

Shaping our future together

Our medium-term plan update for 2020-21



let's talk
Newcastle

Newcastle
City Council 

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1. Foreword from Leader of the Council, Councillor Nick Forbes

Running throughout this budget is our commitment to support all residents and protect our environment. Our ambitions for Newcastle remain steadfast despite political turmoil nationally and a changing local landscape.

We will continue to provide essential services for our most vulnerable residents, attract new jobs to the city and rise to global challenges such as climate change.



However, the government has once again failed to provide any long-term certainty around local authority funding and the continuation of one-year spending rounds means it is difficult to plan for Newcastle's future.

What is clear is that, despite statements to the contrary, austerity is not yet over. At best it has only been paused. Despite pledges in the run up to the general election, government has already deviated from these with recent announcements of a further 5% cut to budgets across many departments.

Nationally since 2010 local authorities have lost a combined £16 billion. By the end of this budget cycle Newcastle will have lost £327 million, an astonishing £2,481 per household.

The Spending Round and our latest one-year settlement does provide a small amount of additional funding; however, this equates to only 3.3% of what has already been taken from us and comes with the assumption from government that councils will increase Council Tax and make full use of the adult social care precept.

Once again, we are faced with the difficult choice to increase Council Tax by 1.95% and use the 2% adult social care precept increase to help towards the rising cost of caring for older people and some of the most vulnerable in Newcastle.

Running throughout our budget is the desire for the city to step forward and tackle emerging challenges; such as addressing the climate change emergency, reducing the negative impact poor air quality has on the health of residents and responding to the potential impacts of Brexit.

Our ambitious plans to tackle the global challenge of climate change will help the city achieve net zero by 2030. Building on our strong history of taking a partnership approach, we are already working with residents, businesses and organisations on how we can show real leadership in every sector of the city. We have seen some success already; in the last 12 months our own carbon footprint has reduced by 13%.

As the additional funding we will receive from government this year is one-off money, with no clear commitment it will continue - it could vanish as quickly as it has appeared. We will use this additional money on a series of specific one-off investments to improve services, facilities and the environment, with a specific focus on creating the infrastructure to help address climate change.

This includes planting more than 1,000 trees, continuing our roll out of efficient street lighting and improving electric car infrastructure in Newcastle.

Alongside this we will continue to support communities across Newcastle, ensuring all families can live healthy, safe and happy lives. This means upgrading play parks, improving technology in our libraries and investing in community buildings. We know that fly-tipped rubbish, litter and other environmental crimes are of the highest concerns for residents, which is why we are proposing an additional £1.1 million to introduce rapid response teams and increase our enforcement activities to tackle the issue.

We continue to transform many of our care services, making sure they are as effective and efficient as possible and have the best outcomes for anyone who uses them. However, the demand for support from these services outweighs the resources available. We continue to campaign and lobby Government for a national solution to the social care crisis.

We know businesses remain committed to our city and are looking to invest in Newcastle and we will continue to work with them to create more and better jobs.

There are difficult decisions to come, but we remain committed to maintaining Newcastle as the Great North City.

I would like to thank all residents, businesses and communities who submitted their views as part of this consultation.

2. Statement from the Chief Executive, Pat Ritchie

In this document, I am pleased to outline our plans for delivering on year two of our medium-term plan. When we published the three-year plan, I was clear we would continue to deliver on our ambitions, transforming services and achieving positive change across the city.

We remain committed to this ambition. We face increased pressures on our children and adult social care services however, we are broadly on track to achieve our financial and delivery targets.



Despite recent political announcements at a national level, the ongoing financial challenge facing the council has not gone away. We continue to mitigate the long-term impacts austerity has had on the city as well as increased pressure on services and changing expectations and demands from residents. Our response to the complexity of these challenges is to continually innovate, transforming services and, of course, supporting the city's most vulnerable people.

The issue of climate change demands decisive action with some difficult trade-offs. This is reflected in our ongoing approach. We are leading the city's response to the climate emergency, bringing together key partners, residents and experts. Working collectively, we are developing immediate actions and longer-term plans to reduce our carbon emissions. We will continue to invest in the capacity and infrastructure needed to respond to this global challenge. This document sets out recent progress and what we will do in the coming year.

Previously, I have highlighted the need to manage ongoing risk and uncertainty including future local government funding, Universal Credit rollout and Brexit. Whilst the long-term impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on our communities and businesses is still unknown, we remain committed to supporting the economic resilience of the city.

