

## **NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

## **COVID-19: MID-TERM RECOVERY UPDATE**

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

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Council's progress responding to COVID-19 as set out in the mid-term recovery plan.
- 1.2 Provide an overview of the national COVID-19 Response – Autumn 2021 and Road Map which will inform actions within our Mid-term recovery.

### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 In March 2020, the council was required to establish business continuity arrangements in order to respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic. As COVID-19 continues to be a significant issue the council continues its focus and operating environment on this, while concurrently planning for and implementing actions related to recovery and renewal.
- 2.2 In June 2020, the North Lincolnshire COVID-19 recovery and renewal framework was presented to Cabinet. Subsequent to this a mid-term recovery plan was approved by Cabinet in December 2020. Both of these have been framed around the priorities set out in the North Lincolnshire Council Plan and provide a framework for minimising and mitigating impact from COVID-19 across North Lincolnshire.
- 2.3 Our priorities for mid-term recovery are:
  - Keep people safe and well,
  - Protect vulnerable people,
  - Enable communities to be resilient,
  - Protect and enable the local economy,
  - Well led council.
- 2.4 Appendix 1 provides an update against the mid-term recovery plan. Since the last report to Cabinet key highlights include:

- The facilitation of greater access to workspaces within Church Square House and Hewson House for the purposes of connectivity.
- Administration of applications for financial support from over 2,600 individuals who have had to self-isolate.
- A range of targeted work to provide on-going support for the most vulnerable groups including rough sleepers, vulnerable children and adults.
- Six units of accommodation and associated support secured to support individuals into settled accommodation; six empty homes brought back into use for step down accommodation, with a further four units of accommodation in development.
- In the region of 200 volunteers have come forward to provide targeted support for vulnerable residents.
- The DfE funded FUELLED Holiday Activity and Food programme for Summer 2021 was successfully delivered with 1,667 children registered on the programme.
- Financial support provided for over 3,000 businesses across North Lincolnshire to enable continued operations, diversification and start-ups.
- Thirty-seven businesses assigned to the Kick Start Scheme, with 26 young people currently in a placement.
- Through strong partnership working with the DWP, 18-24 Youth Hub recruitment and outcomes have exceeded half yearly target - 81 young people into paid employment, four young people into an apprenticeship and one young person self-employed. A bid for Year Two DWP funds has been submitted.
- Support for the visitor economy across North Lincolnshire over the summer holidays, using council run attractions as a catalyst.

2.5 The local response to COVID-19 has been set within a range of legislative regulations that have been introduced. The two key ones being the Coronavirus Act 2020 (much of which has since been repealed) and Health Protection (England) Regulations 2020 (extended to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021). Government guidance and new regulations continue to be issued which are applied to council operational and strategic response as relevant.

2.6 The Coronavirus (COVID-19) national action plan launched in March 2020, confirmed that we need to continue to work with health protection at the heart of the organisation. As place leader the Council has maintained attention on living with and mitigating the risk of COVID-19. After two periods of lockdown, in February 2021 the government signalled a move towards the lifting of restrictions (COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021) based on a roadmap and set out key tests that would determine each stage of the roadmap:

- Test 1: The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.

- Test 2: Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
- Test 3: Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.
- Test 4: The assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

2.7 Since the previous update report to Cabinet on this subject matter in March 2021, progress has been made against the national plan. Key milestones include the move to Level 3 easements from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, which saw the reopening of the majority of the indoor and remaining outdoor economy and gathering limits increased indoors and outdoors. Guidance for close contact between friends and family was updated, with people asked to exercise their own personal judgement in line with the risks. Additionally, the Stay in the UK restriction was lifted with people able to travel to green list countries, if they permit inbound travel.

2.8 Further progress was signalled via The Cabinet Office publishing on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 the COVID-19 Response – Summer 2021, which set out the roadmap for the further easing of restrictions in England to level four. While this heralded the lifting of almost all remaining restrictions, continued emphasis has been placed on social distancing, the wearing of face coverings in crowded/enclosed spaces and the process of Test, Trace and Isolate. From 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, a system of testing rather than isolation for those who are double vaccinated came into force. In moving away from stringent restrictions to everyone's day-to-day lives and towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others, alongside targeted interventions to reduce risk, the government undertook to:

- Reinforce the country's vaccine wall of defence through booster jabs and driving take up
- Enable the public to make informed decisions through guidance, rather than laws
- Retain proportionate test, trace and isolate plans in line with international comparators
- Manage risks at the border and support a global response to reduce the risk of variants emerging globally and entering the UK
- Retain contingency measures to respond to unexpected events, while accepting that further cases, hospitalisations and deaths will occur as the country learns to live with COVID-19

