

## **NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

## **COVID-19 RESPONSE: LEARNING, SKILLS & CULTURE**

### **1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To outline the response to the COVID-19 outbreak across Education & Inclusion and Community functions within Learning, Skills & Culture.
- 1.2 The response to date is set in the context of the business continuity governance arrangements described in the COVID-19 Response report on this agenda.

### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Council's approach to its business continuity response to the COVID-19 outbreak and actions taken to implement government guidelines have been rooted in the values, principles and ambitions of the council plan, and furthered through the strong partnerships within North Lincolnshire, framed under the following priorities:
  - keeping staff safe and well
  - protecting the vulnerable
  - enabling communities to remain resilient
  - protecting the local economy
- 2.2 National advice and guidance has been incorporated into the local response as it has become available and reflected in ongoing risk assessments. The enactment of the Coronavirus Act 2020 has led to certain relaxations of statutory requirements, including to the Children and Families Act 2014 in respect of children with education health and care plans. Similarly, relaxations have been made to regulatory requirements across Ofsted and CQC inspected provisions.
- 2.3 Many council functions have been sustained throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, notably through pre-existing and novel online facilities. Nevertheless, from 19 March it was necessary to suspend community facilities to the public. Large parts of the workforce subsequently stepped

forward for new roles in support of the council's priorities, demonstrating incredible willingness and the ability to work agilely and from home. This was especially true in responding to the requirements to support clinically vulnerable people shielding from COVID-19 and residents made vulnerable through circumstance.

2.4 Key headlines in the Education & Inclusion functions response to COVID-19 include:

- coordinating and supporting school and setting responses to national guidance and requirements relating to COVID-19
- ensuring stability in leadership across the education sector, including securing contingencies for the higher than usual number of primary school leaders due to retire or take on new roles
- developing a remote programme for school centred initial teacher training (SCITT) that prepared students to qualify and teach
- making arrangements to allow newly qualified teachers to complete their probationary year
- enabling early years settings to access grants and to make arrangements for their business viability, including making an early declaration that North Lincolnshire would continue to pay early years settings for free early education and childcare places
- completing admissions processes for children due to start school or transition between phases in September
- supporting vulnerable children and their families to access their learning and broader entitlements
- making arrangements for free school meals to support children and young people both in school and at home through local voucher systems and food pack deliveries
- redirecting Education Inclusion capacity to support an integrated council response to targeted family case management and support
- ensuring specialist teaching support (e.g. autism support) and educational psychology has continued to be available to work directly with children and young people in schools and settings and also maintained contact with those at home
- sustaining Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) statutory functionality within the context of 'reasonable endeavours', including identification, assessment and review of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (0-25)
- developing locality hubs in early years childcare provision and schools to ensure a continuing offer of provision for children of key workers
- facilitating Easter holiday and Bank holiday school provision for key worker children and for vulnerable children, including making arrangements for home to school transport and catering
- ensuring compliance with the council's residual duties for maintained schools so that facilities are Covid-secure

- ensuring that transitions guidance is available for all phases of learning in the context of Covid-19 with a particular focus upon supporting emotional health and well-being
- reviewing and making contact with all children and young people open to disability social work, with daily risk assessments enabling timely support to families and participation in education
- sustaining individualised short breaks (including carefully targeted overnight breaks) and home care support for children with disabilities
- maintaining all children's home regulation 44/45 visits and reports
- reviewing business continuity plans in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for the provision of children's Continuing Health Care packages of support
- supporting post 16 transition, working with local colleges and Skills Plus, to provide career, training and employment taster opportunities throughout the summer term
- working with colleges and other smaller providers in accommodating small numbers of vulnerable young people on site, including creating summer small group engagement opportunities

2.5 Key headlines in the Community functions response to Covid-19 include:

- championing and celebrating acts of kindness and neighbourliness through the #DoOneThing campaign, recruiting and directing volunteers towards community groups
- diverting resources and staffing to create the capacity to lead a place-based response to ensuring that residents made vulnerable by the Covid-19 outbreak have access to food, medicine and social contact. From the inception of shielding arrangements on 21 March to 28 May, the council:
  - received over 2,500 calls and online contacts from the public to the Covid-19 response team
  - made almost 11,000 outbound calls to people who may have had increased vulnerability due to Covid-19
  - actioned close to 1,500 community interventions in support of shielding, of which nearly 1,200 were high or medium priority
  - coordinated activity with a wide range of community and place-based organisations to enable people to stay safe and well while shielding from Covid-19
  - increased the depth and breadth of our relationship with the Voluntary & Community Sector Alliance to take forwards the area-wide lead for volunteering
  - with Health Watch, launched a telephone buddy service and 'good morning report' to counter social isolation
- supporting adult education and community learners through online classrooms and other remote methods
- ensuring that learners could complete their adult education tests by creating a Covid-secure assessment centre
- sustaining support for people furthest from employment, with a particular focus on young adults

- providing a rapid expansion and promotion of libraries e-services offer, including launch of new BorrowBox e-book and e-audio service enabled residents to access e-content and improved children's book and audio offer.
- launching a virtual fitness offer for active lifestyles members, alongside wellbeing contact and personalised programmes for residents on targeted programmes
- moving 20:21 visual arts centre online, with an exhibition tour and further creative arts support, activities and tutorials, including opportunities for young people aged 16-25 to contribute their visual arts to an online gallery themed around 'sense of place'
- providing over 200 arts and creativity packs for schools and families in areas of vulnerability
- providing online music tuition for children and young people
- creating a digital offer for heritage and wellbeing based on Normanby Hall Country Park

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to consider the report and note the response made to date to the COVID-19 emergency and acknowledge that business continuity and emergency planning remain in place.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Business continuity across Learning Skills and Culture continues to be maintained.
- 4.2 The positive working practices that have been successfully embedded throughout this period will be considered and built on as part of planning for gradual emergence to a new normal.

### **5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

- 5.1 Lost commercial income assumed within the council's budget for 2020/21 will be quantified through budget monitoring. Additional costs associated with Covid-19 response are accounted for separately.

### **6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

- 6.1 Not applicable.

### **7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 7.1 Not applicable.

**8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 The partnership and governance structures of the council have been engaged in forming the responses set out in this report and in formulating the direction for recovery and renewal.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That Cabinet notes the response to COVID-19 as outlined in the report.

DIRECTOR OF LEARNING, SKILLS & CULTURE

Church Square House  
SCUNTHORPE  
North Lincolnshire  
DN15 6NR  
Author: Pete Thorpe  
Date: 28 May 2020