

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**COVID 19 RESPONSE: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 1.1. Within the context of national restrictions, to provide an update on the response across the functions of Business Development
- 1.2. The response is set in the context of business continuity and the council priorities.

**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 people and safe and well
  - protecting the local economy
  - enabling communities to remain resilient
  - protecting vulnerable people

Whilst at the same time ensuring good governance and sound financial practice across the Council.

- 2.2 National advice and guidance has been incorporated into the local response as it has become available. The most recent national restrictions were announced on 4 January 2021 and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 3) and (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 came into force on 6 January 2021.
- 2.3 During this time the functions across Business Development have demonstrated resilience in responding quickly and flexibly to these

national restrictions to ensure the Council meets its priorities whilst responding to the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Keeping People Safe and Well:**

- 2.4 We have continued to demonstrate our agility as an organisation with many staff working remotely via strong technological solutions. With ongoing wellbeing assessments staff have been provided with necessary equipment and support to ensure homeworking remains safe and sustainable. Supporting critical workers who cannot work from home to attend work in risk assessed, COVID-19 secure environments.
- 2.5 Providing clear advice to the those employees who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and supporting all other employees who have a vulnerability in terms of COVID-19, by ensuring that Vulnerable Employee Risk Assessments are completed to make sure that we're all working in the safest way possible.
- 2.6 Facilitating the testing and reporting of positive cases and necessary isolations, monitoring these so that we have a clear and constant picture of our workforce resilience in order to support our communities.
- 2.7 Employees are kept up to date with the latest government guidance via the COVID-19 page on TOPdesk. This includes a suite of documents that are updated promptly when guidance changes:
  - COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
  - COVID-19 Face Coverings FAQs
  - Testing policy
  - Vulnerable Employee Risk Assessment template and guidance notes
  - Wellbeing resources
  - Risk assessments/COVID-19 secure information for buildings
  - Links to forms for the reporting of positive cases and isolations.
  - Links to enable the ordering of PPE.
  - Links to the COVID-19 page on the council's website and YouTube channel.
- 2.8 To support national guidance and contribute to the public health prevention plan, a local contact tracing function is now established. This has been in place since 12th November 2020, and we are contact tracing for positive cases passed onto us from the national test and trace service. Local Contact tracing is being managed within our Registrars service and supported by community champions who postcard drop to residents who we are unable to contact via telephone. Additional staff have been recruited internally and externally and this operates as a 7-day function.

## Protecting the Local Economy

2.9 Grants have played a major part in protecting the local economy. This work has been carried out with due diligence to ensure that the applicants were genuine and entitled to the payment. As a result we have not had to recall any payments.

2.10 The following highlights the the 2<sup>nd</sup> national restrictions grants paid to date and the grants paid moving into the revised tier system from 3 December 2020:

LRS ARG - (variable)	£493,242	(575)
LRS (sectors)	£0	(0)
LRS (open) - (variable)	£155,205	(534)
'Wet Pub'- (£1,000)	£66,000	(66)
LRS (closed) addendum		
<£15k RV (£1,334)	£1,035,184	(776)
<£51k RV (£2,000)	£252,000	(126)
>£51k RV (£3,000)	<u>£78,000</u>	<u>(26)</u>
<b>LRS (closed) addendum Total</b>	<b>£1,365,184</b>	<b>(928)</b>
LRS (closed) adden (tier4) <£15k RV (£667)	£334,834	(251)
<£51k RV (£1,000)	£156,000	(78)
>£51k RV (£1,500)	<u>£60,000</u>	<u>(20)</u>
<b>LRS (closed) addendum Total</b>	<b>£550,834</b>	<b>(349)</b>
<b>Grants Total paid</b>	<b>£2,630,465</b>	<b>2,452)</b>

2.11 Working closely with businesses who have Covid outbreaks, drawing together experts from PHE, Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Health & Safety to form an Incident Management Team. Calling in mobile testing units where required to contain the spread of the virus and minimise the impact on the business. Offering advice on Covid safe environments.

2.12 As a commercial landlord we have engaged with our tenants throughout the pandemic. In line with commercial principles and on a case by case basis we have supported those in difficulty through rent holidays and payment plans. This has enabled businesses to retain staff in employment.

2.13 A survey of all business sectors has been undertaken in order to establish a sound evidence base on which to develop a longer term Economic Recovery Plan.

## **Well Led Council**

- 2.14 Additional reporting requirements in respect of grant funding have been maintained alongside responding to new grant allocations made in the context of the latest restrictions
- 2.15 Business as normal has continued across all functions, whilst simultaneously adapting and supporting the overall COVID-19 response.

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

- 3.1 Cabinet Members are asked to consider this report and note the updates

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

- 4.1 Business continuity is maintained across Business Development
- 4.2 HR Guidelines and Process enables the Council to meet its employer obligations and keep staff safe and well.
- 4.1 Support for businesses such as Incident Management Teams and Commercial rent negotiations has enabled businesses in North Lincolnshire to continue operating during this period.

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

- 5.1 Commercial income assumed within the Commercial property portfolio for 20/21 will not be realised. Recovery plans are in place for 21/22.
- 5.2 Sufficient staff time within Registrars has been retained to ensure that normal services to the public are not affected as a result of Local Contact Tracing.
- 5.3 The reallocation of staffing is consistent with the policies of the Council, including the voluntary deployment of staff.

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

- 6.1 All changes are in keeping with council priorities.

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

- 7.1 N/A – responses are as a consequence of national direction.

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

8.1 Trade Unions have been consulted in respect of all HR changes

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Cabinet Members are asked to consider this report and note the updates

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

None