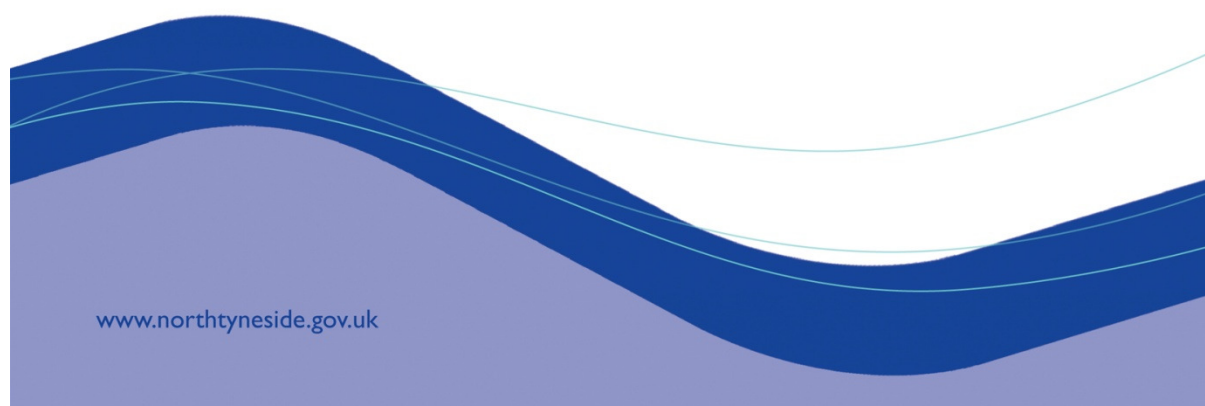




North Tyneside Council

Senior Leadership Team's Progress Report

1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013



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1. Summary

This report sets highlights the areas where progress has been made in the last year.

Progress in 2012/13

Regeneration

- North Tyneside was awarded the top place for inward investment, in a survey by the MJ and Local Futures that took into account connectivity, cost, quality of life and commercial premises.
- Two key sites on the River Tyne North Bank were awarded Enterprise Zone status. Work is underway to improve the infrastructure of the former Swan Hunter site.
- The Business Forum continues to grow with 700 active members. In 2012/13 new sector groups for manufacturing and construction were launched.
- There has been a net increase in the housing supply, which has generated £1.2 million of New Homes Bonus.
- The number of first time buyers reached its largest yearly total for five years and 124 new affordable homes were delivered.

Quality of Life

- The Council recognised the impact of the Government's Welfare Reform programme and is delivering a plan to support people through the changes.
- Started to build new council houses for the first time in 23 years.
- Solutions 4 North Tyneside has been appointed as the Preferred Bidder for Quality Homes for Older People.
- 2,400 people have been supported to live independently and over 95% of eligible customers are now being provided with a personal budget that offers them choice and control over the care and support services that they receive.
- One of the largest social housing solar PV installation projects in the UK was successfully delivered, which will reduce CO2 emissions, save Council house tenants money and generate income for the Council.
- Rates of under 18 conceptions have continued to fall and North Tyneside's progress has been greater than either the North East or England.

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Best Start in Life

- This year saw the best ever results for pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs A*-C, including English and Maths (61%).
- North Tyneside is now the highest area in the region for children at Key stage 2 - 82% of pupils achieving a level 4 in English and Maths.
- 80% of our schools are judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted and none have a notice to improve.
- Ofsted rated our safeguarding and looked after children's services as 'good' overall with 'outstanding' features.
- We currently have the lowest ever rates of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training, at 5%.
- A single point of access has been established. The 0-25 integrated Disability and Additional Needs Service (DANS) will provide all new cases with a joined up approach amongst providers.
- More young people took part in the democratic process after an increase in the number of votes for the Young Mayor in 2012.