The national political context led to postponement of the expected Spending Review at the end of 2019. Whilst the one-year Spending Round contained some welcome additional one-off funding for councils, we remain cautious. We will invest these temporary monies wisely to benefit residents. Yet, our overall financial challenge remains so the need to achieve tough savings targets and transform services continues.

Our ambition for Newcastle is undiminished. Our plans will continue to drive growth and investment whilst providing value for money, high-performing services. We have been at the forefront of service transformation in recent years. We have taken bold decisions, such as changing the way we deliver leisure services and sustaining the city's much-loved parks. These decisions are delivering real benefits for people. Alongside this, we are seeing impressive new housing growth and investment in a road network fit for the future. Flagship developments like Newcastle Helix underline our ambition for the city to be a world leader in research, innovation and smart use of data.

Working with councils in North Tyneside and Northumberland and the Combined Authority Mayor, we are moving ahead to create a strong and inclusive economy across the North of Tyne, connecting people to new opportunities generated from £600 million of additional investment in the area.

We can only achieve our ambitions by working closely with communities, partners and businesses, and through the commitment and dedication of our staff in the face of ongoing challenges. I want to thank them again for the great service they provide for our city.

3. Financial assurance statement from Director of Resources, Tony Kirkham

The council must set a balanced budget each year. As the council's designated finance officer, I have a legal duty to report to City Council in March 2020 on the robustness of the council's budget and the adequacy of its reserves.

The council has a strong track record of developing and delivering robust financial plans. In 2012, the council set out a three-year budget which left us better prepared to support the city through a prolonged period of reduction in public sector spending. In the face of continued austerity and the ensuing financial pressures, we again produced a three-year budget in 2017 which looked forward to 2020.

In 2019, we set out our approach to adapting to further anticipated budget reductions over the medium-term to 2022. This was against a continued very challenging fiscal backdrop, which has seen concerns raised about the financial sustainability of many high-profile councils, requiring specific government intervention.

Although the government broadly confirmed its intention for 2020-21, as set out in the Spending Round in the provisional local government settlement, there is an unprecedented level of uncertainty in relation to ongoing financial support for councils. As such it is vital that we take a pragmatic and prudent approach to setting the council's budget for 2020-21.

My current assessment is that, although the council is facing some in-year pressures, we are largely on track to achieve the tough budget limits for 2019-20. However, this may require calling on some of our reserves set aside for this purpose. The proposals set out can secure a balanced budget for 2020-21 and provide a firm basis for the development of the budget for future years.

Reserves, whilst relatively low, are adequate for the risks we face and can support the transformation programme that is set out. However, reserves are a one-off source of funding and the council needs to make permanent reductions in its net expenditure. As a result, reserves cannot be used to avoid permanent savings.

I am also confident that, subject to the approval of individual business cases, the plans outlined for capital investment can be funded through available capital receipts and resources, and the income or cost reductions from those investments.



4. The national funding context

One year into the council's three-year plan, we had expected a comprehensive review of public spending as part of government's planned Autumn Spending Review.

Instead, in the context of national political uncertainty, government announced a one-year Spending Round for 2020-21. Headlines from this included:

- **Inflationary increase in Revenue Support Grant and business rates.**
- **Ability for councils to levy a further 2% adult social care precept and an additional 2% on Council Tax.**
- **£1 billion from a new social care grant** – this could mean around £7.0 million for Newcastle to address adult social care and children social care cost pressures.
- **Better Care Funding will increase by 3.4%** – this could mean around £0.5 million for Newcastle, with spend to be agreed with health partners.
- **A real-term increase in the Public Health Grant** – this could mean around £0.7 million extra for Newcastle, though this funding may come with additional burdens.
- **Additional £7.1 billion increase in funding for schools by 2022-23.**
- **Additional £700 million funding for children with special educational needs** – we await details on how much extra funding we will receive next year.
- **The Troubled Families Programme will receive continued funding** – we await details on how it will operate next year.

We will receive some additional, mostly one-off, monies from government as part of the one-year funding Spending Round announced by the Chancellor in September 2019. This was confirmed by the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (December 2019), and while the final settlement is not expected to be confirmed until the end of February 2020, we do not expect it to change. Our planning assumptions are set out in Appendix 1.

