



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

DATE: 23 JUNE 2020

COVID-19 PLANNING FOR RECOVERY IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Report of: Daljit Lally, Chief Executive

Cabinet Member: Cllr Peter Jackson, Leader of the Council

Purpose of report

This report outlines the Council's plans to support residents, businesses and communities to recover from the Covid-19 crisis in the coming weeks and months. This report is not intended to be guidance to residents, businesses or other organisations regarding the Covid-19 restrictions and nothing in this report should be interpreted either explicitly or implicitly as guidance. In all cases, residents should refer to the latest Government guidance which is available online.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Consider and agree initial plans and priorities to support economic and social recovery from the Covid crisis across Northumberland.
- Agree to receive further reports on recovery planning as we move further into the recovery phase in the coming months.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for; 'living'.
- We want you to love where you live; 'enjoying'.
- We want you to have access to the things you need; 'connecting'.
- We want you to achieve and realise your potential; 'learning'.
- We want to attract more and better jobs; 'thriving'.

1. Key issues

- 1.1. To prevent the spread of the Coronavirus, the UK was put into a lockdown with unprecedented, peacetime restrictions on daily life.
- 1.2. Locally, the Council has been working with communities, partners and Government to respond to the crisis, helping those most in need and supporting businesses through the crisis.
- 1.3. Whilst the Covid crisis is ongoing and the Council continues to respond, we must also take action now to ensure our communities and businesses can recover in the coming weeks and months.
- 1.4. The recovery process will be complex and long-term; the Covid crisis has impacted every aspect of society.
- 1.5. Our plans will evolve over time as circumstances change and new initiatives are developed. Further reports will update on progress and new initiatives.
- 1.6. The Council will play its part in leading recovery in Northumberland. But, we can only do this by working closely with our residents, communities, partners, businesses and Government.

2. Background

- 2.1. Covid-19 is an unprecedented crisis that has impacted every aspect of society. The response of our communities, staff, partners and businesses has been incredible and we are grateful for all their efforts so far.
- 2.2. Whilst the crisis is not yet over and, we are still responding on a daily basis to the immediate impacts, we must also focus on how we will lead recovery in Northumberland. We have witnessed profound changes as a result of the lockdown. As we move forward, we appreciate people are anxious to return to normal life as quickly as possible, whilst recognising the Covid crisis may well have lasting effects. That is why our recovery plans take account of the immediate impacts on jobs, health and communities whilst adapting to what has changed.
- 2.3. We will listen to our residents, business and partners so our recovery planning is shaped by their priorities and needs. We will also look at how Council services and functions might need to adapt to the changing circumstances as we move beyond the current crisis. In all of this, we will take a 'residents first' approach, putting their wellbeing at the heart of our recovery plans.
- 2.4. This first report on our recovery planning will be followed by further reports in the coming months. The rest of this paper sets out our initial recovery plans across four broad themes: the economy, communities and people; the environment; and, organisation.

3. Economic Recovery

What we know now and moving forward

- 3.1. Moving into the Covid crisis, Northumberland had a strong and growing economy. Key areas of strength include tourism, pharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing, offshore and agriculture. Tourism in particular has seen impressive growth in recent years, supported by continually improving attractions and growth in locally produced quality food, drinks and other craft products. Pre-Covid, we already had ambitious plans in place to build on our recent economic successes through investing in infrastructure, supporting business growth and skills development. Despite the impact of Covid restrictions on businesses, we are clear this is not due to any structural weaknesses in our local economy. We know businesses are hurting right now but we are also determined the economy of Northumberland will recover and, in time, will once more show growth. The Council stands ready to fully play its part in that recovery.
- 3.2. Currently though, we recognise large parts of the economy have been closed down due to emergency restrictions. As markets have declined steeply and some stopped altogether, coupled with social distancing measures, the vast majority of businesses are suffering. Through listening to businesses and from current data we know know the immediate impacts have been:
- Cash flow pressures;
 - Uncertainty, inhibiting business planning, forecasting cash flow and halting investment;
 - Reluctance to take loans, particularly given uncertainty on recovery and if the business already carries debt;
 - Concern over staff; their immediate wellbeing and how future workforces and business operations may look.
- 3.3. There are also clear differences being felt across the sectors of the economy:
- **Manufacturing** - many manufacturers have been able to carry on to some degree but report supply and distribution chain issues, as well as a difficulty in operating within social distancing circumstances. And, those manufacturers who supply sectors which have all but shut down, such as retail, leisure and hospitality, have seen huge impacts on their orders and sales. Despite this, we have seen some manufacturing companies diversify to respond to the Government's requirement for medical equipment and supplies.
 - **Retail, hospitality, food and drink** - there has been a significant impact with the closure of businesses and concerns that some may not be able to reopen as viable concerns whilst social distancing measures remain in place.

