

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REORGANISATION IN
NORTHUMBERLAND

DAY 1 TRANSITION PLAN

March 2008

VERSION CONTROL

Purpose	To satisfy requirement implementation order re: transition plan
Document Title	Northumberland Local Government Reorganisation Transition Plan
Document Status	Final Version
Restriction	None
Version	Final Version
Issue Date	27 th March 2008
Prepared By	Frank Jordan
Future Stages	Approved by IE 26 th March 2008

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1. Introduction

'One Future: One Council', the bid for a single unitary council, was approved by the DCLG in July 2007; the authority must be in place for April 2009.

The vision is to create a first class operating model for local government in Northumberland which establishes an excellent reputation based on the delivery of high performing services that also exhibits a high degree of influence at the local, regional and national level. The bid outlined radical improvements to strategic leadership and neighbourhood empowerment whilst delivering significant benefits to council tax payers in terms of value for money. This vision is articulated within the blueprint design document.

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Transition Programme has been established to design, build and deliver a new council that can deliver both the vision and the key benefits that were outlined in the initial submission. However, the transformational programme to deliver this vision must be based on a sound and solid foundation. Therefore it is essential that the new council is able to deliver all of its statutory and legislative duties and requirements and be able to continue at least the same level of service that is currently being provided from 1 April 2009.

The process of moving from the current seven local authority arrangements in to a single unitary council has been identified as a separate workstream within the overall programme known as Day 1 Transition. The statutory instrument outlining the legal framework for the management of this transition process in to the new unitary council, known as the Structural Change Order, is planned to be adopted by Parliament by March 2008.

The Structural Change Order will give the new Council the overall responsibility for managing the transition process, initially through an Implementation Executive whose makeup is set out in the Order. Following the elections in May 2008, and the dissolution of the Implementation Executive, the new Council's Executive will have the ability to make decisions on behalf of the unitary authority so as to ensure the transition process can take place. To ensure that these decisions and the process around transition are robust it is the statutory responsibility of, initially the Implementation Executive and then the new Council's Executive to prepare, review and revise a transition plan, (referred to in the Order as an Implementation Plan). This must :

- Include a plan which secures the effective, efficient and timely transition in to the new council
- Include an appropriate budget which secures an effective, efficient and timely transition in to the new council
- Have regard to the information supplied by the County Council in relation to strategic leadership, neighbourhood empowerment and value for money.

This document has therefore been produced to provide a baseline transition plan so that the Implementation Executive and then the new Council's Executive can effectively monitor this process. It documents all the decisions and activities that must take place up until 1 April 2009 if the new unitary is to be able to function from day one. It also documents all of the statutory and regulatory functions that are currently being provided by the seven local authorities that must be transferred to the new council without any loss of provision. Furthermore, the plan provides details of the project governance and management arrangements that will be in place to oversee the entire transition process.

The Day 1 Transition Plan has been developed following a number of detailed workshops with Service Clusters held in January. Its structure follows largely that of the blueprint design in as much that it is built around the People, Place and Performance Directorates. However, where it makes more sense from a transition management point of view certain elements have been grouped together which does not exactly relate to the Blueprint.

1.1. Context-‘Going Local’

The principle of ‘going local’ sits at the heart of the Blueprint Design document for the new council. This means working effectively at the right level and creating an environment for productive dialogue between the layers of “natural communities”:-

- Provision of strategic services, core corporate services and resource allocation at the “County” level
- Three “Area” communities - area committees and partnerships linked to the management and scrutiny of Area services and issues
- Twenty Seven “Belonging” communities – accredited community forums acting as information sharing and consultative mechanisms, identifying local priorities and delivering delegated services in association with town and parish councils, development trusts etc.
- “Neighbourhood” working and community capacity building.

Community governance is not something new for local authorities; however, it has taken on much more emphasis in recent years, firstly as a result of the Local Government Act 2000 enshrining the duty on councils to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their areas, and more recently in debates about devolution and localism and in the Lyons Review which calls for local government to have a key role as ‘place shaper’.

Community governance represents a shift away from the structures and institutions of *government* to a focus on the *processes* by which decisions are taken about the ambitions and aspirations for a locality, the priorities to be delivered and the deployment of resources to meet local needs. The new council will begin to embed more devolved governance arrangements, for example, balancing representative democracy through the elected members with more participative engagement with a range of stakeholders.

The new council must also consider the extent to which it is prepared to devolve authority for services and decisions and how this is undertaken in ways that will not result in a local 'postcode lottery' or undermine delivery of services, efficiency and 'economies of scale'. There are lots of models of local community governance; the most successful are those where a clear public mandate exists, where there is strong political backing, clearly defined 'rules of engagement' and where there is widespread clarity and agreement about the aspirations for the locality and the role of local partners.

1.2. Link to Accelerator Projects

The focus of the transition plan is to identify the absolute imperatives that the new council must deliver i.e. the statutory and regulatory services that any unitary council has to provide.

However, it is recognised that there are opportunities to begin to deliver parts of the transformation on Day 1 as accelerator projects. Some of these projects will be taken forward and managed by the other workstreams but others have been identified as transition initiatives. The whole Day 1 transition process will however fall within the overall governance of the Day 1 transition team. The projects identified are:-

- Front office – enabling accelerators (ref 7 & 10)
- Application of Strategic Asset Management Planning Principles to the Combined Property Portfolio (ref 9)
- Housing – Including Early Creation of Strategic Team and Implementation of a 'Choice Based Lettings System (ref 11)
- Early Integration of the Planning Service (ref 12)
- Procurement –align Alnwick tendering processes (ref 14)
- Procurement – mapping exercise (ref 15)
- Revenue/Benefits Model (ref 21)
- Integration of HR Transactional Services (ref 22)
- Options for Shared Services Delivery (ref 23)
- Integration of Financial Systems from April 2009 (ref 24)
- Natural/Belonging Communities (ref 25)
- Amalgamation of Grounds Maintenance Service (ref 26)
- Options for Property Portfolio (ref 29)

These initiatives will be built into the overall programme plan as the business cases and project plans are developed and finalised.

1.3 Cross Cutting Projects ¹

The transition plan has identified a number of cross cutting issues that should be managed corporately to ensure a consistent approach across all services. In particular there are three key areas relating to transition which sit on the critical path and are essential to a successful transition process. These specific projects

¹ See PBS, Section 1

will involve a large number of disciplines that need to be managed as a specific workstream:

- ICT development across all services for the unitary council including the council website
- Accommodation Strategy based on a review of assets and definition of service asset needs.
- The HR transition process

All three of these key projects must be complete by 30th September 2008 if the remaining transition projects are to be completed by 1st April 2009. Moreover all three of these products require a mature draft of the component design to be completed by June 2008 to inform these processes.

In addition to these three key transition projects there are a number of other stand alone projects which can only be developed by a cross cutting project team i.e.

- Embedding Equalities and Diversity procedures in to the new council
- Development of the council's constitution, including scheme of delegation, financial rules and regulations
- Ensuring appropriate representation and support to Outside Bodies
- Asset management
- Training and development of Elected Members and Officers during the transition process
- The approach and branding to be used on vehicle livery, front offices, schools, other properties, plant and equipment, road signage etc.
- Promotion and launch of the new council
- Producing a policy for opening hours for a number services e.g. libraries, museums, leisure centres, customer service centres, tourist information centres.
- Standardised approaches to enforcement and fixed penalty notices
- Review of arrangements and services provided by parish councils
- Standardised policies for charges and concessions
- Standardised approaches to debt and arrears
- Archiving of non electronic information

These projects have been identified separately in the attached product breakdown structure and it is envisaged that specific project groups which work with a wide range of services are developed to deliver these products during the transition process.

2. Performance

This Directorate will focus on ensuring that the council fulfils its corporate and community leadership functions effectively. Its aim will be to provide appropriate support to staff, managers, and elected members to properly undertake their jobs, and to effectively manage the Council's finances, assets and democratic processes. It will also lead the local authority's engagement with communities and partner organisations.

2.1. Political Management, Corporate Policy and Budget Framework

One of the key requirements for Day 1 transition is to ensure that the new council is able to exercise all of its democratic and statutory functions. This therefore requires the establishment of the council's political management structure, its corporate policy and budget framework, and systems to ensure effective partnership working. This will ensure that the appropriate rules and regulations relating to the decision making process for the new council are in place and will also provide the entire framework of operation for Elected Members and Council Officers

2.1.1. Introduction

It is imperative that the political management structures and the corporate planning and policy framework are both finalised and fully adopted by the new council by December 2008 to ensure that the timeframes for the training of elected members and senior officers are met.

2.1.2. Political Management Structure²

Shortly after the appointment of Elected Members, the Council will have to make decisions regarding the political management structure for its operations. This includes the design and composition of the Executive, Scrutiny Committees, Area Committees and other regulatory committees e.g. Planning and Audit Committees.

Moreover, the initial bid for unitary status for Northumberland proposed a radical approach to community leadership and engagement. It is therefore essential that the new council decides upon the appropriate engagement and decision making structures at the area and belonging community level.

To ensure that an effective lead-in process takes place and to enable appropriate support and training to be provided to Elected Members the final decision on the entire political management structure needs to be made by December 2008 at the very latest.

2.1.3. The Executive and Portfolios³

There are various models that the new council could adopt for the composition of its Executive Committee e.g. one that is entirely composed of the administration members, joint party composition etc. The council will therefore need to determine which model is most appropriate for Northumberland.

² See PBS, Section 2

³ PBS tasks 1.1, 3.1

In addition to making decisions regarding the design of the overall composition, the detail of the make up regarding portfolios will also need to be decided upon. Moreover, there will be a need to ensure that the appropriate level and scope of decision making is delegated to the Executive within the council's overall constitution.

2.1.4. *Community Engagement and Development*⁴

Councils' responsibilities as strategic leaders and place-shapers are clearly outlined in the Local Government and Involvement in Public Health Act 2007.

The Government's aims for local government are also reflected in the proposed Corporate Area Assessment framework which demonstrates a significant shift away from assessing a Council's organisational effectiveness and towards assessing its effectiveness in leading and empowering the local community to improve outcomes for people at the local level.

The blueprint design for the new council reflects the new emphasis for local government by outlining the model for leadership, engagement and delivery as being:

- Provision of strategic services, core corporate services and resource allocation at the **County level**
- **"Area" communities** – 3 area committees and partnerships linked to the management and scrutiny of Area services and issues
- **"Belonging" communities** – 27 community forums acting as information sharing and consultative mechanisms, identifying local priorities and delivering delegated services in association with town and parish councils, development trusts etc.
- **"Neighbourhood"** working and community capacity building

It is imperative therefore that these design principles are built into tangible structures to ensure that the new council is able to operate on this basis from 1 April 2009. Whilst full devolution of power may not be in place with immediate effect the local structures should be in place to clearly demonstrate the council's intentions for community engagement and development. It is also important to determine the means by which they can be considered representative and their structure/constitution to allow effective delegation/service delivery in the future.

The composition, membership and delegation of powers/ resources will therefore need to be determined for these three area level committees. In relation to the 27 belonging community forums, the Day 1 imperative is to establish the membership and geographical boundary for most of these with clarification of their broad role, remit and means of support.

⁴ PBS section 4 and tasks 6.1, 6.2

Moreover, a community engagement and communication strategy will need to be developed and produced which will inform the development of detailed communication structures and systems as outlined in section 2.4.4.

*2.1.5. Scrutiny Committees*⁵

In line with the overall design principles for the political management structures of the new council it is proposed that the eight scrutiny committees are established:

- 3 Corporate Level Scrutiny Committees
- 1 Health Scrutiny Committee (tbc)
- 3 Area Level Scrutiny Committees
- Audit Committee

In addition to determining the composition and membership of each of these scrutiny committees there is also some specific activity that needs to take place to enable these committees to function from Day 1. In particular the scrutiny protocols and working procedures, including call in arrangements, are a legal requirement to have in place. In addition, a decision is also required as to whether any budget would be allocated to any of these scrutiny committees to assist them in commissioning research and evidence to inform their scrutiny processes.