Whilst we welcome any increase in funding from government, even if it is short-term, we must be cautious in the local spending commitments we make based on a one-year spending round. The estimated additional resource of £10.8 million for us in 2020-21 is mostly one-off monies. On this basis, it would be wrong for us to make commitments to increased spending beyond the one-year funding offered by government.

And, of course, the latest round of funding comes on the back of nine years of national funding cuts combined with rising cost pressures on councils. In short, the temporary increase announced by government for some local services does not begin to reverse the impact of over £300 million cumulative cuts and cost pressures across our services since 2010.

This means we must continue to deliver on our savings and service reform plans. Our decisions on setting Council Tax must be based on fairness and sustaining vital local services for the long-term; not on one-off grants announced by government. Government

assumes that all local authorities will increase Council Tax by the maximum amount in 2020-21 (i.e. 2% plus the increase in the adult social care precept).

Therefore, to set a balanced budget in 2020-21, we have no choice but to increase the amount of income raised through Council Tax. Our financial plans include increasing core Council Tax by 1.95%, which will increase income by £2.2 million (based on an assumed 1% increase in the Council Tax base). We will use this income to avoid making further reductions to services beyond those already set out in the budget report and its appendices. This increase in Council Tax is below the level that is defined as excessive by the Secretary of State for the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

In addition, we will apply government's Council Tax precept for adult social care of 2% to help fund the rising cost of providing adult social care services. This will also generate an additional £2.2 million of Council Tax income (again, based on an assumed 1% increase in the Council Tax base) to help support vital services for older and vulnerable people in our city.

5. Keeping our three-year plan on track, delivering our priorities

As we move into the second year of our medium-term plan, Shaping our future together, our focus is to keep our finances firmly on track, sustaining vital services, protecting the most vulnerable in the city, making prudent investments in future growth and assets, achieving planned savings and managing cost pressures. Delivery of year one is largely on track.

We will receive some additional, mostly one-off monies from government as part of the one-year funding Spending Round announced by the Chancellor in September 2019. This was confirmed by the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (December 2019). While the final settlement is not expected to be confirmed until the end of February 2020, we do not anticipate it will change.

In the absence of a fair, long-term funding settlement from government that is based on local need, we will use this one-year settlement sensibly – delivering on our stated priorities and, where possible, going further or accelerating our plans. However, we are clear; any temporary, additional funding from government, does not ease pressure on our budget overall and we must continue to make necessary savings and invest in transforming services to sustain them for the long-term.

This report focuses on how we will invest those monies and should be read alongside supporting documents, all available on our website: www.newcastle.gov.uk/budget

- Appendix 1 – Revenue and capital plan 2020-21
- Appendix 2 – Summary of service proposals 2020-21
- Appendix 3 – Cumulative impact assessment 2020-21
- Appendix 4 – Consultation report 2020-21
- Integrated impact assessments for changes to services 2020-21
- Medium-term plan documents 2019-2020 to 2021-22

We published our draft plans for 2020-2021 in December 2019 to allow residents and organisations to understand our proposals and comment. People were encouraged to have their say via online surveys, social media and face to face sessions with organisations such as Connected Voice (formerly the Newcastle Council for Voluntary Sector), Elders' Council, Disability Forum, Healthwatch and North East Chamber of Commerce.

150 individuals and organisations provided their views on our draft plans, these have been set out in Appendix 4 of this document and reflected in our updated integrated impact assessments (IIA). We thank everyone who took the time to comment on the plans, and we commit to continuing to work with residents, businesses and partners across the city in shaping our future together. City Council will debate and vote on this plan at their meeting on 4 March 2020.

In the following sections we set out our priorities and funding plans for:

- Employment : creating more and better jobs
- Education and skills : the best learning and opportunities for all
- Environment : a clean, green and safe Newcastle
- Supporting the most vulnerable people in our city
- Health and social care : a healthy, caring city
- Housing : building more and better homes
- Transforming your public services

6. Employment : creating more and better jobs

Being in good-quality work improves security, dignity, self-respect and hope for the future. In our three-year plan, we have committed Newcastle to be a city where everyone, regardless of background or circumstances, has a choice of good-quality, fairly paid job opportunities.

We will continue to drive growth in all that we do, supporting the creation of more and better jobs through inward investment and supporting local businesses to grow, and funding our ambitions for the city. This is more important as we must move to raising more of the money we spend through retaining business rate income.

