North Tyneside Council
Report to Cabinet
Date: 20 September 2021

Title: North Tyneside Covid-19 Recovery Programme

Portfolio(s): Elected Mayor	**Cabinet Member(s):** Norma Redfearn CBE

Report from Service Area:	**Corporate Strategy and Customer Service**	
Responsible Officer:	Jacqueline Laughton, Assistant Chief Executive	**Tel: (0191) 643 5724**
Wards affected:	**All**	

PART 1

1.1   **Executive Summary:**

The Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Framework and associated work Programme, was agreed by Cabinet on 29 June 2020 and was based upon the strategic objectives from the Our North Tyneside Plan. It created a structured approach to recovery from the pandemic, with 3 clear phases of: restart; transition and rebuild and grow. The programme ran from June 2020 to July 2021. The purpose of this report is to close this Recovery Programme, in line with the timescales originally agreed by Cabinet

The Programme has been directed throughout, by the Elected Mayor and Cabinet with delivery overseen by an officer level Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG).

Appendix 1 of this report, is a closure report for the Programme detailing what has been achieved and how the Programme objectives have been met. All Programme workstreams have been successfully closed.

Since the start of the pandemic, 20,509 positive cases of the virus have been detected in North Tyneside; sadly, 481 people in the Borough have died. Local outbreak control arrangements with the NHS and other partners, have successfully managed the testing, track and trace and vaccination work for the Borough. North Tyneside has some of the highest compliance rates and take up for testing and vaccination, across the country.

The Authority has ensured support for those residents and authority employees who were classed as clinically extremely vulnerable. Open spaces and areas of natural beauty have continued to be maintained to provide a much needed outlet for maintaining personal wellbeing. Many local businesses have found new and innovative ways to continue trading during the pandemic and have been supported with an extensive range of advice and support from the Authority. Rapid and transformational service changes have taken place and the Authority will seek to keep these as part of its ongoing customer service programme. The Local Government Association recently described the Authority's response to the pandemic as 'commendable'.

This report signals the end of the Authority's emergency response to the pandemic. How the Authority and its partners address the longer-term effects from the pandemic, will be taken forward through a new Our North Tyneside Plan and the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board through a new Health and Wellbeing strategy to tackle health and socio-economic inequalities.

1.2   Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

(1) note the North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Programme, End of Programme Report, Appendix 1; and

(2) agree the closure of the North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Programme.

1.3   Forward Plan:

Twenty-eight days-notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 16 July 2021.

1.4   Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report is directly concerned with the delivery of the entire Our North Tyneside Plan.

1.5   Information:

1.5.1 Background

a) Recovery Framework and Programme

The North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Framework and associated Programme, established a structured approach to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, with 3 clear phases: of restart (June 2020 – September 2020); transition (October 2020 – March 2021) and rebuild and grow (April 2021 – July 2021). It was built upon the strategic objectives from the Our North Tyneside Plan themes, of Our People, Our Places, Our Economy, and an additional theme of Our Organisation was also incorporated.

The recovery framework outlined 12 objectives aligned to the Our North Tyneside plan:

Our people
- To provide calm and resilient leadership – both within the Authority and across the Borough as a whole – mitigating the deep impacts of the pandemic on the Authority, communities, and the local economy.
- To protect the vulnerable as a priority.
- To restore hope and confidence in the future amongst communities and creating a platform for social recovery.
- To contain the spread of infection.
- To protect the safety of staff, residents and visitors.
- To address the impacts of the pandemic from an equalities point of view in relation to protected characteristics, health, wellbeing, education and income.

Our places
- To ensure Covid-secure open spaces and town centres to support confidence and to keep North Tyneside a great place to live, work and visit.

Our economy
- To support local businesses to enable economic recovery and growth.

Our organisation
- To ensure clear democratic oversight is in place.
- To follow national Government guidance in all that the Authority does and link in with relevant plans and initiatives at a regional level.
- To reflect the current context in North Tyneside – through evidence-based decision making with the ability to react and respond to opportunities and challenges.
- To evaluate and learn lessons as the Authority moves forward ("better never stops")

Cabinet received an update on the progress made by the Programme, on 22 February 2021.

b) Recovery Coordinating Group

The Programme has been managed by the Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG), reporting to the Elected Mayor, Lead Members, Cabinet, and the Authority's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

c) End of Phase Reviews

End of phase reviews were conducted at the end of phase's 1 and 2 of the Programme, involving a wide range of stakeholders, including workstream leads, RCG members, Trades Union representatives, SLT, Elected Members and the Elected Mayor. End of phase reviews determined whether the Programme had achieved its objectives to date and was ready to proceed to the next phase.