- **Tourism & culture** - there are concerns about the viability of businesses in the tourism and events sector given the unprecedented shock to their operations occurring at a time which would ordinarily be the run-up to the peak tourist and event season. As with many seasonal businesses, this is a time that allows businesses to build up reserves to see them through the rest of the year. In addition, many self-employed workers in the cultural sector have part time jobs to supplement income. These jobs are often in the retail, hospitality and leisure industries and have been most affected by COVID19, so there is likely to be a section of the workforce that has been particularly hard hit.
- **Healthcare/Pharmaceuticals/Life Sciences** - as with the wider manufacturing sector there are reports of issues with supply and distribution chains and a slow down in investments.
- **Energy - Oil, Gas and Renewables** - Implementation of social distance has meant limiting activities for some mobilisation and demobilisation of projects for the offshore energy sector. In addition, falling demand globally due to the COVID slowdown recently pushed oil prices to a negative position which is expected to have a short and medium term impact on operations with companies looking to manage operational costs.
- **Digital, Software, Technology** - Businesses are starting to explore and increase their capacity online in order to sustain business moving forward, which presents an opportunity for growth in this sector.
- **Business, Professional and Financial Services** - mostly impacted because of client operations being on hold, the sector is therefore experiencing reduced income.
- **For agricultural businesses**, there are varying impacts. Food production is, of course, essential and many farms are able to continue operating as they are family run, their employees live locally, and operations are often more amenable to social distancing. However, some aspects of agriculture are affected (e.g. where they supply pubs, hotels and restaurants) and there are wider impacts to rural communities, reliant on the visitor economy.

3.4. The modelling that is available tells us that, initially at least, there is likely to be a fall in employment in accommodation, food services, retail, arts and recreation across the county post-covid.

3.5. More broadly, the Chancellor has previously said it is "very likely" the UK is now in a significant recession, and the latest data shows the economy is shrinking at the fastest pace since the financial crisis in 2008.

Our response so far

- 3.6. The Council moved swiftly to support businesses during this time. We quickly established the **Northumberland County Council Business Hub**, providing a team of expert advisors to help businesses access support being made available by the Government and more widely through business support schemes. Over 1,000 calls have been made to the Business Hub since the start of the crisis, the majority of these have been from the service sector, retail, tourism and food and drink.
- 3.7. Some 1,700 support packages have been identified for enquiring businesses; including government Covid grant schemes (62% of businesses), Covid Business Interruption Loan Scheme (9% of businesses), Business rate holidays (17% of businesses), Covid Job Retention Scheme (18% of businesses), Self-employed income support (29% of businesses) and Universal Credit (10% of businesses).
- 3.8. In rapid delivery of the Government **Emergency Small Business Grant Fund** the council has so far (2nd June) paid out more than £84m in grants to over 7,400 businesses across the county. The County Council was one of the top Local Authorities nationally to deliver grants at speed to the businesses that most need them. In addition over 2,500 retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses are eligible for Business Rates Relief. We have also paid suppliers on receipt of their invoices to assist with cash flow.
- 3.9. Through the Business Hub we are listening to businesses and were able to quickly identify the firms that were falling between the gaps in Government support, particularly B&Bs and small businesses that operate out of shared or managed spaces. We highlighted these gaps to Government and urged them to address this. Subsequently, Government announced further funding and we are now rolling that out to support businesses who are in need.
- 3.10. We have also worked with our partners in the North of Tyne Combined Authority to secure **£1.5m Covid Capacity Funding**. We will use this to continue the work of the Business Hub, providing support packages to businesses, such as support to move their operations online, employability support to those who may have lost their jobs and a package of support for the tourism sector to enable it to survive and thrive once the restrictions are lifted and people can start to visit the county again.