*2.1.6. Other Committees e.g. Planning and Regulation*⁶

In addition to the Executive Committee there are other committees which are required to be established to ensure the administration is able to discharge its functions. Particular examples of these include:

- Planning and Regulatory Committees
- Corporate Parenting Committee
- Pension Fund Investment Panel

The composition, membership and powers for each of these committees will need to be determined by the new council by as part of the agreements on the overall political management structures. A full list of committees can be found at Appendix 5.

*2.1.7. Corporate Policy and Budget Framework*⁷

The corporate planning framework will provide the overall strategic framework by which all other strategies, policies and decisions will be made by the council. The corporate planning framework needs to articulate the Vision and Values for the new council, its priorities and key outcomes it aims to achieve for Northumberland.

It is proposed that the existing corporate planning and policy framework of the county council be used as a baseline from which the framework can be developed for the unitary council. However, this will require a thorough policy review of all the existing corporate planning and policy frameworks for all seven authorities. This will enable a gap analysis to be undertaken between the current framework and that required for a unitary council. This is to ensure that the framework can adequately cater for all the responsibilities of the council.

⁵ PBS task 3.2

⁶ PBS task 1.1

⁷ PBS tasks 2.2, 2.3

To ensure that all other key decisions and policies that the council needs to take in 2008/09 can be properly informed the proposed corporate planning and policy framework needs to be adopted. Although there will be a large number of policies and strategies that must be adopted there are two key ones that are worthy of highlight as outlined below.

2.1.7.1. *Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement*⁸

Local authorities are required to take the lead in working with other agencies and groups to develop a vision for the local area and to work to make it happen imaginatively and jointly; there should be a single vision for the local area (the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)) supported by the Local Area Agreement (LAA) which identifies the key change priorities for Northumberland. The delivery of the vision for the local area should be through the Local Strategic Partnership

The council's corporate planning and policy framework must feed directly into the Sustainable Community Strategy for Northumberland. It will be the statutory requirement of the unitary council to ensure that such a community strategy is in place.

In theory the council could develop a new community strategy for Northumberland for 2009/10 onwards. However it is strongly recommended that the new council endorses and adopts the recently adopted (Sept 2007) county level Sustainable Community Strategy. The current community strategy has been developed by the partnership following a period of extensive consultation and engagement with partner organisations and communities. Moreover, the community strategy outlines the aspirations and desired outcomes for all individuals and communities in Northumberland as opposed to local government organisations in Northumberland.

Although the delivery mechanisms for these outcomes will inevitably be subject to change as a result of local government reorganisation in Northumberland, the rationale and appropriateness of these outcomes contained within the document should not be affected by these changes.

Notwithstanding this, there would be a significant amount of consultation and engagement work required should the new council wish to develop an entire new community strategy for Northumberland which would not be possible to be completed in time for the vesting day.

2.1.7.2. *Medium Term Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan*⁹

The Medium Term Strategy (MTS) will set out the strategic direction for the deployment of revenue and capital resources in line with the vision, values and priorities for the new council for the period 2009/10 to 2012/13. This will set the overall context for spending and saving decisions for this four year period which will be required to deliver the commitments to improve value for money as outlined in the initial bid.

⁸ PBS tasks 2.1, 7.2

⁹ PBS sections 9, 16

The overall medium term strategy needs to be adopted in sufficient time to enable the council to adequately consult on the overall MTS before it adopts the final budget for 2009/10. Further specific activity is required in relation to detailed financial modelling of current spend profiles for services in Northumberland and this is outlined in section 2.4.3.

The initial bid for unitary status was based on the premise that the new local government arrangements would deliver improved value for money for residents in Northumberland. The current provisional figures indicate a likely efficiency target of £15million in 2009/10 to achieve the comments of the initial bid.

It is therefore essential that the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the new council provides further details on how the transition process will translate into the deployment of resources for services and the consequential implication for council tax rates for Northumberland see section 2.2.2. The MTFP should also detail the Capital programme for 2009/10, including legacy projects which will continue under the new authority, i.e. PLF, Highways capital programme.

*2.1.8. The Constitution, Rules and Regulations, Proper Officers*¹⁰

The move to unitary status creates a need for a new Constitution which will set out the Council's procedure rules, terms of reference of committees, the scheme of delegation, financial procedures and contractual standing orders etc. The Constitution will have to reflect the contents of the Bid, the Blueprint Design, and the aspirations of the newly elected council. It will also comply with the statutory framework, principally the Local Government Act 2000.

The Constitution must be in place by 1st April 2009 and is a key Day 1 imperative. The earliest that it can be adopted by the new Council is March 2009 but involves considerable work beforehand. Drafting will have to start after the May elections with elected members setting the guiding principles. It will then become a specific stand alone project involving various disciplines including Democratic, Legal, Finance, Procurement and officers working on belonging communities with a view to a draft being available for elected member input and scrutiny.

Running in tandem with this process is a need to collate a list of all the Proper Officers that the new council is required by statute to appoint. This will entail examining the county council and district functions. Once the list has been prepared the designations will have to be attached at the Component Design stage to the relevant service clusters and then eventually individual posts.

*2.1.9. Equalities and Diversity*¹¹

The status of the County Council in relation to the Equality Standard will transfer as part of the transitional process. However during transition it is important to ensure that the corporate planning and policy framework, medium term strategy and corporate performance system (including service planning) enable the new authority to maintain its accreditation level. Given the nature of this initiative this has been identified as a corporate level product.

¹⁰ PBS tasks 1.1, 1.2., 1.3, 1.4, and section 8

¹¹ PBS task 1.5

2.1.10. *Developing a model for the new NSP*¹²

The Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP), the county-wide LSP created in 1997, has evolved and developed since its conception and now comprises two distinct roles; the pure LSP and the Economic development partnership. Recent initiatives and announcements have led to significant changes in the NSP's structure, composition and programme of work; the responsibility for delivering both the SCS and the LAA, as devolved from the County Council, sits at the heart of the NSP's agenda. Changes are also taking place to the economic development role driven by the Regional Development Agency (RDA).

Building on the NSP's proven track record in leading partnership working across Northumberland, the existing partnership structure should be largely retained but reshaped (with Board changes and additions at sub county level) to best support the new unitary authority (as envisaged in the initial bid for unitary status); the NSP Board and Executive are inclusive and operate well as the strategic decision making forums for multi-agency working; the Sector Board structure has been reviewed and aligned to the key objectives of the SCS and this, together with new terms of reference, has led to greater clarity in terms of the scope of the Sector Boards' work and a more structured and better managed programme of activity.

However, given the reduced financial support from the RDA and other partners, an early decision is required about how the NSP is to be supported which needs to take account of the future plans for regeneration and economic development and be reflected in the medium term plan for the new authority.

A related issue is the need for clarity about the future management arrangements for the LAA. This is currently devolved to the NSP but is supplemented by additional dedicated resources within the County Council. Naturally, changes to current arrangements will impact on both the shape and size of the NSP support team and also the work associated with 'business management'.

The immediate focus of the reshaping exercise needs to centre on the composition of the Board and the role of the new Council Executive Members to be represented on the Board and other levels of the partnership e.g. sector boards. In addition, three area level partnerships need to be established to ensure that the needs of specific geographic communities and communities of interest within these areas are met to best effect. The current constitution will need to be amended to reflect these changes and this will need to be signed off by the new Council to enable new arrangements to be implemented.

2.1.11. *Exit strategy for existing LSPs*¹³

In addition to the NSP, six district level LSPs also currently exist. Whilst there is clear evidence that all six are able to demonstrate good practice, there is broad agreement that the present arrangements for partnership working are not appropriate for the unitary authority. The challenge is therefore to agree an exit strategy for the existing LSPs but to retain and build on the areas of good practice as part of the new partnership arrangements.

¹² PBS tasks 7.1-7.4, 48.3

¹³ PBS task 7.5

2.1.12. *Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement*¹⁴

The new Council is committed to working closely with the VCS across all aspects of policy and delivery. It will develop a 'mixed economy' approach to service commissioning with provision through the VCS as a significant feature. Practices in the seven authorities vary considerably and some informal arrangements exist. A unified approach is required in the form of a VCS policy and protocol from 1st April 2009. A large number of VCS organisations are dependent upon financial and non financial support from Councils (and many operate in an environment of uncertainty). Arrangements for future support must be in place at the latest by December 2008 to enable VCS planning for next year to be completed.

¹⁴ PBS section 5

2.2. Corporate Support Services

Corporate Support Services are defined in the blueprint design document as: “Finance, human resources, payroll, ICT, legal, procurement, asset management etc – i.e. those services which support services in the People, Place and Performance Directorates. They largely consist of business systems that support the organisation in delivering its objectives. It may also be appropriate for other services to sit within this function – Revenues & Benefits being an example.

There are major Day 1 issues associated with this cluster of services as they contain the core support infrastructure of the Council and are associated with many of the statutory requirements of a Local Authority.

2.2.1. Section 151 Officer¹⁵

The Finance function in a local Authority is a statutory one. The person in charge of finance is designated as the statutory Section 151 Officer, and an appointment is scheduled to follow the appointment of the Chief Executive. Section 114 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1972 defines the statutory responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer, one of which is to have staffing structures in place which are adequate and fit for purpose. The establishment of the staffing structures' is dependant on staff transfer orders being agreed, and the appropriate ring fencing and appointment procedures being carried out.

2.2.2. Financial Planning¹⁶

The requirement for the Medium Term Financial Plan as a key planning document has already been recognised in section 2.1.7.2. The other key output relating to financial planning is the budget. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) falls into two stages:

An initial MTFP to be produced based on existing County and District plans and priorities, taking on board all agreed 08/09 budget proposals, and owned by District Councils and the new Council. Alterations will be made as LGR costs and savings are clarified through business cases.

The MTFP for the new organisation, taking on board the service and financial planning framework, cannot be developed until the new Council is in place after May 2008, and policies and priorities have been developed. The MTFP must be completed and approved in sufficient time to provide the over-arching strategic framework for the 09/10 budget preparation.

The 2009/10 budget will be produced by the new Council.

2.2.3. Financial Framework¹⁷

The Financial Framework for the new Council will be set out in Financial Procedure Rules which form part of the constitution. The move to unitary status creates a need for revised procedure rules, as the existing County Council constitution will not have rules and delegations for new amalgamated services (e.g. Housing and Revenues and Benefits), and existing District constitutions are not scaled up for decision making in a larger context. Finance staff will have to work closely with

¹⁵ PBS section 11

¹⁶ PBS section 16

¹⁷ PBS task 1.4

legal colleagues in the Business Management cluster who are working to prepare the new constitution, and the framework needs to be in place for in time to fit in with budget preparation and Member induction training.

*2.2.4. Core Financial Management Systems*¹⁸

The finance function of a modern Local Authority cannot exist without financial management systems. The County Council are currently utilising Oracle e-Business Suite, and the original tender included provision for licences relating to District Councils. Based on continuing use of Oracle, a project is being worked up to ensure that there is a single integrated system in place that can cope with unitary service coding and reporting requirements. The schedule for completion of the project is constrained by 2009/10 budget preparation timescales. The system also needs to be capable of linking up with other core systems used by services and the overall corporate performance system to ensure coherent reporting can take place by service managers.

*2.2.5. Payroll and HR transactional services*¹⁹

The key requirement in this area is to have systems and processes in place that will allow the new authority to recruit and pay staff. An accelerator bid has been agreed by the programme management board to combine transactional HR with Payroll, as the current split of these services means that the Oracle system is working sub-optimally. A project is being worked up that allows for the transfer of NCC transactional HR employees to Finance, and a phased transfer of District and Transactional HR services to a centralised payroll and transactional HR service for the new authority during the period leading up to Day 1.

*2.2.6. Bank Accounts*²⁰

Bank accounts need to be in place so that money can be received and paid out. A tendering exercise is currently underway, and new banking arrangements need to be in place in time to allow stationery and systems to be amended in time for key processes (e.g. Council Tax billing).

