal responsibility to work safely and follow safe working practices.
- Taking ownership to intervene and say 'stop' if we feel a situation or behaviour might be unsafe.
- Creating an environment of trust and transparency where reporting concerns is encouraged.
- Sharing lessons learnt and good practice to ensure we have an injury-free working environment.
- Creating a safer working environment within which our employees can thrive.
- Establishing ways of working that ensure that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our ambition to be an exemplar for health and safety.
- Information to help keep everyone healthy and safe is cascaded and communicated effectively to all colleagues.
- Everyone is suitably trained, qualified and competent to do their roles safely and free from harm.
- Achieving consistent behaviour through audits and promptly remedying deficiencies.

Defining Health, Safety and Culture

Health

Occupational health is about how work affects a person's health and how someone's health affects their work. Good occupational health at work promotes and maintains the health and wellbeing of colleagues and enables good worker health, improved productivity at work and ultimately positive individual social wellbeing and wealth.

Safety

Safety at work encompasses a wide range of duties and responsibilities aimed at ensuring everyone works in an environment and works in a way that is aimed at keeping everyone free from harm.

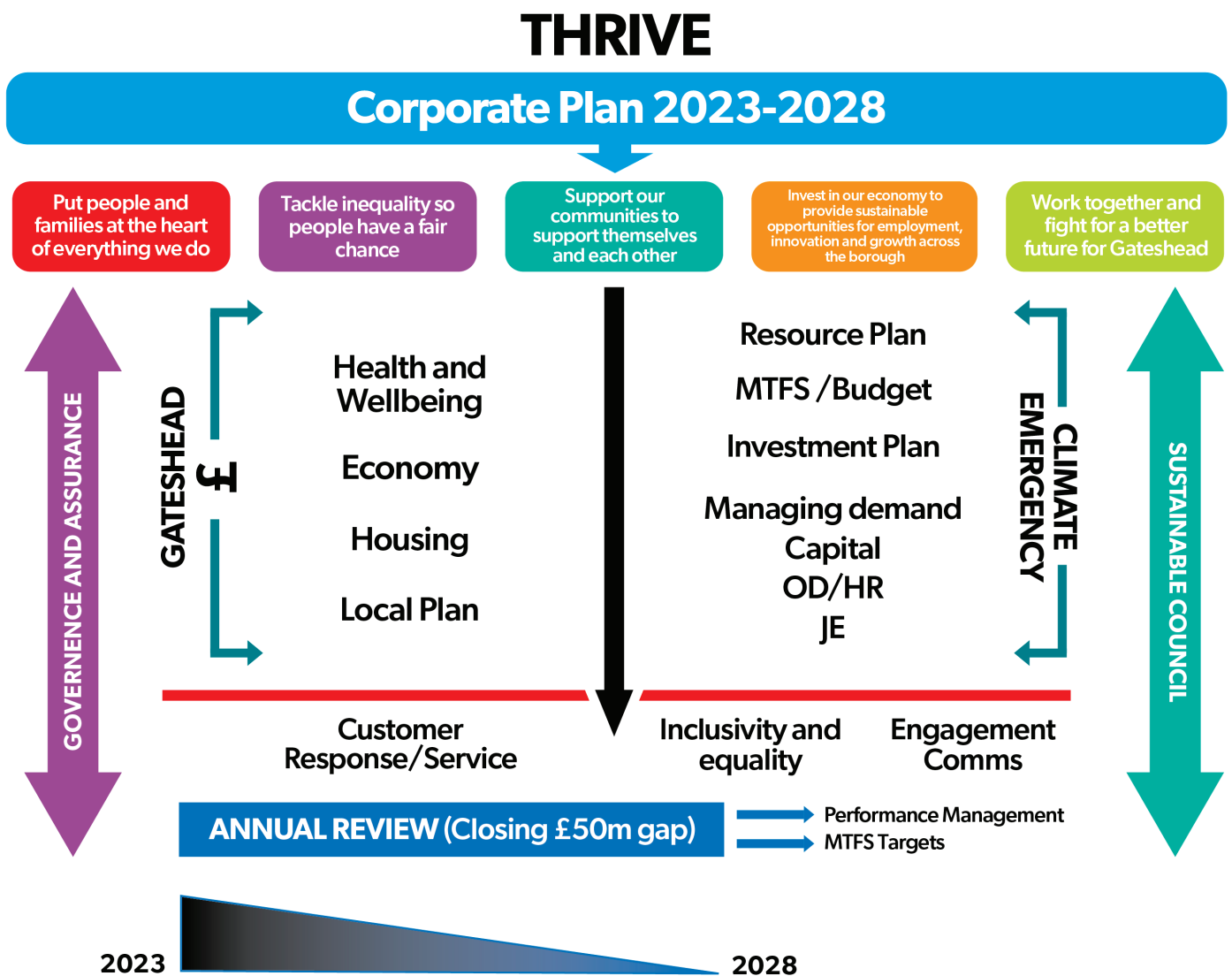
Culture

A health and safety culture is a way of doing things that is shared, taught, or copied. It's a combination of our attitudes, our values and our perceptions that influence how something is being done in the workplace, rather than how it should be done.

Health & Safety Enabling the Thrive agenda and the Council's Corporate Plan

Our strategic approach, 'Thrive' has ambitions to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, including our employees, many of which live in Gateshead. It drives our major policy decisions, aiming to put people and families at the heart of everything we do.

Improving the health and safety at Gateshead Council enables our overall Thrive agenda. The illustration below is a visual representation of the Council's five-year strategy. The link between Thrive, the Corporate Plan and ultimately the Health and Safety Strategy can be seen below: i.e. a deliverable of the Workforce Strategy. This is shown below for illustrative proposes only to highlight how this strategy supports the wider aims and objectives of the organisation.



The Council's Approach to Health and Safety

Corporate Health & Safety Policy

The Council's Health & Safety Policy sets out our general approach to health and safety. It states the aims and commitment of senior leaders for health and safety management and outlines roles and responsibilities

Health & Safety Strategy

The Council's Health and Safety Strategy sets out what we want to achieve and our vision for Gateshead Council culture.

Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan

Our Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan will set out the specific activities that will deliver the change need so that the vision in the strategy becomes a reality.

Our strategic approach for health and safety

Our approach will take account of our obligations in line with legislation, our workforce strategy, and what we want to do/have committed to, so that we grow a sustainable positive health and safety culture.

We'll deliver the change that's needed through focussing our activities on **six key themes**:

Commitment and leadership



Engagement and participation



Communication



Learning and Competence



Monitoring and reporting



Accountability



Our Priority Aims

Priority Aims are stated below against each of the six themes.

Commitment and leadership



We will ensure there is clear visible commitment and support from leaders for making sure people stay safe at work by:

- Ensuring suitable resources are available and clear lines of responsibility are understood.
- Actively promoting and championing H&S initiatives and good practice.
- Responding to issues raised within a reasonable time.
- Carrying out regular Safety Tours.
- Making health and safety a topic of everyday conversation e.g. Safety Moments.

Engagement and participation



We'll create an environment where it is easy for people to have open discussions about health and safety and to not be afraid to speak up when they see opportunities for improvements. We'll do this by:

- Creating a framework which will allow us to reach out to all employees,
- Ensuring there are 'positive feedback loops' and not just one directional.
- Carrying out a 'safety climate survey' and taking action to address issues raised.
- Create a way to promote good behaviours and call out poor ones.

Communication



We'll make sure there are effective means for communicating health and safety information and news by:

- Identifying areas and reasons why communication fails, and where it works well.
- Use effective communication channels for communicating both internally and externally.
- Ensuring health and safety is embedded within our corporate communications strategy.
- Producing documents and procedures that are written in simple and accessible language, so it is suitable for the audience to understand.

Learning and Competence



We'll ensure our people are suitably competent to carry out their roles. We will provide learning that impacts positively on people's motivation, H&S knowledge, behaviour, and perceptions. We'll do this by:

- Ensuring expectations, requirements and responsibilities are clear.
- Ensuring mandatory H&S related learning is identified per job role and is delivered at suitable frequencies for those who require it and in ways that suit differing learning styles.
- Refresher training is provided where identified and for critical roles.
- Providing quality learning and instruction which is delivered in an effective way and is accessible to all employees.
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for demonstrating competence amongst suppliers, contractors etc.
- Providing our people with an appropriate level of information at induction.

Monitoring and reporting



We'll ensure that health and safety performance is measured and reported on, in a way that targets areas for improvement by:

- Measuring positive culture change against KPIs
- Ensuring pro-active reporting and intervention takes place.
- Improving systems for capturing and sharing lessons learnt.
- Evaluating data to identify trends.
- Providing dashboard information to leaders for their areas
- Developing our systems to support greater self-certification.

Accountability



We'll establish and maintain an environment in which people take responsibility not only for their own safety, but the safety of the team. We'll achieve this by:

- Making sure everyone knows what the Council's expectations are for health and safety behaviour.
- Clarifying and communicating consequences for when expectations are met – recognition and feedback to reinforce good performance.
- Clarifying and communicating consequences for when expectations are not met – non-compliances/ escalation mechanisms: the focus being on a fair and balanced approach, not looking to apportion blame.
- Individuals hold themselves accountable for their actions and decisions, which will build trust. This in turn creates a safe and secure environment in which individuals can express themselves without fear of judgment or repercussion.

Our 5-year plan and how the strategy will be used.

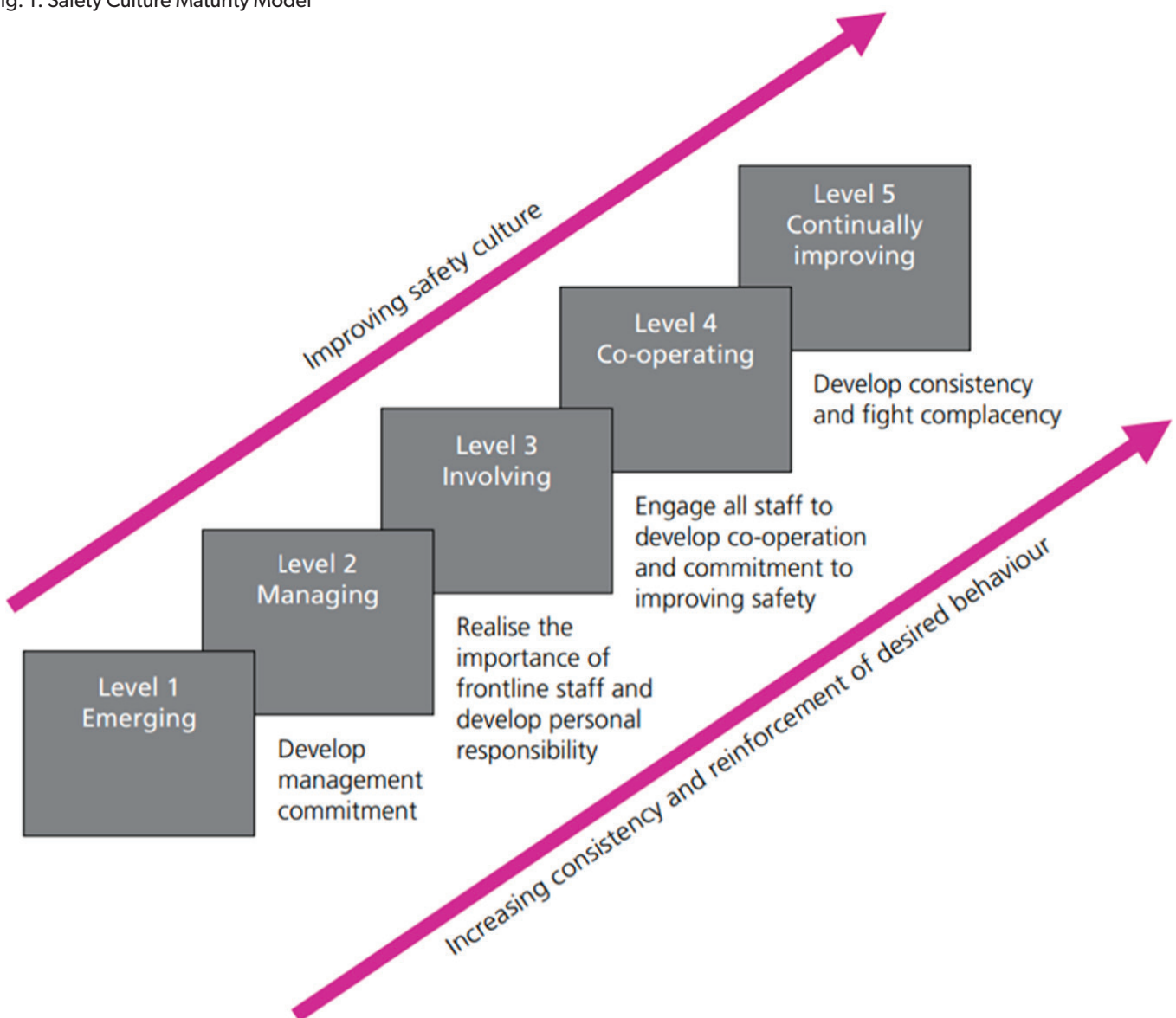
We recognise that evolving the culture within the Council to one where we are continually improving may take a number of years, and we also know that having a plan is how we'll understand what we've got to do and when.

We know that there's lots to do and embedding change takes time. We want our people to be healthy and safe and engage with a culture which is aimed at everyone going home safe every day. We'll develop leading key performance indicators to measure our incremental changes so that people can see the difference we can make as a team through learning, continuously improving and embedding new ways of working.

This Kell's Model for safety culture (see Fig. 1 below) shows how we want to develop and what we want to achieve, with continuous improvement being our target for success.

An initial Safety Climate Survey will be carried out to establish a baseline for safety culture maturity across the Council. Subsequent surveys will then be later used to measure progress over time.

Fig. 1: Safety Culture Maturity Model*



* Safety Culture Maturity® model. © The Keil Centre 2001 Safety Culture Maturity is a registered trademark of The Keil Centre Ltd

Level 1 – Emerging

Safety is defined in terms of technical and procedural solutions and compliance with regulations. Safety is not seen as a key business risk and the safety department is perceived to have primary responsibility for safety. Many accidents are seen as unavoidable and as part of the job. Most frontline staff are uninterested in safety and may only use safety as the basis for other arguments, such as changes in shift systems.

Level 2 – Managing

The organisation's accident rate is average for its sector, but they tend to have more serious accidents than average. Safety is seen as a business risk and management time and effort is put into accident prevention. Safety is solely defined in terms of adherence to rules and procedures and engineering controls. Accidents are seen as preventable. Managers perceive that most accidents are solely caused by the unsafe behaviour of front-line staff. Safety performance is measured in terms of lagging indicators such as lost time incidents (LTI) and safety incentives are based on reduced LTI rates. Managers and Senior Leaders are reactive in their involvement in health and safety (i.e., they use punishment when accident rates increase).

Level 3 – Involving

Accident rates are relatively low, but they have reached a plateau. The organisation is convinced that the involvement of the frontline employee in health and safety is critical if future improvements are going to be achieved. Managers recognise that a wide range of factors cause accidents, and the root causes often originate from management decisions. A significant proportion of frontline employees are willing to work with management to improve health and safety. Most staff accept personal responsibility for their own health and safety. Safety performance is actively monitored, and the data is used effectively.

Level 4 – Cooperating

The majority of staff in the organisation are convinced that health and safety is important from both a moral and economic point of view. Managers and frontline staff recognise that a wide range of factors cause accidents, and the root causes are likely to come back to people's behaviours and management decisions. Frontline staff accept personal responsibility for their own and others health and safety. The importance of all employees feeling valued and treated fairly is recognised. The organisation puts significant effort into proactive measures to prevent accidents. Safety performance is actively monitored using all data available. Non-work accidents are also monitored, and a healthy lifestyle is promoted.

Level 5 – Continuous Improvement

The prevention of all injuries or harm to employees (both at work and at home) is a core organisational value. The organisation has had a sustained period (years) without a recordable accident or high potential incident, but there is no feeling of complacency. They live with the fear that their next accident is just around the corner. The organisation uses a range of indicators to monitor performance, but it is not performance-driven, as it has confidence in its safety processes. The organisation is constantly striving to be better and find better ways of improving hazard control mechanisms. All employees share the belief that health and safety is a critical aspect of their job and accept that the prevention of non-work injuries is important. The organisation invests considerable effort in promoting health and safety at home.

Priority Actions and Delivery Plan

The Health and Safety team will be responsible for creating and maintaining a Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan and associated key performance indicators that translates our strategic vision into practical delivery. Individual Groups and Services will be required to follow this action plan and integrate relevant practical elements into their local plans and operations.

Monitoring

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee is ultimately responsible for monitoring the effective implementation of this strategy and action plan. CMT is responsible for ensuring, that they support and endorse the plan and seek appropriate assurance on delivery.



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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

**Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy:
2024/25 to 2028/29**

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is for approval of the Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Agree the Treasury Policy Statement and the Treasury Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29.

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Title of report: Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29

Report of: Darren Collins – Strategic Director, Resources and Digital

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council approve the attached Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29.