Our Plans for Recovery

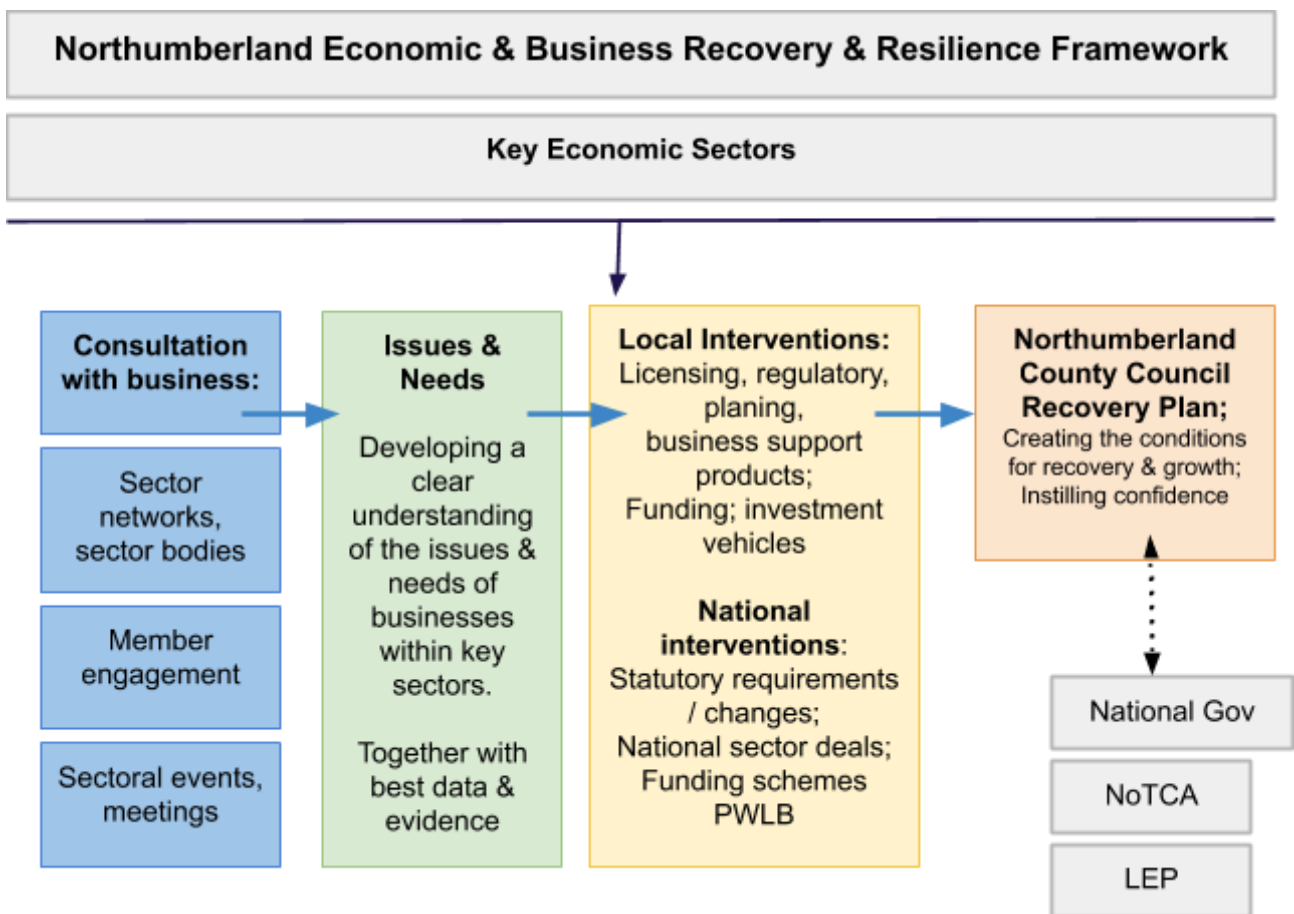
- 3.11. Whilst the global economic outlook is uncertain, we believe the unprecedented scale of the support offered to businesses and employees will provide some help to them through this difficult period, enabling the majority to recover in the coming months and years. The Council is ready to play its part in the county's economic recovery. Sadly, we know some

businesses will not reopen post-Covid and we are also ready to support the people behind those businesses find new routes into employment or self-employment.

Sector Approach - Developed with Business

3.12. We recognise recovery will look different for each business and across the various sectors of the economy and therefore the support will need to take account of this. We are keen to develop our plans for recovery with businesses, working with them as they go through this difficult period to understand their needs and issues and ensure our plans respond to these. And, we are committed to working with national Government and regional bodies to secure the right interventions.

3.13. We set out here the framework for this approach and over the coming days and weeks we will be engaging and consulting with businesses to inform our plans further.



Phased Recovery

- 3.14. As we develop more detail around our recovery plans, we will do so in recognition of different phases that are likely to be experienced over the next few months to two years and beyond. We will be responsive to changes but the following phases will guide our planning:
- **Short-term (1-6 months)** - adapting, planning and early action: we have shown in this document that by putting in place the right arrangements to enable effective decision making, using the best intelligence and good governance we have been able to get early plans and actions in place.
 - **Medium-term (6-24 months)** - managing transition & phased exit from lockdown: recognising that recovery will be phased, uneven, and multi-sector. This phase is about action to alleviate post-crisis jobs, business & social impact.
 - **Long-term (24 months +)** - rebuilding & growing: rebuilding a strong economy, thriving places, communities and public services.

County-wide Programme of Growth

- 3.15. Before the crisis, we already had an ambitious pipeline of actions and initiatives designed to drive economic growth across Northumberland. During the lockdown, whilst supporting businesses survive, we have also continued to move ahead with schemes and programmes of activity so these are ready to go once the restrictions are lifted. Our plans include:
- **Delivering on the Council's capital plan** - we know our programme of capital investments provide opportunities for local businesses, employment and apprenticeships. Inevitably, there will be some delays to our capital work due to Covid-related health and safety measures. But, where it is safe to do so, we will get going on these projects, helping businesses get back to work, creating new Council houses, schools and amenities as well as putting infrastructure in place to support economic growth.
 - **Promoting Northumberland's Tourism** - the small businesses at the heart of our visitor economy have arguably been hardest hit by Covid. When people are able to start visiting the county again we will be ready to boost the sector through a package of exciting measures. We had already planned the 'Discover our Land' programme to promote all that is great about Northumberland. We are now working to enhance this including through a digital platform which will be launched when people can start visiting the county again. We are

moving ahead to establish a Hadrian's Wall partnership to maximise the benefits from this unique World Heritage Site. And, we are actively engaging with the Government to secure funding to deliver our ambitious Cycling and Walking Strategy. The Strategy will not only encourage greater numbers of visitors but will also encourage more residents to continue cycling and walking post-Covid.