In response to the global recession in 2008 and subsequent government austerity, the council and key partners kept the city's economy going through a period of uncertainty. Through our investment in Newcastle Helix and the Stephenson Quarter, we have laid the foundations for current and future economic growth, as well as signalling our ambition to investors to see the city continue to grow.

Indeed, during the past few years, Newcastle Helix has become an exemplar of council-led investment and development, which as one of the biggest urban regeneration projects in the UK, will deliver substantial, positive benefits for people, including:

- 4,000 jobs
- 450 new homes
- A major UK hub for scientific research, technology and sustainability, including being home to two national innovation centres, in data, and ageing.

Preparing the city's economy to respond post-Brexit

In the past year, we have continued to deliver economic growth; developing key sites; investing in jobs and skills; attracting inward investment, growth and new jobs. More Newcastle residents are working and unemployment is at its lowest level since 2005, at 5.4% (October 2018-September 2019).

Now, as the UK has withdrawn from the EU, we remain committed to supporting the city's economy. We are facing a period of real economic uncertainty. In the short-term there is a risk that ongoing uncertainty about the future relationship with the EU during the transition period leads to economic downturn. In the medium-term, regardless of the outcome of ongoing discussions during the transition period, uncertainty over the UK's longer-term trading relationship with the EU is likely to continue for some time.

We need the capacity to support the city through these challenges ensuring continued jobs growth and economic resilience in Newcastle. And, we need to be ready to take advantage of opportunities from North of Tyne Combined Authority as well as government plans to invest in infrastructure.

Securing world-class attractions and sustaining valued city and community events

Despite pressures of austerity, we have attracted national and global events to Newcastle. These have brought visitors, spending and jobs to the city's economy. These events include the Heineken Champions and Challenge Cup Finals and Great Exhibition of the North. These showcased Newcastle as a modern, vibrant place to live, work and invest. And such events provide opportunities for our own residents to get involved, enjoy, and be inspired.

Alongside nationally and internationally important events, we have helped to sustain key city and community celebrations, notably Pride, the Mela, Newcastle's Christmas Market and Chinese New Year. These events give all our residents the chance to celebrate the vibrancy, diversity and openness of Newcastle.

In 2020, we will continue to invest in an exciting programme of big events such as rugby league's showcase Magic Weekend, This is Tomorrow music festival and hosting the national Pride celebrations, whilst also providing additional support and funding for smaller, community events that play an important role in the city's social and community life.

Investing in the city's strategic property assets

Newcastle is already a great city in which to do business. We recognise we are increasingly competing with cities across the world for investment, growth and jobs, and we can never stand still or be complacent. So, we will continue to invest in the city, ensuring businesses of all sizes can thrive and grow.

Last year, we announced an ambitious programme of investment in property assets. This year we can commit to going further and faster in three key areas:

- **Walker Quay** investment will contribute to our vision for the North Bank of Tyne, help sustain businesses and jobs in the area, whilst delivering further investment and jobs growth. This will increase the capacity of the quay, enabling existing and new quay users to grow;
- **Grainger Market** has been at the heart of Newcastle since 1835, attracting six million visits a year and offering a wide range of goods and foods. It's part of the social fabric and history of the city, a place where people can meet with each other and where family traders can make a living and has recently been voted Britain's Favourite Market for 2020. Recognising the challenges facing the retail industry nationally, we are committed to investing in the future of the market. We have already refurbished its entrances, and a £3 million redevelopment of the roof is underway, planned for completion this year. We will also work with traders and partners to raise the profile of the Grainger Market. This will bring it in line with other successful markets in the UK, putting it on a stable financial footing and guaranteeing its future for the next 20 years.
- **Eldon Square** is a great asset in the heart of the city that is performing well and provides income for the council. Yet, we know the retail environment across the UK is extremely challenging. We need to continue to work with the operator Intu, to sustain and build this positive asset for the city, and will explore options to diversify the retail offer, providing more experiential attractions.

7. Education and skills : the best learning opportunities for all

We want Newcastle to be recognised as a great place to be born, grow up, raise a family and develop a career. Having the best start in life sets us up for better learning, improved opportunities for life and better career prospects.

Working in partnership with schools enables us to raise standards and educational attainment. We are aiming to tackle long-term educational challenges of attendance, improving attainment and enabling more young people to access higher education.