Background

2. To provide a framework for the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital to exercise his delegated powers, the Council agrees a five-year Treasury Management Policy and Treasury Strategy which is reviewed at the start of each financial year.
3. The attached Treasury Policy and Treasury Strategy have been prepared considering the Local Government Act 2003, Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) Guidance on Local Government Investments, CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital and CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (2021).
4. The Audit and Standards Committee reviewed the Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy on 7 March 2024 and raised no comments for submission to Cabinet.

Proposals

5. Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council approve the Treasury Policy and Treasury Strategy attached at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, to ensure that the Council fully complies with the requirements of good financial practice in Treasury Management.

Recommendation

6. Cabinet is asked to agree the Treasury Policy Statement attached at Appendix 2 of this report and the Treasury Strategy as attached at Appendix 3 and recommend them for approval to Council.

Policy Context

1. The proposals in this report are consistent with Council strategic approach Making Gateshead a place Where Everyone Thrives and the Corporate Plan. The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy ensures the effective use of the Council's resources to ensure a sustainable financial position.
2. The Council recognises there are huge financial pressures on not just council resources, but those of partners, local businesses and residents. To deliver on the strategic approach over the next five years, the Council will need to be resolute in its determination to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives. This means the Council's decision-making will be policy and priority led and based on robust data and intelligence.

Background

3. The Prudential Code plays a key role in capital finance in local authorities. Local authorities determine their own programmes for capital investment that are central to the delivery of quality public services. The Prudential Code was developed by CIPFA, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, as a professional code of practice to support local authorities in taking their decisions. Local authorities are required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code when carrying out their duties in England and Wales under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003.
4. In December 2021 CIPFA issued a revised Treasury Management Code of Practice and a revised Prudential Code (the Code) which represents best practice. The Council fully complies with the Code and this contributes towards achieving good practice.
5. Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 specifies the powers of a local authority to borrow for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment or for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs. Borrowing is linked to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital which sets out a range of prudential and treasury indicators that must be calculated to ensure borrowing is affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Prudential Code refers to the need for a clear and integrated treasury strategy.
6. In addition, under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 2003, authorities are required to have regard to the DLUHC's guidance on Local Government Investments. This document stipulates the requirement for an annual investment strategy to be integrated into the Council's Treasury Strategy.
7. DLUHC introduced revised investment guidance which was effective for financial years commencing on or after 1st April 2018. The revised guidance focuses on non-financial asset investments, for example investment in commercial property.
8. Under Part 4 of the Council's Constitution the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital will produce a Treasury Policy Statement annually, setting out the general policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management function.

Treasury Policy

9. The Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on the risk implications for the Council.
10. The Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.
11. CIPFA's Treasury Management Code requires the setting out of responsibilities and duties of councillors and officers to allow a framework for reporting and decision making on all aspects of treasury management. To achieve this CIPFA has recommended the adoption of 12 Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) and 1 Investment Management Practice (IMP).
12. These principles are intended to provide a working document that forms a detailed framework for treasury management activities. The policy fully encompasses CIPFA's Code of Practice. In addition, the policy fully takes account of the requirements of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the guidance issued by the DLUHC supporting Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 in respect of local authority investments. The Treasury Policy is attached at Appendix 2.

Treasury Strategy

13. The Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29 is attached at Appendix 3. This covers the specific activities proposed for 2024/25 to 2028/29 in relation to both borrowing and investments and ensures a wide range of advice is taken to maintain and preserve all principal sums, whilst obtaining a reasonable rate of return, and that the most appropriate borrowing is undertaken. The primary objective of the investment strategy is to maintain the security of investments at all times.
14. The term "investments" used in the definition of treasury management activities also covers non-financial assets which the Council may hold primarily for financial returns. The control of risk and optimising returns on these more commercial investments is consistent with the Council's risk appetite.
15. Under the requirements of the Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice the Council have adopted prudential indicators (detailed in Appendix 4). Details of investment types, minimum credit ratings, circumstances of use and maximum investment period are shown in Appendix 5.
16. The Council have reviewed the maximum maturity periods and amounts which can be invested with counterparties outlined in Appendix 6. In ensuring that these limits meet our requirements an assessment of risk has been undertaken and advice obtained from Link Asset Services.
17. The Council has produced the Treasury Strategy to comply with the requirements of the Code, the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (2021) and

Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Council considers that compliance with the above ensures that best practice is followed.

Consultation

18. Consultation on the production of the Treasury Policy Statement, including the Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29, has taken place with the Council's treasury advisers (Link Asset Services). The outcome of the consultation process, along with guidance issued by CIPFA and the DLUHC, has informed the format and content of the policy and strategy statements.
19. The Leader of the Council has been consulted on the contents of this report.

Alternative Options

20. There are no alternative options, as the Treasury Policy and Strategy reports recommended for approval are required in order to comply with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (2021), the Local Government Act 2003 and DLUHC Guidance on Local Government Investments.

Implications of recommended options

21. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, confirms that the financial implications are set out in this report. There are no additional financial implications associated with the report itself.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** - There are no human resources implications arising from this report.
- c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising from this report.

22. Risk Management Implications

The Treasury Policy and Treasury Strategy which informs activity in this area were prepared with the primary aim of minimising risk to ensure that the Council's principal sums are safeguarded. Maximising income is considered secondary to this main aim.

23. Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

24. Crime and Disorder Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

25. Sustainability Implications

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

26. Human Rights Implications

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

27. **Area and Ward Implications**

There are no direct area and ward implications arising from this report.

28. **Background Information**

The following documents have been used in preparation of the report:

- Local Government Act 2003
- DLUHC Guidance on Local Government Investments
- CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital (2021)
- CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (2021)

Treasury Policy 2024/25 to 2028/29**1. Approved Activities of the Treasury Management Operation**

- 1.1 In December 2021 CIPFA published a revised Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services (the Code), which represents best practice. Treasury management activities are defined by CIPFA as:

“The management of the organisation’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

- 1.2 The term “investments” used in the definition of treasury management activities includes all financial assets of the organisation, as well as other non-financial assets which the Council may hold primarily for financial returns. The control of risk and optimising returns on these more commercial investments is also consistent with the Council’s risk appetite.

2. Formulation of the Treasury Strategy

- 2.1 The formulation of a Treasury Strategy involves determining the appropriate borrowing and investment decisions with the prime objective of safeguarding the Council’s assets and secondary objectives of obtaining a reasonable rate of return on investments and minimising the costs of borrowing. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on the risk implications for the Council and ensure robust due diligence procedures cover all treasury and non-treasury investments.
- 2.2 The Treasury Strategy encompasses the requirements of CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code of Practice, Prudential Code for Capital and the DLUHC Guidance on Local Government Investments.
- 2.3 The revised Treasury Management Code and revised Prudential Code were published by CIPFA on 20 December 2021. The Council complied with all previous requirements of the codes and have adopted new reporting obligations arising from the revised codes into the 2024/25 Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy report.
- 2.4 The Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29 is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Prudential and Treasury Indicators

- 3.1 Under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Council may borrow money:
- (a) for any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment, or
 - (b) for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs.
- 3.2 Under the requirements of the Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice the Council have adopted prudential indicators (detailed in Appendix 3, section 1.4).

4. Annual Investment Strategy

- 4.1 The DLUHC has issued guidance to supplement the investment regulations contained within the Local Government Act 2003. It is also referred to under Section 15 (1) of the 2003 Local Government Act which requires authorities to “have regard (a) to such guidance as the Secretary of State may issue and (b) to such other guidance as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify”. The guidance encourages authorities to invest prudently but without burdening them with the detailed prescriptive regulation of the previous regime.
- 4.2 Central to the guidance and the Code is the need to produce an Annual Investment Strategy. This is included as Section 6 of the Treasury Strategy in Appendix 3.
- 4.3 The Annual Investment Strategy document will include:
- The Council’s risk appetite in respect of security, portfolio liquidity and return;
 - The definition of ‘high’ and ‘non-high’ credit quality to determine what are specified investments and non-specified investments;
 - Which specified and non-specified instruments the Council will use, dealing in more detail with non-specified investments given the greater potential risk;
 - The categories of counterparties that may be used during the course of the year e.g. foreign banks, nationalised/part nationalised banks, building societies;
 - The types of investments that may be used during the course of the year,
 - The limit to the total amount that may be held in each investment type;
 - The Council’s policy on the use of credit ratings, credit rating agencies and other credit risk analysis techniques to determine creditworthy counterparties for its approved lending list and how the Council will deal with changes in ratings, rating watches and rating outlooks;
 - Limits for individual counterparties, groups and countries;
 - Guidelines for making decisions on investments and borrowing; and
 - The Council’s policy on commercial investments held for return.
- 4.4 As part of the annual review of counterparty limits changes to the existing market conditions and level of council reserves held have been considered. The level of investment per counterparty has therefore been held at the same limit as the previous year, as shown in Appendix 3 Sections 6.15 and 6.21 respectively.

5. Policy on Interest Rates Exposure

- 5.1 The use of any financial instruments, such as derivatives, to mitigate interest rate risks will be considered on an individual basis and the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, will obtain approval from the Council prior to entering into any arrangement of this nature.

6. Policy on Delegation, Review Requirements and Reporting Arrangements

- 6.1 It is the Council’s responsibility under the Code to approve a Treasury Policy statement.
- 6.2 The Council delegates the review of the policy and monitoring of the performance of the treasury management function to Cabinet, the scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to the Audit and Standards Committee, and the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, who will act in accordance with the organisations policy statement and Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) and CIPFA’s Standard of

Professional Practice on Treasury Management. Any proposals to approve, adopt or amend policy require the consent of the Council and are matters for the Council to determine.

- 6.3 Treasury Strategy (Appendix 3, Section 1.3) outlines the Council's arrangements for reporting on Treasury Management.
- 6.4 As from 1st April 2019, CIPFA required all local authorities to prepare an additional report, a Capital Strategy report, which is intended to provide the following: -
 - a) a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
 - b) an overview of how the associated risk is managed; and
 - c) the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 6.5 The aim of this report is to ensure that all elected members of the Council fully understand the overall strategy, governance procedures and risk appetite entailed by this Strategy.
- 6.6 The Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29 was approved by Cabinet on 21st November 2023.

Treasury Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29

1. Introduction

1.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021 (the Code) emphasises a number of key areas including the following:

- a) All authorities must formally adopt the Code.
- b) The strategy report will affirm that the effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
- c) The Council's appetite for risk, including the appetite for any use of financial instruments in the prudent management of those risks, must be clearly identified within the strategy report and will affirm that priority is given to security and portfolio liquidity when investing treasury management funds and explain how that will be carried out.
- d) Responsibility for risk management and control lies within the organisation and cannot be delegated to any outside organisation.
- e) Credit ratings should only be used as a starting point when considering risk. Use should also be made of market data and information, the quality financial press, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that government support.
- f) Councils need a sound diversification policy with high credit quality counterparties and should consider setting country, sector and group limits.
- g) Borrowing in advance of need is only to be permissible when there is a clear business case for doing so and only for the current capital programme or to finance future debt maturities.
- h) The main annual treasury management reports must be approved by full Council.
- i) There needs to be a quarterly review of Treasury Management Strategy and performance. This is intended to highlight any areas of concern that have arisen since the original strategy was approved.
- j) Each council must delegate the role of scrutiny of Treasury Management Strategy and policies to a specific named body.
- k) Treasury Management performance and policy setting should be subjected to prior scrutiny.
- l) Councillors should be provided with access to relevant training as those charged with governance are also personally responsible for ensuring they have the necessary skills and training.
- m) Responsibility for these activities must be clearly defined within the organisation.
- n) Officers involved in treasury management must be explicitly required to follow treasury management policies and procedures when making investment and borrowing decisions on behalf of the Council (this will form part of the Treasury Management Practices).
- o) "Investments" covers the financial and non-financial assets which the organisation holds primarily for financial returns. This will include investments which are not managed as part of the normal treasury management delegations.

1.2 This Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Code.

1.3 The Council will adopt the following reporting arrangements in accordance with the requirements of the revised Code:

Area of Responsibility	Council/ Committee/ Officer	Frequency
Treasury Management Policy & Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy	Council approval with review delegated to Cabinet/ Audit and Standards Committee	Annually before the start of the year or where a material change is proposed
Annual Report on borrowing and investment activity	Council with review delegated to Cabinet/ Audit and Standards Committee	Annually by 30 September after the end of the year
Scrutiny of treasury management performance via a bi-annual report	Council approval with review delegated to Cabinet / Audit and Standards Committee	Bi-annual
Treasury management indicator monitoring via a quarterly report	Audit and Standards Committee	Quarterly
In year changes to agreed Treasury Management Policy & Strategy / Annual Investment Strategy / Prudential and Treasury Indicators	Cabinet	By exception
Scrutiny of treasury management Policy, Strategy and procedures	Audit and Standards Committee	Annually before the start of the year
Treasury Management Monitoring Reports	Strategic Director, Resources and Digital	Bi-Monthly/Weekly
Treasury Management Practices	Strategic Director, Resources and Digital	Monthly

1.4 Given the link to the revenue budget and capital programme, the following indicators were approved by the Council on 20 February 2024 as part of the Budget and Council Tax Level 2024/25 report. For completeness, the approved indicators are attached at Appendix 4:

- Actual and estimates of financing costs to net revenue stream;
- Estimates of capital expenditure;
- Actual capital expenditure;
- Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement;
- Actual Capital Financing Requirement;
- Authorised limit;
- Liability Benchmark
- Operational boundary;
- Actual external debt;
- Gross debt and Capital Financing Requirement;

- Upper and lower limit of maturity structure of borrowing fixed and variable; and
- Upper limit on principal sums invested for periods of over 365 days.

1.5 In addition to the above indicators, local indicators showing the level of reserves which are backed by cash in the bank and internal borrowing as a percentage of the capital financing requirement are included in this report. Also, where there is a significant difference between the net and the gross borrowing position the risk and benefits associated with this strategy will be clearly stated in the annual strategy. This is highlighted within the main borrowing strategy outlined in Section 4.6 below.

1.6 The Strategy covers:

- Prospects for interest rates;
- Treasury limits in force which will limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council, including prudential and treasury indicators;
- The borrowing strategy;
- Sensitivity forecast;
- External and internal borrowing;
- Debt rescheduling;
- Policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- The investment strategy; and
- The policy on the use of external service providers.

2. Prospects for Interest Rates

Interest Rates

2.1 The current financial year 2023/24 has seen UK inflation continue to reduce from Q4 2022 highs of 11.1% and currently sits at 4% (January 2024).

The Bank of England has taken action to control inflation by increasing the Bank Base Rate at every Monetary Policy Committee meeting up to August 2023, increasing the base rate to 5.25% where it has remained to February 2024. It is considered likely that rates have peaked and forecasts indicate small, gradual reductions in the bank base rate in the second half of the calendar year.

2.2 The table shown below outlines the Council's view of anticipated movements in interest rates, based on guidance received from the Council's treasury management advisers Link Asset Services as at 5 February 2024.

	March 2024	June 2024	Sept 2024	Dec 2024	March 2025	March 2026	March 2027
Bank Rate	5.25%	5.25%	4.75%	4.25%	3.75%	3.00%	3.00%
5 yr PWLB	4.50%	4.40%	4.30%	4.20%	4.10%	3.60%	3.50%
10 yr PWLB	4.70%	4.50%	4.40%	4.30%	4.20%	3.80%	3.70%
25 yr PWLB	5.20%	5.10%	4.90%	4.80%	4.60%	4.20%	4.10%
50 yr PWLB	5.00%	4.90%	4.70%	4.60%	4.40%	4.00%	3.90%

Long Term Interest Rates

2.3 Investment returns are likely to decrease during 2024/25 with further decreases forecast in the following two years.

3 Treasury Limits for 2024/25 to 2028/29 including Prudential Indicator

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for the Council to produce a balanced budget. In particular, Section 31(a), as amended by the Localism Act 2011, requires a local authority to calculate its budget requirement for each financial year to include the revenue costs that flow from capital financing decisions. This means that increases in capital expenditure must be limited to a level whereby increases in charges to revenue from increases in interest charges and increases in running costs from new capital projects are limited to a level, which is affordable within the projected income of the Council for the foreseeable future. This is reported within the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 3.2 It is a statutory duty under Section 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003, and supporting regulations, for the Council to determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The amount so determined is termed the Affordable Borrowing Limit. The Authorised Limit represents the legislative limit specified in the Act.
- 3.3 The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities is a professional code that sets out a framework for self-regulation of capital spending, in effect allowing councils to invest in capital projects without any limit if they are affordable, prudent and proportionate. The Code requires that treasury management decisions be taken in accordance with good professional practice and in full understanding of the risks involved and how these risks will be managed to levels that are acceptable to the Council. The Council will take into account its arrangements for the repayment of debt and consideration of any impact, on the authority's overall fiscal sustainability.
- 3.4 The Council must have regard to the Prudential Code when setting the Authorised Limit, which essentially requires the Council to ensure that total capital investment remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, that the impact upon its future council tax and housing rent levels is affordable.
- 3.5 To facilitate the decision-making process and support capital investment decisions the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code require the Council to agree and monitor a minimum number of prudential indicators which were approved by Council on 20 February 2024 as attached at Appendix 5.
- 3.6 The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, will ensure systems are in place to monitor the treasury limits and will report to Council instances where limits are breached, with the exception of short-term breaches of the Operational Boundary. The Operational Boundary is set so that if breached it acts as an early warning of the potential to exceed the higher Authorised Limit and as such temporary breaches due to debt restructuring and temporary borrowing are acceptable, providing they are not sustained.