- **Delivering on the Borderlands Deal** - we plan to get our business cases over the line to unlock millions of pounds of Government investment across our rural towns. And, we will open up discussions with Government on a Borderlands #2 Deal to secure further funding and support for rural business growth.
- **Energy Central Blyth** - we will work with partners to secure funding for the Energy Site to secure and create up to 10,000 jobs.
- **Northumberland Line** - will help our residents access jobs across the region as well as bringing visitors to the county. Government has already committed funding for us to work up plans for the line and we will push hard for the Government to fully fund both phases of development through the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.
- **Regenerating our towns** - we are continuing our plans to make our towns even more attractive places for people to visit, shop and enjoy. Initially, we will play our part in getting our high streets open for business again. Moving forward, we will continue to work with the Government to secure further Future High Street Funding for Blyth. We will progress plans for Town Centre regeneration in Hexham alongside developing a Town Deal for Ashington. And, we will develop seven rural town plans across the county.
- **Looking to see where we can quickly make small changes to unlock business opportunities** - as we move out of restrictions we will look at how we can use our regulatory powers to support and encourage small businesses to recover or even get established.
- **Continuing the work of the Business Hub** - feedback from our Covid Business Hub suggests this has been a valuable source of advice and support for businesses during this difficult time. As we move into the recovery phase we will sustain the Hub, adapting to the changing circumstances as businesses move from recovery and back into growth.

3.16. As a member of the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) we are leading the development of **recovery plans at the regional level**, working with our partners in the North East Combined Authority (NECA), the Local

Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Transport North East. The significant NTCA investment programmes, focused on our key growth sectors, will be reframed to ensure actions and projects support our economy to recover.

- 3.17. Our own recovery work and those we are involved in at the regional level will focus on:
- **Innovation** and how challenges businesses face might be solved with smart solutions with broader application;
 - The **international** agenda with potential changes to trade and investment and business travel;
 - Opportunities around more **localised supply chains**;
 - The **behavioural changes** we will see and the currently unknown impact this might have on the way we live and work;
 - **Strategic evidence** to give the proper economic context and support for interventions and planning decisions on new inward investment, infrastructure or business expansions.
- 3.18. Delivering our economic recovery plans must go hand-in-hand with measures to ensure continued safety of residents and employees. We will continue to follow ongoing Government guidance as restrictions are gradually eased. In particular, we will follow recent Government guidance on identifying issues associated with the use of public places in light of the need for social distancing. This focuses on areas likely to be busy (such as town centres and retail spaces for example) and includes temporary, practical interventions for adapting and managing public places. As these public spaces become more 'open for business', the Council will continue to work with businesses to ensure the right safety measures are in place so that businesses can reopen whilst people stay safe.

4. Communities and People

What we know now and moving forward

- 4.1. Families, individuals and whole communities have been profoundly impacted by the Covid lockdown. There has been incredible positivity in the response from people coming forward to volunteer and help others. There has also been a sense of communities coming together and becoming stronger, despite having to remain socially distanced. But, undoubtedly there have been challenges and, of course, personal tragedies. First and foremost people have, sadly, lost loved ones and are dealing with personal grief in the most difficult circumstances.
- 4.2. The restrictions have been difficult for people of all ages, but particularly so for those people who are vulnerable and have been isolated from friends and

family. Vulnerable families will have suffered increased pressure. Many children and young people have, almost overnight, had to adapt to home-schooling, with many young people anxious about their future routes into further & higher education, employment and training. There is also the broader impact on health and wellbeing from the restrictions to daily lives all people have experienced.

- 4.3. Added to this, it's impossible to separate the economic harm from Covid from our people and communities who have suffered financial hardship through loss of earnings and restrictions on trade. This will inevitably have impacted on the wellbeing of our residents.
- 4.4. Much has been written already in the media about the long-term impacts of the lockdown even after restrictions are lifted. It's possible people will be less likely to travel as frequently and will want to live and work 'more locally' within their communities. Having adapted almost entirely to remote and digital services in recent weeks, people may in future wish to continue to interact differently with public services and the wider economy. Whilst much of this remains speculative, recent research indicates people are increasingly considering living their lives differently post-Covid. So, we must be ready to adapt our old approaches and how we work with communities moving forward as part of recovery.
- 4.5. Critically, it is likely people will want even greater control over what happens in their communities. So we must rethink how we support communities to recover and become more resilient to future challenges. A key part of that will be supporting capacity within the voluntary and community sector to work with communities and we are actively looking at how the Council can continue to play its part in that as part of the Covid recovery phase.
- 4.6. Whilst the Covid crisis has impacted on people of all ages and backgrounds, we have identified two key strategic priorities around people and communities that require particular attention as we move into recovery.

(i) Children and Young People

- 4.7. Education - whilst our teachers, schools, parents and young people have worked hard to adapt to and support home-schooling, it is accepted that there is a high likelihood that there will have been a negative impact on the educational attainment and progress of some children and, in particular, the most vulnerable.
- 4.8. Some children will have had some additional time in school before the summer break if their parents have agreed to their return to school. Schools will now, as a consequence, be operating a twin-teaching system for those now back in school and those remaining at home which, could lead to further inequalities in access to high quality teaching and learning.
- 4.9. Children facing public examinations in 2021 will return on a part-time basis to school and, even then, only 25% of the total cohort will be in school at any one time. With little direction yet from examining boards as to the direction of

examinations in 2021, schools are currently trying to work through a number of hypothetical examination scenarios with less than 12 months until the 2021 examination season begins.

