

South Tyneside Annual Report

2019/20



...an outstanding place to live, invest and bring up families



South Tyneside Council

Spread the word!

**THIS IS
SOUTH
TYNESIDE**



Foreword

Welcome to the South Tyneside 2019-2020 Annual Report.

As in previous years, this report provides residents and other stakeholders with information about the performance of South Tyneside Council, including our achievements in the delivery of our 20 year vision.

The end of the 2019-20 financial year was indelibly marked by the novel coronavirus pandemic, bringing an unprecedented set of new challenges to support local residents and businesses. We took a decision to delay the Spring publication of our usual 12-month annual report, while we responded to a new raft of community priorities.

Therefore, this year's annual report is different to previous reports.

Firstly it covers a longer period than the usual financial year.

Secondly, it provides information about our priorities, including many examples of achievement toward our vision. However, the report also reflects on the very difficult circumstances facing communities, our response as a Local Authority to support residents and businesses, as well as information about our recovery plan into 2020-2021

Prior to the pandemic, 2019/20 saw the Council well on track with another year of strong improvement for both people and place. We delivered planned regeneration schemes aimed at creating a foundation from which businesses and residents can thrive – with milestones including the opening of the South Shields Transport Interchange.



We have continued to strengthen our adults and children's services, improving experience and outcomes for those who rely upon our services – and we have received encouraging feedback, including an endorsement in summer 2019 from the King's Fund, who told us that our strengths-based approaches to adult social care were making a real difference to service users. We have continued to support our neighbourhoods and communities, emphasising a co-operative approach that encourages social action and community involvement – an approach that earned us the accolade 'Co-operative Council of the Year' 2019.

These continued efforts over 2019-2020 meant that when Covid-19 hit, the Council was in a strong position to continue to provide for residents, even as the world seemed to change overnight. The arrival of Covid-19 brought an onslaught of new and complex challenges but South Tyneside has adapted quickly.

From launching new services at pace (including the Shielding Hub and Temporary Rest Facility), strengthening and reshaping care services to protect the most vulnerable adults and children, and introducing social-distancing adjustments to enable the continuation of existing critical services, coordinating a surge in volunteering, targeting welfare support for the most financially vulnerable residents, and dramatically expanding support for businesses, the Council has stepped up for residents and businesses in countless ways as we have weathered this crisis.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Council has worked tirelessly to protect and support residents through the worst of this unprecedented crisis.



Now that we have reached a phase of the pandemic response in which we are moving to a managed re-opening of the economy and the beginning of the long process of recovery, it is appropriate to report information to our communities on the work of the Local Authority. Although the start of 2020 has been one of the hardest we have experienced as a Borough, it has also demonstrated the importance of local authority services and the value that people have placed on support received.

This Annual Report is a chance to reflect on planned investment in both the physical environment of South Tyneside as well as in services for our people. Together, these have helped us respond rapidly to support the most vulnerable, as well as helping us rebuild our economy as we move forward together as a community beyond 2020.

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of the Council



Councillor Iain Malcolm
Leader of the Council



Martin Swales
Chief Executive

Since the pandemic began the council has been reaching residents in lots of ways

SOCIAL MEDIA

Since the pandemic began our Council facebook and twitter pages have never been busier with over **2,000** new likes and follows



Over **500** posts were sent on social media

Our most **engaged posts** are littering and waste



WEBSITE



4200 page views of the Council website in the first 8 weeks of the pandemic, with **40,000** page views in the first week alone and **38%** increase in the number of people visiting the council website in the first week of lockdown compared to the in 2019'

CONTACT CENTRE



55,872 calls



8,820 emails/e-service requests

EVENTS

Our most watched video EVER was the Piper at dawn to recognise VE Day. Over **70,000** people viewed the tribute

If you haven't seen it you really should! It's on our Council youtube channel www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD7Ye4rdZ9k

SHIELDING HUB

Received and supported **21,106** requests



Delivered **4,932** food & **878** medication parcels

14,910 residents supported with a welfare check, advice and signposting

HOMELESSNESS



We accommodated all **6** rough sleepers in South Tyneside

322 presentations to the service the majority of which we have been able to negotiate for them to remain in their current accommodation



We have accommodated **106** at risk of homelessness/sleeping rough

We've delivered essentials and **NEW** services



BUSINESS GRANTS

2,200 businesses received over **£25million** from South Tyneside Council in COVID government grants