4 Borrowing Strategy

- 4.1 The Local Government Act 2003 does not prescribe approved sources of finance, only that borrowing may not, without the consent of HM Treasury, be in other than Sterling.
- 4.2 The main options available for the borrowing strategy for 2024/25 are PWLB loans, market loans, capital market loans and the Municipal Bond Agency. The interest rate applicable to either PWLB or markets loans can be fixed or variable.

- 4.3 There are different types of market loans available, including forward starting and fixed or variable rates loans. It is not usual practice for the Council to agree forward starting or variable rate loans, but their use may be considered in specific circumstance, and where the rates of interest offered are below a fixed rate loan or future PWLB forecast rates to make them an attractive option.
- 4.4 To mitigate this interest rate risk a limit is placed on the total level of borrowing that can be taken as variable interest rate loans; it is proposed that the limit on variable rate loans is 10% of total borrowing in 2024/25.
- 4.5 The main strategy is therefore:
- Current (February 2023) long term PWLB rates (50 years) are around 5.16%. It is forecast that there will be a gradual reduction in PWLB rates over the next financial year, being 5.00% Q1, 4.90% Q2, 4.70% Q3 and 4.60% Q4.
 - Should interest rates fall below these targets borrowing should be considered, with preference given to terms which ensure a balanced profile of debt maturity.
 - The average interest rates forecast across this financial year for various borrowing periods are as follows: -

10 years –	4.47%
25 years –	5.00%
50 years –	4.80%
 - Whilst monitoring borrowing interest rates if there appears to be an upward trend then it may be considered prudent to lock into rates which exceed those outlined above, to minimise interest rate risk.
 - The use of short-term borrowing (6 months to 18 months) will also be considered with the aim of minimising borrowing costs. This short-term borrowing will be replaced with longer term loans when rates are preferable.
 - External borrowing rates currently exceed the return available for investments, meaning savings can be achieved by borrowing internally from reserves in the short term. The current policy of internal borrowing will continue to be followed as a short-term funding option serving to minimise overall cost.
 - Consideration will be given to borrowing market loans which are at least 20 basis points below the PWLB target rate.
 - Any increases in the CFR and borrowing are undertaken solely for purposes directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority.

Sensitivity of the forecast

- 4.6 The Council, in conjunction with Link Asset Services, will continually monitor both the prevailing interest rates and the market forecasts, adopting the following responses to any changes. The main sensitivities of the forecast are likely to be the two scenarios below:

- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in borrowing rates, then borrowing will be postponed.*
- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in borrowing rates than that currently forecast the portfolio position will be re-appraised. Most likely, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.*

4.7 Against this background, caution will be adopted in the management of the 2024/25 treasury operations. The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, will monitor the interest rate market and adopt a pragmatic approach to any changing circumstances having delegated powers to invest and manage the funds and monies of the Council.

External and Internal Borrowing

4.8 As of 31 January 2024 the Council had net debt of £560.255m; this comprises of total borrowing of £684.966m and investments of £124.711m.

4.9 Investment returns are expected to slightly decrease in the first half of 2024/25. However, while markets are pricing in anticipated Bank base rate reductions in the short-term, actual economic circumstances may fall short of these expectations.

4.10 Borrowing interest rates fell to historically low levels as a result of the covid pandemic but since then have continued to increase as the Bank of England increased bank base rates in response to high interest rates and the cost of living crisis. Since the last increase in August 2023 base rates have stabilised at 5.25% and this is anticipated to continue in the short-term. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served the Council well over recent years. The Council will assess its risk appetite in conjunction with budgetary pressures to reduce total interest costs. Although short-term interest rates are cheapest, longer-term borrowing could also be undertaken for the purpose of certainty.

4.11 There remains a cost of carry, (the difference between higher borrowing costs and lower investment returns) to any new long-term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances as this position will most likely incur a revenue cost.

Borrowing in advance of need

4.12 The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be considered carefully to ensure that it is in line with the projected capital financing requirement and prudential indicators and that the Council can demonstrate value for money and ensure the security of the funds.

4.13 In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Council will;

- ensure that there is a clear link between the capital programme and maturity profile of the existing debt portfolio which supports the need to take funding in advance of need;
- ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future plans and budgets have been considered;
- evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow; and
- consider the alternative forms of funding.

5. Debt Rescheduling

- 5.1 Any rescheduling opportunities will be considered in line with procedures approved under the Council's Treasury Management Practice Statements and will include a full cost/benefit analysis of any proposed variations. Any positions taken via rescheduling will be in accordance with the strategy position outlined in Section 4 above and will also take into account the prudential and treasury limits.
- 5.2 The reasons for any proposed rescheduling will include:
- the generation of cash savings at minimum risk;
 - help to fulfil the treasury strategy; and
 - in order to amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility in the Council's borrowing portfolio.
- 5.3 The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, in line with delegated powers outlined in the approved Treasury Management Practice Statement, will approve all rescheduling.
- 5.4 The Council will monitor interest rates and any opportunities to repay debt early which may arise to reduce the difference between its gross and net debt positions and to realise any benefits from the differential between interest rates. Any significant difference between early redemption rates and interest rates payable on new debt will be considered to ensure that any short term savings is not replaced by a higher longer term financial cost.
- 5.5 Consideration will also be given to the potential for making savings by running down investment balances by repaying debt prematurely as short-term rates on investments are likely to be lower than rates paid on currently held debt. However, this will need careful consideration in the light of premiums that may be incurred by such a course of action and other financial considerations.
- 5.6 All rescheduling will be reported to Council in the quarterly and annual reports.

6. Investment Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29

Introduction

- 6.1 The Council has regard to the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Guidance on Local Government Investments and CIPFA's Code of Practice. The Council must produce a strategy on an annual basis which covers the subsequent five years.
- 6.2 The CIPFA definition of "investments" covers all the financial assets of the organisation, as well as other non-financial assets which the organisation holds primarily for financial returns, such as investment property portfolios. This may therefore include investments which are not managed as part of normal treasury management or under treasury management delegations.
- 6.3 This annual strategy states which investments the Council may use for the prudent management of its treasury balances during the financial year under the categories of **specified investments** and **non-specified investments**.
- Specified investments are those with a high-level credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year.

- Non-specified investments are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use.

6.4 Both specified and non-specified investment types currently utilised by the Council are detailed in Appendix 6, along with approved limits. These limits reflect the Council's investment requirements whilst assessing risk and obtaining advice from Link Asset Services.

6.5 In addition to these, numerous other investment options are available for use and these may be considered suitable for use in the future. Should this be the case then the option will be evaluated in line with the procedures contained within the approved Treasury Management Practice Statement.

Investment Objectives

6.6 All investments will be in Sterling and all investment decisions are taken on data available on the day of investment.

6.7 The Council's primary investment objective is the security of the capital investment. The Council will also manage the investments to meet cash flow demands and to achieve a reasonable return commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite of the Council is low in order to give priority to security of its investments.

6.8 The borrowing of monies purely to invest is unlawful and the Council will not engage in such activity.

Creditworthiness Policy

6.9 The Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link Asset Services. The service uses a sophisticated modelling approach with credit ratings from the three main rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's. This service uses a scoring system to ensure that it does not give undue consideration to just one agency's ratings. It does not rely solely on the current credit ratings of counterparties but also uses the following information as overlays which are combined in a weighted scoring system:

- Credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- Credit Default Swap spreads, financial agreements that compensate the buyer in the event of a default, which give an early warning of likely changes in credit ratings; and
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

6.10 The end product of this modelling system indicates the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. The Council is satisfied that this service gives the required level of security for its investments. It is also a service which the Council would not be able to replicate using in-house resources.

The minimum credit rating criteria the Council use will be a Short-Term rating (Fitch or equivalent) of F1 and a long-term rating of A. In circumstances where ratings from all three agencies are not available, two acceptable ratings will be deemed as sufficient.

Where three ratings are published and all three do not meet our minimum criteria the counterparty will not be used until such a time as all three ratings meet the minimum criteria or the lowest rating is withdrawn.

6.11 The credit ratings will be monitored as follows:

- All credit ratings are reviewed weekly. The Council has access to Fitch, Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s credit ratings and is alerted to changes through its use of the Link Asset Services creditworthiness service. Ongoing monitoring of ratings also takes place in response to ad-hoc e-mail alerts from Link Asset Services.
- If a counterparty’s or deposit scheme’s rating is downgraded with the result that it no longer meets the Council’s minimum criteria, the further use of that counterparty/deposit scheme as a new deposit will be withdrawn immediately.
- If a counterparty is upgraded so that it fulfils the Council’s criteria, its inclusion will be considered for approval by the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital.

6.12 Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition, the Council will also use market data and information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of government support.

6.13 The Council has determined the minimum long term and short-term ratings it deems to be “high” for each category of investment. These “high” ratings allow investments of 365 days or less to be classified as **specified investments**. The Council’s approved limits for this “high” credit rating for deposit takers is as follows:

High Rated	Fitch	Moody’s	Standard & Poor’s
Short Term (ability to repay short term debt)	F1	P1	A1
Long Term (ability to repay long term debt)	A	A2	A

6.14 In addition to the above specified investments, the Council has also fully considered the increased risk of **non-specified investments** and has set appropriate limits for non-high rated deposit takers. These are as follows:

Non- High Rated	Fitch	Moody’s	Standard & Poor’s
Short term	F1	P1	A1
Long term	A-	A3	A-

The selection of counterparties with an acceptable level of creditworthiness will be achieved by selecting institutions down to a minimum durational band within Link Asset Services weekly credit list of worldwide potential counterparties. The maximum maturity periods and amounts to be placed in different types of investment instruments are detailed in Appendix 6.

6.15 As part of the annual review of counterparty limits no changes to the existing market conditions and level of council reserves held have been identified. The level of investment per counterparty, the existing % limit per counterparty and credit rating requirements have been retained to ensure risk is minimised and security of the councils investments is maintained. UK Government nationalised/part nationalised

banks will have a maximum limit of 40% or £20m of total investment, all other counterparties will not exceed a maximum limit equal to 20% of total investments or £20m. Unless there are major changes in the level of investment balances throughout the year this limit will be reviewed prior to the commencement of each financial year.

- 6.16 Where more than one counterparty from a group is included on the counterparty list the group in total will be controlled by the above limits with the maximum limit being that of the parent company. Within the group each counterparty/subsidiary will have individual limits based on their creditworthiness although the total placed with the subsidiaries will not exceed the limit of the parent company. Subsidiaries that do not satisfy the minimum credit criteria will not be included.
- 6.17 A number of counterparties are also approved by the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital for direct dealing. These counterparties are included on the approved list and dealing will be within agreed limits. Direct dealing with individual counterparties must be approved by the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital prior to investments being placed.

UK Banks - Ring Fencing

- 6.18 The largest UK banks were required by UK law to separate core retail banking services from their investment and international banking activities by 1 January 2019. This is known as “ring-fencing”.
- 6.19 Ring-fencing is a regulatory initiative created in response to the global financial crisis which improves the resilience of banks by changing their structure. In general, simpler, lower risk activities will be offered by a ring-fenced Bank (RFB), whilst more complex and riskier activities will sit within a non-ring-fenced bank (NRFB).

Foreign Banks

- 6.20 The Council will continue to use UK banks irrespective of the UK sovereign rating, however non-UK banks domiciled in countries with a minimum sovereign rating of AA+ will be considered for inclusion on the approved list, they must also meet the high rated lending criteria and have operations based in the UK.
- 6.21 A review of investment balance limits on individual countries is undertaken annually. The existing % limit per counterparty and credit rating requirements have been retained to ensure risk is minimised and security of the councils investments is maintained. Limits will be prescribed by the Link Asset Services creditworthiness list and limited to 365 days or less.

Each country will be limited to the maximum investment limit of £20m or 20% of the Council's total investments and individual counterparties will not exceed a maximum limit equal to 20% of total investments or £15m. A list of those countries with a minimum sovereign rating of AA+ is shown in Appendix 7.

Local Authorities

- 6.22 The Council invests with other Local Authorities on an ad hoc basis; each investment is considered on an individual basis and agreed by the Strategic Director, Resources and Digital, prior to funds being placed. Limits are detailed at Appendix 6.

Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) Considerations

- 6.23 The Council overarching Thrive strategy to work towards a better future for Gateshead residents and has individual policies to cover areas such as Public Health and Wellbeing and Climate Strategy.

The council currently consider credit ratings when investing, the agencies providing the ratings incorporate ESG risks alongside more traditional financial risk metrics when assessing counterparty ratings and as such ESG considerations are already incorporated to an extent.

The Council will continue to work with and follow the advice of its financial advisors when looking at ways in which to incorporate further ESG factors into their own assessment service.

Investment balances / Liquidity of investments

- 6.24 Creditworthiness of counterparties is considered prior to depositing funds. The maximum term for investments is 3 years. Longer term deposits will continue where the counterparty is deemed to be a low credit risk to ensure a good rate of return is maintained in the current market conditions. Deposits beyond 365 days will only be considered when there is minimal risk involved. With deposits of this nature there is an increased risk in terms of liquidity and interest rate fluctuations. To mitigate these risks a limit of £15m (20% of total investments whichever is the higher) has been set and a prudential indicator has been calculated (See Appendix 4). Such sums will only be placed with counterparties who have the highest available credit rating or other local authorities.
- 6.25 Deposits for periods longer than 365 days are classed as **non-specified investments** and this will increase the total limit of overall deposits in this classification to 25%.

Long-term Treasury Investments

- 6.26 Any long-term Treasury Investments (including pooled funds) are to be classed as commercial investments unless justified by a cash flow business case.

Non-Treasury Investments

- 6.27 The acquisition of share capital or loan capital in any body corporate is defined as capital expenditure under the Local Government Act 2003. Such investments will have to be funded out of capital or revenue resources and will be classified as 'non-specified investments'.
- 6.28 A loan or grant by the Council to another body for capital expenditure by that body is also deemed by regulation to be capital expenditure by the Council. It is therefore important for the Council to clearly identify if the loan was capital expenditure or if it is an investment made primarily to generate a financial yield. The latter will be assessed using the Council's Investment Framework.
- 6.29 The Council will ensure that all the organisation's investments are covered in either the Capital Strategy or Investment Strategy, and will set out, where relevant, the organisation's risk appetite and specific policies and arrangements for non-treasury

investments. It will be recognised that the risk appetite for these activities may differ from that for treasury management.

Commercial Investments

6.30 To date the Council have not entered into any non-treasury investments which are purely to generate a commercial return, neither are there any plans to consider entering into non-treasury investments solely or primarily to obtain a revenue return. However, if an opportunity to do so arose the long-term financial impact and the risks inherent to the scheme would be assessed as part of the due diligence process. Where the size of the investment or the risk of the investment required external advice, this will be obtained. Any potential investment entered for a commercial return will require prior Cabinet approval.

6.31 The Council does not invest for solely commercial reasons or to generate income to support the revenue budget. Any capital investment entered into to deliver service objectives and/or the placemaking role of the local authority is monitored and reported in line with the Capital Strategy. Capital investments are assessed in terms of their contribution to deliver the following objectives:

- Health and Housing
- Economy
- Poverty and Equality
- Climate Change
- Transport

Further information can be obtained from the Council's Capital Strategy at the following link [Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29](#)

6.32 The Council maintains a schedule setting out a summary of existing material investments, subsidiaries, joint ventures and liabilities including financial guarantees and the organisation's risk exposure, which is attached at Appendix 8.

Internal Investment Strategy

6.33 The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital will monitor the interest rate market and react appropriately to any changing circumstances.

6.34 The Council takes the view that bank base rate is forecast to gradually decrease over the next few years. Bank rate forecasts for financial year ends are 2023/24 5.25%, 2024/25 3.75%, 2025/26 3.00% and 2026/27 3.00%.

6.35 The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK are weighted to the downside. This is based on the Bank of England's forecast that the UK's economic growth would remain slow to subdued rates. Although reduced from the higher rates seen in the previous 12 months inflationary pressure on the economy will continue, with inflation rates in excess of bank targets and expected to remain above target for a prolonged period.

6.36 The balance of risks to increases or decreases in Bank Rate and shorter term PWLB rates are also weighted to the downside.

Investment Risk Benchmark

- 6.37 The Council uses the Sterling Overnight Investment Rate (SONIA) 3-month rate as a benchmark to assess the investment performance of its investment portfolio. SONIA is based on actual transactions and reflects the average of the interest rates that banks pay to borrow sterling overnight from other financial institutions and other institutional investors.

The Council is also a member of the Link Asset Services investment benchmarking Group who meet semi-annually. As a member the council receives quarterly reports on comparative performance with other members of the group and the wider Link Asset Services client base. The benchmarking return for the group is a reasonable target for the Council, which allows the relative risk appetite to be considered as part of the benchmark.

End of year investment report

- 6.38 By the end of September each year Council will receive a report from Cabinet on its investment activity as part of its annual treasury report.