Working with partners to offer help to families who need it ensures we are protecting the most vulnerable in our city. Intervening early to tackle problems before they escalate is key to our approach.

We are experiencing rising demand and greater complexity in our children requiring social care. We believe these demands are linked to the pressures on families resulting from national welfare reforms and government's reductions in support services to families most in need.

We have established an ambitious transformation programme, Right Child, Right Care, to intervene earlier to support more children to remain safe and be well cared for at home. For those children that do need to come into our care, we want their experience of growing up in Newcastle to be as positive as their peers. We will continue to make the case to government on funding for children's social care and will seek additional funding to deliver our three-year vision. Through our programme, we are:

- Investing in our workforce so they have the skills and capacity to provide high-quality early support to vulnerable children and families.
- Continuing to grow our fostering service so that more vulnerable children can grow up in loving family homes.
- Transforming and expanding our residential services so that the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people are better met.

We are also one of only 20 councils to successfully secure Department for Education funding and support to improve our work with families to safely reduce the number of children entering care. The *Strengthening Families, Protecting Children* programme aims to improve the safety and stability of vulnerable children and reduce the need for families to access services.

Our commitment to Newcastle: Child Friendly City, a UNICEF programme which we have championed, is about strengthening children's rights, voice and influence across the city by helping us to answer two key questions; what is it like to be a child in Newcastle, and how do we make it better?

In the coming year, as part of our commitment to be a Child Friendly City, we will invest in strengthening the voice and influence of around 57,000 children and young people in Newcastle. We will create a place-based movement that is ambitious for children and accelerates action to create the conditions, skills and opportunities for young people to contribute to the city's economy.

8. Environment : a clean, green and safe Newcastle

Everyone has the right to live in a clean, green and safe neighbourhood. And we have a duty to protect the environment for future generations. We are continuing to transform the local services on which residents rely with an emphasis on making them more sustainable and environmentally sensitive.

Taking the lead on climate change

Like other places across the world, we recognise the need for a step-change in our approach to climate change. That's why in April 2019, we declared a climate emergency, committing to becoming a carbon neutral city by 2030. We are leading the city's response to climate change, working with partners to set plans and targets for reducing carbon emissions.

Achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 will be challenging. The responses to climate change are complex with difficult trade-offs involved. Solutions will not happen overnight, instead requiring substantial long-term investment in the city's infrastructure, economy and housing.

We have created a dedicated Cabinet Member for Climate Change, who works alongside the Leader of the Council to take forward the climate change agenda. And we have made a clear commitment that considering the impacts on climate change will be at the heart of all decisions, policies, plans we make, and the services we provide. We have established a Climate Change Committee who will bring forward bold, radical and positive recommendations which we anticipate shaping our work in the coming year.

As part of our commitment to net zero, we have established a Climate Change Convention with resident and partner participation at its heart. The Convention brings together experts, residents and partners to revise our climate change plan, setting a route map to being carbon neutral. Partners including the city's universities, hospitals and college, are working closely with us through our Net Zero Taskforce to tackle carbon emissions within our own organisations, and across the city more widely. The first phase of this work is focussing on mitigation measures, we will then look to how we can further reduce emissions through adaptation.

We are already investing in ways to reduce our carbon emissions. Over the last financial year, we have successfully reduced our own carbon footprint by 13%, bringing our total reduction to 40% over the last decade. Examples of how we're doing this are:

- Increasing our electric vehicle fleet
- Rolling out an £8 million street lighting programme by summer 2021 to reduce energy by 50-70%, saving £1.4 million in energy costs
- Switching our energy supplier from April 2020 to give us 100% renewable energy
- procured a new recycling contract with more accessible drop-off points saving nearly 30,000 miles a year in travel by the collection vehicles and enabling residents to recycle a wider range of plastics
- Launching a new district heating scheme at Newcastle Helix
- Energy conservation measures across all of our buildings
- Using recycled plastic in most of our road resurfacing
- Working in partnership on ambitious proposals for solar energy in Newcastle

In the coming year, we will continue to work with our partners and invest in our own capacity needed to respond to the global climate emergency by:

- Build on the work of the Climate Change Committee and take forward the recommendations in their advisory report to Cabinet in March.
- Test the limits of our current regulations and powers, prioritising climate change when developing new policies.
- Embed climate change into every part of our business, ensuring that elected members and officers are aware of and understand the impact of our actions and decisions.
- Use the opportunities of the upcoming Environment Bill to campaign for new powers.
- Harness the momentum of the Net Zero Taskforce to take forward a city response.
- Securing the best advice and evidence to map out a net zero carbon plan, developing business cases to progress specific actions.
- Engaging extensively to raise the profile of existing work, manage engagement and consultation with the Convention and run a high-profile climate change awareness and behaviour change campaign. This builds on our call for evidence to the Convention, which received over 1,300 responses from organisations, businesses, and members of the public.
- Working with partners in the North of Tyne Combined Authority to establish a climate change citizen's assembly.

