

Northumberland Local Government Review Programme

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BLUEPRINT FOR BRAND NEW COUNCIL

COUNCIL leaders have published their first blueprint for a brand new council aimed at saving £17m a year and improving services for residents in Northumberland.

County council and district council leaders in Northumberland have come together to publish their vision of the new single unitary council which will be up and running from April 2009.

The document – “The Whole Council Blueprint Design”- sets out how the new council will be created and organised according to future customer needs.

It is the result of months of work by the joint implementation team (JIT), a team of officers from the county council and district councils set up to manage the successful move towards the new single unitary authority.

Jill Dixon, Programme Director for the joint implementation team, said: “An enormous amount of collaborative work has been going on by the county and district councils since the government gave approval for a new council in December.

“This is the first major document for the new council. It is being sent out to keep our partners informed of progress and it will help ensure we stick to the principles of the original bid.”

The blueprint has been agreed as a working document by the implementation executive – a joint committee set up to take

decisions on local government re-organisation. It is made up of the county council executive and opposition leaders and all six district council leaders, but will be dissolved when the new council is elected in May.

Cllr Peter Hillman, chairman of the implementation executive, said: “The goal of the new council is to really improve services for people in Northumberland. It will keep council tax low and save £17m a year on the current system.

“This is an important step. It is the foundation on which we will build the new council and it shows what can be achieved through teamwork between the district and county councils.

“At the heart of the new council is the will to improve customer services for the people of Northumberland and give residents more of a say in the decisions that affect them.”

Cllr Peter Jackson, Castle Morpeth Borough Council leader and a member of the implementation executive, said: “This document is the start of the process that will take us through to the new council being set up in April 2009 and beyond.

“I am determined to put customer care at the heart of the new council, creating a single, local access to all services, by phone, text, web or email.

“The blueprint is just the start of a process of creating a council that delivers according to local requirements. We have many different communities with different issues and needs and we need the feedback from residents across Northumberland as to how we can meet those needs.”

The blueprint contains details of how local residents will be able to have their say through 27 “Belonging” communities – enabling them to get more involved in decision making in the areas in which they live.

The new council will also make services “go local” through three “Area” committees in west, south east and north Northumberland – each able to make key decisions on priorities and where money is spent.

Copies of the blueprint summary are now being posted and emailed to key organisations across the region to keep them informed of progress and seek their views on which services they think should be delivered centrally and which should be delegated more to a local level. You can access the summary of the blueprint by clicking on <http://www2.northumberland.gov.uk/reports/ofoc/docs/blueprint-summary.pdf>

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NOTES TO EDITORS

You can also access the more detailed document by clicking on the website at www2.northumberland.gov.uk/reports/ofoc/index.html, by emailing generalenquiries@newnorthumberland.org.uk, or by calling 01670 533308.

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