d) Local Outbreak Control

Local Authorities have an ongoing statutory responsibility to have Local Outbreak Management Plans (LOMPs) in place for responding to emergencies in their areas, as part of their existing duty for safeguarding and protecting the health of their population. Authorities were initially tasked by Government, to produce specific plans by end of June 2020, in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The North Tyneside LOMP was most recently updated in March 2021. Its planned activity has been integral to the successful delivery of the North Tyneside Covid-19 Recovery Programme objectives and joint working between the Local Outbreak Management team and Recovery Programme teams, has been evident throughout the Programme

e) Local Government Association Recovery and Renewal Panel

On 22 May 2021, Cabinet agreed that the Local Government Association (LGA) would undertake a Recovery and Renewal Panel remote visit with North Tyneside Council, from 29 and 30 June 2021. Recovery and Renewal Panel visits are designed to help Local Authorities reflect and consider their approaches to recovery from the Covid-19

pandemic. Cabinet will be considering the feedback from the panel at its meeting on 20 September

1.5.2   End of Programme Report

Appendix 1 of this report is the final assessment of the Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Programme. This Appendix is the concluding assessment of the Programme's achievements and learning and signals the decommissioning of its resources and infrastructure. Section 4 of this end of programme closure report, Appendix 1, captures a detailed record of deliverables and achievements. An overview of this is set out below.

Multiple agencies have supported the approach of surveillance, infection prevent and control, contact tracing and epidemiology, to provide a whole system public health approach and action at scale. Regional and local structures, including political leadership, have ensured the consistent management of outbreak control. Intensive and tailored monitoring and support for high-risk settings including care homes, underserved groups, the vulnerable and those needing to self-isolate, has provided effective management of the virus within communities.

Since the start of the pandemic, 20,509 positive cases of the virus have been detected in the Borough and sadly, 481 people have died from the virus.

The North Tyneside Covid-19 Vaccination Board has operationalised the Authority's vaccination programme. Strong partnership working with the primary care network (PCN) sites ensured the early and rapid implementation of a localised vaccine offer. The Authority now ranks within the top quartile of local authorities nationally and within the top three regional authorities for vaccine roll out. As of 5 August, 74% of the resident population had received both doses of the vaccine.

Based on an understanding of the population's demographics and socio-economic circumstances, the Authority will continue to address poorer vaccine uptake within certain communities to help tackle enduring impact of transmission rates.

a) People

The Authority has mitigated the impact of the pandemic across the life course and sought to protect the most vulnerable residents. A collective effort with the voluntary sector, ensured the rapid mobilisation of a Local Support System that made over 19,000 welfare calls to provide regular support and contact and help to tackle loneliness and isolation. Those in need were provided with food, medicines and essential information to help navigate the pandemic. North Tyneside's approach to support for the vulnerable, was hailed as best practice by the Ministry for Housing, Community and Local Government.

North Tyneside students were able to continue their education at home with the provision of over 3,500 devices and 130 4G internet packages. The Authority minimised the number of those 'not in education, employment or training' by engaging with over 2,000 students leaving year 11 and year 13 to confirm their destinations after full time education. Digital projects, including the VODA Digital Champion Volunteers and the digital outbreak project has supported residents become digitally skilled and helped reduce the impact of isolation.

The Authority has supported those experiencing financial hardship with a flexible approach to the allocation of discretionary Covid-19 funding. Over 1,242 residents have received financial support when self-isolating and over £250,000 of emergency

assistance grant monies ensured food and essential supplies were received by those in need. Over 1,000 new applications for free school meals were processed, with 186,000 packed lunches, 25,000 hampers and over 7,000 holiday vouchers issued to support those families in need.

The North Tyneside Marshals, public space messaging boards and digital signs were utilised to provide strong public messaging and support confidence within communities. The Covid-19 correspondence team was developed to provide residents with high quality and consistent replies to enquiries. The Elected Mayor's Spirit of North Tyneside campaign recognised and celebrated the amazing collective effort of the Authority's staff, communities, voluntary and partner organisations.

The spread of the virus was contained by a multiagency approach to outbreak management. The Authority supported NHS and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) colleagues, to ensure effective track and trace arrangements were in place and work with local primary care networks ensured residents had access to local vaccination.

