

## Economic Development Digital Advisory Board

Tuesday 27 July 2021 at 2.00pm

Meeting to be held at: Reception Room, South Shields Town Hall,  
Westoe Road, South Shields, NE33 2RL

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## AGENDA

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	Page No
1. <b>Apologies for Absence (Members)</b>	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
Please remember to declare any personal interest where appropriate both verbally and by recording it on the relevant form (to be submitted to the Strategy & Democratic Services Assistant). Please also remember to leave the meeting where any personal interest requires this.	
3. <b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 23 February 2021</b>	1-6
For approval as a correct record	
4. <b>Digital Update</b>	7-22
5. <b>CV19 Regional Economic Recovery</b>	23-38
6. <b>Date and Time of Next Meeting:</b> 23 November 2021 at 2.00pm	

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## Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board

### Draft Minutes for Approval

23 February 2021

(2.00pm – 3.00pm)

Meeting held: virtually via Microsoft Teams

Agenda Item 3

#### Present:

Chair	Cllr T Dixon
Councillors	G Miller, C Marshall (not present for Item 6, at which point the meeting became inquorate)
Co-opted Members	Gillian Hall (NELEP), Sarah Glendinning (CBI)
Officers	Guy Currey (Director, Invest North East England), John Scott (Head of Economic Growth, South Tyneside Council), Nicola Robason (Monitoring Officer – Core, NECA), Gavin Armstrong (Policy and Scrutiny Officer, NECA), Rory Sherwood-Parkin (Senior Economic Policy Manager, South Tyneside Council), Jonathan Lunness (Strategy and Democracy Support Officer, South Tyneside Council), Karen Connolly (Strategy and Democracy Officer, South Tyneside Council)

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Brain and Cllr Adams.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Gillian Hall declared an interest in Item 6 as a Harbour Commissioner at the Port of Blyth.

3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2020**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

4. **EU EXIT UPDATE**

Submitted: A report and presentation of the Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Digital (previously circulated and attached to Official Minutes).

Rory Sherwood-Parkin presented the report and delivered a presentation on the UK's exit from the European Union and the impact upon the North East Combined Authority area.

The presentation covered the following topics:

- The UK-EU Trade Agreement;
- Immediate Impact;
- NECA Activity;
- Risks and Opportunities;
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- Next Steps

During the presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The UK-EU Trade Agreement was approved on 31 December 2020 and covers Trade, Information Sharing, Security and Nuclear Cooperation, with compromises reach on fishing and the level playing field;
- Work remains ongoing with 25 specialist committees established and a pledge to review the deal every 5 years;
- It will take time to fully analyse and understand the implications of the agreement;
- The threat of tariffs have been removed by the deal, however non-tariff barriers adding significant time and cost pressures for businesses already struggling due to Covid-19;
- At this early stage it is difficult to differentiate between concerns that are teething issues and those that are part of the agreement itself;
- Larger firms are better prepared, but concern remains for SMEs;
- Local Authority business support teams are raising awareness with SMEs and signposting to regional support, such as the North East Growth Hub;

- Key sectors are continuing to be monitored by the LA7 and each LA is closely monitoring local impacts, with any issues raised by the LA12 to government every week;
- Risks include delays relating to Rules of Origin, difficulties importing/exporting due to VAT and carrier fees, a lack of funding and clarity regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and a possible longer-term impact on the UK economy;
- Opportunities include the bid for a NE Freeport, an opportunity to review the UK Subsidy Regime, the chance to grow the Electric Vehicle supply chain and global trade opportunities;
- UKSPF is unlikely to be available until 2022 and questions remain over the levels of funding, with further clarification awaited.

During discussion by Members, the following points were raised:

- A Member noted that the region received significant amounts of money from the EU funding schemes, as it was one of the few schemes that allocated money based on social deprivation;
- Members noted the need for local authorities to have the ability to make decisions on how the money received from the UKSPF is spent;
- It was highlighted by Members that further clarity is needed regarding the UKSPF and NECA should continue to seek further information from Government;
- It was raised that individual local authorities have plans in place to closely monitor any impact from the EU exit;
- A Member raised concerns the risk of the UKSPF being a competition for funding, as opposed to fairly dividing out the money;
- It was raised that the region should continue to think seriously about possible opportunities, such as freeports and green energy.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted.

## 5. **COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN**

Submitted: A report and presentation of the Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Digital (previously circulated and attached to Official Minutes).