Sense of Place

- The Council retained its 5 star Clean Britain award (the highest rating) along with three Green Flag Awards at Rising Sun Country Park, Benton Quarry and Marden Quarry.
- As part of the Olympic and Paralympics Games the Torch Relay attracted 25,000 spectators.
- For the fourth consecutive year, North Tyneside is the safest metropolitan borough in England with a 6.5% decrease compared to 2011.
- The Whitley Bay Customer First Centre is open and work has commenced on refurbishing North Shields Central Library and creating a new Customer First Centre.

21st Century Council

- Over the last two years the CEI Programme has delivered over £33m of savings.
- Established new Business and Technical partnerships with Balfour Beatty and Capita Symonds. This builds on existing partnership working with the Joint Venture with Kier North Tyneside.
- Implemented a shared service for Internal Audit and Risk Management with Northumberland Council.

2. Regeneration

Progress in 2012/13

Economic Growth

- In 2012/13 the second phase of the Business Factory project was expanded to support a higher level of business creation. The project has helped to create 300 new business start-ups in the last 12 months, which has contributed to an increase in the self employment rate from 5.2% in December 2011 to 5.8% in December 2012.

What challenges remain?

- To maintain the improved performance and increase the number of jobs created by new enterprises.

Inward Investment

- The borough was awarded the top place out of 325 local authorities in a national inward investment survey which took into account connectivity, cost, quality of life and commercial premises.

What challenges remain?

- Marketing North Tyneside to international companies in an increasingly competitive market, for example other parts of the UK may be able to offer increased financial incentives. This may have an effect on the ability to maintain the high levels of job creation that have been seen in the past.

North Bank

- The award of two Enterprise Zone sites on the River Tyne North Bank will help the regeneration of the area and boost the local economy.
- Significant external funding, through the ERDF and Homes and Communities Agency, has been secured to deliver infrastructure improvements on the former Swan Hunter site. This work is already underway and bids are being submitted for further funding. In addition a new fixed crane for the former Swan Hunter site has been acquired after two local businesses combined to form Jupiter Offshore Services.
- Planning permission was granted for a major new offshore wind turbine jacket manufacturing plant on the Hadrian Yard site, Wallsend. Work will begin in 2013 and is expected to create 100 jobs during construction and then 700 sustainable jobs when the plant is operational in 2014.

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What challenges remain?

- To develop a cohesive approach with our public and private sector partners to maximise the opportunities the River Tyne can offer for creating an advanced manufacturing hub for the UK and Europe, particularly in the offshore sector and deliver the North Tyneside contribution towards this objective.
- This will include maximising the benefits of Enterprise Zone business rate relief (which must be accessed by March 2015) and the existing external funding to attract new businesses.
- To complete the appointment of the Developer Partner to provide potential tenants with a site and new building option at Jupiter PaRC@Swans.

SME Development

- The Let's Grow grant fund was launched in early 2013 and businesses are being supported to apply for this funding to grow their businesses and claim Hardship Rate Relief where a short-term financial issue has been identified.
- The Business Forum now has 700 active members and in 2012/13 the Business Forum sector groups for manufacturing and construction were launched.
- North Tyneside businesses also have access to a procurement expert through the 'Tender to Win' project.

What challenges remain?

- Undertaking the Account Management role for large businesses previously undertaken by Tyne & Wear Development Company and support businesses to cope with the economic downturn.

Infrastructure

- The annual Area Forum Highway Improvement Programme was completed on time and within budget resulting in marked highway improvements to streets across the borough.
- There has been a strong focus on customer engagement and a postcard questionnaire was sent to all households in the borough asking for views on highway maintenance. The response was positive with around 8,000 returns.

What challenges remain?

- In order to further improve the management of works on the highway the Technical Partnership is proposing to develop a street works permitting system which will be the first of its kind in the North East.

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- Although good progress is being made in relation to improving roads and pavements, there is still a considerable backlog of highways repairs. Maintenance strategies are long term in nature and it may be some time before the network is improved to an extent that significantly raises customer satisfaction.
- While North Tyneside now has several initiatives in place to help combat the affects of future flooding, the borough is still likely to be affected by climate change and with this, further flooding that will have the potential to create damage to local businesses and homes.