- 4.10. It is worth pointing out some recent national surveys have indicated that the majority of teachers are confident in their ability to recover the learning gaps that children will have experienced during the pandemic and, for older children, to predict the grades their pupils would have attained in lieu of GCSE and A-level exams this summer. Despite this however, there is growing concern that the Covid crisis risks increasing inequalities in education attainment and addressing this is a key priority for our recovery work.
- 4.11. **Vulnerable Children and Families** - for some young people, school acts as an important 'safe place'. Risks of abuse and neglect in the home could be increased and during the lockdown reduced contact with teachers (as well as other groups and agencies) limits opportunities for concerns to be raised. Of concern also, is the mental health and wellbeing of young people generally during this time as their scope to participate in positive activities and interact with friends has been curtailed. This is likely to be a particularly challenging time for young people already coping with mental ill-health. Further to this, there has been increased pressure on placements for looked after children as the numbers in care have risen since lockdown exacerbated by difficulties in exiting children from care at this time.

Response so far

- 4.12. Firstly, it's important to emphasise that our Children's Services service was inspected very recently by Ofsted and judged to be 'Good'. This means our services to vulnerable families and young people were in a strong position going into the crisis.
- 4.13. As expected, our Children's Services staff have adapted swiftly and effectively to the changed circumstances and the need for socially distanced ways of working. They have identified and risk-rated vulnerable families already known to services and established clear guidance for visiting and coordinating work and support both face-to-face and virtually dependant on need and risk. We have maintained services in line with statutory safeguarding requirements. A range of proactive measures and ways of contacting families who come to social care attention and may be vulnerable have been put in place. Three approaches to maintaining contact have been established with those families identified: direct calling out to check in with families; use of the health visiting network; and, through children's centres. Our residential service has been supported by staff from within wider social care to ensure appropriate staffing levels have been maintained. And, our Fostering Service has effectively implemented a range of measures supported by national guidance to increase the capacity of and support to our foster carers to meet rising demand.
- 4.14. Schools in Northumberland have put a number of measures in place to mitigate the potential widening of the education gap during the closure

period, including online teaching, electronic resources, regular and consistent contact with pupils and, for those vulnerable children in school, a range of educational and social experiences to ensure that learning continued to take place. The DfE introduced an IT for Students scheme during the closure period, targeting vulnerable current Year 10 pupils initially to try to reduce the digital divide.

- 4.15. The Northumberland Education Service has worked effectively with schools and transport providers to ensure sufficiency of places for children of key workers, vulnerable and ECHP learners. Around 1,000-1,500 vulnerable children and those from key worker families per day have been in schools throughout the 'closure' period, with the vast majority of schools remaining open throughout the period. This has included schools and providers being open throughout the school holidays including the Bank Holidays. As a result, Northumberland has achieved some of the highest attendance figures across the North East with 51,743 pupils attending during the first 10 weeks of the lockdown.
- 4.16. A school transport system was maintained for all those children that needed it. In addition, the eschool meals voucher scheme was introduced. The Education Service is now working with all schools and academies to support their wider reopening plans. This support has included proforma risk assessments, HR and Health and Safety online seminars, HR 'drop-ins' and a daily email update each day throughout the ten week period.

Our Plans for Recovery

- 4.17. The challenges involved in successfully reopening all of our schools to all age groups cannot be underestimated. There remains a high level of uncertainty about health and safety amongst many parents and school staff, despite the best efforts of schools. Practical challenges such as achieving class groups of 15 pupils, maintaining appropriate staffing levels and having the physical capacity in the building to double the number of classes remain. Of course, this will be an evolving picture as the position around Covid infection rates is updated and schools, with support from the local authority, adapt to changes in the national guidance.
- 4.18. In addition, current increased demands and resultant financial pressures on Children's Services and for Special Educational Needs provision are national trends and may even increase post-Covid. To address these challenges around Education and Children's Services, our priorities are to:
 - **Deliver our plans for an Education Challenge** - this aims to boost attainment overall whilst narrowing inequalities in attainment so that all of our young people have a chance to fulfil their potential. Plans and engagement with Government were already advancing well pre-Covid and we are revising our 'ask' of Government to take account of the impacts of Covid.

- **Support schools to develop a ‘Recovery Curriculum’** - The School Improvement Service will work alongside schools to prepare a "recovery curriculum" to ease the transition back to school and reduce the gap. Schools will also be supported to plan a hybrid in school/out of school curriculum if, as expected, pupils continue to attend school on a rota or part-time basis.
- **Education Improvement Board:** - will commence its work in order to drive forward and monitor the improvement agenda but will also coordinate the recovery journey.
- **Introduce a Summer Scheme** - we are considering a Summer Play Scheme to accelerate learning, recognising the lost learning especially for some disadvantaged children due to Covid.
- **Improve Special Educational Needs provision** - we will review and revitalise our offer to meet increased demand.
- **Deliver Children's Homes investment** - we will progress plans to build new Children’s Homes in the County to meet demand and avoid where possible ‘out of authority’ placements.

SEND

- 4.19. A Special Educational Needs and Development (SEND) Recovery Plan has been produced and shared with the Department for Education and NHS England on the steps to be taken moving forward. This has been approved by the SEND Strategic Partnership Board and will be monitored on a monthly basis.
- 4.20. Support services will be available to provide advice and guidance around strategies to support inclusion of SEND learners within schools.
- 4.21. A new model of service delivery already planned for September 2020 will continue to be rolled out. This will provide an equitable service to schools across the county and will help to meet increased demand as schools return to ‘business as usual’.