ADULT SOCIAL CARE



Our Let's Talk team contacted **2,551** residents and **1,899** residents contacted the team

4 new Carers started working for the Council and **10** residents are now working for our care providers

WASTE DISPOSAL

1,700 bulky waste collections from households



11.5 million bins emptied

Waste tonnages up **30%** and recycling up **25%**

HARDSHIP FUND

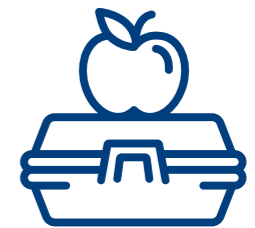
We have supported **1,675** households in South Tyneside



SCHOOLS



800+ laptops and tablets distributed to pupils in need



Free packed lunch provided to all children not in school, even before national meals voucher was introduced



116 school risk assessments undertaken to support safe re-opening

c500 vulnerable and key worker children accommodated in schools in the early phase of lockdown, moving to **c5000** when schools were opened to a wider proportion of learners



Phase 1 and 2 of the £100m South Shields 365, including £17m The Word, the National Centre for Written Word and £3.5m Ocean Road Improvements

£168m efficiency savings identified



22% more schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted



£33m leisure investment including £16m Haven Point, £4m Jarrow Community Pool and £3m Jarrow Focus



£234m Decent Homes investment and £8.4m Housing Plus renovations



£35m investment in roads and footpaths across the borough



Major junction improvements, including £8.1m Arches and £7.5m Lindisfarne at Jarrow



A19 economic corridor enhancements, including £139m Tyne Tunnel 2 and £100m Testos improvements

2019-20 Highlights Another remarkable year

April 2019

The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word, welcomes its millionth visitor



May 2019

Modern Slavery Strategy implemented to maximise opportunities to tackle labour exploitation



June 2019

South Tyneside named 'Cooperative Council of the Year'



July 2019

South Shields Transport Interchange opens to the public and welcomes its first passengers



August 2019

Holiday clubs provide meals and activities for 5000 school children



September 2019

Restoration works begin at North Marine Park on South Shields seafront



October 2019

Consultation on the new Local Plan, collecting resident views on proposals for future development across the borough



November 2019

South Shields Transport Interchange celebrates its millionth passenger



December 2019

New sensory support service to provide specialist support for residents with sight and hearing impairment



January 2020

New 'Safe Haven' service providing space and support to adults with learning disabilities or autism when transitioning between hospital and home



February 2020

Plans unveiled for innovative Viking Energy Network project, which will harness renewable river energy to heat 11 council-owned buildings and Sustainable South Tyneside' climate change strategy and five-year action plan.



March to July 2020

Local response to national Government guidance to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with new services created including Shielding Support and Business Hub.



Since 2020

2019-20 marks a nine year milestone in delivering our ambitious Futures Programme:



Visitor numbers increased by 26% to 6.6m visitors per year

£15m flood prevention investment



£21m South Shields Transport Interchange



Kickstarting the regeneration of Hebburn Town Centre with £11million Hebburn Central Leisure Facility



Leadership and Strategy

Strong leadership and a robust strategy have been foundational to the Council navigating through the various challenges of the last year, not least the multitude of unprecedented new social, economic and health challenges brought about in recent months by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The onset of the pandemic brought with it a need for vastly different service delivery models to meet the requirements of local residents who were facing new, immediate and complex threats. Higher risk members of our communities were overnight required to 'shield', while many business owners were required to temporarily close, furloughing employees or adapting working practices to adhere to emerging Government guidance. Council Leaders supported Local Authority employees to adapt to new ways of working and, for some staff, to learn entirely new skills in redeployed roles such as our early-established 'Shielding Hub' where staff handled requests for food, medication and wellbeing support from an urgently opened base at Hebburn Central leisure facility.

Despite the legal requirement to move to remote decision-making, the Council's Cabinet members met regularly to respond quickly to new Government guidance and the implications for closure of services, adaptation of services and to agree the implementation of new services, such as a Business Support Hub managed from The Word, National Centre for the Written Word.

In line with local resilience emergency response plans, Gold, Silver and Bronze Emergency Planning structures were implemented to facilitate fast-paced, cohesive strategic and operational service planning to support a Cabinet model of decision-making.