Town Centres

- The Retail Centres Task Group was established to support our town centre businesses. This is happening through new initiatives and a marketing and events programme, in addition ten retailers were supported to develop their social media strategies. Vacant commercial property rates in Whitley Bay fell to under 10% for the first time since recording started in 2009.
- The Whitley Bay Customer First Centre is open and work has commenced on refurbishing North Shields Central Library and creating a new Customer First Centre. Cabinet have agreed a preferred option for providing a new Customer First Centre in the former Forum House building in Wallsend.
- Planning permission has been granted and the owners of the Forum Shopping Centre, Wallsend have commenced work to reinvigorate the shopping centre.

What challenges remain?

- In 2012/13 a number of national companies closed that had an impact on the town centres, in addition the trend toward online shopping has continued. This means that the challenge is to continue to support to town centres, for example through the High Street Innovation Fund

Housing Strategy

- £1.2m of New Homes Bonus has been awarded, which reflects the net increase in housing supply in the borough. In 2012 the number of first time buyers reached its largest yearly total for five years
- 124 new affordable homes were delivered in 2012/13, including 33 homes in central Wallsend and 36 in central North Shields. These homes are for those people whose needs cannot be met by the market through partnership working and were delivered by a £2.2m grant awarded from the Homes and Communities Agency's current programme. A further 55 were delivered either through planning obligations or the government's Firstbuy

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- Special housing needs are being met through partnership working, including at Wideopen.
- We continue to tackle private sector empty homes - 84 brought back into use this year through positive interventions by the Council.
- The Council continues to work successfully with developers to encourage and support bids for external schemes, in 2012/13 this has included
 - Work by a housing association partner to reduce long term empty homes, using £240k Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding
 - Projects funded by the Department of Health to reduce the number of winter deaths that are caused by cold housing.
 - Funding to tackle blocks of run-down flats in Rosehill owned by private landlords.
- A new service, based on the Council's housing skills, has been introduced to manage privately rented accommodation.
- Over 500 private landlords are registered with the authority and quarterly forums are held to which they are invited.

What challenges remain?

- Identifying and enabling delivery of the overall future housing needs of the borough.
- Identifying sites and funding to meet the annual shortfall of 479 affordable homes required to meet need
- Meeting the housing and support needs of a range of vulnerable groups to sustain independence.
- To improve housing standards in the 35% non-decent homes in the private sector to reduce ill health.
- Addressing affordable warmth through tackling hard-to-heat homes (e.g. those with solid walls).

3. Quality of Life

Progress in 2012/13

Welfare Reform

- North Tyneside Council, working with partners, has developed a joined up approach to supporting people through the changes by the Government's welfare reform programme.
- A co-ordinated approach to helping residents affected by the reduction in Housing Benefit due to under occupancy rules. This has involved working closely with social landlords and the community and voluntary sector. A further £498,000 has been added to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund to help residents.
- A Local Council Tax Support Scheme has been agreed and a new Local Welfare Provision Scheme has been introduced as a single gateway service for people requesting either social care, supported housing or financial assistance because they have hit a crisis.

What challenges remain?

- It is important that the Council continues to monitor the real impact of welfare reform as different initiatives are implemented.
- Following the introduction of the under occupancy rate, matching available properties with need for those who may want to move will be a key challenge

Adults Personalisation and Independence

- 2,400 people have been supported to live independently in their own homes.
- Over 95% of our eligible customers have been provided with a personal budget, offering them choice and control over the care and support services they receive.
- Over 9% of our customers with a learning disability have been supported to access paid employment, and almost 7% of customers with a learning disability are accessing voluntary work placements.
- 1,500 episodes of reablement have been provided to people of the borough, and for those who access this service following a stay in hospital, almost 89% are still living independently in their own homes 3 months later.
- 27,602 pieces of equipment and adaptations have been provided to support people to live independently within their own homes, and 93% of these were delivered within 7 days.

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- We have reduced the time our customers wait for an occupational therapy assessment from 11 weeks to 7 weeks, to ensure that people are assessed more quickly.
- The savings target of £6.4 million has been reached during the year 2012/13.