The Authority introduced processes and control measures across all Authority buildings and provided individualised support to all 45 North Tyneside care homes to protect staff, residents and visitors. In accordance with JVCI guidance, 1,349 employees were offered priority vaccination in line with their job role.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will work to address the impact of the pandemic on health and socio-economic inequalities with findings incorporated into a new health and wellbeing strategy and reflected within the priorities of the refreshed Our North Tyneside plan, which is due to be considered by Council at its meeting on 20 September.

b) Places

The Authority ensured North Tyneside remained a great place to live, work and visit with the continued delivery of essential Authority services from the outset of the pandemic and throughout. Refuse collection, highway maintenance, street cleaning and the reablement service, adapted their service delivery to ensure the service's continued effective and safe operation.

The Authority established an enforcement hub and the enforcement team worked with Northumbria Police to ensure businesses implemented safe and secure processes when restrictions started to ease.

20 North Tyneside Marshals were employed to provide a visible presence in high footfall areas, to respond to resident concerns and reinforce key public health messages.

Traffic management schemes were introduced along the coastal strip and within town centres to help support town centre businesses, encourage cycling and walking and maintain social distancing.

d) Economy

Working in partnership with the Business Forum, the Authority supported local businesses and helped stimulate economic growth with the distribution of 11 different Covid-19 grants, amounting to £65m of funding, distributed to over 4,000 North Tyneside businesses. A bespoke business consultancy programme was launched assisting over 200 businesses with specialist support and expertise.

A town centre recovery plan was developed to ensure the safe reopening of town centre businesses. The Authority closely monitored commercial unit vacancy rate to understand impact within town centres and supported local businesses launching the 'Buy Local' campaign and provided free advertising in the Our North Tyneside magazine. Hospitality businesses were supported with the provision of temporary pavement licences to allow the extension or introduction of outdoor food and drink amenities.

The Authority's back to work service helped tackle unemployment supporting the completion of 1,940 job applications and CVs, 392 enrolments in training course, 402 individuals gaining interviews and 370 residents securing employment.

e) Organisation

The Authority ensured clear democratic oversight remained in place throughout the pandemic, by delivering 69 virtual Cabinet, Council and other Committee meetings. Mayoral, local and PCC elections were held in May 2021 in a covid secure way.

The Authority recognised the importance of capturing and reacting to frequent changes in Government guidance and established processes to dissect and share guidance ensuring efficient action. National legislation and guidance were translated for a range of audiences to help communicate key public health messages.

In response to the launch of the Government's roadmap to recovery, the Authority established a roadmap action plan to track Authority actions and document the reopening and extended offer of service teams.

Throughout the pandemic, over 100 data dashboards, were produced to ensure the Authority remained informed and was able to respond to data and direct resources through evidence based decision making.

The Authority consulted with stakeholders throughout and in particular at the end of each phase of the Covid-19 Recovery Programme. Feedback from this engagement was used to inform and shape the Programme as it progressed.

The creation of a skills exchange ensured the continued operation of key council services and provided capacity to support the clinically extremely vulnerable people across the Borough with the redeployment of 267 employees.

f) Programme Closure

Section 5 of Appendix 1, details the learning from the Programme and how this will continue to shape the ongoing ambition and work of the Authority.

The closure of the Programme signals an end to the emergency response of the Authority and a return to a busines as usual state, with a focus on building a better and thriving North Tyneside. There is a refresh of the Our North Tyneside Plan underway and this will reflect the ongoing priorities for North Tyneside from the pandemic.

Work has begun to understand the impact of the pandemic on health and socio economic inequalities and this will be used to refresh the Borough's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy to tackle inequalities.

Work to both commemorate loss and celebrate the response to the pandemic across the Borough will continue as part of the Elected Mayor's Spirit of North Tyneside scheme.

1.6   Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet.

Option 1

(i) To note the Authority's Covid-19 Programme closure report in Appendix 1 and agree the closure of the Programme

Option 2

(i) To note the Authority's Covid-19 Programme closure report in Appendix 1 and not agree the closure of the Programme

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7   Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The end of Programme closure report has assessed the delivery of the Programme's objectives and where necessary, confirmed where ongoing support is in place, to ensure change continues to be embedded. The overall performance of the Programme and its management processes have been evaluated and lessons learned compiled, so that they may benefit any post Programme activity or future recovery programmes. Programme information has been reviewed and updated, including risks and finance. The disbanding of the temporary organisation of the Programme is explained in Appendix 1, along with the arrangements for any additional, post Programme activities.