*2.2.7. Procurement*²¹

Procurement procedures and practices are heavily dependant on the financial system utilised by the Council. The decision to use Oracle has already been made, but the operational requisitioning of goods and services depends on where those services are delivered (County, Area, Belonging) and the capacity of staff in those areas to effectively operate requisitioning/ordering and goods receipting. Although structures and delivery methods have not been agreed as yet, it will be essential that all relevant staff are trained on the system and processes in advance of Day 1 if procurement operations are to be effective from 1 April 2009.

There are currently seven separate supplier databases that need to be merged into a single database for Northumberland. Data cleansing and removal of duplicate records needs to be carried out, and the merged database established so that new details can be communicated to suppliers in time for vesting day. In addition a

¹⁸ PBS section 12

¹⁹ PBS section 10

²⁰ PBS section 13

²¹ PBS section 24

programme of all existing and planned procurement activity including major projects will need to be collated

2.2.8. *Accounts Payable*²²

The way in which suppliers are paid is dictated by the choice of financial system. The decision has already been made to continue with Oracle Financials, and like most ERP systems, the way in which processes are carried out is dictated by the system set-up. Given that the District systems will no longer be 'live' for transactional processing post April 2009, there is a requirement that current District Process are mapped onto Oracle processes beforehand. Communications with suppliers need to be carried out informing them of changes to billing details. A single protocol for Tax and VAT issues needs to be agreed with HMRC for the new Council.

2.2.9. *Accounts Receivable*²³

The way in which credit income/sundry debt (accounts receivable) is collected from customers is also dictated by the processes within the financial system. Accounts receivable shares the same issues with Accounts Payable – District systems will no longer be 'live' for transactional processing post April 2009, there is a requirement that current District Process are mapped onto Oracle processes beforehand. Communications with customers need to be carried out from onwards informing them of changes to billing, statement and bank account details. A single protocol for Tax and VAT issues needs to be agreed with HMRC for the new Council.

2.2.10. *IT and systems migration*²⁴

ICT provision is a key resource in the implementation of transition and transformation plans and in line with medium term planning timescales already identified, an ICT strategy for the new authority is required.

Disparate networks exist within the County and six Districts. It is imperative that by Day 1 bridging arrangements are in place so that the 'whole Council' network can be accessed.

The high degree of investment in ICT in the last ten years has meant that there is a heavy reliance by staff on ICT services in order to carry out their jobs in a productive manner. Services that need to be in place by Day 1 are:

- Log-in arrangements
- Access arrangements and permissions
- E-mail arrangements
- Security arrangements – Virus control, spam control, firewall, DMZ etc.
- Standardised internet access
- Standardised telephony and directory
- ICT support desk – single point of contact

²² PBS section 14

²³ PBS section 14

²⁴ PBS section 23

There are other requirements that predate Day 1 that other imperatives rely upon. For instance, there is a need to ensure system outputs (letters, bills, statements etc.) are consistent in good time to allow for testing in Council Tax systems.

The baselining exercise has identified existing ICT contracts for software, maintenance and hardware. These need to be assigned to the new legal entity on 1 April 2009 or earlier where an appropriate need has been identified. Similarly, projects will require the procurement of new systems as transition and transformation develop, and these procurement needs will arise as business cases are developed and agreed.

*2.2.11. Revenues and Benefits*²⁵

The new Council will have the responsibility for the collection of a net Council Tax Debit of £150m on Day 1. Currently there are 6 District Systems, 5 of whom share the same ICT supplier (Northgate) and one which has a different supplier (Anite). In order to stabilise the risk, Blyth Valley Council will be brought onto the same software platform as the other 5 Districts, though Districts will be using a variety of managed service options. Legal and procurement advice is being sought on contract options, but the imperative is to have the six systems in a state where they can bill for a Northumberland Council sufficiently early to allow for testing and a billing date of March 2008. This plan allows for account re-referencing so that duplicate account numbers do not exist, and bills being sent out from separate systems with common format and branding. This project has already been approved by the Implementation Executive.

Harmonisation of policies and procedures (for example hardship relief) surrounding the collection of NNDR and Council Tax also need to be addressed. There is an immediate need to inform customers of potential changes to policies one year in advance of any change. Harmonised policies need to be developed and agreed by the new Council by in order for the effects to be included in the testing cycle starting in October.

Performance in the collection of Council Tax is correlated with the number of payment methods made available. It is essential that payment methods are brought up to the highest common denominator by Day 1 in order to reduce financial risk.

The provision of the Housing Benefits service relies on the same ICT issues outlined for Council Tax and NNDR i.e. an early move to Northgate for Blyth Valley and operation of 6 re-branded systems for 1 April 2009. The policies surrounding HB and compliance with Performance Standards is an issue if the service wants to be seen as high performing. Harmonisation of policies and procedures needs to be carried out to ensure that system parameters can be updated for October testing.

Both Council Tax and Housing Benefit are an integral part of the customer interface. The establishment of a front office is now a separate project, but the way in which both services are going to interact with the customer needs to be taken on board.

²⁵ PBS section 15 and 17

2.2.12. *Cash Receipting and Income Management*²⁶

A major financial challenge and risk for the new authority will be the amalgamation of millions of financial transactions caused by cash collection consolidation (Council Tax, NNDR, Housing Rents etc.), and the ability to analyse these payments and account for them correctly. A sub group has been formed to look at this issue and a tendering exercise for the provision of cash receipting terminals and cash management system is being worked up with NCC procurement. The existing Oracle income management functionality will need to be augmented with an additional system that must be procured and delivered to a schedule that allows for simultaneous testing with source systems (Council Tax etc).

2.2.13. *Insurance*²⁷

There is a Day 1 requirement to ensure that insurance cover for the new authority is in place for 1 April 2009. A sub group has been established to look at insurance issues, and they propose to continue insurance cover with the current main insurance provider, Zurich Municipal (ZM) and tie into NCC's current long term agreement which runs until 31/03/12. There is an immediate action to standardise claims recording using the ZM QLAS software.

2.2.14. *Land Charges*²⁸

As the product breakdown identifies, there are some issues which must be addressed by Day 1 to provide an effective Land Charges Service. A Land Charges register will need to be developed and the land charges software will need to be assimilated. Access points for personal searches will have to be agreed. Facilities management issues for corporate properties are taken care of within the 'Places' cluster.

2.2.15. *Legal Services*²⁹

As the new Council will, like any local authority, exercise its functions within a legal framework from which it will draw its powers and responsibilities, it is essential that it has access to efficient and effective legal advice. This will be particularly crucial in the first years of the new authority when it will be getting to grips with the very wide range of functions it will have as a Unitary Authority.

2.2.15.1. *The Legal Services Unit*³⁰

To perform its function, the new Council's Legal Services Unit will need to have, from Day 1, an efficient and flexible structure and be adequately resourced. There are a wide range of issues, identified in product breakdown structure, which are essential for the Legal Services function to operate from Day 1. These include the appointment of authorised signatories for legal documents, delegated authority for the commencement and conduct of proceedings, designation of officers able to instruct counsel and the putting in place of an effective injunction service.

²⁶ PBS section 18

²⁷ PBS section 19

²⁸ PBS tasks 26.8, 26.9

²⁹ PBS section 26

³⁰ PBS section 26

There are also essential tasks to ensure continuity of ongoing proceedings which will include formal application to the County Courts to change the name of the Council in ongoing proceedings. There are also some essential issues with regard to the handling of day to day legal work which need to be tackled for Day 1. These include creating a combined contract register, an efficient combined approach to archiving deeds and other legal documentation, the standardisation of legal agreements and the assimilation and rationalisation of the law library resource, by which we mean all the legal reference materials, in electronic and legal form, which are essential to providing up to date informed legal advice to the Council.

*2.2.15.2. Work for outside bodies*³¹

A policy decision will need to be taken, prior to vesting day, as to whether the Legal Services Unit in the new Council will undertake work for outside bodies. This is a complex issue and whilst it can provide income generation opportunities, there are resource issues around balancing such work against the demands from the internal clients within the Council.

*2.2.15.3. Governance Issues*³²

In view of the very close connection between Legal Services and Democratic Services work, and the mutually supportive roles of those functions, it is inevitable that there is some overlap between the Legal Services service analysis and the same exercise undertaken by Business Management Service Cluster. Governance issues identified in the Legal Service Service Analysis include the core one, which is a need for effective governance and ethical framework arrangements through the Constitution for the new Council.

The new Constitution will need to tackle a number of issues, again identified in the product breakdown, which must be resolved in time to be in place on vesting day, namely the appointment of the Monitoring Officer and his deputy and the appointment of the various proper officers which will be needed in the new authority.

³¹ PBS task 1.6

³² PBS task 1.1, and section 26

2.3. HR and HR Transition

The employees of the new Council are at the heart of the delivery of excellent services to the people of Northumberland. Ensuring that the right employees are in the right place at the right time and possess the right skills to carry out their jobs is crucial to the transition process

2.3.1. Interim People Management Protocol³³

In October 2007 an Interim People Management Protocol was agreed by all seven Councils. This provided a general framework of principles to aid a successful transition without imposing unnecessary bureaucratic or prescriptive requirements. The protocol recognises that there is a balance between the needs of the Transitional Authority and those of the existing Councils that will continue to function and deliver their services during the period of change.

The protocol ensures that any significant HR developments leading up to April 2009 are aimed at, or are at least consistent with, ensuring a successful transition to the new Council. Any HR actions taken should be consistent with what the new Council will expect.

So, a very early start was made to ensure HR issues were considered with the new Council in mind. Building on this, an HR Workstream was established in February 2008 which formalised much of the work the Northumberland Personnel Group had started to plan.

A joint LGR employee communications strategy has been developed so that employees of all seven Councils hear the same key messages at the same time. This is important so that no individual or group of employees feel they are being unfairly treated. Communication with employees is essential and this will continue throughout the transition period and beyond.

2.3.2. Recruitment Protocol³⁴

A recruitment protocol has been agreed between all seven Councils. In general, many vacancies in the Northumberland Councils will be initially ring-fenced to all employees in the seven Councils prior to any external advertising. The Councils have committed to working together and use a range of strategies to ensure a balance is drawn between moving forward toward the new Council and meeting the current requirement to deliver services. A common advertising process has also been agreed.

Any new senior posts will only be created on an agreed basis. Any significant structural changes, special retention arrangements, and HR policy changes made during the transitional period will be discussed as part of the protocol.

³³ PBS task 30.3

³⁴ PBS tasks 25.4, 25.5

2.3.3. *Union Consultation Protocol*³⁵

A Trade Union consultation protocol has been agreed with the recognised unions and the intention is to work with the unions in a constructive and transparent way. The consultation protocol will ensure consultation and communication at three main levels. At the political and strategic level a Joint Consultative Forum will be established, at management level monthly meetings take place, and, communication and consultation is established at a day to day level.

2.3.4. *Baselining*

A baseline of HR related data is being collected to inform other areas as required. Whilst carrying out this exercise the opportunity has been taken to review and tidy up data currently held.

2.3.5. *Terms and Conditions*³⁶

Much of the HR Transition plan depends upon the content of the regulations to be issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which will determine the basis of the terms of the transfer of employees to the new Council. It is likely that there will be TUPE protection of some sort and, if so, this will need to be managed during the design of the staffing structure of the new Council. As the transitional Authority, the County Council's existing policies and procedures will apply to the majority of employees and these are constantly being reviewed as part of the normal work programme. Within the HR protocol all seven Councils agreed that new or revised policies and procedures will be developed jointly and will reflect what is required in the new Council. Any changes to policy or terms and conditions will go through the normal consultation and approval processes.

The County Council continues to work on implementing Single Status and a new pay and grading system. Ideally a new pay and grading system will apply to any new posts in the new Council, however, this will depend upon progress with the implementation. Should there not be a new pay and grading system available then any new posts will be graded in accordance with the County Council's current scheme.