Tackling air quality

Outdoor air pollution is a major risk to human health and is responsible for hundreds of deaths in the UK each year. The main cause of roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is road transport, which also has wider impacts on public health and is a significant contributor to carbon emissions and climate change.

Several areas in the city were in excess of legal limits on NO₂, and in 2017 the government issued a legal direction to identify the option that would deliver compliance with legal limits for NO₂ in the shortest possible time. In response, we have worked with North Tyneside and Gateshead councils to develop a plan to tackle air quality.

We have sought to ensure that the plan not only improves overall air quality – rather than narrowly focusing on only one pollutant in a specific location – but also avoids a detrimental impact on the economy, local businesses and those on lower incomes.

The three local authorities have also called upon the government to take action at a national level through establishing a programme that provides financial support for the poorest in our society and for small businesses to switch to cleaner vehicles, shared transport or active travel via schemes such as mobility credits, extending electric vehicle subsidies and offering a national scrappage scheme, to name a few of the measures required to help towards combatting harmful levels of pollution. We have also called on government to implement the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission, which would give longer-term certainty to infrastructure budgets and enable local authorities to plan and deliver works.

The plan was subject to consultation, with over 23,000 responses received. Following changes in response to the consultation process, the plan was recently approved by the three councils and submitted to the Joint Air Quality Unit (as a joint venture between Defra and the Department for Transport to deliver government's NO₂ reduction strategies). The core elements of this package are:

- A Clean Air Zone - charging non-compliant buses, coaches, taxis (Hackney Carriages and private hire vehicles), heavy goods vehicles and vans from 2021.
- Temporary changes to the road layout on the Central Motorway, that will prevent traffic from merging on and off the slip lane between the New Bridge Street and Swan House junctions from 2021.
- Temporary lane restrictions on the Tyne Bridge and Central Motorway. These restrictions will be put in place from 2021 to support air quality work but we are also asking government for £40 million funding to ensure essential maintenance works take place at the same time. This work is one of 12 schemes which the government is developing as part of the Major Road Network Fund and the funding is managed through a separate process.

Alongside these proposals and considering feedback from our extensive consultation and the outcomes of an impact assessment, we will also bring forward:

- A £1.4 million programme of School Streets – enabling children to be protected from poor air quality.
- A plan for our future cycling network to ensure all the city’s schools, district centres and areas of open space are linked by clearly defined and connected routes, while also reflecting the key links between communities and major employment sites.
- A bid for £7.3 million to make changes to the local road network in Newcastle and Gateshead to provide additional public transport to improve public transport reliability, making it a more viable and attractive choice.

There is a clear link between the plan, and wider action to improve air quality, and our commitment to achieving carbon neutrality and improving public health outcomes. We will continue to consider these issues in an integrated and holistic way, underpinning all aspects of the services we deliver to the city.

A cleaner, greener city

We know how important clean and green streets are to our residents. That’s why we’re investing one-off monies to meet long-standing pressures in our localised teams to deal with litter and ensure grass-cutting in neighbourhoods.

We will also boost our rapid response teams to do things like tackle graffiti and other nuisances that can blight neighbourhoods. We have replaced the entire refuse collection fleet this year with vehicles that are within limits for harmful exhaust emissions produced by virtually any vehicle powered by petrol or diesel engines (Euro 6 standards), ensuring that the most efficient vehicles are used. As well as ensuring clean streets, this will also create 25 new jobs; a real win-win for the city.

To ensure Newcastle continues to be a green city for future generations and to contribute to carbon reduction, we will invest in an ambitious tree-planting programme, focusing on spaces where we can maximise planting at least cost. This could provide for an additional 1,000 new trees.

We will spend money to preserve the trees we have; specifically, better understanding the nature of the ash dieback disease - prevalent across the UK, on the city’s ash trees and exploring ways these trees can be saved or, if this isn’t possible, then replaced. We will also look at the feasibility of community orchards.