What challenges remain?

- To maintain quality services in a period of rising demand but a reduction in resources.
- Increasing affordable choice and control for individual customers.

Health and Wellbeing

- Rates of under 18 conceptions have continued to fall in North Tyneside, our progress has been greater than either England or the North East region. The 2011 rate equates to a 44.5% reduction from the North Tyneside baseline rate of 58.2 per 1,000 in 1998.
- The prevalence of childhood obesity in year 6 children rose to 22.0% in 2011/12. This represented a 10% increase from 2010/11. However, early indications from the 2012/13 data suggests that the figure has dropped back down below 20%.
- There has been a gradual improvement with breast feeding in the last few years. Latest provisional data for 2012/13 suggests the 6-8 week continuation rate has improved significantly at 42.8%, compared to 39.2% in 2011-12 and 34.0% in 2010/11. However these rates continue to be below the national average.

What challenges remain?

- Latest estimated figures suggest that smoking prevalence in 2011 in North Tyneside was 22.6% compared to 20% in England. Rates in routine and manual workers remain at around 35%.
- North Tyneside has one of the highest rates of alcohol related hospital admissions in the North East (3061 per 100,000 in 2011) and early data for 2012 suggests that the rate is still rising.
- Injuries due to falls in older people remain significantly higher than the average for England (2,487 per 100,000 in 2011 compared with 1,642 in England as a whole).

Housing (tenant services)

- Rent collection target was achieved; the proportion of rent collected at the end of March 2013 was 98.05%, the best performance in the last 5 years.

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- Empty home turnaround time continues to improve; our average re-let performance has improved from 33.59 days at the end of 2011/12 to 29.92 days at the end of March 2013.
- The number of people in temporary accommodation has fallen. At the end of March 2013 there were 23 households in temporary accommodation which is an improvement on March 2012 when 28 households were in temporary accommodation.
- Homelessness preventions continue to perform well. During 2012/13 the Housing Advice Team dealt with 2,942 enquiries, of which 1,309 were taken forward for further investigation. As a result of the continued focus upon homelessness prevention activity homelessness was prevented for 962 households and 168 households were accepted as homeless. The performance is slightly lower than achieved during 2011/12 which saw 1,005 cases prevented and 128 acceptances. The current economic climate would appear to be having an adverse impact in this area with the trend being similar to that being reported elsewhere.
- Solutions 4 North Tyneside has been appointed as the Preferred Bidder for Quality Homes for Older People.
- New council homes are being built after planning permission was obtained for new build at Station Road and Byrness Court. Work commenced in February 2013 on the 12 new units at Station Road. Planning permission was also obtained to demolish Bude Court and Byrness Court with service disconnections and pre-demolition surveys being undertaken. Work has commenced on the development of a longer term strategy linked to Annitsford Farm and other HRA land holdings.

What challenges remain?

- Working with the Preferred Bidder will continue to progress the Quality Homes for Older People project towards Financial Close. This will enable the build phase of the programme to commence from October and progress over the next 2 years and 10 months.
- To develop a range of options for the delivery of new build council homes over the next 5 plus years.
- Ensuring the arrangements for maintaining high standards on estates are effective. Working closely with environmental services to delivery high quality responsive services on our estates.

CO₂

- The solar panel project was completed with 1503 installations in total completed. It was one of the largest social housing solar PV installation projects in the UK and the benefits included reducing CO₂ emissions, saving tenants money and creating income for the Council.

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- The Council is aspiring to meet the Government's Carbon target 5 years early by reducing its carbon emissions by 34% (against 1990 levels) to 28,600 tonnes in 2015. This year carbon emissions have been reduced by 5%
- There has already been a 19% overall drop in the Borough's carbon footprint (14th highest level reduction in the UK) which currently stands at 6 tonnes per capita
- A further 36 Council buildings have been added to the 52 top-energy using buildings already in the carbon budget monitoring process. This now means that the Council's top 88 energy consuming buildings have carbon emission reduction targets that are being performance managed on a monthly basis

What challenges remain?