Prior to the Prime Minister writing to all households with Covid-19 information, the Leader of South Tyneside Council had already written to every household in our Borough to provide emergency information and contact numbers, including how vulnerable and at-risk residents could access our new 'Shielding Hub'. Regular press-releases, web, social media and plasma screens were used as an important tool in reaching as many residents as possible with critical information.

Throughout the pandemic response, Council leaders and senior managers **collaborated and coordinated with local, regional and central government colleagues**, sharing data and intelligence, communicating constantly updated advice and guidance and ensuring a two-way flow of insights and information. The Leader of South Tyneside Council, Cllr Iain Malcolm, has played a key role, as Chair of the North East Combined Authority and a member of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership Leadership Board, in promoting local and regional interests, including leveraging relationships with national and regional stakeholders to lobby for policy improvements and emergency Covid-19 local government funding. Building on relationships previously established with a wide range of local government stakeholders, including senior colleagues at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, through local-central government work around the EU Exit, Chief Executive Martin Swales also took up a **key role representing the interests of and sharing weekly updates on behalf of NE12 local authorities and local businesses in Covid-19 related conversations with Central Government.**

As time has passed, the Council Leadership has shifted focus from immediate and short-term decisions and actions to **planning for medium-term and long-term recovery**, and has now brought forward a **South Tyneside Economic Recovery Plan**, aimed at navigating the emerging challenges as well as leveraging the emerging opportunities brought about by the pandemic. The Council has also contributed to the regional work and intelligence gathering underway through the **North East Covid-19 Economic Response Group** (comprised of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, North East Combined Authority, North of Tyne Combined Authority, and other regional partners, including regional universities and business representatives) to shape and produce an **outline regional economic stimulus plan.**

Even prior to the arrival of Covid-19, the last year was one of tumultuous national policy, including snap elections and ongoing uncertainty about the impact of withdrawal from the European Union. Throughout this, South Tyneside Council worked hard to **ensure local services were**



appropriately prepared and optimally positioned for a wide range of possible implications of different policy outcomes.

Across service areas, this involved putting in place a range of risk-mitigation efforts and contingency plans, communicating central government policy, as well as collaborating with partners, such as schools, care homes and food banks.

In the background to all of this change, over the course of this year the Council has nonetheless continued to steadily progress the long-term strategic Futures Programme approach to supporting increasing prosperity. Since the launch of the 20-Year Vision in 2010, this has involved **£1.6bn of public and private sector investment in town centres, schools, housing, health, cultural and transport infrastructure (with South Tyneside Council directly investing £850m).**

Although Covid-19 has caused some disruption to timetables and has prompted close consideration of the long-term viability of certain plans, the vision of delivering an 'outstanding' South Tyneside continues and 2019-20 has seen a number of major projects progress at pace.

This has included **progress on the 'nationally significant' International Advanced Manufacturing Park**, which will leverage local manufacturing strengths and the Nissan supply chain, and an anticipated £400m private investment, creating 7000 jobs. The Council has also moved forward with a vision for **regenerating the currently underused land at Holborn Riverside**, with the creation of high-quality facilities and homes, including 'The Glassworks'. With Phase 2 of the South Shields 365 reaching completion, the Council has also **strengthened plans for Phase 3 of the significant town centre regeneration efforts**, aimed at enhancing the leisure and hospitality offer. Recent bold investment in infrastructure will help businesses in their journey of economic recovery. This includes the strong platform of major road improvement schemes along South Tyneside's key economic artery, the A19, including the northbound lane gain and works at Testos Roundabout. The **£21m South Shields Transport Interchange**, opened Summer 2020, also strengthened the metro and bus offer for commuters across South Tyneside. In relation to housing, the Council has continued to innovate to ensure a continued diverse supply of high-quality housing options across the South Tyneside area.

Following on the success of the South Tyneside Housing Ventures model, which has delivered over 400 social homes across the borough since it was established, **new Council-led housing company Centaurea Homes** aims to achieve a different yet similarly important function, identifying and developing local sites that big-name housebuilders have overlooked, simultaneously boosting the borough's housing offer and generating profits that can be fed back into local services. While plans have been in the works for some time, this year saw a major milestone in progressing with this innovative new model, with planning permission secured for the first exciting 62-home Centaurea development. The Council Leadership has also in the last year put considerable emphasis on sustainability, including with the development of **the 'Sustainable South Tyneside' Strategy**, and with work on ambitious new green energy projects including the **Viking Energy Network and Hebburn Colliery geothermal schemes**.