2.9 As Autumn/Winter 2021 approaches, the government aims to sustain the progress made, while ensuring the NHS does not come under unsustainable pressure. The recently announced (14<sup>th</sup> September 2021) COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan, sets out that success will be achieved by:

- Building our defences through pharmaceutical interventions

- Identifying and isolating positive cases to limit transmission
- Supporting the NHS and social care
- Advising people on how to protect themselves and others
- Pursuing an international approach

2.10 New measures announced to support the autumn and winter plan include renewed calls for the unvaccinated to become so; the vaccination of 12-15 year-olds (one dose); booster vaccinations for the over 50's and vulnerable groups and a concerted flu jab campaign covering a wider population than previously. Additionally, many more of the remaining measures contained within the Coronavirus Act 2020 have been repealed.

2.11 Contingency plans have also been announced in the event of the continued spread of the virus leading to unsustainable pressure on the NHS. These include the re-introduction of mandatory face coverings; return to home working arrangements and possibly vaccine passports required for certain settings.

2.12 Local authorities continue to play a key role in achieving the successful easing of national restrictions and the steps outlined in the roadmap have provided a frame for the Council's emergence from the pandemic and reopening and return to some level of normality. These are consistent with our priorities and actions within the mid-term recovery plan which continues to be revised in line with the roadmap. The national COVID-19 response document remains relevant, providing a framework for all actions and focusing on the things that need to continue to be in place and prioritised at both national and regional level:

- Healthcare response (Supporting NHS, Vaccines and Therapeutics)
- Keeping people safe and responding to threats (Behaviours, Test, Trace & Isolate and Responding to variants of concern)
- Economic and social support (Economic support, Support for vulnerable people and communities and Support for care homes)
- Long Term (Transition from pandemic to epidemic, Living with COVID and Resilience for future pandemics)

2.13 As well as continuing to meet council priorities and responsibilities, the council will continually ensure that there is capacity to respond to the above requirements and emerging national policy changes, in the context of the pandemic.

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

3.1 Cabinet is invited to note the contents of this report and support the continued delivery of priority actions.

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

- 4.1 A continued focus on the priorities and actions set out in the mid-term recovery plan enables the council to provide an effective local response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.2 The national COVID-19 Response and associated roadmap have provided specific milestones for the local re-open planning for council activity and functions. As in our previous response to easing of restrictions, all information about the safe operation of facilities has and will continue to be communicated with relevant stakeholders and updates provided through the council's website and media channels.
- 4.3 The COVID-19 Response will be used to inform the strategic plans for the Council with updates provided at the next Cabinet meeting.

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

- 5.1 Resources associated with the council's response to the COVID-19 and the delivery of the mid-term recovery plan continue to be monitored and managed.

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

- 6.1 A council-wide approach to assessing and monitoring the implications and risks associated with COVID-19 has been adopted with mitigations being implemented as necessary in accordance with the legislative framework.

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

- 7.1 Not applicable.

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

- 8.1 Ongoing consultation and collaboration with a range of national, regional, place partners and other key stakeholders is integral to our local response: recovery and renewal.

- 8.2 There are no conflicts of interests associated with this report.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That cabinet note the content of the report and support the continued delivery of priority actions.