- To continue to help the borough reduce its carbon footprint. Carbon emissions may increase as a result of potential economic growth within the borough over the coming years including the developments around River Tyne North Bank and the anticipated growth in housing.

Public protection

- In excess of 60 businesses are now registered with the Trader Register and this number continues to grow; and the Trader Register scheme continues to promote good quality legitimate business and marginalise unscrupulous traders
- 393 disabled facilities grants have been delivered to applicants this year
- Delivery of business advice through the Safer Food Better Business coaching scheme; and other food safety promotions such as the Food Safety week which is an annual event
- Manifest checks and surveillance of 35,164 tonnes of imported food from outside of the EU took place
- As part of a nationally-funded initiative, the Service has recently authorised an Illegal Money Lending Team at Birmingham City Council to detect instances of illegal money lending activity in the Borough

What challenges remain?

- The number of food businesses with ratings has risen dramatically from 600 at launch to 1,035 however the service must meet the challenge of inspecting any new and changed food business within the set priorities

4. Best start in life

Progress in 2012/13

Education and Development

- North Tyneside is now the highest in the region for children at Key stage 2 - 82% of pupils achieving a level 4 in English and Maths. We also have above average progression between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in both English and Maths.
- This year the borough achieved the best ever results after 61% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths.
- 2nd in the country for Looked After Children achieving 5 GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths (37.5%).
- 80.2% of our schools are judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, none have a notice to improve.

What challenges remain?

- Gap between the lowest performing and the rest at Early Years Foundation Stage has widened (to 31.4%). We have not hit our target of 27.5% despite consistent performance overall.
- Average Points per student (A levels) have declined by 22 points from last year, against a national decline of 14 points.
- The need to continue to narrow the achievement gap between vulnerable learners and their peers.

Youth Provision

- All services in North Tyneside for young people were rated as 'Good' or 'Very Good' by at least 64% of respondents to the Young Persons Survey in 2012.
- The Children and Young People Provision group has been established (as per the Creating a Young Person's Borough Strategy) to ensure the council and partners develop an integrated youth offer.

What challenges remain?

- Anti social behaviour committed by young people (almost a third of that committed in the borough is by those 18years or under) is highlighted by residents as a top priority for attention.

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Early intervention and Prevention

- Have established a 0-25 integrated Disability and Additional Needs Service (DANS) providing a single point of access and a joined up approach amongst providers.
- The numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan have fallen in line with the National average.
- The Supporting Families Programme has been established in the borough incorporating the Government's Troubled Families Programme. All year 1 families have been identified and over 75% have engaged.

What challenges remain?

- The numbers of Looked After Children remain much higher than the National average.
- 1 in 5 children and young people are still living in poverty in North Tyneside.

Youth Employment

- Lowest ever not in education, employment and training rates for 16-18 year olds currently at 5%.
- 58% of young people leaving Key Stage 5 go into Higher Education, above the national average.
- The participation of 17 year olds in education or training at 88% is top quartile.

What challenges remain?

- The proportion of 18-24 year olds claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is slightly higher than the North East average and well above the national average. In March 2013, there was a claimant rate of 11.1% for this age group in North Tyneside, compared to 10.9% for the North East and 7.1% for Great Britain.
- Participation and attainment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic (STEM) qualifications remains low.
- There has been an 18% drop in university applications, which was the 13th biggest drop in England in 2012.

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Decreasing Youth Offending

- There has been a 30% reduction in the numbers of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System since last year.

What challenges remain?

- Young offenders' engagement in suitable education, employment or training has seen a decline in performance this year.
- The integration of the Youth Offending and Prevention Service and the Universal Youth Service into an integrated Youth Support Service will provide improved early help and support to vulnerable young people. This will be concluded in 2013/14.

5. Sense of Place

Progress in 2012/13

Coastal Development

- The coastal regeneration programme, which is funded from the Capital Plan and supported by £1.99 million from the Coastal Communities Fund, will improve the heritage of North Shields Fish Quay and the public realm around the Spanish City Dome. This will continue to increase tourism, business opportunities, jobs and improvements for people of the borough.