Outside of the coronavirus response, the last year has also seen leaders within the Council continue to leverage regional and national influence to further local priorities. As well as the Leader of the Council **using his role as Chair of the North East Combined Authority to steer the collective interests of this major economic block and promote inter-authority collaboration** on major



Reducing journey time on the A19 northbound, cutting congestion and improving air quality

economic transport, digital and skills initiatives, the **Deputy Leader has continued to serve as Co-Vice Chair for the Association of Public Excellences' Northern Region Board**. Cllr Ernest Gibson was also this year appointed as Chair of the Local Government Association's Coastal Special Interest Group, a position from which South Tyneside can influence policy changes aimed at maximising prosperity and reversing decline in coastal areas. South Tyneside Council Chief Executive Martin Swales, as **President of the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)**, has also raised South Tyneside's profile with a wide range of local government stakeholders. The Council has also continued as the **Lead Authority for the majority shareholder LA7 collective overseeing Newcastle International Airport**, which in the last year has introduced new routes and finalised its Masterplan 365, which promises to strengthen the regional economy. South Tyneside also administers the £10.8bn Tyne and Wear Pension Fund on behalf of a wide number of employers across the Tyne and Wear county area.

While the Country has been hit hard and we all have a long way to go, South Tyneside has a strong platform and our Leadership will continue to advocate for our local communities at every opportunity.



Cllr Ed Malcolm and NAAFI Break Volunteer Joe Mills ensuring advice and support is available for the Armed Forces community (2019)

Resources and Innovation

In the last decade, and in the last year, South Tyneside Council has faced continued significant financial and resource pressures. Studies by both the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Cambridge University have shown that austerity has had an unequal impact on different local authorities, and that **South Tyneside has been one of the hardest hit local authorities in the country in terms of loss of spending power**. In 2020/11, almost 67% of the Council's funding came from central government; this has **reduced to just 39% in 2019/20**. At the same time, with high local levels of persistent deprivation and an aging population, demand for services has only continued to grow. More recently, the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic, and with it the sudden loss of many income sources, and the **sudden increase in demand for a range of new and changed services**, has brought new resource pressures.

Nonetheless, responsible resource management and a willingness to adapt and innovate have ensured that in spite of these pressures, South Tyneside has consistently continued to deliver high quality services for residents - while at the same time pressing forward with an ambitious programme of capital investment that is laying the foundations for long-term opportunity and prosperity for local people.

South Tyneside is a lean and well-managed organisation, with the 2017 LGA Peer Reviewers observing that **'financial management is robust, focused, and major Capital programmes are delivered in innovative ways'**, and that the council **'is making a very challenging position work for itself'**. Since 2010, the Council has identified **£168m of efficiencies savings**, including £12m over the last year – yet at the same time, the quality of services has been consistently maintained and strengthened, with **corporate complaints reduced by 42.9% since 2010**. With the 'Supply South Tyneside' scheme, the Council has also worked to ensure that as far as possible Council expenditure goes back into the local economy. Last year, South Tyneside Council spent over £207.5m on goods and services and of this, thanks to the Supply South Tyneside initiative, **almost £115m (55.33%) was spent with local South Tyneside businesses**.

Sustainability has become a growing priority for the Council, with the Council having this year made a commitment to transition towards carbon neutrality by 2030. Following consultation with staff, residents and partners, the **'Sustainable South Tyneside' Strategy and 5-year action plan**, which sets out plans for achieving this net zero goal was approved by members. Sustainability

in many ways goes hand in hand with ensuring value for money, but also requires conscious, forward-thinking investment. **In the last 5 years, Council carbon emissions have already been reduced by 48%**, through increased investment in energy saving technologies and facilities, including generating electricity through solar panels on Council buildings, fitting 26% street lighting with LEDs, and rationalising older inefficient buildings, replacing them with modern, efficient, centralised hubs. Future plans include increasing on-site energy generation, including the innovative Viking Energy Network project in Jarrow, a cutting-edge river source heat pump which will heat public sector buildings, and the Hebburn Minewater project, which will utilise water from flooded underground mines to heat nearby Council properties. Both of these schemes have successfully attracted external funding from the European Regional Development Fund, largely due to their innovative nature.