Skills

- 4.22. During the lockdown, young people and adults have been able to continue their studies using a range of on-line, digital learning. As at June 1st, some 84% of learners continued to be engaged in their learning and were making good progress towards achieving their qualifications. The qualifications are being assessed using prior attainment on the course, records of assessment and continued engagement. In addition, the pastoral team is supporting learners very well and safeguarding risks for all learners remains a priority.
- 4.23. A digital development team emerged early in lockdown to support staff and learners to use successful and meaningful digital learning styles. The focus

remains on the 16% of learners not engaged in regular and routine learning to prevent significant learning gaps from emerging. A small number of learners have been challenged by lack of appropriate IT equipment or connectivity. Learners have been supported where possible with IT kit and connectivity using learner support funds and learner bursary funds.

- 4.24. Recruitment for September 2020 will begin from mid-June with a Live and Learn Local campaign, supporting NCC as a first choice learning experience with exceptional support.

Apprentices

- 4.25. Apprentices have taken the opportunity during lockdown and, in some cases when furloughed, to accelerate their learning. The on-line learning packages are also supporting the apprentices with 86% of the cohort engaged in significant learning. A small number of apprentices have accelerated their work and completed their apprenticeship successfully.

Employability and Inclusive Economy

- 4.26. We have responded swiftly to the rapidly increasing unemployment claims. Work to help referred clients has continued remotely including 'job club' work. Contact with clients through digital platforms and telephone has been important to individuals, particularly where there have been concerns with mental health and wellbeing. Referrals for jobs and matching skill sets have continued to support clients into work in priority roles such as care and driving.

Our Plans for Recovery

Skills

- 4.27. We will tailor the curriculum to meet economic recovery priorities for Northumberland. As part of this, we will consider continued social distancing and a mixed model of continued remote learning and safe classroom engagement. This will ensure a quality first training in skills for our young people so they are well prepared for employment.
- 4.28. We will develop a school liaison service to support next steps in training and careers in Northumberland, harnessing links with industry to provide work experience, enhanced alternative provision and support engagement to help make career choices ambitious much earlier in schools.
- 4.29. And, we will drive a 'live and learn local' campaign to support local solutions where concerns arise for travel to learning centres.

Adults

4.30. We will support adults to access the learning, skills and development they need to fulfill their potential and to benefit from new economic opportunities by:

- Developing key partnerships with employers and businesses across the county to support training, work placement opportunities, industry liaison and skills workforce development. As part of this, we will review and deliver a new curriculum that meets the devolved Adult Education Budget priorities.
- Promoting 'routes to employment', 'routes to a new career' and 'routes to my next steps'.

Apprentices

4.31. As we drive economic recovery in Northumberland it is vital that we maximise the opportunities for young people to access high-quality apprenticeships. We plan to do this by:

- Promoting and marketing the value of apprenticeships to young people and businesses.
- Working with Advance Northumberland and employers to grow business support and ensure the range of apprenticeships offered by the council supports the wider needs of businesses.
- Making use of section 106 agreements to include apprenticeship elements in key developments.
- Developing an apprenticeship levy 'passport package' to support SMEs and micro businesses in culture, tourism and visitor economy sectors.
- Working with Northumberland College on joint delivery models to support and aid recovery.
- Aligning provision to established models of excellence such as the City and Guilds Technical Academy.

Employability

4.32. It is vitally important we support people who have fallen out of work as a result of the Covid crisis to get back into employment. And, we must continue to help people who were already out of work pre-Covid. To achieve this, we will:

- Expand the employability function to support the increasing demand.

- Develop a 'triage' model to support the post COVID-19 response fund work for residents in Northumberland.
- Develop a safe approach for face-to-face support sessions for clients and provide progression routes from employability into training and apprenticeships.
- Expand the digital working pattern to reach further (i.e. evenings, weekends) and explore access to digital inclusion kit for disadvantaged residents.
- Expand the re-engagement packages to meet wider locality needs.

(ii) Communities, older and vulnerable people

- 4.33. Naturally, there has been significant emphasis on support for vulnerable people during the current crisis. Government established a system to ensure our 'shielded residents' receive free essential food parcels delivered to their front doors. This group includes people with certain health conditions as well as pregnant women.
- 4.34. The Council has supported the national effort with a local supply of emergency food parcels being delivered to doorsteps, making sure those that are shielded and at the highest risk can stay at home at all times to prevent exposure to the virus. To do this, we swiftly set up a Community Shielding Hub with a dedicated team of Council staff, redeployed from their usual day jobs, with support from Active Northumberland.
- 4.35. As we move into the recovery phase there is the likelihood those in the shielding hub will require some ongoing level of support. This will be dependent on how long the current lockdown restrictions remain in place and how these are eased over time but remain an ongoing part of our recovery planning. Through our analysis of the Shielding Hub data, we have also developed new learning on our vulnerable and older people and their needs. We propose to use this to better inform our approaches to services in communities during the recovery phase, including our priority work on addressing loneliness and isolation.
- 4.36. Our voluntary and community organisations, our Town and Parish Councils, and local charities have all come together to rally support across the county, with many more new networks and groups being set up to support our most vulnerable residents through this difficult time. The Council has welcomed this incredible response and is thankful to all the people and groups for their ongoing contribution.
- 4.37. Many areas already have volunteers in place who are coordinating with local partners including supermarkets to ensure residents have access to vital supplies, including food shopping and picking up prescriptions. As a Council, we have supported this by launching 'Northumberland Communities Together' (NCT) to strengthen and connect all the volunteering networks. We have supported residents, groups and volunteers with practical advice and help for things like food supplies, access to resources for other essentials, as well as safeguarding information for our most vulnerable and 'at risk' residents.
- 4.38. Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) is intended to enhance the work of all our local community and voluntary groups, connecting the most vulnerable in our communities with the support they need, whilst making sure that they are safeguarded and protected. This is where the Council is playing a critical role. We have mapped out where all this activity is taking place across Northumberland, to make sure support is coordinated, to target help exactly where it is needed. As we move forward into recovery we are looking at how the NCT can be enhanced and sustained to support even greater levels of community empowerment and cooperation between groups