What challenges remain?

- To deliver the regeneration of Spanish City Island.

Street Scene

- The Council retained its 5 star Clean Britain award (the highest rating) along with a Gold award for being the best medium sized local authority and the national winner overall.
- The 'Big Spring Clean' is in its sixth year. There have been 23 community clean ups so far, 12 up my street events, 329 graffiti incidents removed, and over 400 warning letters sent to residents regarding problems with household wheeled bins being left out in lanes.
- Environmental Wardens have visited all town centre businesses and reminded them of their duty of care relating to litter and waste storage and collection. 12 businesses have been involved in clean-up events.
- Our target of 16 grass cuts was delivered across the borough.

What challenges remain?

- Despite hitting the Litter survey targets and running successful clean up campaigns the 2012 residents survey tells us that 35% of residents believe there to be a problem with rubbish and litter. With 31% seeing clean streets as an area in need of improvement.
- Weekly refuse collections have been maintained for the next five years after a Government grant was awarded. The funding will also be used to improve waste awareness and recycling.

Culture, parks and heritage

- Volunteer programmes and community involvement opportunities are a key feature in this area, for example
 - Parks volunteers worked 619 days in 2012/13,
 - 7 Friends of Parks groups are in place,
 - Libraries, Community Centres and Tourist Information Centres implemented a volunteer scheme this year attracting 24 volunteers,
 - Sport volunteers worked 10,000 hours, and 6 volunteers have gained employment as casual sports coaches with the council
- As part of the Olympic and Paralympic Games the Torch Relay on 15th June attracted 25,000 spectators. 'Go for Gold' summer holidays programme was well attended by 17,113 children and young people.
- As part of the Excellent Parks Programme Phase 1 at Wallsend Parks is nearing completion, work has been delayed due to the weather. Phase 2 work has commenced. Improvement works at Killingworth Lakeside Park are underway.
- 3 Green Flag Awards were achieved at Rising Sun Country Park, Benton Quarry Park and Marden Quarry Park.
- A comprehensive events and holiday activities programme was delivered with 11,204 people attending the Parks Events Programme, the Events and Festivals Programme attracting 191,309 people and 74,840 adults and 31,262 children attending Library/Community Centre Events.
- In libraries the Premier Library Ease Card was launched in October (146 cards sold by end of March), a virtual library has been created offering 24/7 services and Wi-Fi has been installed at the Whitley Bay CFC and White Swan Centre.
- 50 new allotment plots were created in 2012/13 taking the total to 1,978.
- A number of site-specific Art Projects have been delivered, including
 - the 3rd Shimmer Event successfully attracting 16,000 people;
 - 'Connecting Light', a digital light installation along Hadrian's Wall starting at Segedunum Roman Fort as part of the London 2012 Festival;
 - 'Big Pull' Artwork installed at Howdon Library, funded by Big Lottery Fund.
 - The Dome in Whitley Bay hosted Mariner 9, the world première exhibition by Canadian Artist, Kelly Richardson, attracting over 10,000 people and national and international media coverage.
- VisitNorthTyneside.com went live on 18th March. Visitor guide produced and distributed. Annual visitor survey completed and 98.9% satisfied with their visit, an increase from 97.1% in 2011.

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What challenges remain?

- To complete the construction and open Foxhunters sports pavilion.
- To regenerate Northumberland Park, from autumn 2013.

Crime and disorder

- North Tyneside remained the safest metropolitan borough in England, for the fourth consecutive year. Total recorded crime fell by 6.5%; this was 506 less offences than last year.
- Recorded Anti Social Behaviour was 9.7% lower with 1,252 less incidents than previous year.
- The number of deliberate fires attended by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service decreased by 40% from 560 last year to 336 this year.
- Examples of the work that has contributed to these successes have included the work by the Integrated Offenders Management service, the ParkWatch scheme, the CoastWatch scheme, childsafe and the night time economy initiatives such as street pastors.