Across this year, the Council has also continued to ensure local neighbourhood priorities can be met, via the **£1.4m Community Area Forum fund**, which enables residents and ward councillors to allocate small grants to local social housing and environmental policies.

Though the Council has delivered significant efficiency savings, investment in staff has continued both in the last year and since 2020, including with the development, this year, of a new strategy aimed at optimising workplace health, and with the **roll-out of a further wave of technology updates**, in conjunction with the **Digital Strategy 2019-2022**, with modern laptops and other equipment provided to ensure staff can work flexibly and effectively. This investment, complemented with further **rapid investment in remote working facilities**, has proven especially worthwhile recently, with a large portion of the workforce moved at short notice to work-from-home arrangements at the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic.

With 38% increase in residents relying on online support in the initial weeks of the pandemic, the digital offer to residents has also been strengthened, supporting 420,000 views over the first 8 weeks of lockdown, over 1200 online applications for covid-19 business support, and high-take up of new service offers, such as applications for household waste permits.'

Corporate building rationalisation, which has supported a **reduction from 20 to 4 corporate buildings in the last decade**, has continued over the last year, and future opportunities to accelerate this are now being considered as work-from-home arrangements become the new normal. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, where staff have needed to work from corporate buildings, a range of measures have been implemented to ensure that they can do so safely, including with **over 58 workplace risk assessments, increased cleaning regimes, introductions of amended**

layouts and one way systems, installation of plexi-glass screens, and new signage.

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, the Council has in various ways demonstrated adept and flexible management of resources. **Revised service methods and processes have been introduced at pace across key statutory and frontline services**, from household waste management to taxi licensing, funerals and planning. Throughout the pandemic, appropriate **personal protective equipment has been procured, stocked up and distributed** to frontline social care staff, as well as to partner social care providers where their independent procurement processes could not keep up with demand. Due to a relatively strong financial position going into the crisis, the Council was able to find the necessary resources to respond quickly to support impacted residents and businesses in their hour of need, including by setting up a **new Hardship Fund**, offering **emergency reductions in Council housing rent**, and setting up a **local small business recovery fund**.

In the **setting up of the Shielding Hub and the Temporary Rest Facility at pace, resources were redirected and staff redeployed** from temporarily closed services such as leisure and libraries. Many temporarily closed assets have also been used creatively to contribute to the pandemic response: Hebburn Central became the headquarters for the South Tyneside Shielding Hub; the 'FabLab' equipment at The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word, with its 3D printers and vinyl and laser cutters, has been used to produce up to 200 full-face visors to be used by healthcare workers; and the International Advanced Manufacturing Park site was temporarily repurposed to become the North East's Nightingale Hospital.

The Council's flexibility and resourcefulness have also been proven time and time again in the last year, not only with the Coronavirus response, but also with the response to challenges such as **preparations for different potential Brexit scenarios**, as well as with the smooth delivery of the snap General Election in December 2019.

Support for the Armed Forces community has also been continued in spite of the challenges presented by Covid-19, with the Armed Forces Forum, chaired by Cllr Ed Malcolm, working to ensure memorial dates important to the Armed Forces Community, such as VE Day, VJ Day and Armed Forces Day, could still be safely celebrated. The Council has also continued to prioritise support to Armed Forces veterans and families, including through the NAAFI Break Drop-In scheme and the funding of a dedicated Armed Forces Outreach Worker.



South Shields Transport Interchange



South Tyneside, including three properties to house people who might otherwise be at risk of living on the streets, a round-the-clock outreach team to respond to reports of rough sleepers, and a tenancy sustainment officer to help people maintain their tenancies.

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, and then the lockdown, the focus moved temporarily from planning for the future, to **providing immediate support to residents to help them stay safe in their homes or to overcome housing insecurity.**

The pandemic brought a spike in homelessness applications, in spite of the national eviction ban, specifically from residents with a set of multiple vulnerabilities, but the Council was successful in ensuring nobody was left living on the street during the pandemic, moving quickly to **accommodate all individuals who presented as homeless.** This included responding effectively to any reports of rough sleepers, and supporting those with a range of other immediate housing needs, including people leaving hospital, being released from prison, escaping domestic abuse, in unstable 'sofa surfing' accommodation arrangements or formerly temporarily living with people who were now required to shield. **322 people (55 of whom might become at significant risk of rough sleeping) were supported during the four months of lockdown** with a mix of temporary hotel accommodation, support to find permanent accommodation and other practical support including mobile phones, food parcels and referrals to specialist services. As well as this, Council worked closely with existing residents, including some highly vulnerable individuals, to help them manage and maintain their tenancies during what has been a financially difficult time for many. Work was also undertaken with providers of supported accommodation, to make homes safe, to manage social distancing and to effectively respond to the needs of residents during this difficult time. social distancing easier to manage.