The Advisory Board received a presentation on the Regional Economic Recovery from Covid-19. Members were invited to take part in a discussion afterwards. The presentation was delivered by Rory Sherwood-Parkin.

The presentation provided information on the following topics:

- Economic impact;
- Labour market impact;
- NECA LA response;
- Government announcements;
- Budget 2021;
- Next steps

During the presentation, the following points were noted:

- Covid-19 caused a significant economic shock, with the NECA area particularly hard hit given the high proportion of jobs in at-risk sectors;
- Business confidence is low, with footfall low in town and city centres;
- Digital, professional services, low-carbon and construction are doing well;
- Significant rise in unemployment since March 2020, with the North East having the highest levels outside of London;
- North East vacancy levels are close to pre-pandemic levels;
- LAs in the NECA area continue to support businesses through a variety of schemes, as well as the Kickstart six-month placements and monitoring the impact on key sectors;
- The March Budget will be delivered on 3 March 2021 with the possible announcement of further measures to support the economic recovery.

During discussion by Members, the following points were raised:

- A Member highlighted that the Covid-19 recovery will perhaps take more time and resources than the Government expects and therefore the work to support businesses through the crisis is essential;
- It was queried if there was any further guidance or help which could be provided by the CBI to assist LAs in supporting the roll-out of support grants to businesses;
- It was raised whether there needs further support with testing and vaccines to help the return to work and reopening as laid out in the Government's Roadmap, noting that the CBI has called for extended financial support in this regard;
- It was noted that businesses can contact local authority public health teams where support is available to assist with testing for businesses of 50+ staff;

- A Member raised that during lockdown last year, investment enquiries fell significantly, although there was a spike towards the end of the year, particularly for warehousing and manufacturing space. It was noted that Covid-19 has currently had an impact on the demand for office space;
- It was noted that Invest North East England is running a northshoring campaign to attract businesses from London and the South East, with the North East offering a stable workforce and cost-attractive option. Members noted that discussions with businesses remain ongoing.

The Chair thanked Rory Sherwood-Parkin for the update and presentation.

**RESOLVED** – That:

- i. the report and presentation be noted.

## 6. **FREEPORT UPDATE**

Submitted: A report and presentation of the Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Digital (previously circulated and attached to Official Minutes).

The Advisory Board received a presentation on the North East Free Port Proposal. The presentation was delivered by John Scott.

The presentation provided information on the following topics:

- What a Free Port is;
- UK Free Ports;
- Government Requirements;
- The North East Free Port Model;
- Proposed Tax Sites;
- Customs Sites – Overview and Benefits;
- Proposed Customs Sites;
- Business Rate Surplus and Potential Uses;
- Governance and Timescales

During the presentation, the following points were noted:

- A free port is within a country's territorial area, but considered outside the custom's border, with a framework to lower the administrative burden and costs of importing/exporting within the zone;

- The Government launched a competition to create 10 Free Port Zones across the UK, with the North East bid based upon a digitally-connected multi-site;
- The North East bid covers 3 ports and the airport, with 3 separate tax sites;
- Businesses operating within Freeport customs sites will receive the authorisation to use simplified import procedures;
- The North East bid has been supported and developed with NECA, NoTCA, Newcastle Airport, Nissan, the Ports of Tyne and Blyth, and the NELEP.

The Chair thanked John Scott for the update presentation.

**RECOMMENDED** – That:

- i. the presentation be noted.

7. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, 20 April 2021 at 2.00pm



## **Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board**

### **Agenda Item 4**

**Date:** 27 July 2021

**Subject:** Digital Update

**Report of:** Thematic Lead for Economic Development and Digital

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide the opportunity for the Board to have a further discussion on the NECA digital agenda, exploring the practical implementation of digital initiatives in the area.

### **Recommendations**

The Advisory Board is recommended to receive a presentation from Victoria Murray (Head of Digital and Customer Services at Durham County Council) and take part in a discussion about the development of the digital agenda in the NECA area.

## **Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Part of the Advisory's Board remit is advising the Leadership Board on the digital agenda and the associated implications and opportunities for the NECA. This includes building an understanding of regional and national strategies, developments and initiatives and how the NECA can benefit from involvement, or as it is well placed to do, lead the way.
- 1.2 Building on previous presentations to the Board (including from Sunderland) and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (from South Tyneside), a presentation will be given at this meeting with an update on some of the practical, digital developments and projects being implemented in the NECA area.