Making safe and fun places to play

We want to ensure safe and fun places for young people to play. In Summer 2019, we set out a far-reaching playground investment programme to improve 45 play spaces

- Improving the quality and play value of a play space
- Delivering repairs to bring play spaces to a good and safe standard with a continued level of investment and maintenance
- Providing a safe and accessible space for natural play

We now plan to go further than the initial 45 spaces and invest in up to a further ten sites, ensuring even more places for children, young people and families to enjoy.

The People's Network

The People's Network is a network of 340 desktop computers that are free for the public to access and are available across 14 libraries and community hubs, Westgate College, two community run libraries and three Your Homes Newcastle supported accommodation sites. While the People's Network is a fantastic resource, the computers were last updated in 2014, and are in urgent need of replacement. We will use some of our additional funding to replace existing computers either like-for-like or provide a mixed offer of desktop PCs and tablets (mainly in the City Library), allowing library users flexibility and freeing up space for other uses.

As part of these proposals, we will install a next generation wireless system providing forthcoming WiFi-6 alongside current standards. This will enable us to deliver high bandwidth wireless capability throughout libraries, providing a seamless experience to the public. Through this, the system will be futureproofed and take full advantage of the development of full fibre provision in the city, allowing for significantly quicker internet speed.

9. Health and social care : a healthy, caring city

We want to make sure that people can live healthy and fulfilling lives, with the right health and care support when they need it. Newcastle's population has a growing proportion of older people, more people who have complex needs and greater numbers of people with recognised learning and physical disabilities.

In recent years, the country has faced a crisis in adult social care as a result of reduced funding from government, rising demand, and unavoidable cost pressures. We have been proactive in working with partners to develop new models for social care, more effectively managing demand for services and supporting people to be independent for longer.

The government's short-term approach to these critically important services has added to the challenge. One-off monies announced by government in Autumn 2019 have not reduced the longer-term funding crisis and the need for the tough choices set out in our medium-term plan last year. We continue to press government to bring forward a social care white paper which sets out a new vision for care, accompanied by a fair funding settlement that enables us to effectively support the most vulnerable residents in the city.

We continue to implement proposals set out in the medium-term plan in 2019, but to meet the continuing challenges we face we will also:

1. Review the provision of support to people who are no longer in crisis, including:

- **Services in response to risk** - We will undertake reviews of services originally provided in response to a crisis to ensure these are appropriate to current needs and risk once the crisis is resolved.
- **One-to-one in residential care** - we will review additional one-to-one support provided in residential care homes to ensure levels of support are appropriate to the needs of the person.
- **Community Time to Think** - we will create additional Time to Think capacity in the community, with input from Reablement to provide support following a crisis/emergency and reducing the need for residential care and re-admission to hospital.
- **Services in response to deterioration in physical and mental health** - we will undertake a review of complex care and support packages people to maximise their personal independence and ensure support levels are appropriate to need.

2. Review our charging and financial assessment - we are revising our charging and financial assessment policy in line with statutory guidance.

3. Begin to deliver our Being Well in Newcastle programme - remodelling our traditional homecare offer to provide more flexible and dynamic services for older people with severe frailty. We will develop a new approach to help adults and older people with moderate frailty to live more independent lives.

10. Supporting the most vulnerable people in the city

Alongside investing in future growth and jobs, continuing to support the most vulnerable people in our society is a priority for us.

We will continue to fund a wide range of debt and welfare advice and support services, helping those in financial difficulties through:

- **Council Tax reduction scheme** - in 2013-14 Council Tax Benefit was abolished by government, with Council Tax Support introduced in its place. At the same time, funding for this support was cut by over 10% by government: increasing the financial pressure of sustaining a Council Tax reduction scheme for the poorest people in our city. We will continue to provide this scheme, recognising that it can make a significant difference to families and households at risk of falling into poverty.
- **Council Tax hardship scheme** – we continue to provide a hardship scheme for those experiencing severe financial difficulty and unable to pay their Council Tax.
- **Discretionary housing payments (DHP)** - extra payments to help people who claim housing benefit or get the housing element of Universal Credit and are struggling to pay their rent.
- **Crisis support** - intended for those who have suffered a disaster or crisis.
- **Supporting independence scheme** - helping people resettle in the community following a stay in an institution or indeed to remain in the community rather than enter an institution.
- **Welfare rights** – providing free information and independent advice to Newcastle residents. This includes advice and information on all aspects of the state benefits system, how and when to apply for benefits and other help and challenging decisions including representation at benefit appeal tribunals. We also operate the Housing Advice Centre, providing a service for residents in need of housing advice, at risk of homelessness or already homeless with nowhere to stay. Staff give confidential advice, helping residents to keep their home or assisting them to find a home to meet their needs.