1.8   Appendices:

North Tyneside Covid-19 Recovery Programme, End of Programme Report.

1.9   Contact officers:

Jackie Laughton Assistant Chief Executive, tel. (0191) 643 5728
Haley Hudson Customer Service and Digital Manager, tel. (0191) 643 7008
Colin MacDonald Senior Manager, Technical and Regulatory Services, tel.(0191) 643 6620
Carol Girvan Recovery Programme Manager, tel. (0191) 643 8946
David Dunford, Senior Business Partner, Finance, tel. (0191) 643 7027

1.10   Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

(1) Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up and Recovery and Renewal Remote Visit Findings report to Cabinet 20 September 2021

(2) [North Tyneside COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan](#) published on 12 March 2021

(3) [North Tyneside Council Customer Service Programme](#) report to Cabinet 22 February 2021

(4) [North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Framework](#) report to Cabinet 29 June 2020

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no further financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Within the financial years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, the Authority has managed over £107m of Government grants to support local businesses, residents, care homes and schools with financial support and additional Covid-19 related services throughout the pandemic. Details of both the income and expenditure relating to Covid-19 grants has been documented in all Financial Management reports to Cabinet, since the start of the pandemic.

2.2 Human resources

The priorities and work of two RCG subgroups, focused on Covid-secure workplaces and the wellbeing and support of Authority teams, have been combined, as part of the Programme closure process. This new Group will continue its work, post closure of the Programme, until at least December 2021. The Group will report at least monthly to the Authority's SLT.

Programme resources that will be released or retained following the completion of the Programme are detailed in section 10.7 of Appendix 1.

2.3 Legal

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

2.4 Consultation/community engagement

Throughout the Programme, views from stakeholders have been captured and used to help inform and shape the plans for subsequent phases. Engagement with key Programme stakeholders is outlined within section 1.5.7 of this report.

2.4.1 Internal Consultation

Consultation on the recommendation to close the Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Programme, has been carried out with RCG, the Authority's Senior Leadership Team and Lead Members.

Elected Members were provided with an online survey at the end of phase 1 and phase 2 of the Programme, providing feedback on the Programme's work and eliciting views about the effect of the pandemic on the communities they serve. This information was used to shape the plans of the subsequent Programme phase.

Authority teams have taken part in 3 pulse surveys, to assess the ongoing impact of the pandemic and also to seek feedback on a range of operational issues.

Trade Union representatives have supported their members from the outset of the pandemic and in addition to the existing pre pandemic engagement routes, additional meetings with Trade Union representatives and the Chief Executive and RCG Chairs, have taken place at least monthly.

2.4.2 External Consultation/Engagement

Residents were consulted during phase 1 of the Programme, through the Big Community Conversation in August 2020. The comments were incorporated into the 2020 State of the Area event and provided valuable insight for the public confidence and town centres workstreams in phase 2. The Authority's resident's panel also gave feedback in a bespoke survey about the Programme and shared experiences and views that were used to inform phase 3 plans.

Partners at both local and regional levels have been integral to the Programme throughout.

2.5 Human rights

There are no human rights implications directly arising from this report.

2.6 Equalities and diversity

In undertaking the process for Covid-19 Recovery Programme the Authority aimed to secure compliance with its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty under that Act.

Equality Impact Assessments were carried out by each workstream undertaking an alternative approach to service delivery to remove or minimise any disadvantage for people with protected characteristics.

2.7 Risk management

The Covid-19 strategic and workstream risks have been reported to and reviewed by RCG on a monthly basis throughout the Programme. The risk log for the duration of the Programme, has been maintained by the Authority's Risk Manager with the log held centrally by the Authority's risk management team.

During the third and final phase of the Programme, there were 38 workstream risks open - 14 rated as high, 10 medium and 14 low. Most were linked to the final step in the Government's roadmap and as part of the Programme closure process, have been subsequently reviewed and closed.

There are 14 risks that remain open all of which will be transferred to relevant service areas for management as part of business as usual. The risks will be managed, in conjunction with the Authority's risk management team and as part of the Authority's risk management framework. A list of the remaining open risks and post Programme responsibilities can be found in Annex H, of Appendix 1, to this report.

2.8 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report.

2.9 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications directly arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive   X

- Director(s)   X

- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X

- Chief Finance Officer   X

- Monitoring Officer   X

- Assistant Chief Executive X