What challenges remain?

- The major issue is theft from vehicles. This increased by 33% (from 332 to 442). However, this is not an issue peculiar to North Tyneside, which remained best-performing in its group of 15 most similar areas and second in Northumbria.

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6. 21st Century Council

Progress in 2012/13

Structure and shape and form of organisation

- Established new partnerships with Balfour Beatty and Capita Symonds.
- Implemented a shared service for Internal Audit and Risk Management with Northumberland Council.
- Remodelled the Values, Behaviour and Skills Framework to support the Individual Performance Review process for 2013/14.
- Delivered the L21C programme to build leadership capability across the Council.
- Delivered a Culture Change Programmes in service areas to enhance performance.
- Appointment of a new Head of Service for Business and Economic Development.

What challenges remain?

- Further organisational restructuring to ensure the organisation is fit for purpose.
- Building on our engagement strategies with employees.

Enabling Democracy

- There has been a review of the Constitution and associated documents.
- The Enabling Democracy Network is supporting work to increase voter participation, particularly through the move to Individual Elector Registration.
- A corporate approach to Member communications is being reviewed.

What challenges remain?

- There will be a review of the Member development programme and officer development programme, focussing on governance and skill development to support the democratic decision making process

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Traded Services

- A North Tyneside Trading Company has been created and the first Business Case was approved in March 2013.
- Law and Governance are exploring trading their legal services to other public and third sector organisations, jointly with Newcastle City Council. They are also collaborating with Northumbria Police to build resilience.
- The Commercial Services team provide the client monitoring service for the Schools PFI for Darlington Borough Council.

What challenges remain?

- Delivering the financial target for trading activity, which includes opportunities outside of the North Tyneside Trading Company.

Change, Efficiency and Improvement Programme

- Over the last two years the CEI Programme has delivered over £33m of savings.
- Following a procurement exercise a contract was awarded to Balfour Beatty Workplace to deliver the 'Business Package' of services and Capita Symonds to deliver the 'Technical Package'.
- A shared Internal Audit and Risk Management Service between North Tyneside Council and Northumberland has been implemented.

What challenges remain?

- Continuing to operate in an environment of reduced resources.
- To ensure effective governance and monitoring of performance of the Partnerships' contracts continue and to embed the new service delivery arrangements, supporting the client and corporate core.

Demographics and future proofing

- Information from the 2011 Census, which was released in 2012, is enabling the council to better understand the demands of its current and future population. This information will be used during the planning of future service provision.
- 2011 Census based equality and diversity data, at local authority level, has been published on the Council's website.

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What challenges remain?

- To provide more detailed analysis on the implications of future changes.

Excellent intelligence

- The creation of corporate wide Networks, including a Performance and Intelligence, has increased the Council's ability to develop shared intelligence. For example the Communications and Engagement Network is sharing learning from engagement activities to reduce future costs.
- The Residents' Survey, which took place in 2012, has provided decision makers with a detailed understanding of the priorities and levels of satisfaction among local residents in relation to the council, its services and the local area.
- Developing Information Governance systems and Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) to enable the use of the Council's information and creation of knowledge.

What challenges remain?

- To build on the success of the 'Voice your Choice' campaign to establish new ways of engaging and communicating with local residents and communities. Only 30% of residents currently think that they can influence decisions which affect their area.

Customer First

- In 2012/13, the customer satisfaction score was 91.2% over the year. 73% of all calls answered by the Contact Centre were answered within 20 seconds, and 92% of all calls offered were answered.
- The Council has developed a 'Customer First' approach. 60% of residents say the council keeps residents very/ fairly well informed and the numbers of formal complaints, while already at a very low baseline, have been reduced by a further 8% in the last year.

What challenges remain?

- To complete and open the Customer First Centres in Whitley Bay, North Shields and Wallsend.
- To ensure that we keep up to date with our customers views and opinions on how they want to interact with the Council, for example providing multi – access channels to customer advice and support or implementing technology to assist residents where appropriate.