in the long-term. We think by taking this approach, we can help communities and voluntary groups be more joined-up and resilient to future challenges.

5. Environment

What we know now and moving forward

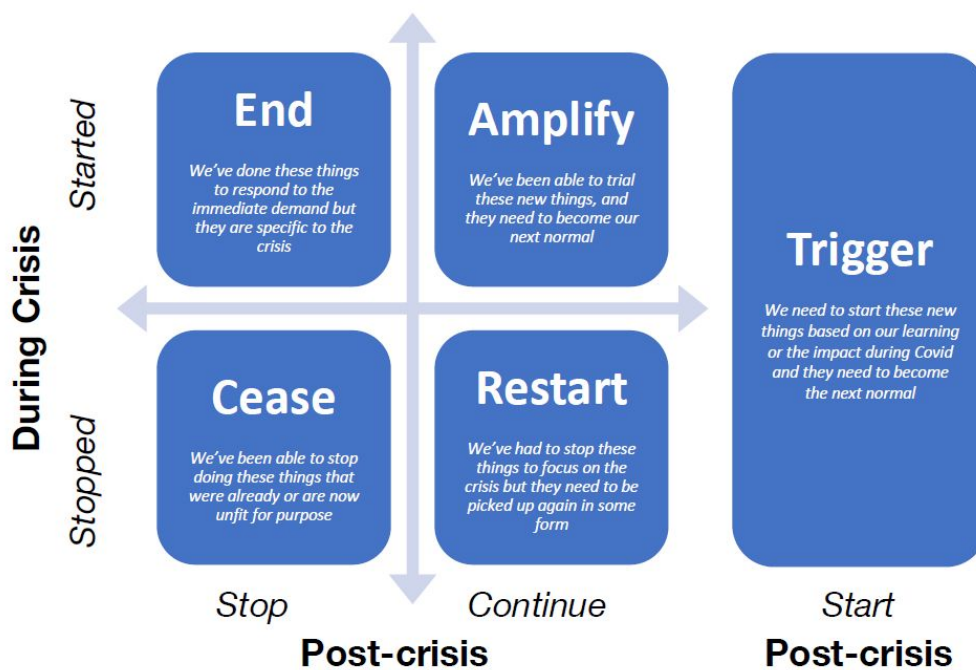
- 5.1. The environment is perhaps one of the few areas, where the lockdown has led to some short-term gains. Far fewer car journeys and much-reduced consumption generally have led to lower CO2 emissions and improved air quality nationally and globally. Although it is too early to see in data trends, anecdotally, we have all witnessed increased numbers of people walking and cycling as people have sought to make the most of their leisure time.
- 5.2. Alongside this, Local Services have adapted during the crises to ensure the core environmental services have been delivered throughout.
- 5.3. Of course, these environmental gains have come at costs to the economy on which we depend for our livelihoods not to mention the impact of temporary curbs on civil liberties. And, as we move into recovery and the economy gets going we could quickly see these trends reversed, particularly if social distancing on public transport is maintained in the medium term.
- 5.4. The opportunity then, as we move into recovery, is to hold onto at least some of the environmental gains we have managed to achieve whilst recognising that the economy needs to get going too. And, there are indications that people generally, having experienced quieter roads, more cycling and walking and improved air quality, will want to retain at least some of these benefits into the long-term. This is borne out in recent, national survey work which shows people have enjoyed the environmental benefits and also figures indicating increased homeworking is likely to become a permanent feature.
- 5.5. Pre-Covid, the Council was already moving ahead to implement its ambitious Climate Action Plan. In the recovery phase, we will review that plan to see whether, post-Covid, people's new work patterns, travel patterns, and holiday plans change in a way that impacts on CO2 levels. And, we will use a range of engagement activities with staff and residents to prioritise action. As an organisation, we will of course do our bit to contribute directly to this; for example new ways of working post-Covid should lead to reduced mileage as more people work from home, more often.

6. Organisation

- 6.1. Whilst Council services have adapted and responded well to the immediate impacts of the Covid crisis, we must now also turn our thinking to how our organisation will recover post-Covid.
- 6.2. As we look to recovery, we anticipate, there are likely to be some long-term and profound changes resulting from the unprecedented challenges that

people and communities have faced. We see the potential for people to interact with public services and the wider economy in radically different ways post-Covid and that may well have a significant impact on the structure, outcomes and operational requirements of each of our services.