11. Housing : building more and better homes

Everyone deserves to live in a decent home, have good quality community facilities in their local neighbourhoods and be supported if they have housing needs. Investment in quality housing can also support our ambitions around climate change, tackling fuel poverty, and improving public health.

In Newcastle we are working to create a city that is a 'Great Place to Live'. By this we mean a city with desirable neighbourhoods that offer a range of affordable and quality homes that meet people's needs, along with a strong sense of local identity and attractive well-used and popular public spaces and facilities. These neighbourhoods will be accessible and well connected, with the overall positive affect of enabling all our communities to enjoy a high quality of health and well-being in a home of their choice for as long as they choose.

We will continue building more affordable homes for families and making more specialist properties available for older, vulnerable or disabled people. Last year, we delivered 162 new affordable homes and started five exciting, new schemes which will deliver 150 council homes using an innovative annuity lease back model. Recognising that our city's population is ageing, we also ensured over 500 households across the city could stay safe and independent at home with 600 adaptations undertaken and investment totalling £3.4 million.

We are delivering specialist housing in every neighbourhood, with examples including the first council homes built in Gosforth since the 1980s at Ridgewood Gardens – housing with support for people with a learning disability, autism, or both - as well as assisted living apartments in Scotswood.

Over 750 private-sector empty homes were returned to occupancy through council-funded advice, loans and grants. And, The Rise Scotswood saw the completion of phase one with 367 new homes built.

During this three-year plan, we are:

- Investing to save with approximately £1.8 million per annum in specialist housing, helping people to live independent, full lives whilst delivering annual savings in social care budgets. This will deliver over 650 specialist housing units for older people (including bungalows and assisted-living apartments) and over 70 specialist supported homes for people with a learning disability, autism, mental health conditions, or a combination
- Bringing approximately 300 empty homes back into use per year
- Delivering 1,000 net additions to the city's housing stock per year, including 150 affordable homes (the latter in excess of the level required of us by government)
- Continuing to work with tenant and resident associations to involve them in decisions that have an impact on their homes and communities.

As part of our emerging plans for carbon neutrality by 2030, we are exploring what investment is needed to further improve the energy efficiency of our current housing stock, as well as lobbying government to improve new homes standards to ensure expensive retrofitting is not needed in the future, and that energy efficiency is built in to all new homes.

12. Transforming your public services

In the past 10 years we have had to find savings of over £300 million as a result of funding cuts and cost pressures. The scale of these reductions has made impacts on services inevitable. Yet, we have invested in transforming public services; finding alternative, more cost-effective ways to deliver sustainable services. In many cases, we have been able to improve outcomes and broaden partner and community involvement in services through our programme of transformation.

Our medium-term plan, and this update for 2020-21 outline the substantial improvements made through our transformation programme. But this is not a short-term fix. That is why we are committed to continuing to invest in service transformation, ensuring services are efficient, effective and sustainable.

We will secure a transformation reserve of £0.3 million by 31 March 2020 plus a base budget of £1.0 million per year to invest in one-off transformation projects designed to deliver savings in future years. We will ensure investment is based on robust business cases that deliver substantial efficiencies and improved outcomes for people.

13. Shaping the future of our great city

This report has summarised our service and budget plans for the year 2020-2021; year two of Shaping our future together: our medium-term plan agreed in 2019.

It has set out how, in spite of ongoing and hugely damaging cuts to our funding by government, we have worked tirelessly, in collaboration with partners and residents across the city, to continue to deliver the best possible services and to shape a future for the city that is ambitious, inclusive and provides value for money.

The report sets out the areas in which we continue to invest, reflecting the needs of all our residents, particularly those most vulnerable residents. It recognises that we continue to need to make tough choices and explains our rationale for those choices.

Informed by consultation with residents, businesses, and partners, and working in partnership across the city, it underlines our continuing commitment to shaping the future of our great city, together.