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

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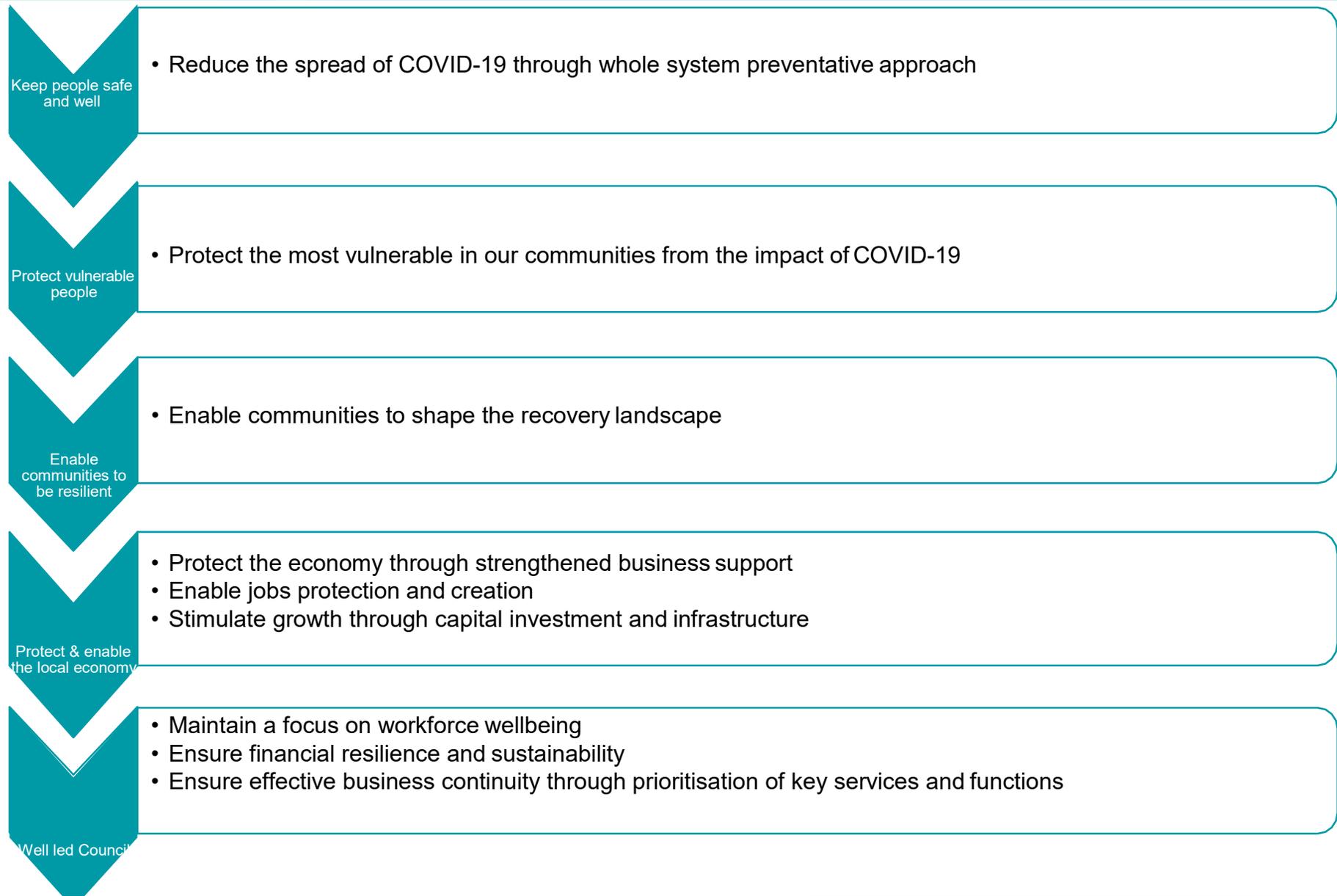
# NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COVID-19 MID-TERM RECOVERY PLAN

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS (September 2021)

**North  
Lincolnshire  
Council**

[www.northlincs.gov.uk](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk)

Enhance digital technologies in order to deliver our council priorities



Value added through partnerships

- Following positive assessments against the four key tests the government set to underpin each step of the COVID recovery roadmap, progress has been made against the government’s approach to lifting restrictions. Consequently, level four was reached in August 2021, resulting in the lifting of almost all remaining restrictions, but with key messaging continuing in respect of social distancing, face coverings, vaccination take-up and Test, Trace, Isolate. In response to the current position, the council continues to reflect and promote key advice, guidance and legislation and this approach is rooted in the values, principles and ambitions of the council plan. Our response focuses on key priorities to ensure the Council remains resilient throughout the crisis and sustained through the period of recovery and renewal.
- As well as responding to the implications of national restrictions, the council continued to keep services running and adapting to the changing environment, led the prevention and management of local outbreaks and work with businesses to drive economic recovery and growth and worked in partnership with NHS to enable the successful commencement of the vaccination programme to the priority groups.

Priority	Overview of progress
<p>Keeping People Safe and Well: <b>Reduce the spread</b></p>	<p><b>Safe working practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working from home arrangements continue but with greater access to workspaces within Church Square House and Hewson House for the purposes of connectivity. This remains under review by the ORR group and a ‘Living with COVID-19’ framework is currently being developed to support this. Risk assessments kept under review and updated according to any change in operational procedures or in use of buildings, including use of PPE for those working in the community and in peoples’ homes.</li> <li>• Preparing for the new legislative requirement from 11 November 2021 that only those who are fully vaccinated or exempt for clinical reasons can work in Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulated care homes (vaccination as a condition of deployment). This includes policy &amp; FAQs, review of recruitment process and collation/recording of vaccination records for existing and new staff working within CQC registered establishments.</li> <li>• Enacting easement plan including the recommencement of group work for children, young people and families where appropriate and utilising consultation opportunities to strengthen the children and family support offer.</li> <li>• Wellbeing and risk assessments for our workforce are regularly reviewed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outbreak management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and prevention outbreaks continue to be a priority focus area, using robust data and progress is reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board on a regular basis. Schools, care homes and high risk business have responded well to identification, control and mitigation of outbreaks across the settings.</li> <li>• Throughout each phase of national restrictions, community facilities were assessed for Covid security, so that functionality could be resumed in a safe and timely way for residents and staff.</li> </ul> <p><b>Safe places and enforcement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid prevention assistants continue to undertake proactive work on an intelligence led basis to ensure communities are safe and they are working with businesses to promote good practice.</li> <li>• Public protection continue to undertake assessments and enforce regulations as appropriate, in partnership with Humberside Police.</li> </ul> <p><b>Test, Trace, Self-Isolate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have provided information advice and guidance for all citizens and workers to access the national schemes for lateral flow testing, including</li> </ul>