More detailed consideration will be given to the terms of the current severance and redundancy schemes, however, this can only be done further once DCLG regulations and guidance are issued.

Job descriptions will be developed from existing District Council descriptions for posts that are not already in the County Council's structure, for example, refuse collectors. This will ensure that any new appointments to posts can be made on terms appropriate for the new Council.

³⁵ PBS task 30.5

³⁶ PBS tasks 25.1, 25.5, 25.6

2.3.6. *Recruitment and Selection*³⁷

It is expected that the vast majority of employees will transfer to the new Council. It is likely that the Chief Executive post will need to be advertised nationally and (assuming there are no regulations made to the contrary), the Implementation Executive will need to decide on the process for recruitment to other posts. Arrangements are currently in place to procure the services of an executive recruitment agency to manage the recruitment and selection of the Chief Executive and Executive Directors.

A detailed staffing structure will be developed to reflect the needs of the new Council. Trade Unions will of course be consulted on any proposed staffing and structural changes. An appointments procedure will be developed to ensure recruitment and selection is transparent, and is on merit, taking into account the legal, financial and moral obligations of the all seven Councils to minimise the number of dismissals and redundancies. The principles of the Alternative Employment Policy will be adhered to wherever possible.

2.3.7. *Managing Redundancies*³⁸

In order to make the proposed financial savings detailed in the bid and due to the transformational change expected, it is likely that there will be some employees at risk of redundancy. Although redundancy is a last resort, should staffing reductions be necessary then they will be handled in accordance with the relevant procedures and good HR practice, and, the legal obligations in relation to consultation will be met. Wherever possible reductions will be achieved through voluntary means, providing this is consistent with good managerial and financial practices.

2.3.8. *Other issues*³⁹

The constitution of the new Council will need to reflect the personnel related delegations made to Chief Officers. Consideration will be given to how data can be transferred within existing HR ICT structures and a decision will be made as to which one(s) will be used in the new Council. Any new HR contracts entered into will be in accordance with the agreed People Management Protocol. Arrangements will be made to ensure that an Occupational Health Service is in place and is fit for purpose. Existing HR policies on Criminal Records Bureau checks should be harmonised, current staff checks reviewed, and arrangements made for further checks to ensure full coverage by Day 1.

³⁷ PBS tasks 25.2, 25.3, 25.4

³⁸ PBS task 25.5

³⁹ PBS tasks 1.2, 25.4, 25.7

2.4. Business Management

The Business Management Service Cluster hosts a variety of services important to the internal and external well being of the new council. Failure to have these key services operating from Day 1 will adversely affect the corporate health and reputation of the council.

2.4.1. Corporate Performance ⁴⁰

The Council will need a corporate performance framework in place by Day 1 which reflects the Council's policy framework, medium term strategy (MTS), medium term financial plan for 2009/10 and the Council's contribution to the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. The Community Strategy is already in place and the Local Area Agreement will be finalised with the Government by June 2008.

Consistent service planning has been identified a requirement for 2009/10. A common framework should be agreed to fit with the 2009/10 service planning schedule, and service plans need to be in place by Day 1.

Arrangements for collection of the 198 measures of the national indicator set established under CSR2007 are being discussed by all 7 authorities and an initial 'place' survey will be carried out. Critical to the process is adoption of universal software, such as Performance Plus.

The Leader of the Council is required to publish two months in advance the Forward Plan setting out the Key Decisions that the Executive of the new council will take.

2.4.2. Training and Organisational Development ⁴¹

People, that is elected members and employees are key to the success and well being of the new council. Before the elections in May 2008 an induction and training programme will have to be prepared for the new members. Initially it will have to focus on the role of the transitional council and then move to cover the wide range of functions provided by unitary council.

At employee level the following development programmes should be in place by Day 1:

- Workforce Development Plan
- Organisational Development Strategy
- Management Competency Framework

During the transition period employees will require induction training to cover their new roles and the needs of the new organisation. By Day 1 the new council will have in place;

⁴⁰ PBS section 27

⁴¹ PBS tasks 1.14, 1.15

- A training policy, strategy and framework
- Procedures for training needs analysis
- Health and Safety training
- A short courses programme

In relation to training during the transition process the Northumberland Authorities will explore how joint working can be developed during the interim, and this will include looking at the pooling of resources, joint delivery of appropriate training including Management Programmes, early work on induction programmes for the new Unitary Authority and related activities.

2.4.3. *Corporate Governance including Monitoring Officer* ⁴²

In addition to drafting the constitution the corporate governance of the new authority includes other important areas including the ethical framework for members and officers, complaints handling, freedom of information, elections, civil registration and civil ceremonies.

The new council elected in May 2008 will have to rely on the ethical framework adopted by the county council. As this is largely governed by statute, changes to the members' code of conduct, the officer code of conduct and the operation of the Standards Panel are likely to be minor. A Monitoring Officer and Deputy need to be appointed when recruiting the authority's senior managers. The composition of the Standards Panel needs to be sufficient to cover the new filtering mechanism and independent members need to be recruited and trained at an early stage. The latter has already been identified as an 'accelerator' project.

A committee timetable has to be prepared to allow the timely conduct of business taking account of statutory deadlines as appropriate in such areas as planning and appeals. A list of venues needs to be collated so that business can be conducted at area and belonging levels.

Decisions need to be taken over what media will be used to publish and distribute agenda, reports and minutes. The benefits of e-government need to be embraced to reduce cost and allow information to be accessible over the wide geographic area covered by the new authority.

Before April 2009 arrangements need to be in place to allow the new authority to scrutinise its own actions and those of external agencies. This assumes dedicated support in terms of both research and committee servicing.

No organisation is fault free. By 1st April 2009 the new council will need policies, procedures and a co-ordinator for handling complaints. This includes liaison with the Ombudsman and assuming responsibility for unresolved complaints inherited from the constituent councils. Trend analysis will have to be in place from Day 1 so that the new council can learn from its mistakes and take corrective action. Policies, procedures and co-ordinators also need to be established in relation to Freedom of Information and Data Protection. Staff, and especially front line staff,

⁴² PBS sections 8, 28, 29, and tasks 1.20, 3.4-3.7, 26.1, 26.13, 26.14, 30.6-30.8, 49.10.

will need to be trained so that they understand the council's obligations and the need for prompt handling.

The new unitary will have to appoint a Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer with deputies. Elections to the European Parliament will take place in June 2009 with the district councils making the initial preparations. Northumberland with its small electorate dispersed over a wide geographic area poses many challenges for managing elections and electoral registration. A plan needs to be in place to cover the management of these elections and the possibility of a Parliamentary Election the same year.

The bid emphasised the role of parish councils in the new unitary structure. At the moment their main point of contact is through the district councils on matters such as governance issues, planning and local services. It is important therefore that from Day 1 parish councils have a single point of contact at County level which will be able to sign post parish councillors and clerks.

Civil registration which covers births, deaths and marriages is largely self contained and has no Day 1 imperatives other than the possible appointment of a proper officer. The same applies to the coroner service.

Prior to April 2009 the new council will have to decide upon the role and level of support to the new Chairperson. The significant demands placed on the individual and the large geographic area points towards the appointment of deputies. Support to the Lord Lieutenant will have to continue. The civic regalia inherited by the new council will need to be identified as opposed to items which will pass to existing town councils and the Charter Trustees. The same applies to the large number of artefacts held by the districts.

*2.4.4. Risk Management and Internal Audit*⁴³

The way in which councils operate and embed risk management is scored as part of the Audit Commission's Use of Resources score. Consequently a risk management strategy and policy needs to be adopted by the new Council in as part of the overall corporate planning framework. Following on from that, a new strategic risk register needs to be approved, feeding into the corporate planning process. A risk management framework, covering all areas of strategic and operational risk, needs to be designed and embedded in time for vesting day. This framework must include the establishment of a strategic risk management group and risk appraisal panel. Service plans and new policies will also have to be vetted to ensure that key risks are identified and control mechanisms put in place.

The Internal Audit function is a key element of the assurance and internal control framework of the Council, and its effectiveness is reflected within the internal control element of the Use of Resources score. An Audit Committee needs to be built in to the new constitution of the Council in line with current best practice. An internal audit plan needs to be approved and adequately resourced by Day 1.

⁴³ PBS sections 20, 21

Whilst the needs of the new council have to be addressed it is also important that there is a plan covering the close down of the 2008/09 final accounts of the constituent councils.

An Audit Plan and Strategy will need to be in place for the new council together with an Annual Governance Statement. Attention will have to be focused on the new Use of Resources and Key Lines of Enquiry.

*2.4.5. Communications*⁴⁴

The new council requires a consultation strategy to ensure that it communicates future plans to residents and ascertains their views on its current performance. The statutory consultations in such areas as planning and education must not be overlooked together with those exercises already underway in the districts when the new council comes into being.

External consultants are in the process of being recruited to help the new council develop its culture and identity. The identity, in particular, needs to be in place for Day 1 so that the new council is clearly identifiable. This will entail changes to logo, uniform, front office signage, vehicle livery, plant, schools, road signage etc and agreed house styles for letters, emails and greeting customers, where deliverable. Given the importance of this issue this will be managed as a stand alone corporate project during the transition process.

Moreover, there will be a need to effectively communication during the transition process and more specifically around the launch of the new council. This again has been identified as a stand alone project which will operate throughout the transition period.

Clear channels of external and internal communication need to be in place from Day 1. This includes a press protocol with spokespersons identified at elected member and senior officer level. Flowing from this is a need for these individuals to have media training so that they can respond to press enquiries and promote the new council. Effective means of internal communications need to be in place so that all employees are reached in a clear manner.

*2.4.6. Corporate Health and Safety*⁴⁵

Whilst forming a small part of the overall Transition Document, it is essential that a Corporate Health and Safety plan is in place by Day 1 if the new council is to safeguard its employees and avoid litigation. The plan will contain a policy, strategy, framework and inspection plan to ensure employee well being.

⁴⁴ PBS section 30

⁴⁵ PBS section 31

3. People

This directorate will focus on enabling people to reach their full potential. This will include providing tailored support to our most vulnerable residents – children and young people and those who are likely to be an offender or a victim of crime or accident. Its aim will be to ensure that everyone can lead happy, fulfilled and safe lives for as long as possible independently in their own homes.

3.1. Children and Young People ⁴⁶

Children's Services cover a wide range of services to children, young people and families and is already configured as a county level service. These services include the strategic planning and management of education for all pupils in Northumberland, Child Protection and Safeguarding, support for all children with learning difficulties and disabilities, services and accommodation for looked after children, early years provision and a wide range of integrated services to young people.

Since Children's Services functions are already managed countywide, there will be no requirement for major changes as an immediate result of the creation of the new Council.

However, there is a wide range of statutory core services that are absolutely imperative to be delivered from Day 1. Failure to deliver these services would be a serious breach of a statutory duty and more importantly would place children and young people at significant risk of harm. Moreover, failure to deliver these core services would lead to a significant reduction in the reputation of the council and lead to increased scrutiny from external bodies e.g. OfSTED.

Since there will be newly appointed Elected Members charged with these responsibilities these statutory duties are outlined below. In addition to overseeing the overall transition process, the council needs to assure itself that these core duties are not undermined or placed at risk as a result of other transition activity. In particular changes to support services e.g. legal services or customer relationship systems could place the integrity of these services at risk if they are not managed appropriately

⁴⁶ PBS section 35

3.2. Statutory and Core Services

There are a number of statutory and core responsibilities which children's services must be able to continue to provide from 1 April 2009 onwards as outlined below.

*3.2.1. Child Protection and Safeguarding*⁴⁷

It will be the statutory responsibility of the council to ensure that all children in the county are protected from emotional, physical and sexual harm. The council must provide advice, guidance and information to any member of the public who makes contact on child protection matters.

The council will need to maintain a child protection register and organise and manage reviews of all children the register identifies. It will need to ensure core information is provided to the chief executive and the local safeguarding board in order to comply with the requirements of the 2004 Children's Act.