### **2. Proposals**

- 2.1 This report and the presentation to be provided, update the Board on digital developments in the NECA area and the activity currently taking place.

### **3. Reasons for the Proposals**

- 3.1 The digital agenda and continual developments in the deployment of new technologies are of key importance to economic growth. Places at the forefront of providing the best digital connectivity to business, as well as to residents and communities, will be best positioned to realise their growth potential. The presentation will therefore enable the Board to consider the digital issues and opportunities for the NECA area, providing any advice to the Leadership Board.

### **4. Alternative Options Available**

- 4.1 There are no alternative options associated with this report.

### **5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation**

- 5.1 A further update will be provided to the Board at subsequent meetings.

### **6. Potential Impact on Objectives**

- 6.1 The activities under the Economic Development and Digital theme will support NECA in its aims to promote economic growth and regeneration in the area.

### **7. Financial and Other Resources Implications**

## **Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board**

7.1 There are no financial or other resource implications associated with this report.

### **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **9. Key Risks**

9.1 There are no specific risk management issues arising from this report.

### **10. Equality and Diversity**

10.1 There are no specific equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

### **11. Crime and Disorder**

11.1 There are no specific crime and disorder issues arising from this report.

### **12. Consultation/Engagement**

12.1 There are no specific consultation and engagement issues arising from this report.

### **13. Other Impact of the Proposals**

13.1 There are no further impacts arising from the proposals.

### **14. Appendices**

14.1 None.

### **15. Background Papers**

15.1 None.

### **16. Contact Officers**

16.1 Rory Sherwood-Parkin, Senior Economic Policy Manager, South Tyneside Council,  
[rory.sherwood-parkin@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:rory.sherwood-parkin@southtyneside.gov.uk)

Victoria Murray, Head of Digital & Customer Services, Durham County Council,  
[Victoria.Murray@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Victoria.Murray@durham.gov.uk)

## **Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board**

### **17. Sign off**

- 17.1
- Head of Paid Service: ✓
  - Monitoring Officer: ✓
  - Chief Finance Officer: ✓

### **18. Glossary**

- 18.1 None.



# NECA EDDAB Durham County Council Digital Update

Victoria Murray

Interim Head of Digital & Customer Services

July 2021

# County Durham Vision & Digital Strategy

We want Durham to be a county where:

- There are more and better jobs
- People live long and independent lives
- Our communities are well connected and supportive.

This vision is set out in our corporate plan and our digital strategy builds on that plan.

Based around three core themes that, collectively, enable us to put the customer at the heart of everything we do in a changing technological landscape, the strategy sets out the future for connecting Durham, digitally improving our services, supporting our people, our communities and our organisation to deliver better outcomes for everyone.



# Delivering the Strategy

- An ambitious digital transformation programme underpins our strategy and is enabling the delivery of outcomes against our measures of success.
- Whilst we have already made great progress on our digital journey through our desire to change and improve, our response to the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated our digital transformation at an unprecedented pace.
- Building on our strong digital platforms and infrastructure we proved that digital readiness is crisis readiness, enabling safe and effective working during the pandemic, using technology to ensure our communities have stayed connected and continued to be part of local conversations, in addition to providing a full range of existing services as well as the development of a range of new and essential offers.

# Digital customer initiatives

- **Digitising the customer experience**
  - Digital offer with over 130 council services now available online
  - 176k customers transacting digitally
  - Digital self service is the most popular way of transacting
  
- **Channel choice**
  - Launch of our multichannel contact centre has widened communication options for residents, reducing the complexity of customer journeys and enabling interact with the right person, with the right information at the right time
  - Delivery of an enhanced, more connected, and digitally inclusive resident experience through access to devices, free Wi-Fi and supported self-service across our access points and libraries
  - Working with partners and the VCS to support the development of community-led services, designed and delivered on a localities basis. Centred on building the capacity and resilience of communities and helping them play an integral part in co-creation and service delivery
  
- **Culture, sport and leisure**
  - Durham History Centre: Physical space/research and learning environment, complemented by virtual, media rich data, resources and records space
  - eTicketing System and venues and events and live streaming
  - Moving our libraries online
  - Online family history sessions with the Durham County Record Office