providing community testing facilities. Community assisted testing sites are open to all residents and workers of North Lincolnshire.

- The local testing site for residents with symptoms continues to operate from Centenary Way. LFT test kits are available for collection at Community Hubs throughout North Lincs and at various additional facilities for NLC staff and are distributed throughout identified areas of concern where there is low testing uptake and/or the population has additionally been identified as higher risk (due to occupation/health issue prevalence/low vaccine uptake).
- Local contact tracing arrangements are in place and are operating well with a contact rate of circa 96%
- Financial support to help eligible people to self-isolate continues to be paid with over 2600 applications received. The scheme has been extended to the end of September 2021.

Priority	Overview of progress
Protect vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work in partnership with health colleagues on the successful roll-out of the national vaccination programme.</li> <li>• The council is strongly promoting the Evergreen Vaccination Offer, targeting those individuals who have yet to be vaccinated.</li> <li>• All 12-15 year olds who suffer from underlying health problems have been identified and are offered vaccination as a priority group.</li> <li>• Where possible rough sleepers continue to be offered temporary accommodation alongside the continuing targeted work with partners around specific vulnerable groups and the development of pathways to support individuals into settled accommodation more directly. Partnership work with Ongo has resulted in six accommodation units with support now occupied. Funding was secured in partnership with Framework for six empty homes to be brought back into use for step down accommodation which are now occupied and funding for a further four units of accommodation has been secured through the MHCLG. These are currently in development, with completion due by the end of the calendar year.</li> <li>• During the summer holidays, extended the use of the COVID-19 Local Support Grant to support over 7000 children and young people in families experiencing financial hardship. As well as providing food support for children in receipt of free school meals, the scheme was extended to care leavers and families in low-income households with pre-school children, and 16-18 year olds in full-time education</li> <li>• Continue to have a strong position within the 'front door' of children's social care services in order to respond to any potential increases in demand for service, and a focus across the partnership to enable families to receive the right help and support at the earliest stage and at the lowest level</li> <li>• Children in care and care leavers continue to be supported and we have responded to their voice and experiences</li> <li>• Procured MIFI devices for all care leavers in the community to enable them to access the internet. This helped to reduce social isolation for our young people and enabled them to remain connected to their support networks and their wider community, leading to more positive emotional wellbeing</li> <li>• Corporate parents remain committed to children in care and care leavers and through the recommencement of face-to-face visits to children's homes, there are further opportunities for increased connectivity</li> <li>• Provision of home testing kits for secondary and college students to support twice-weekly testing guidance</li> <li>• Continue to maximise capacity and sufficiency across children and community resilience to provide support through the Security Control Centre to vulnerable people and delivering effective outcomes</li> </ul>
Enable resilient communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships within neighbourhoods and between the council, individual volunteers and voluntary and community groups continues to be strong. Working together is both highly localised and place-based, as well as formal and informal.</li> <li>• Community volunteering has been further strengthened through place-based brokerage and the 'TeamNL' volunteer hub. There are currently around 200 volunteers who are deployed to local vaccination centres, to existing community organisations, providing targeted support for vulnerable residents.</li> <li>• The leadership, development and administration functions of the volunteer hub are now established with posts recruited to which are enabling continued active recruitment and deployment of volunteers to meet current demand as well as continuing to build the</li> </ul>

infrastructure to support a 'future-fit' model to meet the anticipated increase in demand for Autumn 2021.