Failure to provide this service would be a breach of a statutory regulation, could lead to significant harm to a child or young person and to the reputation of the council.

*3.2.2. Strategic Planning and Management of Education and School*⁴⁸s

There is a range of activity relating to strategic management and planning for education in Northumberland that must be delivered by the new council. The first of these relates to ensuring the appropriate monitoring and intervention in schools to ensure that a good quality education is provided through schools. Maintaining this support and intervention is a key service that must be delivered to maintain the reputation of the council particularly with OfSTED.

The council will also have specific responsibilities relating to assessment and ensuring the appropriate education provision is made for children with special educational needs and for also making provision for children who receive their education other than at school.

Another key function is ensuring that every child is able to access full time education. The council must be able to continue with the annual process of school admissions which are subject to a specific code of practice. In particular the new council will have to support and manage a number of independent admissions appeal panels which could be affected if the appropriate legal support is not provided. Furthermore, the authority has the statutory responsibility for providing home to school transport for children in the county.

Finally the council must be able to be in the position to provide a range of support services to schools. This includes setting the budget for each individual school and providing ongoing finance, HR, legal and governor support. It is important therefore that any proposed changes to corporate support services do not undermine the ability of officers to provide this support to schools.

⁴⁷ PBS task 35.1

⁴⁸ PBS task 35.2

3.2.3. *Other core services* ⁴⁹

In addition to the two main core areas relating to education and children's social care there are other core services that are provided within a regulatory framework including the youth offending service, drug and alcohol support to children and young people which must be capable of being delivered from 1 April 2009.

⁴⁹ PBS task 35.3

3.3 Community Safety

The community safety division will include fire and rescue services, emergency planning, business continuity planning, community safety, crime and disorder management and support for those abusing drugs or alcohol. The new council must be able to deliver community safety services from 1 April 2009

Many of these services are currently provided at a county level and should transfer automatically to the new council, but there are elements of work that will require some work to be completed to ensure that effective transition does take place.

3.3.1 Fire and Rescue Services⁵⁰

The activities of this service fall into three categories as outlined in Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004:

- Prevention – home safety assessments, education and community programmes particularly with young people, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, road safety etc. The prevention strategy is delivered through the Community Safety Academy within the service and the delivery is ensured across the whole service
- Regulation – inspections of public buildings and associated enforcement
- Intervention – emergency response to fires including off shore, road traffic accidents, transport incidents flooding, environmental protection, and heritage risks etc

The service will continue in its present form under the new authority. It will be necessary to establish the new council as the Fire and Rescue Authority under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and this formal process should be in place on Day 1. The Fire and Rescue Service has statutory role under the auspices of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The regulation and enforcement function will require the support of the Legal and Building Control services in the new council. The Fire and Rescue Service is a statutory Category 1 responder under the auspices of Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and as such is a statutory partner on the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum.

3.3.2 Emergency Planning⁵¹

This service will plan and co-ordinate the council's response to any civil emergency. This involves exercising the powers under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Pipeline Safety Regulations, and the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (COMAH). It will be necessary to transfer these powers formally to the new council and this must be in place on Day 1

⁵⁰ PBS section 32

⁵¹ PBS section 33

The service will also prepare and co-ordinate an Emergency Community Assistance Plan (ECAP) and all seven existing councils currently contribute to this, together with external partners. The plan must be updated and adopted by the new council by April 2009. This also applies to the Emergency Mortuary Plan. There is currently an effective joint protocol between all seven local authorities which provides a sound basis for a model to be developed for the new council.

Northumberland County Council currently operates a duty officer roster for emergency planning and this must be carried forward by the new council.

Business Continuity Plans are currently prepared by all seven existing councils. These plans ensure the continuation of basic local authority services in the event of civil emergency. The new authority needs to have a single BCP in place by vesting day.

The quality of most of this planning work depends on the availability of information on a spatial basis. The provision of appropriate mapping and GIS facilities for the new authority is necessary and is a risk for the Day 1 transition of this service.

*3.3.3 Crime and Disorder Reduction*⁵²

All 7 authorities have a statutory responsibility under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the crime and disorder implications of their activities in their area. This responsibility will pass to the new council on vesting day.

A Community Safety Strategy Group is currently in place and consultancy support is being provided via GONE to determine appropriate partnership arrangements in the year before and after vesting day. Similarly, a Community Safety Strategic Assessment is currently being prepared which will be refreshed in March 2009. The vehicle for this development and discussion will be the Interim Community Safety Strategy Group.

There is a need to prepare a single policy for domestic violence and to nominate an officer as Domestic Violence Reduction Coordinator. The County Council is the accountable body for the Drug and Alcohol Action Team. Responsibility for the partnership will need to pass to the new Council on vesting day.

⁵² PBS section 34

4. Place

The Place Directorate will focus on providing quality environments and convenient access to services that enrich the quality of all residents' lives. Its aim will be to ensure that our neighbourhoods and surroundings are safe, green and clean, that our network of customer and cultural services is easy to reach and use, and that our forward planning and regeneration strategies maximise the potential for our communities to thrive and prosper.

The Directorate will be structured around 3 divisions: Strategic Services, Local Services and Customer & Cultural Services.

4.1. Strategic Services

Strategic services will (largely) be resourced and provided at the 'County' level. Strategic Services are those best organised and managed at a County level to ensure economies of scale and/or strategic alignment. Strategic Services will include services such as planning, regeneration and transportation operating in an integrated manner to effectively deliver the councils 'Place' shaping responsibilities. Those services that cannot be cost effectively delivered at area or belonging level will also be included within strategic services.

Aspects of these services, however, will be delivered at an area or belonging level and will need to effectively integrate with other activity taking place at a more local level. Strategic Services will ensure appropriate policies and strategies are in place to support service delivery at the Area and Belonging Community levels.

4.1.1. Strategic Planning⁵³

The planning system has been substantially reformed to embed community responsive policy-making at its heart and deliver sustainable development. The new spatial planning system exists to deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for our communities. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the collection of local development documents which will be produced by the council to collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for Northumberland. The Core Strategy will be the key plan within the LDF and will be the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

An early deliverable will be a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which will set out the Council's programme for the production of the core strategy and other local development documents. A Statement of Community involvement will also be prepared setting out the Council's policy for involving the community in the preparation of local development documents and planning applications.

The existing councils have all made significant progress in preparing local development documents and each has ambitions to prepare further documents. A review of these ambitions will be carried out to assist in informing what should be included within the new LDS. There will be a rolling programme of LDF preparation

⁵³ PBS section 36

but it is anticipated that priority will be given to the preparation of the Core Strategy. This will be a major piece of work and cannot be simply a 'bolting' together of existing planning strategies. Through the Planning Accelerator the creation of an officer team to begin to prepare the evidence base for the Core Strategy will be an early deliverable. This will also need the creation of suitable Governance arrangements and the consolidation of IT/GIS systems.

To provide the basis for development control decisions by the new Council's Planning and Regulation Committee and its 3 Area Sub-committees, a further early deliverable will be the consolidation and adoption by the Council of all existing development plan policies at both the County and Area levels.

A range of planning specialist services is needed to support both strategic planning and development management and to deliver the council's legislative duties e.g on biodiversity. This includes archaeology, listed buildings, tree preservation orders, ecology, landscape, urban design and sustainable development. In-house provision will be coordinated at the county level but it is likely that certain services will need to be 'hired in' for specific projects eg an expert witness for a Public Inquiry. The Planning Accelerator is investigating the potential for establishing these services through a consolidated or 'virtual' team by September 2008 and how best they might be deployed, e.g centrally located, based in one or more Area Offices or deployed on a case by case basis. Another early deliverable will be the bringing together or sharing of information and data-bases and unifying/standardising specialist policies and procedures. This will be required both for transition and to prepare for new legislation expected in 2010.

4.1.2. *Strategic Housing*⁵⁴

The Northumberland Housing Board currently provides a strategic overview across the county but is currently an informal partnership of housing and planning officers and requires formal governance arrangements to be put in place. This will include the establishment of various sub groups including for example Supporting People and Choice Based Lettings. A single overarching housing strategy reflecting county-wide consolidation (for example the introduction of a Northumberland wide choice based lettings scheme is dependent on a Joint Allocations Policy for Northumberland) and local flexibility (for example by allowing local lettings policies that meet particular social needs in defined areas) is required. It is essential that a Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment is undertaken to comply with LDF regulations as there is a risk that core strategies could be declared unsound if assessments have not been undertaken. An overarching Affordable Housing Strategy is required for improved schemes and funding opportunities.

Quick wins, delivered through the approved Accelerator project, can be made during the transitional period e.g. implementation of Joint Homelessness Strategy as all areas can benefit from best practice already developed in some districts. Work to identify quick win opportunities is already underway with consolidation taking place throughout the transition period.

It is essential that housing stock transfers in Berwick and Wansbeck are completed on schedule. These projects will consume a significant amount of resource and risk during the transition period but are commitments that are supported by tenants and expected to deliver significant investment and improvement in the respective

⁵⁴ PBS section 37

areas' landlord functions. The abolition of the district councils means that it will be necessary to formally register the new council as the landlord for Alnwick district.

The strategic housing function will oversee the consolidation of existing market intelligence and performance data. It will be necessary to consolidate IT systems, with changes needed predominantly around Allocations and Homelessness databases.

The landlord function will need to take a strategic decision about the operation of the two remaining Housing Revenue Accounts as a single consolidated account or in the two ring fenced areas for Alnwick and Blyth.

*4.1.3. Highways and transport*⁵⁵

The Day 1 operation will be a continuation of the existing countywide services with strategy and policy agreed at the county level but with delivery being organised around the various depots. At the county level the service needs to retain statutory functions such as the network manager function and safety checks. There may be a need to rationalise depots; consolidation of assets and small plant will provide opportunities for efficiency and will arise from the new set-up.

It is essential that the new council has a new Operating Licence for operation of the fleet from 1st April 2009. This will involve a full review of the existing transport fleet, systems and operating instructions to ensure the fleet operates in accordance with the licence. The review will also include contract terms and expiry dates and renegotiation of contracts will follow as necessary.

The key strategic document for this service is the Local Transport Plan that will set out the significant infrastructure projects and priorities for the new council.

A review of operational contracts (eg construction and maintenance) should be completed to coincide with known contract breaks. All discretionary services should be reviewed and a decision made on continuation, expansion or withdrawal of services.

The creation of the new council provides opportunities for integrated street scene teams that conduct a range of environmental improvement projects e.g. litter collection, graffiti removal, grass cutting, grounds maintenance, gully cleaning and minor repairs to footpaths at the same time.

All existing inventory information needs to be brought together so that the information is available for use by the service. This should include an agreed methodology and systems for street naming and numbering, gazetteers and GIS systems.

It will be necessary to close down the remaining agency arrangements that exist between NCC and some District Councils. Plans should be established to manage agencies closures and transfers to the new council.

*4.1.4. Car park strategy*⁵⁶

A county-wide car parking strategy will need to be developed with procedures and charging policies being reviewed and agreed. Existing Car Parking orders should be reviewed for continuity by prior to transfer in advance of Day 1.

⁵⁵ PBS section 38

⁵⁶ PBS task 38.2

It will be necessary to create a consolidated programme documenting committed and prioritised capital schemes for the county's car parks. This should be in place before budget setting in November 2008.

4.1.5. *Concessionary travel*⁵⁷

A standard approach to the new concessionary travel scheme has been taken and as a consequence consolidation will be possible well in advance of Day 1.

4.1.6. *Regeneration*⁵⁸

Alignment of local service plans and policies and a review of existing grants, awards and contracts will lead towards the development of a county-wide Economic Assessment and Strategy. Moreover, a review of grant awards, existing commitments and desired schemes that may span the transition period is required. Governance arrangements and representation on outside bodies will also be established at this time.