# Digital organisation initiatives

- **Using digital technology to improve our services and operate more efficiently**
  - 8,500 staff working from home supported by the right hardware, software and connectivity
  - Microsoft O365 rolled out to all users – c.7,000 & 5,000 Teams meetings & calls respectively per day
  - Digital Mail Room: Scanning, distribution and storage of all incoming correspondence, together with electronic-to-physical post handling
  - Unified Communications system: Omni-channel system with fully integrated contact centre, role-based staff profiles, softphones, mobile services, ACD, conversational AI web/chatbots, single knowledge base, social media sentiment analysis
- **Digital democracy**
- Digitising our member experience
  - Keeping residents part of local conversations through delivery of live streaming of a range of events and virtual meetings
  - Over 150 remote meetings involving up to 120 Councillors and Chief Officers have been broadcast to the public
- **Building digital capability**
  - Digital maturity assessment and learning and skills framework development - 180 sessions delivered
  - Development of digital virtual learning and development offer available to all staff from a range of training providers both internally and externally
- **Data led decision making**
  - Building our business Intelligence
  - Enterprise-wide Power BI Dashboards: Live data feeds, multi-source analysis, smart decision making and evidence gathering
  - Performance against service standards, channel shift, customer satisfaction, staff performance and financial information accessible at any time

# Digital communities initiatives

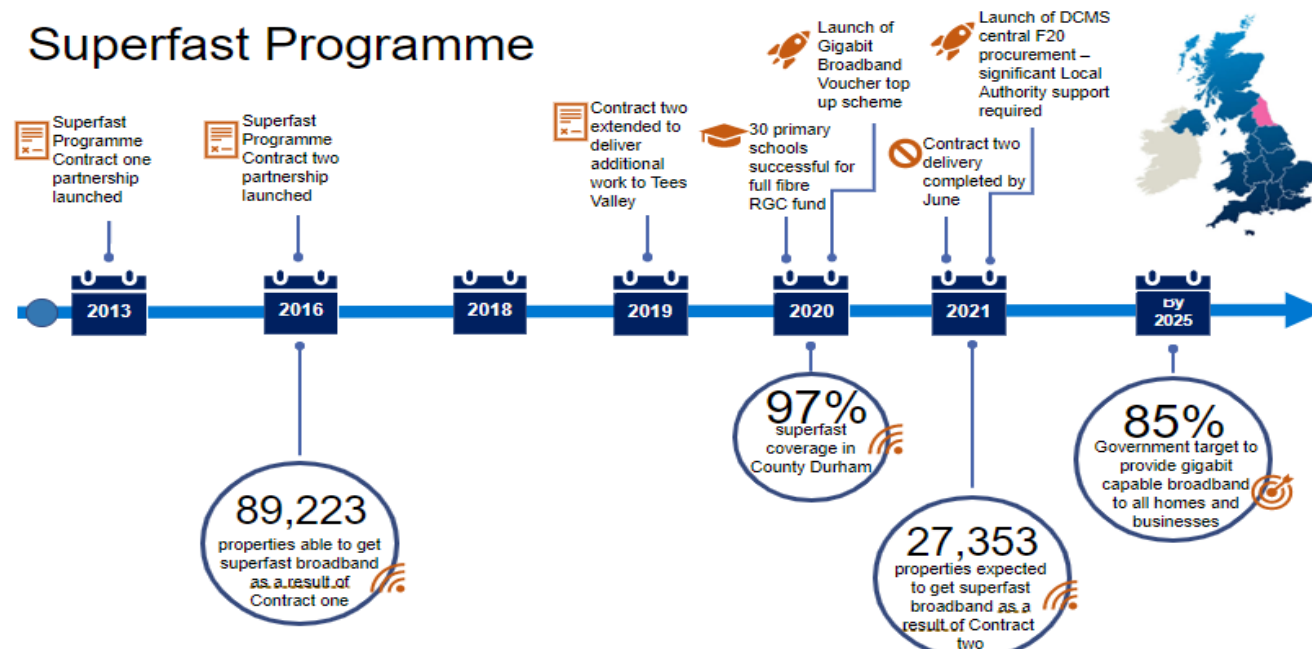
- **Connecting our communities**
  - Provision of digital services (connectivity, telephony and Internet access services) directly to all sectors (public, private, third sector community)
  - Now more than 600 sites connected across the region: County Durham, Gateshead, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland
    - 500+ Schools, 50+ Businesses, 20+ Community Venues, 30+ Blue Light services
    - 3 Hospitals and NHS Data Centre, 13 Fire Stations
    - National YPO and DfE approved frameworks
  