Policy on use of external service providers

- 6.39 The Council currently uses Link Asset Services as its external treasury management advisers.
- 6.40 It is recognised that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the Council at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.
- 6.41 It is also recognised that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

Training

- 6.42 The CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires the Section 151 Officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management.
- 6.43 The council will carry out the following to monitor and review knowledge and skills:
- Prepare tailored learning plans for treasury management officers and board/council members.
 - Require treasury management officers and board/council members to undertake self-assessment against the required competencies.
 - Have regular communication with officers and board/council members, encouraging them to highlight training needs on an ongoing basis.
- 6.44 The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.

Scheme of Delegation

- 6.45 As required by the Guidance Notes for Local Authorities the Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation is detailed in Appendix 3, paragraph 1.3.

Role of the Section 151 Officer

- 6.46 As required by the Guidance Notes for Local Authorities the role of the Section 151 Officer in relation to treasury management is detailed below:

- Recommending the Code of Practice to be applied, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance;
- Submitting regular treasury management policy reports;
- Submitting budgets and budget variations;
- Receiving and reviewing management information reports;
- Reviewing the performance of the treasury management function;
- Ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function;
- Ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit; and
- Arranging for the appointment of external service providers;
- Preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management;
- Ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority;
- Ensure that the authority has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing;
- Ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the authority does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the authority to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources;
- Ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of any other financial guarantees and other long-term liabilities;
- Provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees;
- Ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by an authority; and
- Ensuring that the authority has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above.

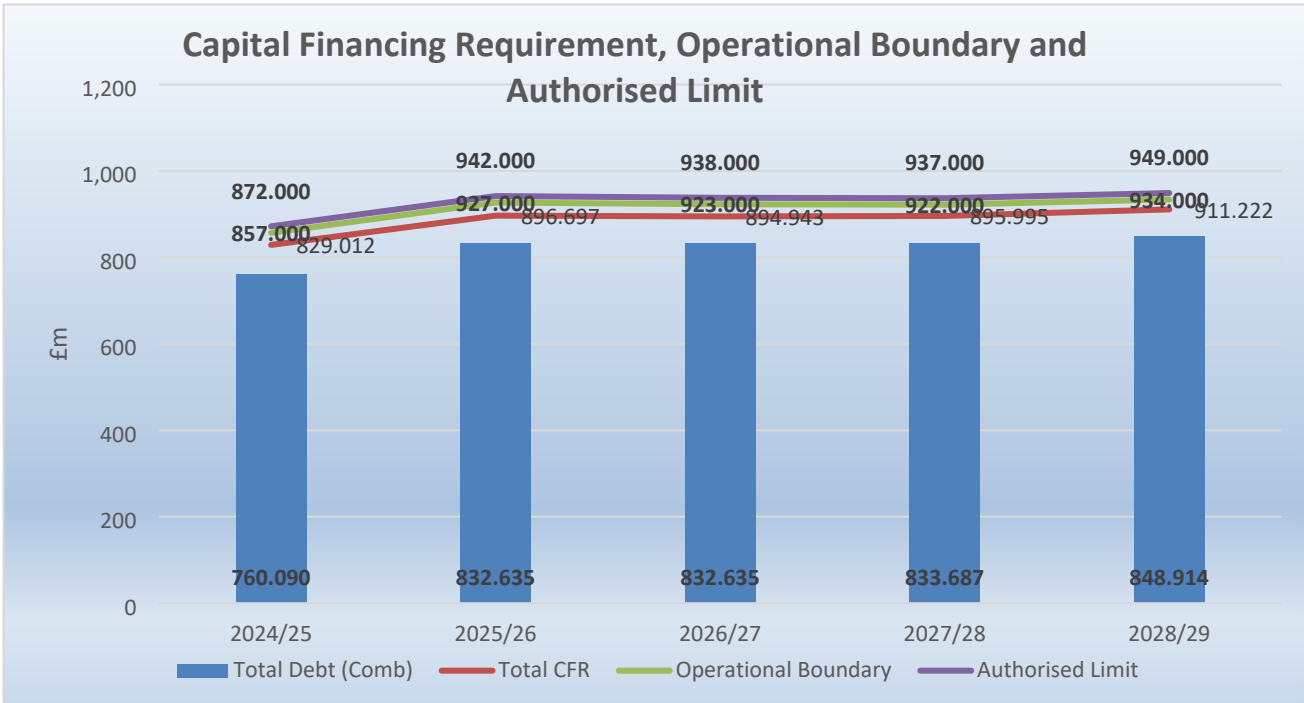
Prudential Indicators –Treasury Management

Authorised Limit for External Debt					
	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
Borrowing	872,000	942,000	938,000	937,000	949,000

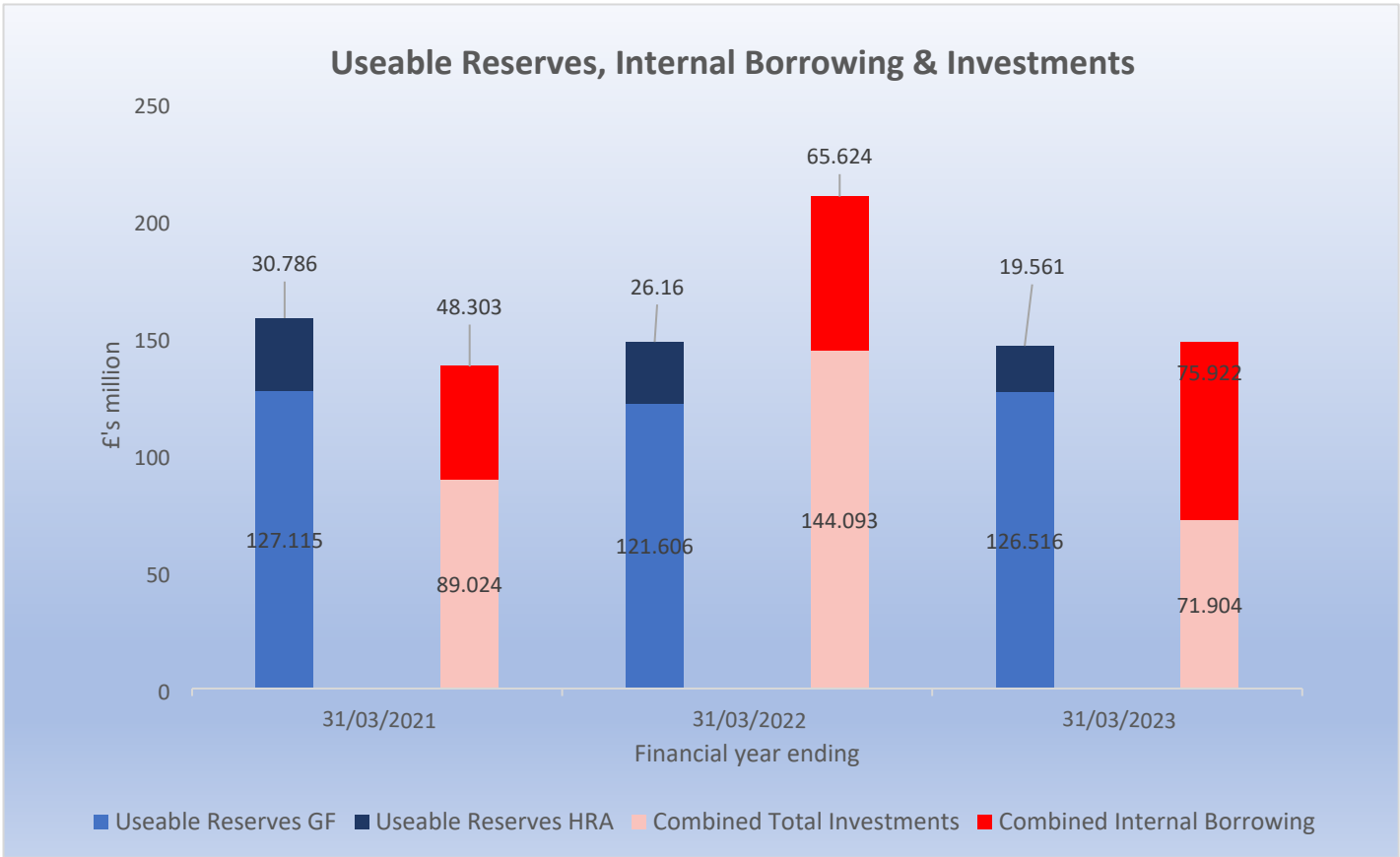
The Authorised Limit for External Debt sets the maximum level of external borrowing that the Council can incur. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short-term, but is not sustainable. It is the Council's expected maximum borrowing need with headroom for unexpected cashflow. The limit also provides scope for the Council to borrow in advance of need.

Operational Boundary for External Debt					
	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
Borrowing	857,000	927,000	923,000	922,000	934,000

The Operational Boundary for External Debt is based on the probable external debt during the course of the year. It is not a limit and actual borrowing could vary around this boundary for short times during the year. It acts as an early warning indicator to ensure the authorised limit is not breached. Similar, to the authorised limit it also provides scope for the Council to borrow in advance of need.

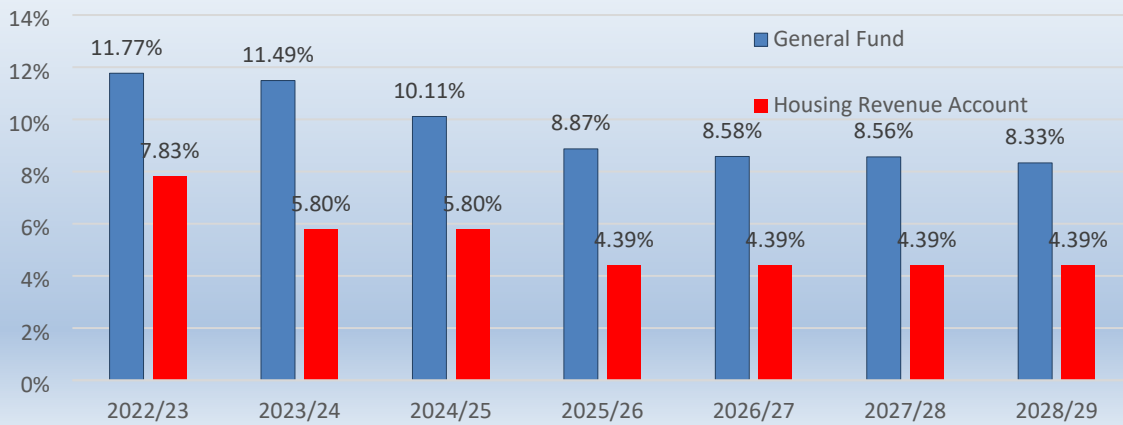


Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) shows the Council's capital borrowing requirement. Any gap between the CFR and the total debt highlights the potential to borrow further if the cashflow and treasury management position dictate.



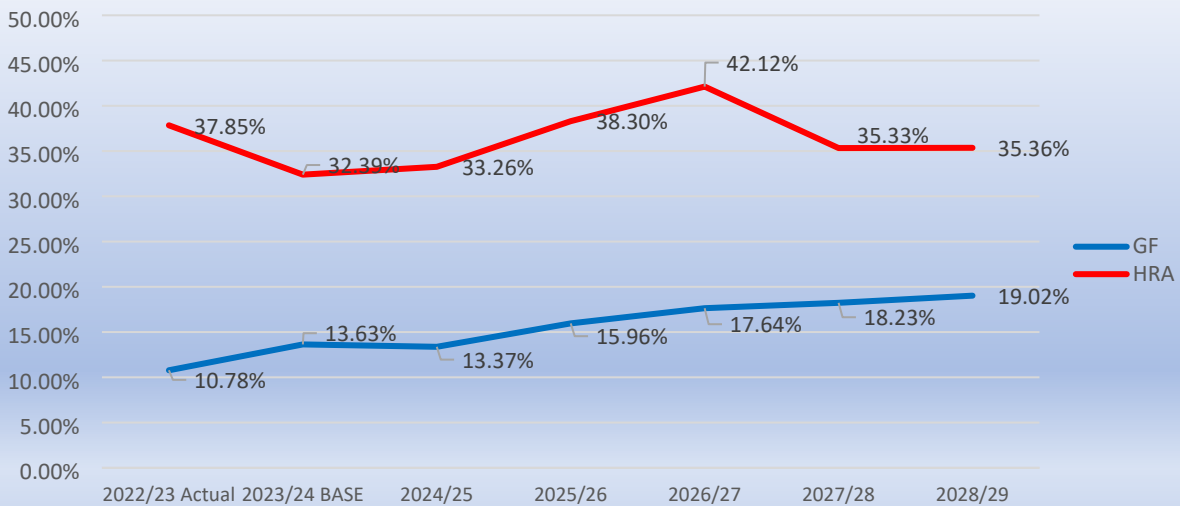
The internal borrowing position represents the level to which reserves and balances have temporarily been used to support borrowing positions and therefore the reserves will not be backed by cash in the bank.

Internal Borrowing as a % of Capital Financing Requirement



Internal borrowing as a percentage of the Council’s underlying borrowing requirement reflects the Council’s exposure to interest rate movements and the element of borrowing that is being undertaken at variable rates (i.e. rates equivalent to the lost interest on investment income).

Estimated Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream



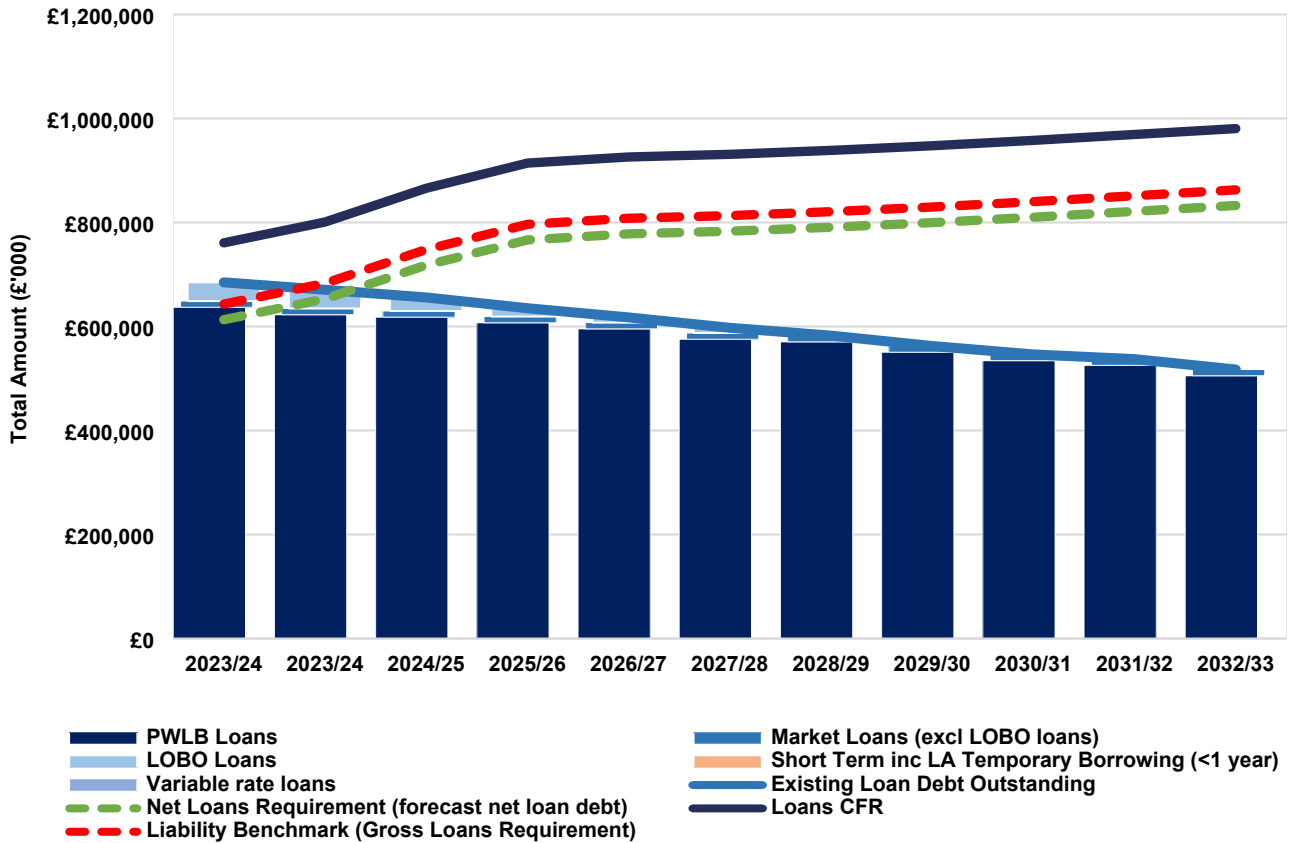
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream – financing costs must be met before any services have been delivered. Higher financing costs leaves less available to provide services.