The NSP's responsibilities for the management of the delegated programme of regeneration from ONE (the RDA One North East) will need to be reviewed. It has already been agreed for 2008/09 pending the transition in to the new unitary council. A new delegation agreement must be in place to enable project planning and management to continue. Agreement also needs to be made with ONE on delivery arrangements for the regeneration in South East Northumberland by December 2008.

4.1.7. *Leisure, tourism and culture*⁵⁹

The co-ordination of leisure, tourism and cultural services will be a county-level function although most service provision is likely to be delivered at the area level. Service provision will be largely unchanged on Day 1, with service users being able to access the same range of services, from the same locations, on vesting day and beyond.

Much of the cultural delivery at a neighbourhood level is in reality delivered by voluntary or community groups often working informally. There needs to be a consistent approach developed to identify the needs of these groups going forward within the overall cultural service provision

However, it will be necessary to review all the various arrangements (contractual relationships, grant awarding, partnership agreements) that exist across the leisure, tourism and culture sector and ensure that these are either transferred to the new council or replaced with new arrangements if necessary e.g. for tourist information centres. In addition to this, a review of opening hours across this group of services will need to be conducted leading to the production of a single policy for the new council by Day 1.

The integrated tourism accelerator project will identify the way forward for delivering the local authority tourism functions. Furthermore decision will need to be made about cultural exchange and Town Twinning arrangements.

⁵⁷ PBS task 38.3

⁵⁸ PBS section 48

⁵⁹ PBS tasks 1.21, 5.1, 47.1

4.1.8 *Land drainage/ Coast Protection*⁶⁰

A review of those areas currently documented as “wet spots”, informed by the recent Climate Change Impact Assessment for Northumberland and Environment Agency flood mapping, should be completed in time to allow the new council to lobby for appropriate flood alleviation measures and to update flood action plans, emergency plans and business continuity plans. Arrangements for managing the interface between the new council and the EA (and other environmental partners) will need to be established and operational by Day 1. In addition a review for flood response should be undertaken to ensure that the new council is able to respond appropriately. A coast protection plan should also be agreed by Day 1.

4.1.9 *Travellers*

All housing authorities are required to carry out housing needs assessments of Gypsies and Travellers in their areas. This is ongoing work which will be completed this year and which will inform important decisions for the new Council on dealing with unauthorised encampments and making new provision. The existing 7 Councils have previously jointly agreed a policy and procedures on these issues and this will be reviewed in the context of a new Strategy for Gypsies and Travellers in Northumberland which is currently being prepared on behalf of the Northumberland Children's Foundation. There will be a need to review the various policies, procedures and protocols related to Gypsies and Travellers operated by the existing Councils and to harmonise these for the new Council.

⁶⁰ PBS section 39

4.2. Local Services

Local Services cover a range of front line services supporting the 'clean green and safe' agenda which have a direct impact on the quality of life of the residents of Northumberland such as refuse collection, grounds maintenance, building control, street cleansing etc.

4.2.1. Refuse collection, recycling & waste disposal⁶¹

Aside from a rationalised management structure that reflects area-based co-ordination, the waste operation on Day 1 will be largely unchanged from the current service. Existing depots are likely to be utilised and collection routes will remain substantially as now, although some analysis of existing district boundaries may well reveal opportunities for some efficiencies. A county-wide waste strategy will reflect the harmonisation of contracts, policies and procedures that will take place throughout 2008. Household waste recovery sites will continue to operate as at present.

The new council will inherit a fleet of vehicles and equipment and it is desirable for these to be consistently branded in time for Day 1..

Alignment of waste disposal contracts through the new PFI arrangement with SITA will take place during 2008.

Guidance to the public on what materials should be placed in their kerbside recycling bins should be harmonised. Guidance should be aligned with the input specifications agreed for the waste being sorted at a new Materials Recycling Facility being developed via the PFI arrangement with SITA.

4.2.2. Facilities Management⁶²

If there is any rationalisation of the council's property during the transition process an adjustment to existing supply chain arrangements and consultation with staff and partners will need to take place. It will also be necessary to safeguard essential service contracts through novation and variation agreements. This will be determined by contract termination clauses and procurement processes.

Service-specific requirements (eg transportation of items between different locations) will need to be identified by December 2008 to enable support arrangements to be in place for Day 1.

Facilities Management will also need to provide support to the front office and this is critical to the quality and consistency of the customer experience. It is therefore essential that facilities management arrangements are robust and in place by Day 1.

Because of the high dependency on robust IT and telecoms it will be necessary to secure appropriate service level agreements with the council's ICT supplier. The

⁶¹ PBS section 43

⁶² PBS tasks 26.12, 46.1, 46.2, 49.6, 49.7, 49.16

facilities management function will also be responsible for the council's inbound mail handling operation.

Services to schools will be unaffected by transition although it will be necessary to manage any concerns raised by schools in the run-up to Day 1. This will be done by the Facilities Management Service directly.

4.2.3. *Grounds Maintenance, including Green Spaces, Cemeteries & Crematoria, Parks, Sports Pitches and Playgrounds*⁶³

A review of existing grounds maintenance contracts aligned to the new area based structure should be carried out as part of the approved Accelerator project and where necessary, steps taken to arrange continuation or renegotiation of contracts. This review should include those less formal arrangements that might exist with Parish Councils and community groups.

A review of all local partnerships will be required to ensure that good working relationships and an understanding of shared priorities are developed. Close liaison with local "Friends of" groups and other community organisations is essential to ensure that local beauty spots continue to be well maintained.

Management of assets needs to be coordinated and an inventory of assets should be completed to enable redistribution as necessary across areas to ensure optimal deployment of assets is completed by Day 1.

Local community priorities, such as Britain in Bloom, Green Flag, Quality Coast Awards will need to be factored into local delivery plans.

It will be necessary to create a consolidated programme documenting committed and prioritised capital and planned maintenance schemes for the county's green spaces. This should be in place before budget setting.

4.2.4. *Trading standards, licensing and environmental health*⁶⁴

Whilst the transition activities required to deliver the Day 1 operation are broadly similar across these 3 services, there is no assumption that trading standards, licensing and environmental health are to be delivered as a single integrated function. This decision will need to be taken when approving the component design.

In order to function effectively on Day 1, these services will need to be in a position to carry out inspections and investigations, undertake enforcement action, issue licences and perform environmental monitoring. Officers will ideally use a common IT infrastructure however, for Day 1 it will be acceptable to run area-based systems.

There will be a single county-wide strategy and policy framework, incorporating a standardised scale of fees, which will need to be approved by the new Council. Confirmation of the management structure will lead to the drafting of area service plans and the approval of an appropriate scheme of delegations.

Service managers will establish operational procedures ensuring that officers are duly authorised and insured.

⁶³ PBS section 40

⁶⁴ PBS section 42

4.2.5. *Animal health and welfare*⁶⁵

The new council will be required to work in partnership with DEFRA to protect animals and to control and eradicate infectious diseases. The protection and welfare of domestic animals and pest control policies need to be developed according to local needs. Charges will need to be considered as part of the corporate review of charging.

4.2.6. *Building control*⁶⁶

Building Control is in part a discretionary service in that plan vetting and inspection can be offered by private approved inspectors but the enforcement of regulations is a statutory responsibility for the council. The service is marketed on a commercial basis to secure the health, safety & welfare of building users, conservation of resources and energy efficiency and to secure accessibility to buildings and facilities for the disabled. The service is required to operate on a basis of covering its own costs through fee income on a 3 year rolling programme.

Delivery from Day 1 will require the harmonisation of systems, processes, procedures and fees across the current District Councils taking place throughout 2008. Marketing of the re-modelled service will be necessary during early 2009 and the service will be resourced so as to ensure that existing market share is maintained.

4.2.7. *Development control*⁶⁷

Throughout 2008 as part of the Planning Accelerator staff will standardise operational systems, processes and procedures for Development Control, or Development Management as it is increasingly referred to in the modern planning system, and will develop robust information sharing arrangements so that applications can be readily accessed and promptly determined. Currently the 7 local planning authorities use 4 different planning IT systems and specifications will be developed to enable a unified service to operate as a minimum at Area level by April 2009 with further IT developments being a transformational activity.

It is anticipated that staff will be deployed mainly at the Area level to support the 3 Area Planning and Regulation Sub-Committees. It will be necessary to assess the need for a specialist team at the County level to support the Planning and Regulation Committee and deal with specialist and strategic applications which have wider strategic implications e.g in relation to minerals, waste and energy developments.

By December 2008 a Development Management Charter will be prepared, drawing on this alignment work and the Council's Statement of Community involvement, and setting out guidance for potential applicants, consultees and the public on harmonised application, consultation and decision making processes. This will include specific area based guidance where appropriate. The charter will also reflect a harmonised approach to charging e. g. for pre-application advice.

A further important area for early alignment of policy and practice is in respect of planning obligations and financial contributions sought for infrastructure and community facilities resulting from developments. A member decision will need to

⁶⁵ PBS task 1.24

⁶⁶ PBS section 45

⁶⁷ PBS section 44

be taken by December 2008 on whether the new Council becomes a 'charging authority' in respect of the new Community Infrastructure Levy which the Government proposes to introduce in April 2009.

4.2.8. *Street Cleansing*⁶⁸

An early understanding of existing street cleansing arrangements will allow area-based renegotiation and the subsequent publication of cleaning schedules. Service level agreements with community groups, town and parish councils etc will help cement joint working arrangements.

The new council will inherit a fleet of vehicles and equipment and it is desirable for these to be consistently branded in time for Day 1.

4.2.9. *Environmental crime / street enforcement*⁶⁹

A consistent approach to enforcement is required and a county-wide enforcement policy should be developed and approved. Area-based partners play a part in reporting and supporting enforcement action in respect of street and environmental crime and current arrangements should be reviewed to allow local negotiation of revised protocols. It may be necessary to provide some training in respect of enforcement, both internally and to partners. Enforcement officers will require specific authority to issue fixed penalty notices and a scheme of authorisations should be agreed.

Effective enforcement will require that a range of partners, including police and Environment Agency, work closely to tackle local hot-spots and close working relationships should be established in advance of Day 1.

4.2.10. *Event coordination & safety*⁷⁰

Closely aligned to leisure and culture services, event co-ordination, promotion, police liaison, traffic management and road closures as required by the new council's cultural calendar will need to be managed. Early production of the planned events schedule will aid planning.

4.2.11. *Housing management*⁷¹

The landlord function currently reflects a mixed provision of in-house, arm's length and outsourcing arrangements. During 2008 the transfer of the Berwick and Wansbeck housing stocks under LSVT conditions will take place, leaving Alnwick as the only "in-house" provider of landlord services. Local service standards will be negotiated with the relevant housing associations / RSL's and performance monitored through an agreed framework. A consolidated reporting mechanism to allow aggregate performance monitoring at county level should be in place by Day 1.

4.2.12. *Housing improvement grants*⁷²

The process for allocation of Home Improvements Grants differs across the county and would benefit from review and consolidation. A decision needs to be made about the delivery mechanism – this could be organised on a county-wide or area-

⁶⁸ PBS tasks 1.17, 40.7

⁶⁹ PBS task 1.23

⁷⁰ PBS task 49.22

⁷¹ PBS section 37

⁷² PBS task 37.2

specific basis and could be delivered “in house” or outsourced to an established 3rd sector partner such as the Northumberland Home Improvement Agency. This decision would need to be linked to the review and adoption of the Supporting People Strategy and approval of Capital plan. A firm decision is required prior to budget setting.

4.2.13. *Markets*⁷³

Town centre markets are a vital component of the economy of Northumberland and their sustainability is closely linked to the economic prosperity of our towns. Each Area should develop its Markets Strategy, ensuring that local markets continue to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

⁷³ PBS task 40.5

4.3. Customer & Library Services

This area of services includes the front-office interface with the public providing the first point of contact for many residents in Northumberland and libraries – both services with a high visibility profile and with high demands for their service.

