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Subject: AGM report May 2018

Dear all,

Here is a brief report on NCC for the last council year. Unfortunately you all have meetings tonight so I obviously can't attend all three. I would be happier giving a verbal report where we can discuss but happy to do that when I next attend.

A new administration took over after last may's election and took the council in a completely different direction.

The previous chief executive left and was replaced by Daljit Lally who was the deputy. Daljit's salary is half funded by the NHS so an immediate saving was made.

The first action by the new administration was to halt the move of county hall to Ashington. This was a very political decision and has caused much controversy especially over the proposed costs/savings. The previous administration costed the move at less than £40 m. The new administration costed the move at nearer £80 m. Both sides have a good argument but previous administration had only costed the new build where new administration have used total cost of new build plus infrastructure and moving an entire operation. Take your pick.

Morpeth county hall is to be revamped at a cost of £16+ m and vacant space to be let to private sector for an income stream.

The Core Strategy was withdrawn and work is taking place on a new one.

Main differences is in housing numbers. Down from 26.5 thousand to approximately 18000. This is well above the government requirement of 14000. Also withdrawn core strategy had been put together over 8 years and much of the information was out of date. New core strategy updated information and will be in place in 18 months time.

As an administration which is made up of many rural members there is an emphasis on the rural road network including better drainage. New Hot Boxes on order to speed up pothole repairs and a new Pacer on order for resurfacing narrower rural roads. £4+ million has just been sourced from the government to help the situation caused by a bad winter. Now that spring is here much highway work is taking place.

Arch the situation called investment company for Northumberland has been totally revamped with greater transparency and council control and investment, much of it bad, outside of Northumberland had stopped. Contrary to the claim if the previous administration Arch never paid a dividend back to NCC.

Local planning committees have been restored and Local Area Councils. Early days but a move in the right direction for local democracy.

Northumberland has been the key driver in the new North of Tyne Authority. A link up of Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside. The new authority has the ability to pull in huge amounts of government money. Again contentious but that's what's happening.

The education review in Hexham and Haydon Bridge partnerships is now over and thankfully no schools in our area are to close although closer working and federations will have to happen to save money.

Haydon Bridge partnership is going 2 tier with the likely result of Bellingham middle school closing. Greenhead school which voted itself to close will stay open.

Haydon Bridge high school will have a major overhaul and school capacity reduced from 900+ to 700+. The aim is to provide alternative education to what is on offer at Hexham with vocational courses added to academic courses for 6th form pupils.

Much work is going in at county hall to expand on its different direction but it's early days and a huge administration like a county council can't be overhauled quickly.
I will keep you informed on new developments and happy to expand on anything when I next attend your parish.

Regards

Colin Horncastle



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