- **Economic recovery and growth**
  - Enhancing the high street offer - Free public Wi-Fi pilot schemes in Bishop Auckland, Stanley, Chester-le-Street, Seaham, Barnard Castle and Durham City, aim to encourage additional footfall and increase the time people spend in the town centres to help local businesses grow
  - Supporting Durham City regeneration - new HQ, Milburngate, Aykley Heads developments (fibre under River Wear)
  - NorthEast Technology Park (NETPark) - Provision of digital services to support the development of Orbit - Durham University's Enterprise Zone (DUEZ) and the wider business park offering

# Digital communities initiatives

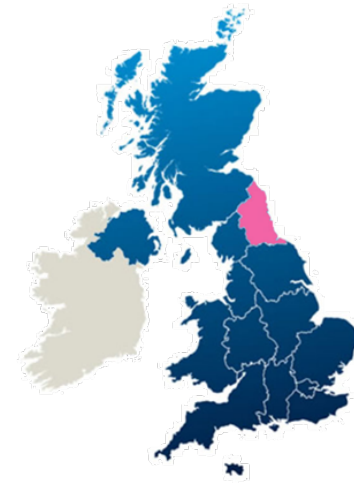
- **Enhancing digital skills and inclusion**
  - Range of programmes supporting a digitally-confident population, able to make the most of opportunities that being digital can provide
  - Digital Drive business transformation programme – fully funded support and digital project grants
  - Reboot – Access to low-cost computer equipment to County Durham based registered charities and social enterprises
  - Digital and cyber-security apprenticeships scheme
  - Identifying funding streams to purchase devices and data at scale
  - Social value activity: Cyber-Security sessions for over 20 teachers and 250 students, and development of cyber awareness sessions for parents
- **Smart place**
  - GovTech Augmented Reality Project: Highway asset identification, pothole/surface damage auto-assessment
  - Mobile project, in conjunction with the Local Government Association, to independently benchmark coverage data and mapping. Supporting decision making linked to connectivity, transport and future investment such as IoT/Smart initiatives
- **Schools and education partners**
  - Supporting education partners in 230 schools to adapt to a world of online teaching, enabling over 30,000 pupils to learn remotely
  - 150 schools with Office 365 and Google pupil accounts, including 41 of these schools using a Google-365 hybrid set up
  - Training has also been delivered to over 60 schools with many more schools attending virtual events that the Learning Cloud Team have supported including working in conjunction with Education Durham and Microsoft
  - Provision of over 900 computers and Internet access to disadvantaged families

# Digital Durham

- Improving connectivity has been a significant focus for DCC for almost a decade
- Lead role in DCMS Superfast Programme on behalf of 10 of the 12 NE LAs – 116k properties upgraded to Superfast broadband over two contracts
- Significant programme of supplier engagement facilitating deployment of commercial and public funded connectivity rollouts – current County Durham full fibre (gigabit capable) coverage at 30.8% (UK average 24.3%)
- Co-ordination and development of Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme projects with suppliers and rural communities - 18 approved projects / 367 vouchers issued (June 2021) – set to increase



# Project Gigabit



- Government committed £5bn to [Project Gigabit](#)
- £1.2bn projected to be spent by 2025
- Aims to maximise coverage in the harder to reach 20% of the UK
  - **Procurements** - First areas to benefit from Project Gigabit announced March 2021 – includes County Durham, Gateshead, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland and Tees Valley – other areas of NE to be considered under a later phase
  - **Vouchers** - £210m funding offered under next phase of Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme
  - **Hubs** - £110m to connect up to 7,000 rural GP surgeries, libraries and schools
  - **Consultation** - [Call for evidence](#) on connectivity for very hard to reach areas (closed 25 June 2021) – DCMS analysing feedback
- Durham County Council working in partnership with DCMS to complete Open Market Review (OMR) and Public Consultation (PR) on behalf of the North East ahead of a regional procurement