4.3.1. Libraries, Modern Records and Archives ⁷⁴

The existing patterns of management and operation will continue beyond Day 1, with all existing library sites remaining available and the current mobile library service continuing in accordance with existing schedules.

Liaison with the remodelled Facilities Management division will be required to ensure continuation of the stock transportation system.

Libraries will provide access to a broader range of council services from Day 1 (although in practice steps are already being taken to establish extended servicing in parts of the county). A list of key library sites for extended servicing should be identified, with staff training and some signage being provided in these sites as appropriate.

There will need to be a review and closedown plan for the existing 7 modern records arrangements together with the production of a protocol of how modern records will be managed by the new authority together with charging policies. Similarly a review needs to be undertaken in relation to archive and family treasures.

4.3.2. Customer Services including Contact Centres, One stop shops and other access channels ⁷⁵

This service will be responsible for the operation of the council's main customer access channels i.e.

- face to face interaction
- telephone access
- electronic and web access

Collectively referred to as the “Front Office”, this area is a major determinant of the council's reputation and it is essential that as many access channels as possible are open and functioning on Day 1. A key requirement for the Front Office is a Customer Access Strategy setting out the council's service offering, including locations, contact arrangements, hours of availability and corporate service standards.

As the service will be supporting all functions of the council it is imperative that there is a full understanding of service-specific requirements. Equally, service areas must be clear about the standards of service that their customers can expect

⁷⁴ PBS tasks 38.6, 49.3, 49.4

⁷⁵ PBS tasks 1.13, 1.14, 1.18, 49.2, 49.8, 49.9, 49.10, 49.12, 49.14, 49.15, 49.20, 49.21

from the Front Office. Internal Service Level Agreements will therefore need to be developed, negotiated and agreed.

The IT infrastructure that underpins Front Office delivery is a critical requirement for Day 1. For example, it will be essential that staff will be able to capture customer service data that systems enable the transfer of this information to the relevant service team for processing. Alignment of systems to ensure this level of functionality and integration and compatibility must be completed.

Face to Face access on Day 1 will be through the existing network of One Stop Shops, libraries and community buildings. Staff in such locations will need to be able to access information about the full range of services offered by the new council through the council's website.

Service information and application forms will need to be available electronically and also on display for customer reference. A full register of access points detailing opening hours and the range of services on offer should be developed and published for public and internal reference. Staff training should be delivered in advance of Day 1.

The telephone remains the most important and frequently used access channel of all, accounting for around 70% of all customer contact. It is therefore essential that telephone access on Day 1 is simple, reliable and consistent.

Contact Centre numbers need be retained and customers will continue to call according to their understanding of where their local contact centre is. Staff would proceed as at present, relying on either existing CRM systems, the online servicing facility within the website, or call transfer to allow them to handle customer requests.

Each site acting as a contact centre will offer the same service performance and call handling standards and it will be necessary, within the Customer Access Strategy, to define what those standards will be. Management to those standards will be co-ordinated centrally although performance management will be the responsibility of the local site manager.

Staff in all contact centres should have the ability to handle all types of call and will require appropriate skills training in the run-up to Day 1. Staff should also have up-to-date access to the full internal telephone directory to enable them to transfer calls efficiently.

There will be a heavy reliance on web-based information about services and it is essential that the website is maintained adequately to provide a useful knowledge base for contact centre staff and customers.

The design of the council's new website along with the service content, application forms and other functionality should be added and fully tested. Subsequent migration from the existing councils' websites should take place on a phased basis using simple redirection from the original sites.

It is important that customers know how to access council services on Day 1 and a marketing campaign should be scheduled to run in the lead up to Day 1. The marketing campaign is likely to stimulate interest and this may result in an influx of calls.

Most critically, however, vesting day coincides with the distribution of the annual council tax notices and this always results in a massive surge of enquiries, often

resulting in a significant reduction in call handling performance which can last for many weeks. It is therefore essential, particularly in the days following the creation of the new council that a flexible resourcing model is in place to give additional capacity and resilience. A resourcing plan based on forecast call volumes should be developed to allow sufficient time for the recruitment of additional temporary staff to cover forecast peaks.

Electronic access is not only an important customer channel it is also a critical support mechanism for the network of contact centres and physical access points that will be in place on Day 1. Even after training, staff in front office functions will rely heavily on the availability of useful, relevant and up-to-date information about all council services and the website will be the main repository for this type of knowledge.

CRM workflow requests will need to be integrated with email addresses to ensure that service requests are directed to the appropriate officer or team.

Other means of access, including SMS (text messages – both inbound and outbound), video-conferencing and web kiosks are currently offered by some, though not all, of the seven councils and in agreeing the Customer Access Strategy, the council must specify how it intends to utilise or withdraw from, such channels. Where these channels are to be retained it will be necessary to develop plans to extend availability across the whole council area. Such development will need to be completed in such time that the availability of new channels can be included in the new council's marketing campaign and reflected in key mail shots such as council tax notices.

5. Adult Services

This directorate operates as a partnership between the County Council and Northumberland Care Trust, which is an NHS body. The Council's Executive Director of Adult Care is also a Director of the Care Trust, and almost all of the Council's statutory responsibilities for adult social care are formally delegated to the Care Trust under a Partnership Agreement. Most staff responsible for statutory adult care functions are NHS employees; the Council's non-statutory direct services, such as residential care, day care, and home care, are managed by the Care Trust but the staff continue to be Council employees.

The Care Trust still makes extensive use of Council corporate support services for most social care activity. Social care budgets are accounted for separately from NHS budgets, using Council financial systems, which also handle payments (e.g. to providers of social care services) and charges (e.g. to service users), both of which involve large numbers of transactions and substantial sums of money. Legal support is also provided by the Council, and the Council owns and maintains most of the premises used for social care purposes and makes them available for Care Trust use without charge. The main IT systems used by the Care Trust for operational social care purposes are supported by the Council's Computer Services Division.

The new Council will need to agree with the Care Trust intended changes to the current Partnership Agreement – which will at a minimum involve a change to the identity of the local authority partner, and may also involve changes to the range of services delegated to the Care Trust and the governance arrangements.

Since adult social services functions are already managed countywide, there will be no requirement for major changes as an immediate result of the creation of the new Council. The Supporting People responsibilities which have also been delegated to the Care Trust do raise some issues, though these are not major. There are also some other functions for which district councils are currently responsible which it may be sensible to manage alongside adult social care.

5.1 Adult social services responsibilities

The County Council's statutory social care responsibilities arise from a range of legislation; they are listed in a schedule to the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, and the Council is required to appoint a Director of Adult Social Services responsible for them.

The core responsibilities are:

- To assess the needs of ill or disabled adults, and when necessary either to arrange services such as home care, day care, or residential care or to make a direct payment to enable the person concerned to make their own arrangements.
- To assess the needs of family members, neighbours and other unpaid carers
- To carry out various functions under mental health legislation, including a statutory role in decisions about whether a person should be compulsorily admitted to hospital

National policy since the 1990s has increasingly emphasised the importance of an integrated approach to adult social care and health services. There are requirements

to co-operate in developing services such as community rehabilitation, “intermediate care” and integrated community equipment services.

Northumberland was a pioneer in developing joint services in the 1990s, and built on this to create the Care Trust in 2002 – the Council was the first in the country to delegate almost all of its adult social services functions to a Care Trust; this model has since been replicated in other areas of the country.

The Council has a discretionary power to provide directly services such as residential care, day care and home care. (It has a duty to arrange and fund them for people who need them, but this is generally fulfilled by commissioning services from independent providers). The Council has in recent years reduced the scale of its in-house care services and refocused them on short-term support designed to help people maintain or recover their independence and on specialist services which are not readily available from independent providers. The Care Trust manages these services under a Management Agreement with the Council.

5.2 Supporting People

The County Council is the Administering Authority for the Supporting People programme, which funds housing-related support services. The day to day running of this programme has been delegated to the Care Trust, to take advantage of the potential synergies with adult social care – but the programme also supports services for children and families, and other services linked to probation, domestic violence, and other needs.

The Supporting People programme funds a range of services provided by district councils, as well as services which were formerly provided by districts but have now transferred to registered social landlords (RSLs). These services include warden support to sheltered housing schemes and community alarm systems. Some of these services, such as community alarms, are provided across all tenures, and are not necessarily managed alongside housing functions. The Care Trust has contracted with one district council community alarm service (Valley Care) to provide a range of related services under social care contracts, including support for “telecare” systems.

The unitary council will become responsible for those district council services which have not transferred to RSLs; it will be necessary to decide by whether some of these services are best located within the adult care directorate rather than with housing functions.

5.3 Disabled facilities grants (DFGs) ⁷⁶

Disabled facilities grants are statutory grants for the adaptation of housing to meet the needs of disabled people, which are currently a district council responsibility. Occupational therapists employed by the Care Trust, as one of the functions delegated from the County Council, assess the needs of disabled people and make the recommendations on the basis of which decisions about DFGs are made.

Transfer of responsibility for DFGs to the unitary authority will raise a range of issues about equity and budgeting. Disabled people across all tenures have a right to apply for DFGs, but in some districts it is usual for adaptations to Council properties, or former Council properties, to be funded by the landlord. This raises significant issues about equity and budgeting, since adaptations funded in this way are free to tenants

⁷⁶ PBS task 37.11

(though paid for by the whole body of tenants through their rent), while DFGs are means-tested. A full analysis of the current situation will be prepared by July 2008 to enable the new Council to made decisions about policies and budgets for adaptations.

Appendices

- 1) How the transition will happen
- 2) Product Breakdown Structure
- 3) Due Diligence Check List
- 4) Programme Gantt Chart to follow
- 5) List of Central Executive Committees

Appendix 1

How the transition will happen

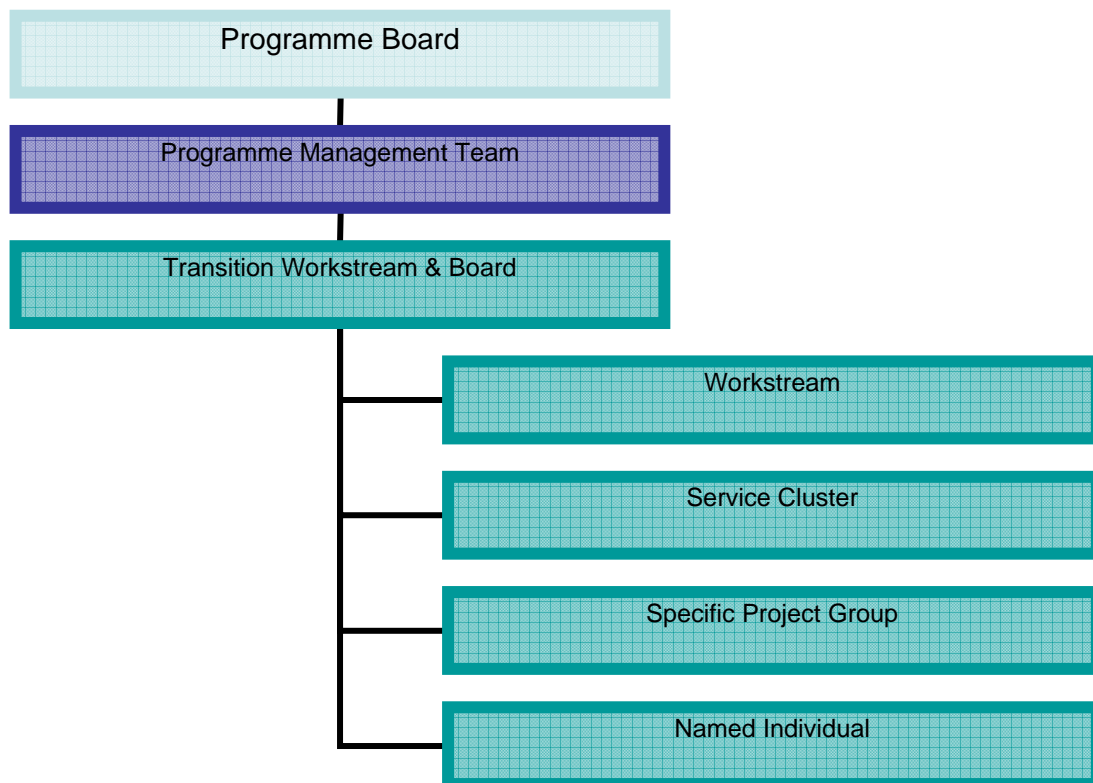
The development of the transition plan has produced a comprehensive list of projects, initiatives or packages of work that must be delivered if the transition process is to be successful in time for 1 April 2009. See Appendix [x]

This has enabled a product breakdown structure to be developed which also identifies deadlines by which each of these must be delivered, key dependencies, constraints and risks.