Net Income from Commercial and Service Investment Income to Net Revenue Stream

	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2028/29
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income from financial investments	5,854	5,980	5,935	5,935	5,935	5,935
Income from assets held primarily for financial return	0	0	0	0	0	0
Investment management costs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other direct revenue costs of investments	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL NET COMMERCIAL & SERVICE INCOME	5,854	5,980	5,935	5,935	5,935	5,935
Taxation, Precepts	110,476	117,473	117,473	117,473	117,473	117,473
Non-specific grant income	73,872	91,005	91,005	91,005	91,005	91,005
NET REVENUE STREAM	184,348	208,478	208,478	208,478	208,478	208,478
Ratio of net income from commercial & service investments	3.18%	2.87%	2.85%	2.85%	2.85%	2.85%

This Indicator shows the financial exposure of the Authority to the loss of its non-treasury investment income.

Liability Benchmark



The Liability Benchmark is effectively the Net Borrowing Requirement of a local authority plus a liquidity allowance. It is calculated by deducting the amount of investable resources available on the balance sheet (reserves, cash flow balances) from the amount of outstanding external debt and then adding the minimum level of investments required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

Treasury Indicators

Upper and Lower Limits for the Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowings		
	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	16%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	16%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	22%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	23%	0%
10 years and within 20 years	17%	0%
20 years and within 30 years	21%	0%
30 years and within 40 years	46%	0%
40 years and within 50 years	39%	0%
50 years and above	13%	0%

Upper and Lower Limits for the Maturity Structure of Variable Rate Borrowings		
	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	18%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	13%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	13%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	13%	0%
10 years and within 20 years	13%	0%
20 years and within 30 years	13%	0%
30 years and within 40 years	13%	0%
40 years and within 50 years	13%	0%
50 years and above	13%	0%

Upper Limit on Amounts Invested Beyond 365 Days					
	2022/23 £000	2023/243 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2029/27 £000
Investments	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000

Specified Investments (All Sterling Denominated)

Investment type	Share/ Loan Capital	Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months	Security / Minimum Credit Rating	Capital Expenditure	Circumstance of use	Maximum period
Term deposits with the UK Government or with UK local authorities (i.e. local authorities as defined under Section 23 of the 2003 Act) with maturities up to 365 days.	No	Yes	High security although LA's not credit rated. <i>See appendix 3 Creditworthiness Policy</i>	No	In-house	365 days
Term deposits with credit-rated deposit takers (banks and building societies), including callable deposits with maturities up to 365 days.	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum credit rating <i>See appendix 3 Creditworthiness Policy</i>	No	In-house	365 days

<p>Short Term Money Market Funds The majority of these funds are instant access and therefore do not have a maturity date.</p>	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum credit rating <i>See appendix 3 Creditworthiness Policy</i>	No	In-house	The investment period is subject to liquidity and cash flow requirements. It is assumed that funds are placed overnight and will be returned and reinvested the next working day (although no actual movement of cash may take place).
<p>Standard Money Market Funds and Ultra Short Duration Funds 3-day notice cash plus fund These funds require three-day notice for withdrawals and therefore do not have a maturity date.</p>	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum credit rating <i>See appendix 3 Creditworthiness Policy</i>	No	In-house	The investment period is subject to liquidity and cash flow requirements. Notice required is three days, however it is the intention to leave these funds for terms longer than other money market funds to achieve greater returns.

Non-Specified Investments (All Sterling Denominated)

Investment type	(A) Why use it (B) Associated risks	Share/ Loan Capital	Repayable/ Redeemable within 12 months	Security / Minimum credit rating	Capital Expenditure	Circumstance of use	Max % of overall investments	Maximum maturity of investment
Rated deposit takers (banks and building societies) which do not meet the Council's "high" credit rating Page 17 of 19	(A) To improve ability to place smaller amounts (B) Greater risk than "high" credit rating counterparties but advance warning by rating agency of potential problems. The Council has fully considered this investment category and set appropriate investment and maturity limits in order to minimise risk.	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum Credit rating <i>Minimum:</i> Long term A- Short term F1	No	In-house	Total not high rated deposits as a proportion of total investments 25%	6 months (but set on an individual counterparty basis)
Term deposits with UK Government, UK Local Authorities or credit rated banks and building societies, with maturities over 1 year	A) To improve the ability to "lock in" at times of high interest rates to secure a higher return over a longer period should rates be forecast to fall. B) Lower liquidity and greater risk of adverse interest rate fluctuations. The Council has fully considered this investment category and set appropriate investment and maturity limits in order to minimise risk.	No	No	Secure Varied minimum credit rating	No	In-house	Total investment per Counterparty 20%	3 years

Certificate of Deposits issued by banks and building Societies	<p>A) Provides additional counterparties, as many banks do not want to take fixed term cash deposits.</p> <p>B) Credit risk could change but if adverse there is an option to sell onto a secondary market.</p> <p>The Council has fully considered this investment category and set appropriate investment and maturity limits in order to minimise risk.</p>	No	Yes	Secure Varied minimum Credit rating <i>Minimum:</i> <i>Fitch</i> <i>Long term</i> <i>A-</i> <i>Short term</i> <i>F1</i>	No	In-House	20%	12 months (but set on an individual counterparty basis)
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Maximum Maturity Periods and Amounts

Organisation	Criteria	Max Amount*	Max Period
High Rated (Specified Investments – High rated and up to 365 days see Appendix 5)	Minimum Fitch rating of F1 short term and A long term. Moody's minimum rating of P1 short term backed by A2 long term and S&P minimum rating of A1 short term and A long term.	£20m	3 years
Foreign Banks	Must meet the minimum high rated criteria above and have a minimum sovereign rating of AA+	£20m country limit (£15m individual counter party limit)	365 Days
Non-High Rated	Minimum Fitch rating of F1 short term and A- long term. Moody's minimum rating of P1 short term backed by A3 long term and S&P minimum rating of A1 short term and A- long term.	£15m	6 months
UK Local Authorities	(i.e. local authorities as defined under Section 23 of the 2003 Act) Each investment is considered on an individual basis	£10m	3 years
Short-Term Money Market Funds (Same day settlement)	AAA MMF fund rating or equivalent with assets >£1bn	£10m	Overnight
Standard Money Market Funds and Ultra-Short Duration Funds (Trade plus 3-day settlement)	AAA fund rating or equivalent, backed up with lowest volatility rating (S1) or equivalent with assets > £0.75bn	£10m (excludes any compound interest)	3 days

* Restricted to a maximum of either 40% if government backed or 20% of total investments if non-government backed counterparty.

Foreign Banks

This list is based on those countries which have non-UK sovereign ratings of AA+ or higher at 14/02/2024.

AAA

- Australia
- Denmark
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland

AA+

- Finland
- Canada
- U.S.A.

Non-Treasury Management Investments

Investment	Latest Balance 31 January 2024	Notes
Long term loans to Keelman Homes	£15,661,864	Loan Balance at 31/01/2024
SCAPE System Build Ltd	£784,000	17% Shareholding in SCAPE
Newcastle International Airport	£11,661,242	13.33% shareholding in Newcastle Airport
Loan to Citizens Advice Bureau	£425,807	Loan Balance at 31/01/2024
Newcastle International Airport Long Term credit notes	£13,152,711	Loan notes - interest paid bi-annual Principal repayment due 2032
Loans to North Music Trust	£76,070	North Music Trust - Balance at 31/01/24
Loan to NE Credit Union	£107,303	Loan Balance at 31/01/2024
Loans to Gateshead Energy Company	£5,500,000	Loan Balance at 31/01/2024
Loan to NGI	£100,000	Loan Balance at 31/01/2024

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

Information Security Framework and Policy

Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is to recommend a new Information Security Framework and Associated IT Security Policies and the approach to implementing the new framework and associated policies.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- i. Approve the new IT Security Framework and Policy.
- ii. Approve the implementing the new framework and associated policies to safeguard the Councils Information Assets and Technologies.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Information Security Framework and Policy

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

Purpose of the report

1. To recommend to Cabinet and Council a new Information Security Framework and Associated IT Security Policies and the approach to implementing the new framework and associated policies.

Background

2. It is important that the Council has an IT Security Policy which identifies the requirements for all individuals accessing and using the Council's IT assets and resources (IT users) in order to preserve the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of systems and information used by the Council.
3. The IT Security Policy demonstrates the commitment of the highest level of leadership within the organisation to the ideals of the policy, therefore providing direction for the rest of the employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders
4. The landscape of IT technologies and services is forever changing and at a rapid pace and, whilst the old policy has served its purpose, it has become outdated and does not cover some of the technologies we've come to heavily rely on, such as cloud services.
5. The Council's Cyber Security Group have been working on creating the new IT Security Policy and associated policies for the past 18 months.

Proposal

6. It is proposed that the council implement a new IT Security Framework for all IT Users consisting of a main IT Security Policy and eight sub policies relating to specific activities or functions within the council. The sub policies are as follows
 - Acceptable Use Policy
 - Personnel Security Policy
 - Remote working Security Policy
 - Email Policy
 - SMS Policy
 - Social Media Policy
 - IT Asset Management Policy
 - Information Classification Policy
7. The new policies can be found in appendix 2.

8. Additional policies will be added to the framework when technologies change. Other new or updated policies also exist but they do not apply to all IT users.
9. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified in the new IT Security Policy, with Information Asset Owners (Service Directors) having specific responsibilities. A dedicated learning package will be available to Service Directors to ensure they understand their responsibilities.
10. An awareness programme will take place using the Intranet, Council Info and employee forums and focus groups to communicate the changes to all stakeholders.
11. All policies will be reviewed on an annual basis (or earlier should changes to technology or legislation necessitate this) by the Councils Cyber Security Group.
12. IT users will be asked to accept the policies on an annual basis using a policy acceptance application.

Recommendations

13. That Cabinet recommends Council to approve the new IT Security Framework and Policy as set out in appendix 2 and the approach to implementing the new framework and associated policies to safeguard the Councils Information Assets and Technologies.

For the following reasons

To preserve the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the councils information assets enabling services to deliver the Thrive Agenda and the Council Plan, and protecting those whose information we hold.

CONTACT: Joanne Morgan Extension 3716

Policy Context

1. Confidentiality, integrity and availability of the council's information systems and assets is crucial in enabling services to support the delivery of the Council's Thrive agenda and the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028.

Background

2. An IT Security Policy identifies the requirements for all individuals accessing and using an organisation's IT assets and resources and is a model of the organisation's culture, in which rules and procedures are driven from its employees' approach to their information and work.
3. An organisations IT Security Policy demonstrates the commitment by the highest level of leadership within the organisation to the ideals of the policy, therefore providing direction for the rest of the employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders
4. The objective of an IT Security Policy is the preservation of confidentiality, integrity, and availability (CIA) of systems and information used by an organisation's members.
 - Confidentiality - involves the protection of assets from unauthorised entities.
 - Integrity - ensures the modification of assets is handled in a specified and authorised manner.
 - Availability - is a state of the system in which authorised users have continuous access to said assets.
5. The IT Security Policy must be a living document that is continually updated to adapt with evolving business and IT requirements and in line with defence from evolving cyber security threats and risks.
6. An organisation's IT Security Policy will play a large role in its decisions and direction, but it should not alter its strategy or mission. Therefore, it is important that any policy is drawn from the organisation's existing cultural and structural framework to support the continuity of good productivity and innovation, and not as a generic policy that impedes the organisation and its people from meeting its mission and goals.

Planned Changes

7. The landscape of IT technologies and services is forever changing and at a rapid pace and, whilst the old policy has served its purpose, it has become outdated and does not cover some of the technologies we've come to heavily rely on, such as cloud services.
8. The Council's Cyber Security Group have been working on updating the old IT Security Policy for the past 18 months.
9. The group consists of officers from IT Services, Legal and Demographic Services, Human Resources and Workforce Development, Internal Audit and Risk, Insurance and Communications.
10. From a very early stage, it was decided that we needed to break down the old Policy into a framework with a number of dedicated, bite-sized and easier to understand policies. This change to a framework subsequently also became an audit requirement.

Policy Structure

11. The Council's new Information Governance Framework sits above the Data Protection policy and this new IT Security Policy Framework.
12. The new IT Security Policy framework consists of the main IT Security Policy and currently eight sub policies, all relating to specific activities or functions within the Council.

Information Governance Framework	
Data Protection Policy	IT Security Policy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptable Use Policy Personnel Security Policy Remote working Security Policy Email Policy SMS Policy Social Media Policy IT Asset Management Policy Information Classification Policy

13. An additional Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy is also in draft and will be added to this Framework once complete.
14. At a minimum, each policy consists of the following sections:
 - Purpose** – Why the policy exists and what it aims to achieve.
 - Scope** – Who and what the policy applies to.
 - Policy Statements** – the actual declaration of intent of the Council
 - Responsibilities** – A list of responsibilities
 - Compliance** – confirmation that all employees are responsible for compliance with each policy
 - Non-Compliance** – confirmation that non-compliance will be deemed an intrusion attempt or a breach of security
 - Policy Acceptance** – All users are required to confirm that they have read and understood each policy
15. Other new or updated policies also exist but they do not apply to all users. For example, privileged user security policy, system owners policy, technical vulnerability management policy and more.

IT Security policy

16. **Purpose** - The purpose of this policy is to define the overarching cyber security requirements necessary to safeguard all council IT resources.
17. **Scope** - It covers all users who have been granted access to any council IT resource.
18. It does not replace any of the Council's legal or regulatory requirements
19. **Policy Statements** - The policy statements are the Council's high level declaration, written to cover all areas of IT security.
20. **Roles and Responsibilities** - Roles are required within the Council to provide clearly defined responsibilities and an understanding of how the protection of information is to be accomplished
21. We all have some IT Security responsibilities, either based on the service we work in, the working groups we're a member of, the sensitive information we have access to or simply because we have access to any Council digital resource. It is essential that these responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated throughout the business on a recurring basis.
22. The newly documented roles and responsibilities are perhaps the most important aspect of the new top-level IT Security Policy.
23. There are some very important roles and groups mentioned such as the Chief Executive, the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), Corporate Risk and Resilience Management Group, the Cyber Security Group, the Corporate Data Protection Group and more.
24. However, those who can have the biggest impact on the Council's entire Cyber Security posture at this moment in time are the Information Asset Owners - our service directors who are responsible for the Council's digital assets, both cloud-hosted and on-premise.
25. Some of these key areas of responsibility include:
 - Leading and fostering a culture that promotes good cyber security practices across their service.
 - Ensuring appropriate identity and access controls are implemented for their assets.
 - Understanding and addressing cyber risks to the asset, including vulnerability management, and providing assurance to the SIRO.
 - Ensuring that all applications, systems and services used to process data are appropriately maintained and supported at all times.
 - Understanding how and where data flows between their assets.
 - Ensuring that information governance policies and procedures are implemented across all digital assets including, classification and retention.
 - Appointing an appropriately knowledgeable System Owner for all applications and systems owned by the service.
 - Ensuring that an appropriate and tested business continuity framework (both strategic and operational) exists for all critical systems owned by the service
 - Ensuring that all third parties involved the processing of service data are aware of their roles and responsibilities

26. The Council's Cyber Security Group and IT Services are in the process of creating a dedicated learning package on the Council's Learning Hub, which aims to help Service Directors understand their responsibilities within these areas.
27. **Breaches of Security** – This section explains the reporting procedures as well as the action that might be taken in the event of a breach of policy. For consistency, all other sub-policies refer to these actions within their non-compliance sections.

Implementation

28. It is proposed that these changes are introduced on 1st April 2024

Consultation

29. The Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council, Corporate Management Team, Trade Unions and the Cyber Security Group have been consulted on the Framework and associated policies.
30. We will inform employees of the new policies via Council Info, Intranet and Learning Packages on the Learning Hub if the approach is endorsed.

Alternative Options

31. One alternative option could be to retain the current IT Security Policy, however this is not recommended as it would pose a significant risk to the Council in relation to an increased likelihood of a successful Cyber Attack or Data Loss/Breach.

Implications of Recommended Option

32. Resources

a) Financial Implications - The Strategic Director, Resources & Digital confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this report.

b) Human Resources Implications – There could be human resources implications arising from this report. Should an employee fail to adhere to the policies, disciplinary action could result, following a formal investigation.

c) Property Implications – There are no property implications arising from this report.

33. **Risk Management Implication** – Introduction of the new IT Security Framework will reduce the risk of a successful cyber-attack or significant data breach/loss.
34. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.
35. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
36. **Health Implications** – There are no health implications arising from this report.
37. **Climate Emergency & Sustainability Implications** – There are no climate change implications arising directly from this report.

38. **Human Rights Implications** - Human rights implications could arise from this report. Should an investigation be required into an individuals alleged misuse of Council IT resources investigators could be subjected to personal information. This is clearly documented in the IT Security Policy and strict processes exist to ensure investigations take place in line with Council policy.
39. **Ward Implications** - There are no ward implications arising from this report.

Gateshead Council

Information Technology (IT) Security Policy

Introduction by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive

The Council recognises the growing demand for digital services and technologies which prompts important opportunities for the Council. Information held within IT systems and cloud services is a key resource and we must make sure that it is used appropriately and securely, and that the Council is protected against potential security threats.

This revised IT Security Policy along with its related sub policies sets out the Council's approach to cyber security and aims to support the Council's wider commitment to managing threats and opportunities as set out in its Corporate Risk Management Policy. It is intended that this policy will help councillors and employees to understand the risks and implications of using IT resources and their responsibilities in relation to its use.

