

# Scrutiny Briefing Note

The Communities Scrutiny Panel have asked to monitor progress on the following issues. This briefing contains the latest position as at w/c 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020.

## Subject: Covid-19 Response and Recovery Update Report

- 1.1 North East Lincolnshire Council led a controlled and well-managed response to the initial wave of covid-19 during the first lockdown which commenced in March 2020. This measured approach contributed to NEL experiencing one of the lowest levels of infection rates of all upper-tier local authorities within England. The immediate response and deployment of resources ensured the impact on the borough was managed with the best possible outcomes, given the unprecedented emergency situation.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020, Cabinet considered and approved the Council's local strategic recovery plan, to provide a structured and robust plan to restore services following the initial lockdown and minimise as much as possible the impact on the borough. At the sub-regional level, under the auspices of the Humber Local Resilience Forum (LRF) a Humber recovery co-ordinating group (RCG) has been overseeing sub-regional plans for response and recovery. At the local level, a recovery task group (RTG) has driven progress of delivery of the recovery plan across the following themes/workstreams, each led by a Director or Assistant Director:
  - Local economy and business support (including a "green" recovery)
  - Adult social care and protection of the vulnerable
  - Children, families and schools
  - Environment and regulatory
  - Community resilience and engagement
  - Financial resilience, reform and renewal (including organisational development)
  - Public health and health protection
  - CCG Union
- 1.3 The borough-wide approach to recovery has continued to be governed through weekly meetings chaired by the Joint Chief Executive, with regular reporting to political forums, covering the extent of progress across all services, whilst maintaining focus on emerging risks that pose a threat to recovery.
- 1.4 Throughout October 2020, on a national level, data suggested that easing of restrictions had resulted in increases in the reproduction (R) number. Increases were being experienced in NEL despite the previous very low levels from the initial wave.
- 1.5 Extensive infection control mechanisms have continued to be deployed through partnership responses led by the NEL Director of Public Health (DPH), although the



infection growth rate in NEL has continued to rise. In mid-October the growth rate became disproportionately higher than the England rate, with rates in the over 60's and care homes overtaking those evidenced across England.

- 1.6 In a proactive response to growing infection rates, in conjunction with government advice, NEL announced that tier two restrictions would be implemented from 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020. Subsequently, Government announced England-wide lockdown measures would commence from 5<sup>th</sup> November.
- 1.7 To respond immediately and robustly, NELC Leadership reinstated the response mechanism adopting the framework articulated above (para 1.2) to manage response and recovery of all council services. Close attention has been paid to epidemiology reports from the DPH, along with outbreak statistics for NEL and maintaining continual attention to hospital capacity and its impact on community services.
- 1.8 A notable impact of this second wave has been the substantial impact on the workforce of all services across the borough. The strain that has been placed on front line services is significant and must not be underestimated. Workforces across all services are under immense pressure, whilst staffing numbers drop and service demand increases. The emotional wellbeing of our public sector workforce must be at the forefront of consideration. It is recognised that this level of strain on such an already pressurised workforce must be acknowledged and supported. The detail within the accompanying update report highlights the impact on staff groups across the authority that are going above and beyond to continue to provide much needed public sector services despite the overwhelmingly difficult challenges they face.
- 1.9 Collaboration, engagement and partnership across the public, private and voluntary sectors remain essential. Such engagement continues via the Development and Growth Board, the Voluntary and Community Sector Alliance and, from a system wide perspective, the Place Board.
- 1.10 NELC has maintained focus on response and recovery, and an updated strategic recovery plan retains strategic drive on the authority's movement through this continued challenging period. The overarching strategic aims remain unchanged: to facilitate and support local economic recovery, support and sustain local community resilience, support the health and care system, maximise digital capability, support workforce wellbeing, remain focused on prevention and effective outbreak management and build as much financial resilience (organisation and Borough) as possible.
- 1.11 The Council's primary strategic objectives of stronger economy and stronger communities remain as relevant as ever. The recovery plan has evolved as circumstances have changed and new challenges and opportunities arisen. This situation remains volatile and as such the plan and actions are flexible to respond accordingly. Business continuity plans have been reviewed to ensure critical functions will continue to be delivered during lockdown, and that non-essential services can be redeployed.
- 1.12 As further clarity on the local economic, social and environmental impact of Covid-19 is achieved, the strategic recovery plan will continue to be reviewed to ensure fitness for



purpose, relevance and focus; enabling the Council and the Borough to respond to significant challenges as best as reasonably practicable.

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