# Open Market Review & Public Review



- OMR process involved consulting with 21 broadband infrastructure providers to request data on existing gigabit coverage and future plans to provide in next three years
- Involves assurance process to confirm existing coverage is technically capable of gigabit speeds and viability of future plans
- Areas outside of this form a draft 'Intervention Area' where public subsidy can potentially be used under a DCMS procurement
- The categorised data is currently undergoing a Public Review – set to close 18 July 2021 – [link to info](#) on DCC website promoted by all LAs
- Once the review is closed, DCMS consider all comments submitted - the finalised maps detailing the Intervention Areas expected to be made available Summer 2021
- BDUK will then move to the Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage of the procurement, where suppliers are invited to bid for contracts - estimated to launch October 2021



# Procurements



- DCMS currently plan to launch two large lot procurements (figures are estimated):
  - 110k to 130k premises in County Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland & Tees Valley
  - 30k to 50k premises in Northumberland and East Cumbria
- Delivery estimated to begin Summer 2022 – where and when unknown until supplier(s) appointed
- Digital Durham will continue to work collaboratively with LA partner contacts to share information





Questions



## **Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board**

Agenda Item 5

**Date:** 27 July 2021

**Subject:** CV19 Regional Economic Recovery

**Report of:** Rory Sherwood-Parkin, Senior Economic Policy Manager, South Tyneside Council

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide a presentation on the current economic and labour market impact of the pandemic upon the NECA economy, the response from national and local government.

### **Recommendations**

The Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board is recommended to note the contents of the presentation.

## Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board

### 1. Background Information

- 1.1 This presentation on CV19 regional economic recovery will outline the economic and labour market impact upon the NECA area of the CV19 pandemic. It will describe the response from NECA and the four constituent authorities to this unprecedented economic shock, the wider regional response and how this fits with Government announcements.

### 2. Proposals

- 2.1 There are no proposals being put forward as the presentation is for information and discussion.

### 3. Reasons for the Proposals

- 3.1 Not applicable.

### 4. Alternative Options Available

- 4.1 Not applicable

### 5. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Not applicable.

### 6. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 6.1 None.

### 7. Financial and Other Resources Implications

- 7.1 None

### 8.

- 8.1 None

### 9. Key Risks

## Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board

9.1 None

### 10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 None

### 11. Crime and Disorder

11.1 None

### 12. Consultation/Engagement

12.1 None

### 13. Other Impact of the Proposals

13.1 None

### 14. Appendices

14.1 None

### 15. Background Papers

15.1 Economic data from North East Data Hub [here](#)

### 16. Contact Officers

16.1 Rory Sherwood-Parkin, Senior Economic Policy Manager, South Tyneside Council,  
[rory.sherwood-parkin@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:rory.sherwood-parkin@southtyneside.gov.uk), 07812 514 191.

### 17. Sign off

## Economic Development and Digital Advisory Board

- 17.1
- Head of Paid Service: ✓
  - Monitoring Officer: ✓
  - Chief Finance Officer: ✓

### 18. Glossary

- 18.1 OBR (Office for Budget Responsibility)  
NELEP (North East Local Enterprise Partnership)

# CV19 Regional Economic Recovery

Economic Development & Digital Board

27<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Rory Sherwood-Parkin,  
Senior Economic Policy Manager  
South Tyneside Council

# Contents

1. CV19 Impact & Support
2. Looking forward
3. Expected Government announcements
4. Next steps

# 1. CV19 Impact & Support

- Profound economic shock with NECA hit hard given high proportion of jobs in at-risk sectors (hospitality, retail, visitor economy, travel)
- Town and city centres impacted by low footfall and national retailer closures
- Many firms exhausted reserves and cash flow, real concerns about survival until they were able to reopen
- Some sectors not impacted hugely (digital, prof services, low-carbon) and some have bounced straight back (construction)
- Manufacturers and construction experiencing supply chain and material issues

# CV19 Impact & Support

- Overall rate of unemployment in the NECA area up from 6% in March 2020 to 6.8% in Dec 2020 (above national average)
- Claimant count up from 5% in March 2020 to 6.7% in May 2021, particularly 18-24s and over 50s
- But the claimant count has fallen steadily since the peaks seen in August 2020 (8%).
- Significant support for businesses since March 2020



A range of support measures have been announced by Government since 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, including:

- **cash grants** (the Small Business Grant Fund, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (HAL) Grant Fund, the Discretionary Fund, Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSB), Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG), Wet Led Pub Grants and Restart Grants);
- **additional business rates reliefs**, waiving charges to the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sectors as well as Nurseries for 2020/21;
- **loan programmes** (Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce-Back Loan Scheme);
- **deferral of VAT payments;**
- **changes to Statutory Sick Pay;**
- **the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme;**
- **the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** (allowing businesses to furlough employees) with the subsequent associated Job Retention Bonus;
- **the Kickstart job placement scheme;**
- **the Job Support Scheme** (which follows the earlier Job Retention scheme)