It is important that we all take our responsibilities seriously, as we want everyone to be able to work with the many types of technology available to the Council in a safe and secure environment. All employees are responsible for making sure that the policies are put into practice.

Please read this policy and all supporting sub policies to help ensure that the Council's data is securely protected in accordance with legislation such as the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Additional guidance relating to Information and Cyber Security can be found on the Intranet. If there is anything you don't understand, please talk to your line manager. We are sure that with the co-operation of everyone, this policy will improve cyber security throughout the Council.

Councillor Martin Gannon
Leader of the Council

Sheena Ramsey
Chief Executive

Purpose

The growing demand for digital services and technologies prompts important opportunities for the Council, but also leads to a greater “attack surface” that requires enhanced cyber security measures to minimise risks. Inconsistent management of IT resources has the potential to increase the risk of a cyber-attack or lead to the compromise of Council data.

The purpose of this IT Security Policy along with its supporting standards and guidelines, is to define the overarching cyber security requirement necessary to safeguard ALL IT resources and to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the information held therein.

In this policy the expressions “Council” or “Gateshead Council” includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Council’s IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Scope

This policy sits below the Council’s overarching Information Governance Framework and applies to all IT resource that stores or processes Council data.

For the purposes of this policy, IT resources can include but is not limited to user accounts, end-user devices, systems, applications, networks, cloud resources, printers, telephones and customer facing web services.

This policy is mandatory for all persons who have been granted access to any Council IT resources.

Legislation

Gateshead Council has an obligation to abide by all relevant legislation, all members of staff must abide by UK legislation relevant to information security including:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Electronic Communications Act 2000
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) Regulations 2000
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

All Service areas must also comply with any specific information protection standards relevant to Council business.

Definitions

A list of terms used throughout this policy are defined in within **Appendix A**.

Policy Statements

It is the policy of Gateshead Council to: -

- Develop and maintain appropriate policies, standards, procedures and guidelines to affect a high standard of cyber security, reflecting industry best practice.
- Implement human, organisational, physical and technological security controls to preserve the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its IT resources and the information held therein.
- Maintain a thorough understanding of the IT resources we manage, and what business need they support.
- Maintain a strong and thorough vulnerability management programme covering all IT resources.
- Utilise appropriate identity and access mechanisms for all IT resources.
- Maintain an Information and Cyber Security awareness programme across all users with access to IT resources.
- Monitor, record and log activity on the Council's network and use of its IT resources.
- Rapidly detect and determine the cause of any breach of security and aim to minimize damage to IT resources should any such incident occur.
- Only use supported IT resources to store or process Council information.
- Work closely with the suppliers of our products, systems and services to help improve security across our supply chain.
- Comprehensively assess and manage cyber risks to safeguard IT resources and the information held therein. This includes the continuous review and improvement of Cyber security controls.
- Comply with all relevant laws and regulations.

Roles & Responsibilities

CEO

The Chief Executive has overall accountability for information governance.

SIRO

The SIRO is a Senior Leadership Team member responsible for managing information risk at the highest level. Key responsibilities are to:

- Oversee the development of information governance policies and information risk management strategy
- Ensure that the Council's approach to information risk is effective, in terms of resource, commitment and delivery
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the necessity for information governance and the risks affecting the Council's information.
- Provide a focal point for managing information risks and learning from incidents
- Prepare an annual information risk assessment for the Chief Executive to be included in the Annual Governance Statement

Information Governance Board

The Information Governance Board provides overall direction and leadership for information governance arrangements. The Board is chaired by the SIRO, who is supported by professional and business leads. Key responsibilities are to:

- Lead and influence the direction of information governance
- Provide overall strategic direction and alignment of information governance with other organisational change work

- Work collaboratively to ensure successful information governance delivery
- Ensure that information governance is appropriately resourced
- Own the resolution of information governance issues, risks and decisions.

Audit and Standards Committee (Risk Management Assurance)

The Audit and Standards Committee is the principal interface with Councillors for the purposes of supporting and monitoring the Council's risk management arrangements. The Committee receives quarterly reports on the Council's performance in relation to risk management and this provides an opportunity for challenge and discussion.

Cyber Security Group

The Cyber Security Group is responsible for agreeing the most appropriate technical controls to implement across Council managed systems and devices:

- To meet legal compliance requirements
- For compliance with external standards
- In line with internal information management policies
- Following an incident review
- In line with Cyber Security best practice

The Group will also assist services throughout the Council with their own Cyber Security responsibilities for non-Council managed systems and devices. This may include assistance with:

- Cyber risk management requirements
- Incident management
- Appraisal of corporate systems
- Penetration testing and mitigation requirements of corporate systems

Corporate Risk and Resilience Management Group

The Corporate Risk and Resilience Management Group is an officer group consisting of the central risk management function, all Risk and Resilience Co-ordinators and representatives from the Council's Corporate Resilience Planning Team and IT Services. As part of its role and remit the group will assist with the comprehensive assessment and management of cyber risks to safeguard IT resources and the information held therein.

Corporate Data Protection Group

The purpose of the Corporate Data Protection Group (CDPG) is to ensure cross-council compliance with data protection obligations. The CDPG is to demonstrate accountability for the data protection principles which the Council must follow when processing personal data. As data protection is the responsibility of every employee of the Council, the CDPG will ensure that the key data protection principles are applied across the organisation. The role of the Corporate Data Protection Group is to:

- ensure that the Council's information governance framework is complied with
- ensure that the Council's approach to handling personal data is reflective of national standards and is communicated to all staff and made available to the public
- ensure the recommendations of the Information Governance / Data Protection internal audit are fulfilled
- offer support, advice and guidance concerning Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Subject Access issues within the Council
- monitor the Council's information handling activities to ensure compliance with law
- monitor reviews/audits relating to information governance and adherence/development to relevant

- review and discuss lessons learnt from data breach incidents to ensure the risk of future incidents is mitigated.

Information Asset Owners

Information Asset Owners are Service Directors responsible for ALL information assets including digital assets (cloud hosted and on-premise) and assessing, controlling and mitigating cyber risks in their service areas. Key responsibilities include:

- Leading and fostering a culture that promotes good cyber security practices across their service.
- Maintaining a thorough understanding of the IT resources used within their service and what business need they support.
- Ensuring appropriate identity and access controls are implemented for their assets.
- Understanding and addressing cyber risks to the asset, including vulnerability management, and providing assurance to the SIRO.
- Ensuring that all applications, systems and services used to process data are appropriately maintained and supported at all times.
- Understanding how and where data flows between their assets.
- Ensuring that information governance policies and procedures are implemented across all digital assets including classification and retention.
- Appointing an appropriately knowledgeable System Owner for all applications and systems owned by the service.
- Ensuring that there are handover processes in place should key parties leave.
- Ensuring that an appropriate and tested business continuity framework (both strategic and operational) exists for all critical systems owned by the service.
- Ensuring that all third parties involved the processing of service data, wherever located, are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Information Asset Assistants

Information Asset Assistants are operational members of staff nominated by Information Asset Owners. Key responsibilities include:

- Acting as a local contact for Cyber Security in their service area.
- Supporting the IAO in identifying and addressing cyber risks.

Internal Audit and Risk Management

Internal Audit and Risk provide assurance that information technology controls and procedures are operated in accordance with the policies, regulations and best practice.

Internal Audit is statutory service in the context of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2015. And the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards defines the role as: “Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes”

Risk management is one of the key systems within the Council and the risk management responsibilities are set out in the Council’s Financial Regulations.

Legal and Democratic Services

Legal and Democratic Services provide training and advice on data protection matters and Freedom of Information Act requests; they liaise with and advise senior management, individual users and line managers on relevant laws and regulations; assist in the development of data related policies and procedures, and advise on appropriate actions to take in the event of an actual or suspected breach data security.

The Council Data Protection Officer sits within Legal and Democratic Service.

Human Resources

Human Resources provides a range of services, relating to improving the employee experience for our people across the Council.

They work collaboratively and in partnership with every Service Director, their leadership teams, managers, our people and our recognised trade unions to improve every aspect of the employee life cycle taking both a tactical and strategic approach to transforming and continuously improving the people experience.

They ensure that cyber security is covered throughout the staff lifecycle with appropriate guidelines, policy and support for the workforce. This includes:

- Ensuring the Council has a policy and procedure in place in relation to recruitment including all relevant pre-employment checks
- Ensuring that staff are encouraged to speak up, to raise problems and voice new ideas.
- Encouraging staff at all levels to complete relevant training issued via Learning Hub.
- Ensuring that the Council has an appropriate Disciplinary Policy and Procedure which is made available to managers and staff.
- Overall ensuring in conjunction with HR Support and Payroll that there are procedures in place in relation to management of joiners, transfers and leavers.

IT Services

IT Services provide strategic planning, development, implementation and support of information and communication technology solutions for the council, schools and other key customers.

The Cyber Security team within IT Services implement the technical solutions required to assist with identifying vulnerabilities and securing the Councils on premise IT solutions, and work with services to ensure that the appropriate technical controls exist and are implemented for the cloud hosted solutions they may use to process and store their data.

IT Services also ensure that physical environmental controls protect our datacentres to protect against tampering, fire, flood and theft.

Corporate Communications

The Corporate Communications team plays a key role in managing and overseeing the council's reputation - both on a local, regional, and national scale.

The team provides a professional communications service to all council service areas and partner agencies to ensure that Gateshead residents, businesses, colleagues, and the media are provided with accurate and up-to-date information about council services, facilities, and policies.

The Corporate Communications team is responsible for:

- handling media enquiries from local, regional, and national newspapers, television, and radio stations
- providing advice on media issues
- issuing press releases
- providing professional help and advice to officers and councillors
- conducting daily media monitoring, including social media
- creating and managing a wide range of marketing campaigns
- graphic design
- internal communication to colleagues through a range of internal channels
- producing the Council's main print and digital publications, including Council News and Gateshead Now

System owners

System owners are responsible for ensuring that the controls identified in this policy and the IT System Owner Policy are implemented at a level appropriate for the risks to the system and the information it processes.

Line managers

Line Managers are responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy and all other relevant policies within the business areas for which they are responsible
- Ensuring that all employees who report to them are made aware of and are instructed to comply with this policy and all other related policies
- Ensuring any risks arising from the use of the Council's IT resources are managed in accordance with the [Corporate Risk Management Policy](#).
- Consulting with the Human Resources and Workforce Development in relation to appropriate procedures to follow when a breach of this policy has occurred
- Consulting with the Legal and Democratic Services and IT Services in relation to the appropriate actions to be taken when an actual or suspected breach of data security has occurred.

Users

Each user is responsible for:

- Complying with the terms of this policy and all other relevant policies, standards, procedures, regulations, and applicable legislation
- Completing all information and cyber security awareness training within the given timescales
- Respecting and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the information they have access to at all times
- Reporting all suspected misuse and breaches of this policy to their line manager immediately. If it is not appropriate to raise with the line manager the Council has a [Whistleblowing policy](#) in place that can be used.
- Reporting all actual or suspected breaches of data security to their line manager, [Legal and Democratic Services](#) and [IT Services](#) immediately.

Logging and Monitoring

The Council reserves the right, consistent with the relevant legislation listed within the policy to exercise control over IT resources and to monitor their use to ensure efficient operation, to detect misuse and to supply evidence if required, for use in disciplinary, legal proceedings, as a response to Freedom of Information requests or any other matter as deemed appropriate and necessary.

By using any Council IT resource or by accessing any Council system users accept that all use may be monitored.

Breaches of Security

Any individual suspecting that there has been or is likely to be a breach of data security must inform their line manager who must inform Legal and Democratic Services, HR and IT Services immediately. They will advise the individual and their line manager on what action should be taken.

Users should also be aware that they can use the Council's [whistleblowing](#) procedures to raise a concern if the concern they want to raise presents a danger, risk, malpractice or wrongdoing which affects others .

The Council reserves the right to take such action as it deems appropriate should the terms of this policy, or any sub-policy, be breached. Any person found to have breached or attempted to breach this policy or any sub-policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the Council's Disciplinary Policy, up to and including summary dismissal.

Supporting Policies, Standards, Procedures and Guidelines

There are a number of supporting policies, standards, procedures and guidelines to accompany this IT Security Policy. All are published on the intranet

Review & Update

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually or more frequently, if necessary, to ensure that any changes to the Council's governance structure and business practices are properly reflected.

Policy Distribution & Awareness

This policy and all supporting policies, standards and guidelines will be issued via the Council's [My Policies Application](#).

Users are required to acknowledge that have read and understand this policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Policy Acceptance

Individuals requiring clarification on any aspect of the policy or any supporting policies, standards and guidelines and/or advice on general IT security matters should log a call via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.

By clicking Accept, employees acknowledge that have read and understand the above policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Appendix A

Authorisation / Authorised: Official approval and permission to perform a particular task.

Availability: Ensuring that authorised users have access to information and associated assets whenever required.

Breach of Data Security: The situation where sensitive data has been put at risk of unauthorised disclosure as a result of cyber compromise, the loss or theft of the data or, the loss or theft of a computer or storage device containing a copy of the data or through the accidental or deliberate release of the data.

Confidentiality: Ensuring that information is only accessible to those users who are authorised to access the information.

Council Network: The data communication system that interconnects different wired and wireless Local Area Networks (LAN) and Wide Area Networks (WAN).

Cyber risk: Any risk of financial loss, disruption, or damage to the reputation of the organisation from some sort of failure of its information technology systems or those of its partners/third parties.

IT resources: Includes all computer facilities and devices, networks and data communications infrastructure, cloud resources, telecommunications systems and equipment, internet/intranet and email facilities, software, information systems and applications, account usernames and passwords.

Information: Any data in an electronic format that is capable of being processed or has already been processed.

Information Asset Owner: The individual responsible for information assets within their service area. This is generally the service director.

Information Asset Assistant: The individual nominated by the Information Asset Owner to assist the Information Asset Owner with their responsibilities as Information Asset Owner

Cyber Security: The protection of IT services and devices we all use (systems, servers, laptops, computers, tablets, printers, portable storage devices and smartphones), and the services we access from theft, loss or damage.

Information Security: The preservation of confidentiality, integrity and availability of information (whether verbal, paper based or online).

Information System: A computerised system or software application used to access, record, store, gather and process information.

Integrity: Ensuring the accuracy and completeness of information and associated processing methods.

Line manager: The individual a user reports directly to.

Process / Processed / Processing: Performing any manual or automated operation or set of operations on information including:

- Obtaining, recording or keeping information

- Collecting, organising, storing, altering or adapting the information
- Retrieving, consulting or using the information
- Disclosing the information or data by transmitting, disseminating or otherwise making it available
- Aligning, combining, blocking, erasing or destroying the information.

Risk: The potential that a given threat will exploit vulnerabilities of an asset or group of assets and thereby cause harm to the organisation.

Third Party Commercial Service Provider: Any individual or commercial company that have been contracted by the Council to provide goods and/or services to the Council.

Threat: A potential cause of an incident that may result in harm to a system or organisation.

Users: Any individual using any of the Council's I.T. resources.

Gateshead Council

Acceptable Use Policy

Introduction

IT resources, such as PCs, laptops, tablet devices and smart phones offer new and exciting ways of working and engaging with our colleagues and citizens. However, we must also be aware that improper use can impact us, our colleagues, citizens, the Council's reputation and the public purse.

In this policy the expressions "Council" or "Gateshead Council" includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Councils IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Purpose

This Acceptable Use Policy aims to protect all users of the Council's IT resources and to minimise such risks by providing clarity on the behaviours required by Gateshead Council and its employees.

It sets a framework within which to conduct the Council's business and explains how we can achieve compliance with new business and technology requirements.

It also aims to ensure that all users understand their responsibility for the appropriate use of Gateshead Council's IT resources. Understanding this will help users to protect themselves and Gateshead Council's equipment, information and reputation.

Scope

This policy sits below the Council's overarching IT Security Policy and applies to all IT resources that stores or processes Council data.

For the purposes of this policy, IT resources can include but is not limited to user accounts, end-user devices, systems, applications, networks, cloud resources, printers, telephones and customer facing web services.

This policy is mandatory for all persons who have been granted access to any Council IT resource.

Definitions

A list of terms used through this policy are defined in within **Appendix A** of the overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Statements

All users are required to adhere to the IT Security Policy and all sub-policies.

This policy is a sub policy to the Council's IT Security Policy.

General principles

Users will:

- Be responsible for their own actions and act responsibly and professionally, following the Gateshead Council [Code of Conduct](#) while respecting the Council and fellow employees, suppliers, partners and citizens.
- Use IT resources and the information they hold in line with [Gateshead Council security and Information Management policies](#)
- Ensure any risks arising from the use of the Council's IT resources are managed in accordance with the [Corporate Risk Management Policy](#).
- Immediately report any breach of this Acceptable Use Policy to their line manager or Service Director who will then discuss the next steps with their nominated HR advisor.
- Be aware that they can use the Council's [whistleblowing procedures](#) to raise a concern if it is believed that someone is misusing council information or electronic equipment.
- Understand that both business and personal use of corporate IT resources will be monitored as appropriate.
- Undertake education and awareness on cyber security, including completing cyber security awareness modules via the Learning Hub in order to be able to understand, recognise, and report threats, risks and incidents.