Project leads are to be identified for each of these products who will be given the responsibility to successfully implement this work and to provide regular monitoring reports to the transition workstream.

It will be the responsibility of the transition workstream to provide a regular monitoring report to programme board and Implementation Executive outlining the overall health of the transition process and any key risks or issues that have arisen which affect the delivery of a successful transition process.

Figure 1 Transition Project Management Structure



The transition workstream will not therefore be responsible for delivering any individual projects or packages of work directly but will be concerned with the ensuring that the overall delivery of all of these products is on track in terms of timescale, quality and cost.

Product Breakdown Structure

As outlined in above a product will be either a specific project or a package of work that must be delivered to ensure that transition takes place effectively. Appendix 2 identifies all of these individual products and the key dependencies between each of these.

Monitoring of these products will be limited to the least level of bureaucracy needed for effective project management. Whilst the Transition Workstream Lead, supported by the Workstream Sponsor should be able to make things happen to bring a product to a successful conclusion, circumstances can arise which are out of their control, power or influence. The monitoring level will therefore be chosen to provide the support that is likely to be needed in terms of resourcing, decision making and issue resolution.

The monitoring level will be as low as practicable so that the Transition Workstream is able to focus on and monitor the overall programme of work effectively.

The Workstream Lead and Workstream Sponsor have determined a proposed monitoring level based on the Charter / Project Brief for the Transition Workstream to consider and agree.

The three proposed levels are as follows:

1. Transition Workstream Sponsor / Programme Management Team
2. Transition Workstream Lead
3. Service Cluster or Workstream Lead

This will be based on the type of project being undertaken, using a scorecard approach against set criteria as detailed below. As with all projects of this nature the level of monitoring will be reviewed based upon the risk profile and progress against timescale.

Categories of projects

A crucial step in the way projects will be managed through the transition workstream will be an initial assessment to decide into which category a product should be placed to determine the level of management that will be required.

For a short, low-risk product a 'light touch' project management process will be required. For anything of any length and complexity, full project management with associated documentation is necessary to maintain effective control.

The assessment of categories must be carried out by the workstream lead or service cluster lead at the earliest opportunity, preferably when the charter is produced. This will enable the transition team and/or programme management team (where appropriate) to consider the assessment alongside the project brief and agree the appropriate level of monitoring.

As a precaution, the product category should be rechecked by the project manager during the development of the Charter to ensure that the monitoring level is still appropriate.

The assessment of each project will determine whether it is:

- Low risk product
- Medium Risk products
- High Risk Products

The basis for assessing the category of a product will be to apply criteria to all projects and allocate a score to each. The resultant total score will then be used to allocate the project a category.

Criteria used for this assessment will be:

- Forecasted project cost
- Forecasted project duration
- Whethet the deadlines is imposed by external agency or body
- Political profile
- Level and nature of stakeholders involved
- Whether or not it require external suppliers
- The answer to the question “Have we done this before?”
- Confidence in delivery
- Critical Path

Using these criteria, the following table will provide a category for the product.

Table One

Question	Small	Meduim	Large
Forecasted project cost	<25k	<100k	>100k
Forecasted project duration	<4 months	4-12 months	>12 months
Externally imposed deadlines	None	Yes	Yes – maybe with penalties
Political profile	None	Ward/Council	Council/National
Stakeholder involvement	Minimal – confined within 1 service or department	Yes – cross-service and/or regular partner involvement	Yes – cross-service/new partners/stakeholder opposition
External suppliers	None	Yes	Yes – maybe new suppliers
Have we done this before?	Yes- similar undertakings have been completed successfully	Yes – similar projects may previously have been undertaken but further development or customisation may be required	Unlikely – significant development will be required
Confidence in delivery	High	Medium	Low
Critical Path	Low	Medium	High

Product Category Scorecard

To ensure that this process is consistently applied the scorecard will be completed for all products when the charter is finalised thereby allocating a category for that product

The guideline below shows how the Product Category Scorecard will be completed. However this is not an absolute process and common sense will also be applied when determining the category:

- For each criterion an 'x' will be placed in the column which best describes the project. For example, if the project is expected to cost between £20,000 and £100,000, an 'x' will be placed into column 3.
- Once an entry for each of the criteria is entered, the number at the top of the relevant columns is placed into the corresponding column for each of the criteria. For example, if an 'x' was entered into column 2 for political profile, then the number 2 was entered into the score column for the criteria.
- Finally on completion of all of the score columns, the scores are added up to give a total score for the project / package of activities / tasks.

If the score was:

Score	Project Category	Monitoring Level
8 - 15	Small	Service/ Workstream Cluster Lead
16 - 27	Medium	Transition Workstream Lead
28 +	Large	Transition Workstream Sponsor / Programme Management Team

Project Category Scorecard						
CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5	SCORE
Cost in £1,000	<5	5-20	20-100	100-1000	>1000	
Length in months	1-3	4-6	6-9	10-11	Full 12	
Deadline imposed externally	No		Yes		Yes, with penalties or tangible financial loss	
Political profile	Insignificant or local	Area interest	Council interest	Regional interest	National interest	
Stakeholder involvement	Single service	Multi service OR regular partners	Multi service AND regular partners	New partners	Stakeholder opposition	
Using external suppliers	None		Yes, known supplier		Yes, new supplier	
Have we done this before?	Many times	One or twice	Not the same as last this		Never	
Confidence in delivery	High		Medium		Low	
Critical Path	Low		Medium		High	

Project Reporting Structure

For those products which have been categorised as **'large high risk products'**, the following project management arrangements are required:

1. Production of project charter, project plan and risk register
These documents are to be produced and signed off by the transition workstream sponsor and/or programme management team within 6 weeks of the identification of the project.
2. Production of issues log and highlight report
These documents are to be produced on a weekly basis and the project manager is to report progress to the transition workstream, to enable any areas of concern and/or decisions regarding action to be taken by the PMT, reducing the impact of non decisions or time lost
3. Production of exception report
This document needs to be produced when there is likely to be a deviation from the project charter or project plan
4. Production of project closure and lesson's learnt
These documents should be completed within 4 weeks of completion of the project and reported to the transition team or programme management team for official sign off

For those products which have been categorised as **'medium projects/package of activities'**, the following project management arrangements are required:

1. Production of project brief, project plan and risk register
These documents are to be produced and signed off by the transition workstream lead within 6 weeks of the identification of the project.
2. Production of issues log and highlight report
These documents are to be produced on a 2 weekly basis and the project manager is to report progress to the service cluster lead, who in turn will report progress to the monthly service cluster lead meeting. A representative of the transition workstream will attend the monthly service cluster lead meetings to enable feedback, back to the weekly transition meeting.
3. Production of exception report
This document needs to be produced when there is likely to be a deviation from the project charter or project plan
4. Production of project closure and lesson's learnt
These documents should be completed within 4 weeks of completion of the project and reported to the transition team for official sign off

For those products which have been categorised as ‘**small projects/tasks**’, the following project management arrangements are required:

1. Production of project brief and project plan

These documents are to be produced and signed off by the service cluster lead within 6 weeks of the identification of the project.

2. Production of issues log and highlight report

These documents are to be produced on a monthly basis and the project manager is to report progress to the service cluster lead, who in turn will report progress, if necessary, to the monthly service cluster lead meeting. A representative of the transition workstream will attend the monthly service cluster lead meetings to enable feedback, back to the weekly transition meeting.

3. Production of exception report

This document needs to be produced when there is likely to be a deviation from the project brief or project plan

4. Production of project closure and lesson’s learnt

These documents should be completed within 4 weeks of completion of the project and reported to the service cluster for official sign off

Communication Management

As part of the Transition Workstream, a small communications sub-group is to be established to liaise with the programme communications team. Following the monthly cluster lead updates to the Transition Workstream, the sub group will distill key messages in relation to the projects and package of activities, to relay to the programme communications team for disseminate.

Transition Project Gantt Chart

Appended to this Transition Plan [x] , is a transition project gantt chart which identifies all of the projects, packages of activities and tasks, to enable the Transition Workstream, Programme Management Team and Programme Management Board to monitor progress at any stage throughout the implementation.

To support the Transition Plan, all project leads are required to produce a detailed plan of how they are going to implement their specific project / package of activities / tasks, which will enable them to individually monitor and report progress when required.

Key Risks and Risk Management

As part of the process for identifying the list of Day 1 imperatives, service clusters will be also asked to identify the risks to successful implementation. These risks will be monitored through a Transition Workstream Risk Register and scored. These risks will then be allocated to the appropriate service cluster lead and/or project lead for them to manage and report on in line with the project reporting structure above. Appendix [x] provides a baseline risk register for the transition plan.

Due Diligence

To ensure that all transition processes do not fall foul of any legal or financial regulation a due diligence check list has been developed. It is proposed that this is used by all transition projects to health check each of their projects during the transition process. This is available at appendix 3

Appendix 2 Product Breakdown Structure (see separate spreadsheet)

Appendix 3

Due Diligence Checklist		
	Y/N	Key Issues, processes, documents
Legal Status		
Do the organisations have the legal capacity to enter into the programme?	Y	Parliamentary orders
Who controls the legal entity?	Y	PMB, JIC
Are requisite legal, probity and decision making frameworks in place for all services	N	Constitution
Business Information		
Financial resource and capacity are in place to deliver the programme?		
Are performance standards agreed?		
Clarify all financial information and produce affordability model		
Are there any VAT implications – partial exemption, accountable bodies?		
Do Service Level Agreements between the new organisation and partners exist?		
Implementation plans in place?		
Strategies in place?		
Service plans in place?		
How are existing policies and procedures affected?		
Staffing		
Identify numbers and status of staff affected		
Provide full TUPE lists (or equivalent) in accordance with model provided		
Produce complete file of terms and conditions		
Identify all outstanding grievances, disputes etc. and how these will be resolved or addressed		
Ensure that staffing orders are followed in terms of continuity of service and pensions		
Property		
Identify all property that will be affected – location, type, nature of occupancy, tenure etc.		
Obtain and amalgamate condition surveys		

Identify terms of occupancy for new organisation and produce licenses/leases if required		
Assets		
Produce complete inventories of all transferring assets (ICT, furniture, plant, vehicles etc.)		
Identify any leases relating to transferring assets		
Ensure that all necessary maintenance agreements, manufacturer warranties and leases can be assigned, transferred or novated.		
Other Issues		
Ensure that full an proper consultation is established with all stakeholders, especially trade unions		
Establish and maintain a communication and public relations strategy at the start of the programme		
Identify any insurance issues		
Identify all industrial relations or staff negotiation issues		
Ensure all services are aware of the programme and involved in the planning		
Identify all existing contractual relationships for services, and how they will be assigned to the new organisation		
Other Considerations		
Review the appropriateness of transition and contingency plans		
Ensure that exit strategies and contingency plans are established for District Council services		

Appendix 5

Full list of Central Executive Committees

	<u>No. of members</u>
<u>Chairman and Vice Chairman</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Council</u>	<u>67</u>
<u>Executive</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Scrutiny (x3)</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Planning</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Rights of Way</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Licensing</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Pensions</u>	<u>5 (+1)</u>
<u>Standards</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Ad Hoc Panels</u>	<u>tbc</u>
<u>Outside Bodies</u>	<u>tbc</u>