- Support for those individuals required to self-isolate who need support to access essential food and medicines as well as other practical and wellbeing support, such as befriending and emotional support is also being provided by community resources.
- Community Champions continue to be recruited as the credible and informed local voice, providing localised feedback and helping to shape targeted responses to Covid, e.g. faith and community leaders worked with the council to increase the reach of the vaccination programme.
- Community facilities and functions have been brought back as national restrictions, staff deployment and local priorities have permitted, with the focus on ensuring a health and wellbeing offer for residents. Currently at stage 4 of the national roadmap, all council run facilities are open with covid secure arrangements in place.
- Preparation for the delivery of the identified Community Renewal Funded projects which support and prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Successful delivery of the DfE funded FUELLED Holiday Activity and Food programme for Summer 2021. As of 17th August 2021, 1,667 children were registered on the programme. Of these: 64% are eligible for free school meals; 15% have an Education Health and Care plan and a further 125 children are recorded as SEND.
- Pop-up vaccination centres established, targeted to case rates and lower than average vaccination take-up
- Community collect scheme initiated across six community-based venues to enable the collection of home testing kits

## Priority

## Overview of progress

Protect the economy

- To support businesses through the pandemic, the council has distributed over £60m in grant funding to over 3,000 businesses and made over 12,000 payments. This encompasses small business and retail grants in phase one, and local restrictions support grants, closed business lockdown payments, a scheme for wet led pubs, restart grants and additional restrictions grant in the second phase.
- The majority of business support grant schemes have now been concluded, with focus shifting to post payment assurance. The Council continues to utilise additional restriction grant funding to invest in areas enabling forward growth (e.g. start-up grants, diversification and renew grants). These grants include:
 

Business Growth Scheme: 18 businesses supported, £72,998 worth of grants issued, contributing to an overall project cost of £182,495

Start Up grants: 28 businesses supported, £27,790.43 worth of grants issued.

Covid-19 Renew Grant: Six businesses have been recommended to the panel for approval with NLC funding of £268,450 and total project costs of £7,070,886

Business Diversification Scheme: Seven businesses have been recommended to the panel for approval funding £208,947 with total costs of £646,607
- A number of care leavers have secured employment in a range of different sectors, including making use of the Kick Start

Programme, the apprenticeship scheme within the council and securing full time, permanent employment within Children and Community Resilience.

- The Kickstart scheme supports young people aged 16-24 who are claiming Universal Credit with a six-month work placement. North Lincolnshire Council have 37 businesses who have been accepted onto scheme and 26 young people are currently in a placement.
- To support people to find work, we have been participating in monthly virtual jobs fairs organising by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) since November 2020. We also participated in a virtual apprenticeship event in February 2021.
- We support businesses in certain sectors that are struggling to recruit via a variety of means including working closely with partners externally (e.g. DWP) and internally (e.g. working closely with Adult Services to promote the Proud to Care campaign to increase the number of people working in the care sector in North Lincolnshire).
- 18-24 Youth Hub recruitment and outcomes have exceeded half yearly target - 81 young people into paid employment, 4 young people into an apprenticeship, 1 young person self-employed. A bid for Year 2 DWP funds has been submitted.
- We are currently organising a North Lincolnshire jobs fair to employers to advertise their vacant posts and people to attend to gain employment. The fair will include practical support for people to help them gain employment e.g. C.V. writing and interview practice.
- The number of people claiming unemployment related benefit support continues to decrease in North Lincolnshire and for August 2021 stands at 4.7% (some 4,900 people), compared to 6.1% (some 6,345 people) at the same time last year. The claimant count rate remains lower than the regional and national rates of 5.5% and 5.3% respectively.
- To further support our businesses, a business renew event will be taking place within the next month to update and inform businesses about the projects taking place in North Lincolnshire, our progress on delivering the Economic Growth Plan and informing them of our plans to continue to support recovery set out in the new Economic Renew Plan (currently draft).
- Specific focus has been placed on the visitor economy across North Lincolnshire. The Council took part in English Tourism Week in May 2021, the refurbished tourist information centre in Brigg was opened in July and NLC-run attractions such as Normanby Hall held a full programme of activities during the school summer holidays.

#### Well led council

- The council continues to prioritise business as usual of its operations and responds and adapts flexibly to overcome any pressures and issues as they arise. The vast majority of council services and functions continue to be provided with limited disruption.
- In response to the national roadmap, the re-opening of facilities and activities has been completed. Priority messaging continues to be focused on aspects that contribute towards public health and wellbeing. On-going assessments of workforce capacity are made.
- Regular updates continue to be provided to the workforce in respect of COVID-19 through bulletins and webinars.
- The council has maintained robust governance arrangements. Following the expiry of legislation that permitted the holding of virtual meetings, decision making has reverted to face to face council and committee meetings, with alternative accommodation sourced where required to accommodate social distancing requirements.
- Regular messages are issued to staff to warn against the issues of cyber/malware attack, dressed in the context of COVID related communications.