Users will NOT:

- Undertake illegal activity, or any activity that could be harmful to Gateshead Council's reputation or jeopardise staff and/or citizen data, on any IT resource.

User IDs and passwords

Users will:

- Always protect usernames and passwords from disclosure.
- Create secure passwords following [best practice guidance](#).
- Always lock the screen when temporarily leaving devices that are in use.
- Always log out of all devices connected to the council's network when not in use for a period of time.
- Immediately report any suspected breach or attempted breach of their account to the IT Service Desk.

Users will NOT:

- Share their passwords with anyone, including IT Services.
- Log on to any council system using another user's credentials.
- re-use of passwords across multiple applications and services.

Managing and protecting information

Users will:

- Understand that they must adhere to the Council's Data Protection Policy in order to protect Council information.
- Be careful not to be overheard or overlooked in public areas when conducting Council business.

- Comply with the Councils [guidelines and procedures](#) for managing all Council information.

Users will NOT:

- Attempt to access Council data unless there is a valid business need that is appropriate to their job role.
- Provide information in response to any request where the requesters identity cannot be verified.
- Attempt to access, amend, damage, delete or disseminate another persons files, emails, communications, or data without the appropriate authority.
- Attempt to compromise or gain unauthorised access to any Council IT resource or the content it holds, or prevent legitimate access to it.

Personal use of Council IT

Users will:

- Understand that they are personally accountable for what they do online and with any IT resource.
- Understand that personal use of IT resources is only permitted in an employee's own time, when not on official duty and 'Clocked out' as per the Flexitime Working Scheme. Breaks taken in normal working hours, such as paid breaks, do not count as the employee's own time for personal use of Council equipment.
- Understand that the ability to store personal information (data related to employees that is not related their job) is only permitted within their personal drives (Z:\ Drive or OneDrive), and that Gateshead Council has the right to require the data be removed should it interfere with business activity or use.
- Ensure activities do not damage the reputation of Gateshead Council, its employees or citizens. This includes accessing, storing, transmitting or distributing links to material that:
 - Could embarrass or compromise the council in any way.
 - Is obtained in violation of copyright or used in breach of a licence agreement.
 - Can be reasonably considered as harassment of, or insulting to, others.
 - Is offensive, indecent or obscene including abusive images and literature.

Users will NOT:

- Misuse their official position, for example by using information acquired in the course of official duties to further their private interests or those of others.
- Trade or canvass support for any organisation while working on official premises or from any Council issued IT resource, whether it is for personal gain or on behalf of external bodies.
- Send messages or material that solicit or promote religious, political or other non-business related causes, unless authorised by the council.
- Provide unauthorised views or commitments that could appear to be on behalf of the council.
- Undertake any form of gaming, lottery or, betting.
- Use any type of applications and/or devices to circumvent management or security controls.
- Download software onto council devices, with the exception of council supplied tablet devices and smart phones where permitted from an official source and appropriately

licensed. This software must not compromise the performance or security of the device.

- Download music, video or other media-related files for non-business purposes or store such files on network drives.
- Attempt to download any attachment or click on any links from any personal webmail accounts on any Council IT resource.

Email/fax/voice communication

Users will:

- Comply with the council's email policy at all times
- Only use appropriate language in messages, emails, faxes and recordings. Threatening, derogatory, abusive, indecent, obscene, racist, sexist or otherwise offensive content will not be tolerated
- Be vigilant to phishing emails and know how to spot and [report suspicious emails](#).
- Only use your council email address for council business related activities and linked organisational activity (e.g. council discount schemes, Trade Union activity and other officially provided Internet links).
- Use their personal email address for personal activities including purchasing and selling of goods, internet banking and any other personal activity.

Users will NOT:

- Use their council email address for any personal use.
- Engage in mass transmission of unsolicited emails (SPAM).
- Alter the content of a third party's message when forwarding it unless authorised.
- Try to assume the identity of another user or create or send material designed to mislead people about who originated or authorised it (e.g. through misuse of scanned/digital signatures).

Websites and Social Media

Users will:

- Only access appropriate content when using council IT resources and not intentionally visit sites or news groups that are obscene, indecent or advocate illegal activity, as described in the [Web Filter guidance](#).
- Report any access to a site that should be blocked by our web filters to their line manager and to IT Services via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.
- Request a review following the online process for any website that is blocked but where a legitimate business need exists to access the site.
- Use social media appropriately by making themselves aware of the Council's Social Media Policy.
- Only use approved council social media accounts for official business and where appropriate, use council branding and a professional image or persona on such accounts.
- Be aware that their social media content may be available for anyone to see, indexed by Google and archived for posterity.

Users will NOT:

- Attempt to download any file types from any unknown or unreputable sources.

- Attempt to upload or store any council information on any none approved Cloud Service
- Input any council information including anything that is sensitive / personal information onto online forums, blogs or social networking sites.

Devices, systems and networks

Users will:

- Understand that the council permits only certain approved devices (such as managed Agile Devices) to connect to the Internet via WiFi or Ethernet. When doing so, the Remote Access Security Policy must be adhered to at all times.
- Understand that they are permitted to utilise personal hotspot (tethering) technologies via a council or personal mobile phone in order to wirelessly connect to the Internet for business purposes. However, please be aware that this may have incur additional charges.

Gateshead Council cannot be held liable for any additional data charges this may incur if tethering to a personal mobile device. Therefore, any use of a personal phone for this purpose is the individual's choice.

- Understand that all requests to use new software not currently approved by Gateshead Council must be subject to the Software Request process though [AssystNET](#). Note that this is not required when installing applications onto Android or iOS devices.
 - Contact [IT Services](#) if travelling outside of the UK and wishing to take council devices with them. Council devices, including smart phones, must only be taken outside the UK when required for official business and approved by your line manager. Gateshead Council may prohibit the carrying and use of council devices in certain countries.

Users will NOT:

- Connect any mobile devices (business or personal) by USB cable to any Council IT resource for any purpose including uploading and downloading files or charging.
- Use any personal wallpapers or screensavers.
- Store any Council information on any devices or application where the council's security controls have not been applied.
- Connect any non-council issued device to any council network other than those specifically provided for personal use such as Guest WiFi.

Physical Security

Users will:

- Be responsible for keeping all portable devices assigned to them safe and secure and will:
- Immediately contact the Service Desk via telephone on 433 3771 to report any lost portable device.
- Immediately report any damage of their equipment to their line manager and to the IT Service Desk via the relevant [AssystNET form](#).
- Protect council equipment appropriately when travelling e.g.laptops must always be carried as hand luggage.
- Never leave a portable device unattended in sight in parked vehicles or hotel rooms

- Do not leave council equipment in parked cars overnight
- Without delay, return all council equipment when leaving Gateshead Council. Line Managers must complete all appropriate [exit procedures with leavers](#)

Compliance

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that users understand their own responsibilities as defined in this policy and continue to meet the policy requirements for the duration of employment with the Council. It is a line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where individuals fail to comply with this policy.

All Council employees are responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the security requirements defined in this policy and all other security policies. If for any reason, users are unable to comply with the policy, this should be discussed with their line manager in the first instance for resolution.

Non-Compliance

Any attempt to contravene or bypass any security measure documented within this policy, technical or written, will be deemed an intrusion attempt or a breach of security and will be dealt with in accordance with Gateshead Council's overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Acceptance

Individuals requiring clarification on any aspect of the policy or any supporting policies, standards and guidelines and/or advice on general IT security matters should log a call via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.

By clicking Accept, employees acknowledge that have read and understand the above policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Gateshead Council

Personnel Security Policy

Introduction

Personnel security is a system of policies, standards, procedures and technical measures, which combine to mitigate the corporate risk of legitimate access to Gateshead Council assets being exploited for unauthorised purposes. In particular, this policy serves to mitigate the “insider threat” and associated operational risks, the causes of which are inherent vulnerabilities arising from accidental, negligent or deliberate (malicious) actions by people working on the physical or IT estate.

In this policy the expressions “Council” or “Gateshead Council” includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Councils IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the Council’s requirement for personnel security controls and how and where they should be applied, and in so doing mitigate the corporate risk of unauthorised access to Council data, IT resources and physical premises.

Scope

This policy sits below the Council’s IT Security Policy and applies to all IT resources that stores or processes Council data.

For the purposes of this policy, IT resources can include but is not limited to user accounts, end-user devices, systems, applications, networks, cloud resources, printers, telephones and customer facing web services.

This policy is mandatory for all persons who have been granted access to any Council IT resources.

Definitions

A list of terms used through this policy are defined in within **Appendix A** of the overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Statements

All users are required to adhere to the IT Security Policy and all sub-policies.

This policy is a sub policy to the Council’s IT Security Policy.

The Council must ensure resources and processes are in place to deliver the requirements of this policy, in an integrated fashion where necessary, ensuring that dependencies are mapped and understood.

All individuals must comply at all times with procedures established under this policy.

Security awareness

To facilitate awareness and compliance the Council will maintain a Cyber Security awareness programme, the key principles of which are:

- all individuals must undergo IT induction upon commencement of their employment.
- all individuals must complete the annual Cyber Security E-Learning modules within the appropriate deadlines.
- all individuals should be made aware of and understand the contents and requirements of regular security awareness campaigns and communications, made available through all appropriate channels.
- all individuals can participate in the risk identification process, in accordance with the Council's corporate risk management arrangements.

Joiners, Movers and Leavers

To maintain best practice and support effective risk management, the Council shall ensure that simple procedures to enable all new starters - whether permanent or temporary staff or contracted resource - to have completed mandatory pre-employment checks (Baseline Personnel Security Standard) and to undertake the mandatory Cyber Security Awareness training upon entry to the Council and before they have access to any customer-facing systems or other sensitive data;

The Council shall ensure that it has IT systems, policies and simple and effective procedures in place to maintain a constant record of the numbers of individuals working on its physical or IT estate at all times, their usual work locations, and their working roles;

The Council shall ensure that it has policies, procedures, technical controls and monitoring capability in place and consistently implemented, such as to only allow those with specific access rights to operate on named IT systems and data sets: this is so as to provide assurance that access rights are being explicitly granted, rather than by default;

The movement of individuals between roles shall be understood and monitored to the extent that specific system, data and building access rights are granted in relation to a specific role and an individual's access needs relating to it;

Simple procedures shall be put in place, and monitored, such that anyone leaving the Council returns their IT equipment upon departure, and that access to IT systems, applications and data - wherever located - shall be removed at the same time;

All individuals and line managers must ensure compliance with the Joiners, Movers & Leavers Procedures and associated policies as defined.

Remote Working

Individuals who work remotely, or from home, including working from abroad, must ensure full agreement with their line managers and comply with the Council's Acceptable Use Policy, the Remote Working Security Policy and all other IT Security policies at all times.

Investigation and Disciplinary Measures

The Council shall put in place appropriate personnel policies and procedures to enable the timely investigation of any security incidents and/or allegations of internal fraud, contrary to the intentions of this policy.

The Council shall ensure that its personnel policies include effective and proportionate disciplinary measures, appropriately communicated to all individuals, such as to deter inappropriate behaviour under this policy.

Risk Identification

All employees are encouraged to be risk aware and to participate in the risk identification process. More information is available here: [Corporate Risk Management Policy and Information \(Gateshead Intranet\)](#)

Compliance

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that users understand their own responsibilities as defined in this policy and continue to meet the policy requirements for the duration of employment with the Council. It is a line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where individuals fail to comply with this policy.

All Council employees are responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the security requirements defined in this policy and all other security policies. If for any reason, users are unable to comply with the policy, this should be discussed with their line manager in the first instance for resolution.

Non-Compliance

Any attempt to contravene or bypass any security measure documented within this policy, technical or written, will be deemed an intrusion attempt or a breach of security and will be dealt with in accordance with Gateshead Council's overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Acceptance

Individuals requiring clarification on any aspect of the policy or any supporting policies, standards and guidelines and/or advice on general IT security matters should log a call via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.

By clicking Accept, employees acknowledge that have read and understand the above policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Gateshead Council

Remote Working Security Policy

Introduction

For security purposes, remote working is identified as creating, accessing, processing, storing or handling Council information outside of the Council's network or business locations.

In this policy the expressions "Council" or "Gateshead Council" includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Councils IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define risk controls including preventative measures that protect and secure Council information and assets when working from remote locations, including from home, when travelling, when on third party premises and so on.

The policy addresses a number of operational risks (threats) to Council data, or implications related to its use:

Threat	Description
Device Loss	Devices used to access, transfer or transport work files could be lost or stolen.
Data Theft	Sensitive corporate data is deliberately stolen and sold by an employee or unsanctioned third party.
Malware	Viruses, Trojans, worms, spyware, and other threats could be introduced via devices.
Compliance	Loss or theft of financial and/or personal and confidential data could expose the Council to the risk of non-compliance with various identity theft and privacy laws.
Excessive/inappropriate use of device	Excessive use of the device or use of Sim card when wi-fi is available will incur unnecessary costs for the council. Breakages and lost devices also incur a cost to the council.

The policy is designed to ensure that IT resources are used appropriately and do not incur any unnecessary cost for the council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Scope

This policy relates to the handling of any IT resource, all Council data (digital and paper based) including but not limited to:

- All types of computers e.g. Laptops\Desktops\MacBooks\Surface Pros
- Smart Devices e.g. Smartphones and Tablets
- Mobile Phones
- Digital cameras or recording devices
- Any other portable device, navigation system or a hybrid device that combines functionality

This policy applies to all Council employees and agents acting on their behalf (this includes students, temporary, casual, agency staff and volunteers working for or on behalf of the Council), who handle, process or store Council information remotely, and should be followed by individuals who:

- Work in remote environments on an ad hoc basis, e.g. mobile working within the community, in public areas, in hotels or using any public or private transport.
- Work from home with the appropriate approval and authorisation.

For the purposes of this policy;

- Managed Laptop refers to Council provided Dell Laptops
- Managed mobile device refers to a Council provided Apple tablet or phone or Android phone.
- BYOD refers to a device provided by the end user to access council systems and information i.e. Office 365
- Agile device refers to all of the above
- Citrix remote access refers to any device (both managed and BYOD) that provides access to the Council's Citrix infrastructure.
- Council paper records includes handwritten notes taking by Council officers during their working activities and any Council data printed into hard copy form

Definitions

A list of terms used through this policy are defined in within **Appendix A** of the overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Statements

All users are required to adhere to the IT Security Policy and all sub-policies.

This policy is a sub policy to the Council's IT Security Policy.

General statements

All users must consider the sensitivity, classification and value of information being handled when working remotely and should understand the policy requirements on protecting Council information and assets, managing them accordingly, including:

- Only using systems, applications, software and devices which are approved by IT Services to undertake Council business.

- Consideration of classification and sensitivity of the information being worked on and whether it is appropriate to do so outside of a secure Council working environment.
- Not allowing any unauthorised persons to access IT resources or any Council information, including family members.
- Consideration of the sensitivity/classification of information and privacy requirements where smart devices/listening assistants are/may be present and active. This includes (but not limited to) Alexa, Siri, Google and Microsoft Cortana.
- Storing Council information and assets securely, ensuring also the appropriate secure destruction of Council printed information.
- Remaining vigilant when using Council information to reduce the risk of mishandling data which could lead to a security breach, particularly where remote working is in practice.
- Ensuring that any Council data that needs to be kept permanently is transferred onto an appropriate location i.e. on the corporate network or within the Council's Office 365 Tenant.
- Informing IT Services of any future plans to work remotely overseas.

When in transit, staff must not leave any IT resource or sensitive information (whether hardcopy or electronic) unattended at any time. If travelling by vehicle, IT equipment and Council information must be stored securely, out of sight and removed whenever the user leaves the vehicle.

Any lost or stolen device, managed or unmanaged, used to access and/or store Council information must be reported to the IT Service Desk immediately.

Users must immediately report to their manager and the IT Service Desk any incident or suspected incidents of unauthorised data access, data loss, and/or disclosure of Council information.

Shared Devices

For Council provide shared devices;

- Passcodes must be administered by a nominated departmental officer and all devices must be signed in and out whenever issued/taken by an employee.
- Council information must not be stored locally.
- Council systems/information can only be accessed via Citrix using the user's unique username, password and MFA login.

Use of unmanaged devices to conduct Council business

Where Council systems are configured to permit access from unmanaged devices, user are;

- Responsible for the confidentiality and integrity of all Council information held on their unmanaged device.
- Required to enable and configure encryption for any unmanaged device used to access and/or store Council information.

- Responsible for the removal of any Council information held on their unmanaged device in accordance with the Councils Retention Policy and if they leave their current post of employment.

The Council reserves the right to inspect any Agile device to ensure the security / deletion of Council information at any time, even after termination of employment with the Council.

Data Usage

SIM Card data must not be used for any personal use of IT resources when working remotely.

Users understand that data usage on SIM cards provided by Gateshead Council is monitored to record sites accessed, times, dates, duration of access and so on in order to identify unusual usage patterns or other suspicious activity.