## Three phases of support:

### **Initial Phase - Spring/ Summer 2020**

- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants (Government criteria linked to Business Rates)
- Small Business Rate Relief Grants (Government criteria linked to Business Rates)
- Discretionary Fund
  - Shared Space, Market Traders, Charities and Bed & Breakfasts
  - Other gaps in local provision

### **Second Phase – Autumn 2020 – March 2021**

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSB) (Government criteria)
  - Open
  - Closed
  - Closed Business Lockdown Payment (CBLP)
  - Wet-led Pub Grants
- Additional Restriction Grants (ARG)(Local Authority criteria)

### **Third Phase – Spring/ Summer 2021**

- Restart Grants - April 2021 onwards (Government criteria)
- Ongoing ARG payments

# Business Support

- Thousands of businesses supported across NECA area, vital assistance to support our companies through the pandemic. Total funding of over £500m distributed across the NECA area (to March 2021):

Scheme	Funding across NECA area
<b>Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) – Spring/Summer 2020</b>	£145,890,000
<b>Rates Relief (retail, hospitality and nurseries) – Spring/Summer 2020</b>	£161,120,267
<b>Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) Grants – Spring/Summer 2020</b>	£61,080,000
<b>Discretionary Grant schemes – Spring/Summer 2020</b>	£10,637,065
<b>Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open and Closed and Wet-led Pub grants) – Autumn 2020/Spring 2021</b>	£104,760,646
<b>Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG) - Autumn 2020/Spring &amp; Summer 2021</b>	£16,668,333

- Discretionary schemes operated by each individual Local Authority (under broad set of shared parameters across LA7)
- Restart Grants ongoing

## 2. Looking forward

- City and town centre firms concerned about consumer confidence
- Hospitality and tourism worried about delays to unlocking given restrictions on number in pubs, restaurants and events
- Skills shortages and vacancies in hospitality and leisure sector (and self-isolating effecting all industries)
- Yet positive future bookings reported by accommodation providers
- Firms concerned about loan and rent repayments (and some landlords worried about extension of rent eviction ban)
- But business confidence starting to reach pre-pandemic highs (Chamber survey this month, plus Lloyds and NatWest surveys)

# Labour market

- New DWP programmes in place (JETS and RESTART)
- NE vacancy levels close to pre-pandemic levels (growth in construction, logistics, manufacturing, health and social care)
- Unemployment projections of peak in job losses in the Autumn is being revised down by Bank of England and OBR
- Yet concerns about impact when Universal Credit uplift ceases and Furlough ends in Sept; 37,000 residents in NECA area are still Furloughed (up to end of May and down from 51,000 in April), while 34,000 people have relied on self-employment grants)

# Support for town and city centres

- Local Authorities continue to focus upon town and city centres given impact of reduced footfall, changed business models and national retailer restructuring.
- Government £56m Welcome Back Fund:
  - Durham £569k
  - Gateshead £178k
  - South Tyneside £198k
  - Sunderland £309k
- Range of activities including comms and marketing, signage and temporary public realm, boosting safe visitor experience and looking at plans to help medium-term impact (particularly on the high street)
- Money has to be spent by the end of March 2022
- Follows Reopening High Street Safely funding (£600k across NECA)

# 3. Expected Government announcements

## Funding

- Announcements on successful UK Community Renewal (end of July) and Levelling Up (Autumn) Funds
- UK Shared Prosperity Funds to replace European Structural and Investment Funds in 2022

## Policy

- Levelling Up White Paper on Levelling Up and devolution
- Skills & Post-16 Education Bill to boost upskilling and retraining
- Subsidy Control and Procurement Bills on subsidies and allowing for more local procurement following consultations earlier this year
- Further details of UK Gigabit Programme (rural connectivity)
- Outcome of consultation on Business Rates and online retail

## 4. Next Steps

- Continue to **roll out grant support to businesses**
- Help residents to **access jobs**, re-training and up-skilling
- Continue to **monitor impact** of CV19 upon the NECA economy and resulting recovery measures
- Continue to **work across LA7 area** on Recovery and Renewal Deal
- Continue to **lobby Government** for further support for economic recovery and clarity on funding streams and measures