- 6.3. The restrictions on movement have helped people to re-discover the value of their local, shared spaces and we expect that this will continue beyond the current crisis and so we need to consider how we manage and support that going forward. Our teams have embraced new methods of working to deliver services in much more creative and responsive ways. Some activities have stopped, some continued and some may recommence with a new focus, vigour or different operational approach going forward.
- 6.4. Our service recovery must be informed and shaped by what has changed and the things which may never return to the pre-Covid 'business as usual' position. As our services recover they must reflect the 'new normal' and that must be something all services consider both in terms of service planning, as well as whether new models of operational delivery and technology can play a bigger part in what we aim to achieve.
- 6.5. To consider all of these implications, the Council has established a programme of work to ensure our services are fit-for-purpose to meet the new demands and expectations we will face post-Covid. The diagram below summarises the methodology we will apply to this process with services.



7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This is the first report on the Councils approach and initial priorities for Covid recovery planning. As we move forward, we will work in partnership with local and regional frameworks to coordinate, implement and adapt our plans

to changing circumstances. This paper will be followed by further reports in the coming months.

8. Recommendations

8.1. Cabinet is recommended to:

- Consider and agree initial plans and priorities to support economic and social recovery from the Covid crisis across Northumberland.
- Agree to receive further reports on recovery planning as we move further into the recovery phase in the coming months.

9. Implications

Policy	NCC's recovery plans impact on the full range of the Council's policies. Where specific changes to policy are required these will be subject of separate report(s) and decision(s).
Finance and value for money	<p>The Council has received the following additional funding from Government to respond to the Covid crisis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £19.105m funding to meet Covid-related cost pressures; - £3.381m to be applied to a Covid Local Council Tax Scheme; - £39.966m to apply as business rates relief for eligible businesses; - £97.716m to apply to direct grants for eligible businesses. <p>The S151 Officer is closely monitoring the financial impact of Covid response and recovery, including additional pressures of services and loss of income. Financial impacts and forecasts are being reported to the Government on a monthly basis in line with requirements placed on all councils.</p> <p>The financial implications of NCC's recovery plans will be set out in separate reports as projects and programmes of recovery are taken forward.</p>
Legal	The Council's Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report. In line with other local authorities, NCC has numerous and wide-ranging legal duties and powers to respond to and recover from the Covid crisis. These include, but are not limited to the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and extant Civil Contingencies legislation. Moving forward, the Monitoring Officer will continue to be consulted on the detailed legal implications of our recovery plans.
Procurement	Our response to the Covid crisis has required our approach to procurement to be agile to respond to rapidly, changing circumstances. As part of the recovery phase, we will evaluate lessons learned from the crisis and how these might inform future approaches to procurement. We will also take account of any ongoing national changes to procurement frameworks.

Human Resources	<p>The response to the Covid crisis has resulted in significant changes to the way staff work and deliver services. As we move into the recovery phase it is very possible that some of these changes will remain long-term and may well become permanent. As part of the Future Services work, outlined in this report we will consider what has changed due to Covid and how our services will need to adapt to reflect those changes and meet the needs of our residents and businesses. Any specific changes to services or HR policies to facilitate this, will be the subject of separate report(s) and decision(s).</p>
Property	<p>Whilst this report itself, does not contain direct implications for NCC property, as we move further into the recovery phase, we will consider the best use of the property portfolio to support recovery and deliver services in a changing context. Any future changes to the use of the property portfolio would be the subject of separate report(s) and decision(s).</p>
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>This report sets out a wide range of policies, services, projects and initiatives to ensure Northumberland Council recovers from the Covid crisis. These will, of course, have implications for all our residents and communities and therefore are likely to have implications across the nine 'protected characteristics' under equalities legislation. Where there are specific changes to services or policies as part of our recovery planning, these will be assessed separately in Impact Assessments relevant to the specific change proposed.</p>
Risk Assessment	<p>In line with Council's overall policies and procedures, individual risk assessments are in place for the services, projects and other activities set out in this report.</p>
Crime & Disorder	<p>As we move into the recovery phase, we will continue to monitor and respond to ongoing changes in relation to community safety.</p>
Customer Consideration	<p>Our recovery plans will take a 'residents first' approach, taking account of the changing needs and requirements of our residents and communities as a result of Covid.</p>
Carbon reduction	<p>Before the Covid crisis, the Council was taking forward ambitious plans to address carbon emissions. We will continue to take this ambitious and proactive approach. The crisis and resultant restrictions have led to reductions in car journeys and emissions more generally as consumption has been impacted. As restrictions are gradually eased, we will review our Climate Change plans, assessing changes in behaviour and, where possible, looking for opportunities to maintain reductions in carbon emissions.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>This report emphasises a key part of the recovery process will be ensuring health and wellbeing of our residents and staff continues to be central to our recovery planning. A key</p>

	consideration will be how we support people who may have suffered mental ill-health as a result of the crisis.
Wards	The Covid crisis response and recovery planning impacts on all Wards.

Background papers:

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Chris Hand
Relevant Executive Director	Daljit Lally
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Peter Jackson

Author and Contact Details

Phillip Hunter, Service Director, Policy
philip.hunter@northumberland.gov.uk
01670 623130