Responsibilities

Line Managers are responsible for, and must ensure that:

- Employees are made aware of the relevant Security Policies and HR Policies which support working securely in remote locations.
- Equipment is appropriately authorised; Council assets are accounted for, and a record maintained prior to issue and use of all Council approved devices.
- Employees are made aware of the operational risks often associated with remote working and any additional service specific controls or procedures that must be followed. Examples of risks include:
 - the loss or theft of IT equipment or sensitive and personal data.
 - the inadvertent or deliberate disclosure of sensitive, operational information.
 - unsecured storage of information and user credentials, such as username and passwords.
 - tampering, where IT equipment/information is left unattended.

Users must always:

- seek line management approval, prior to undertaking any type of remote working, including hybrid working and travelling for official business outside of the UK, this list is not exhaustive.
- take personal responsibility to understand and comply with relevant Council security policies where circumstances are relevant.
- Be risk aware and raise any risks with management in accordance with the corporate risk management policy.

Compliance

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that users understand their own responsibilities as defined in this policy and continue to meet the policy requirements for the duration of employment with the Council. It is a line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where individuals fail to comply with this policy.

All Council employees are responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the security requirements defined in this policy and all other security policies. If for any reason, users are unable to comply with the policy, this should be discussed with their line manager in the first instance for resolution.

Non-Compliance

Any attempt to contravene or bypass any security measure documented within this policy, technical or written, will be deemed an intrusion attempt or a breach of security and will be dealt with in accordance with Gateshead Council's overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Acceptance

Individuals requiring clarification on any aspect of the policy or any supporting policies, standards and guidelines and/or advice on general IT security matters should log a call via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.

By clicking Accept, employees acknowledge that have read and understand the above policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Gateshead Council

Email Policy

Purpose

This policy aims to help users understand what information can be sent using email and under what circumstances.

Whilst email may often appear to be an informal method of communication users should remember that it has the permanence of written communication, and as such users must ensure that it meets the same standards as other published documents.

In this policy the expressions "Council" or "Gateshead Council" includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Councils IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Scope

This policy sits below the Council's IT Security Policy and is mandatory for all persons who have been granted access to any Council email address.

Definitions

A list of terms used through this policy are defined in within **Appendix A** of the overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Statements

All users are required to adhere to the IT Security Policy and all sub-policies.

This policy is a sub policy to the Council's IT Security Policy.

When using email as a means of communication:

Users will:

- encrypt any email containing sensitive information by following the Council's approved encryption procedures.

Users will not:

- Keep emails that are construed as business records in any email mailbox. Business records should be transferred to the appropriate corporate filing system as soon as possible
- Use council emails to conduct any business other than that of the Council.
- Use a Council email address to subscribe to websites accessed for personal use.
- Enter into any commitment on behalf of the Council unless explicitly authorised to do so.
- Generate emails in such a way that it appears to come from someone else.

- Send or forward email that could be construed as obscene, sexually explicit, racist, defamatory, abusive, harassing or which describes violent or criminal acts or otherwise represents values or opinions that are contrary to Council policy. Employees who receive email of this nature should inform their line manager immediately.
- Read, delete, copy or modify the contents of any other user's mailbox without prior authorisation in writing from a Service Director, unless access has been delegated to that mailbox by the mailbox owner.

ALL emails and attachments sent and received using a Council email address are owned by the Council.

Monitoring of email

IT Services make every effort to ensure the privacy of user data, including email messages. Any information obtained by IT Services during the course of systems administration will be treated as confidential and will not be used or disclosed in the normal course of events. Where routine systems management or administration indicates a breach of Council policy or the law, IT Services will bring this information to the attention of the Council or other relevant authorities.

Where there is reason to suspect misuse, management are able to access detailed reports of this information.

Users should note that all emails are potentially subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Compliance

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that users understand their own responsibilities as defined in this policy and continue to meet the policy requirements for the duration of employment with the Council. It is a line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where individuals fail to comply with this policy.

All Council employees are responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the security requirements defined in this policy and all other security policies. If for any reason, users are unable to comply with the policy, this should be discussed with their line manager in the first instance for resolution.

Non-Compliance

Any attempt to contravene or bypass any security measure documented within this policy, technical or written, will be deemed an intrusion attempt or a breach of security and will be dealt with in accordance with Gateshead Council's overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Acceptance

Individuals requiring clarification on any aspect of the policy or any supporting policies, standards and guidelines and/or advice on general IT security matters should log a call via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.

By clicking Accept, employees acknowledge that have read and understand the above policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Gateshead Council

SMS and Instant Messaging Policy

Purpose

This policy aims to help users understand what information can be sent using SMS and instant Messaging (IM), this also includes chat messaging facilities built into some websites and applications when using a Council device or network.

The policy does not overrule any data protection legislation concerning the sharing of confidential, personal or sensitive data.

Whilst SMS/IM may often appear to be an informal method of communication users should remember that it has the permanence of written communication, and as such users must ensure that it meets the same standards as other published documents.

Note: This policy does not apply to emails, which are subject to their own policy.

Scope

The Policy applies to all Council employees and its representatives when using a Council device or the Councils network, including:

- Councillors
- Employees
- Agency staff
- Contractors
- Consultants
- Suppliers
- Service users
- Employees and committee members of organisations funded by Gateshead Council
- Employees and Principals of Partner Organisations

Definitions

A list of terms used through this policy are defined within **Appendix A** of the overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Statements

- The use of SMS/IM is appropriate when it is being used to give routine non-personal business information and reminders.
- Due to the difficulty in ensuring the recipient is entitled to any requested information, SMS/IM must not be used for any exchange of any personal or sensitive data which includes (but is not limited to) date of birth, bank account details, addresses, benefit details, payroll data, information on family members and health/medical information.
- SMS/IM should not be used as a substitute for email. SMS/IM should be used only for questions or announcements that are short and need to be communicated immediately.

- Limited private use of SMS/IM when using the Councils network or devices, is permitted.
- Only approved applications and services should be used to send Council business SMS/IM.
- All SMS/IM messaging application must be configured in such a way to allow the auditing of all SMS and IM messages. At a minimum, this must include, the source user, the recipient(s), the time sent and an indication of the content of the message. SMS/IM messages are subject to FOI / SAR requests and must be stored in accordance with the Councils Retention Policy.
- All SMS/IM messages which are sent via the Council's managed devices and services are recorded and remain the property of the Council.

Compliance

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that users understand their own responsibilities as defined in this policy and continue to meet the policy requirements for the duration of employment with the Council. It is a line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where individuals fail to comply with this policy.

All Council employees are responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the security requirements defined in this policy and all other security policies. If for any reason, users are unable to comply with the policy, this should be discussed with their line manager in the first instance for resolution.

Non-Compliance

Any attempt to contravene or bypass any security measure documented within this policy, technical or written, will be deemed an intrusion attempt or a breach of security and will be dealt with in accordance with Gateshead Council's overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Acceptance

Individuals requiring clarification on any aspect of the policy or any supporting policies, standards and guidelines and/or advice on general IT security matters should log a call via the dedicated [AssystNET](#) form.

By clicking Accept, employees acknowledge that have read and understand the above policy and consent to adhere to the rules outlined therein.

Gateshead Council

Information Classification Policy

Introduction

Information Classification is the process for classifying information into relevant sensitivity categories.

In this policy the expressions "Council" or "Gateshead Council" includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Councils IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

Purpose

This policy describes the way that the Council has decided to protect its information, and when to apply markings if required.

This policy describes how Gateshead Council classifies information assets to: ensure they are appropriately protected; support Council business and the effective exploitation of information.

Scope

This policy sits below the Council's IT Security Policy and applies to all IT resources that stores or processes Council data.

The policy applies to all information that the Council collects, stores, processes, generates or shares to deliver services and conduct business, including information received from or exchanged with external partners.

For the purposes of this policy, IT resources can include but is not limited to user accounts, end-user devices, systems, applications, networks, cloud resources, printers, telephones and customer facing web services.

This policy is mandatory for all persons who have been granted access to any Council IT resources.

Policy Statements

All Council information must be classified according to the following scheme to ensure that all persons know what level of security should be applied.

Personally Identifiable - Information that can be used to identify living individuals. These documents are likely to be bound by the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Organisationally Sensitive - This classification includes any information relating to activity that does not identify living individuals but may cause operational difficulties if the information became corrupted, compromised, unavailable or disclosed.

Public Information - Information that does not identify individuals or include organisationally sensitive information and has not been published. This information may be subject to access requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

Published information - Information that has been published, including classes of information identified in the Council's Freedom of Information Act publication scheme.

All Council systems and applications must be classified depending on the classification of data they store and/or process.

All emails, either automated or user generated, must be encrypted if they contain Personally Identifiable or Organisationally Sensitive information.

Personally Identifiable and Organisationally Sensitive information must not be shared over insecure channels.

Personally Identifiable and Organisationally Sensitive information must not be shared with any unauthorised parties.

Compliance

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that users understand their own responsibilities as defined in this policy and continue to meet the policy requirements for the duration of employment with the Council. It is a line manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where individuals fail to comply with this policy.

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Gateshead Council

IT Asset Management Policy

Introduction

This IT asset management policy provides a framework for the appropriate and effective management of IT equipment (hardware and software), from procurement to disposal, in Gateshead Council.

It defines responsibilities that relate to the implementation of this policy and is designed to ensure that IT assets are:

- Managed appropriately from the point of acquisition to the time of disposal in a way that is compliant with the Council's policies and regulatory obligations;
- Procured correctly in line with the Council's strategic plans;
- Registered within the IT Service's asset management system for tracking and auditing purposes;
- Supported and maintained throughout their lifecycle so that they deliver best value for the investment;
- Controlled effectively to protect the data and information that they store or transmit; and
- Administrated in a way that enables the identification of risk and ensures business continuity.

This policy does not stand in isolation and must be implemented in conjunction with the wider range of information security, procurement and financial related policies of the Council.

Purpose

This policy is produced in response to the operational risk associated with IT assets and aims to provide a clear instruction on the appropriate management of physical IT assets to help to ensure that the Council is meeting its legal, regulatory, contractual and licencing obligations.

In this policy the expressions "Council" or "Gateshead Council" includes any agents, third-party organisation or company that utilises Gateshead Council's IT infrastructure and solutions (e.g. Schools, Regent Funeral Service) or accesses and utilises information held by Gateshead Council.

This policy does not replace any legal or regulatory requirements, to which all Council employees and suppliers must comply.

Scope

This policy applies to all physical IT assets purchased by or on behalf of Gateshead Council.

A physical IT asset is defined as:

- All desktop and laptop computers (including docking stations);
- All monitors, printers, scanners and portable storage devices;
- All phones and mobile data devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets and other portable computing equipment);

- All meeting and public area IT equipment;
- System software, client applications and associated licences;
- IOT Devices such as sensors, meters and any device that collects or stores data
- Any other IT peripheral provided by the council.

This policy also applies to all IT equipment that forms part of the Council's IT infrastructure (servers, routers, firewalls, switches, access points and other network infrastructure etc.) and any equipment that electronically stores data on the Council's central file storage systems or transmits it across the network.

This policy applies to all employees and other agents of the Council, including agency staff, contractors, partner organisations, suppliers and customers, who request or hold IT equipment purchased by or on behalf of the Council.

Information asset management will be covered by a separate policy, in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation.

Definitions

A list of terms used through this policy are defined in within **Appendix A** of the overarching IT Security Policy.

Policy Statements

- The procurement of IT assets must be undertaken in consultation with and carried out by IT Services from inception. IT Services is responsible for engaging with the Council's Procurement Team and ensuring that the best procurement practice is followed as per the Council's policies and applicable legislation.
- Requests for individual IT assets must be submitted to IT Service via AssystNET or the IT Service Desk in accordance with current ordering processes and procedures.
- IT Services will assess requests for new and replacement IT equipment and, where possible, will fulfil them using existing equipment held within the centralised store.
- Requests for non-standard specialist IT equipment will be assessed by IT Services and approved via a business case through the appropriate channels, Total cost of the assets will be added to IT Services budget if the purchase is authorised by the relevant Service Director/Business Partner.
- For compatibility and efficiency reasons, IT assets will be issued on a 'fit for purpose' basis based on user roles and requirements.
- IT Services will not, without adequate justification, approve or proceed with the procurement of IT assets that do not comply with the requirements of the Council's plans, policies and standards.
- All IT equipment purchased by the Council will be stored in centralised asset management stores managed by IT Services when they have not been issued or are not in use.

- On behalf of the Council and in consultation with the Procurement Team, IT Services is responsible for identifying and managing sources and channels for the purchase of IT assets, utilising existing framework agreements whenever possible.
- All IT assets purchased by the Council are the property of Gateshead Council and will be deployed and utilised in a way that is deemed most effective for addressing the Council's needs and objectively demonstrates value for money. The budget for IT assets will be centralised and managed by the Resource and Digital Directorate on behalf of the Council, with the exception of Traded Services and Grant Funded equipment where separate arrangements apply.
- All IT assets purchased (excluding consumable items) will be registered in the asset management system and be asset tagged before being issued or put into use.
- The asset management system will be maintained by IT Services, to enable assets to be tracked, managed and audited throughout their entire lifecycle.
- IT assets will be appropriately administered and maintained to ensure they remain secure, fit for purpose and compliant with the licenced conditions of use during their entire lifecycle.
- End users are not allowed to install software on devices, unless authorised to do so. Requests should be made to the IT Service Desk to have additional software installed on to a device. Only approved software is permitted to be installed.
- End users must always contact the IT Service Desk if they need to move, reassign or return IT equipment.
- All IT assets that are no longer in use must be returned to the Council via the IT Service Desk for redeployment. This includes where the asset was purchased using specific service-related funds.
- In order to ensure the confidentiality of information, any IT asset that has been used to process or store personal or sensitive information will be 'wiped' by IT Services before being reissued and must go through a physical disposal and destruction process at the end of its useful life as defined by the IT Asset Disposal Policy.
- The management of IT assets must comply with this policy. Breach of this policy may result in any device being remotely wiped, blocked from the Council's network and being prevented from using Council provided services and software. A breach may also be considered a disciplinary offence.

Responsibilities

The IT Service Director is accountable for the implementation of this policy in the Council and on a day-to-day basis the IT Service will be responsible for:

- Coordinating IT asset audit activity such as annual inventory checks for management reporting;
- Updating and maintaining the accuracy of the asset management system as soon as a change is made (including office moves, reports of lost or stolen equipment and disposals);
- Ensuring that equipment is signed for by end users when collected from or returned to the IT Service and is recorded in the asset management system;

- Ensuring that all IT assets are processed, and asset tagged before they are issued to end users or entered into the central store;
- Checking equipment is returned in the same configuration as expected;
- Administrating the control and security of equipment held in stock for issuing and awaiting reissue or disposal;
- Ensuring that any IT asset that is retired is disposed of according to the IT Asset Disposal Policy;
- Ensuring that the relevant risk and control records are kept up to date;
- Giving correct and appropriate advice to users on the correct handling of IT assets; and
- Reporting any incorrect disposal or misuse of an IT asset to an appropriate manager within the IT Service as soon as possible.

End users issued with IT equipment will be responsible for:

- Retaining responsibility for equipment issued to them until it has been returned to the IT Service for redeployment or disposal;
- Ensuring that IT equipment is not moved to another location (if fixed) or transferred to another person without the consent of the IT Service;
- Reporting the loss or theft of IT equipment immediately to the IT Manager via the IT Service Desk or the Council Security Team;
- Reporting any defects and returning equipment immediately that is not operating normally to the IT Service via the IT Service Desk; and
- Returning all IT equipment to the IT Service upon replacement, when it is no longer required for Council business or when the holder leaves the Council.
- Raising any risks relating to the IT equipment in accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Policy.

Compliance

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COUNCIL MEETING

21 March 2024

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Catherine Donovan will move the following motion:

Since 2010, local government workers have lost an average of 25% from the value of their pay. Our staff are experiencing an ongoing cost of living crisis. Since 2010 the cost of living has risen by 60%, more and more local government workers have been pushed into debt, and their basic spending has overtaken their income, with 1 in 5 households having less than £100 to spare each month. This is a terrible situation for anyone to find themselves in.

At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, the local government workforce has fallen by 30% as a result of job cuts. This has had a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce. Local government continues to show how indispensable it is. But staff are increasingly leaving the sector for better paid jobs elsewhere, for example in retail, leaving local authorities with a massive skills gap, and vacancies in a range of key services, including in social care, education, and youth services.

Local government finance is in an enormously difficult state, facing an estimated funding gap of more than £3.5 billion for 2024/25. Recent research shows that if the Government were to fully fund the unions' 2024 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits and tax credits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

This Council believes:

Our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need and keep our, neighbourhoods, towns and cities running.

Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.

Local government workers deserve a proper real-terms pay increase. The Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding has been cut to the bone.

This Council resolves to:

Support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers, for an increase of £3,000 or 10%, whichever is the greater
Call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim, working with the unions to present a united front in defence of the local government workforce.

Write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.

Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can support the campaign.

Encourage all local government workers to join a union.

Proposed by: Councillor John Adams

Seconded by: Councillor Michael McNestry

Supported by: Councillor Angela Douglas
Councillor Malcolm Brain