Housing and Transport

While ensuring a supply of decent housing is always a priority for the Council, the coronavirus pandemic, which saw people confined to their homes for all but essential outings, brought additional urgency to Council housing activities.

Over the last year, South Tyneside Council, in partnership with South Tyneside Homes, has continued to work hard to ensure residents have access to sufficient high-quality, value-for-money housing options, suited to a range of needs and preferences. **Over 4000 new homes have now been built across South Tyneside since 2010, with a 45% increase in the rate of new homes built per year since then.** This year saw the publication of the borough's new draft **Local Plan, which sets out plans to meet government targets and build a further 5,000 homes in the borough by 2036.**

Innovative housing delivery vehicle South Tyneside Housing Ventures Trust has continued to play a key role in ensuring a pipeline of high quality, socially rented new housing options, with **over 435 properties delivered or underway since its establishment in 2014.** This year saw the

Trust deliver, on budget and on time, the major **Whitburn Towers scheme, which has created 36 new apartments for over 55s** on the grounds of the former Croftside Court sheltered accommodation scheme. As well as creating new build properties, during this time, Ventures Trust **has renovated and brought back over 43 long-term empty homes back into use,** with 10 more planned. This year saw the Trust renovate and bring back into use a run-down, empty, eyesore property on Beach Road, transforming it into 4 high-quality apartments to be made available for affordable rent.

2019-20 also saw the Council's newest housing-model take its first steps towards delivering additional homes in South Tyneside. **Innovative for-profit housing development vehicle Centaurea Homes has been developed** to identify and transfer local sites that have been overlooked by big-name housebuilders, producing high-quality homes that will attract aspiring buyers while also generating profit that can be ploughed back into Council plans and services. As of this year, planning permission has been secured for

Centaurea's first development, a 62-unit site of first-rate 2, 3, and 4-bedroom homes in Eskdale Drive, Jarrow.

As well as working to support the development of new homes, over the last year the Council has continued to work with South Tyneside Homes to improve the quality of the existing housing offer. **Last year, over £15m was invested in existing Council housing stock, including hundreds of new kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and independence adaptations.** The Council has also now **completed £1.4m investment in fire safety works in tower blocks** across the area.

2019 also saw the Council **take action to improve private Houses of Multiple Occupation,** including with the adoption of a new policy which gives the Council additional powers of oversight and licensing, which help to ensure such accommodation is of a high-standard and well-managed.

The Council also in the last year secured **£250,000, via a collaborative regional bid to the 'Rough Sleeping Initiative', which will support additional services to tackle homelessness** in



Although routine repairs services were suspended during the lockdown period, **emergency repairs were still undertaken wherever reported** to reduce any risks and to ensure tenants were safe and comfortable in their homes. With the easing of lockdown, repairs were gradually restarted, with efforts to address the backlog.

With the pandemic causing economic turmoil, many people have lost their jobs or been on reduced wages and the level of Universal Credit claimants has increased significantly, both locally and nationally; this has impacted on many residents' ability to manage rent. While enforcement action was paused, the Council has offered a **wide range of support, from payment plans to benefit checks, to help Council housing tenants and wider residents avoid and address any rent arrears.** The Council has also continued to work with landlords, both social and private, to ensure that illegal evictions are not taking place and to offer support to avoid evictions once the ban is lifted.

The Council has also been engaging with MHCLG around the best ways to utilise recently announced grant funding to be used to support those at risk of rough sleeping going forward. This funding should support the Council to **tackle underlying causes of homelessness and rough-sleeping**, and will

be used both to offer additional accommodation for this vulnerable cohort, as well as a wide range of wrap-around support.

In the last year, the Council has also further strengthened local transport infrastructure.

Prior to the pandemic, summer 2019 brought the opening of the **£21m South Shields Transport Interchange**, bringing significant transport improvements for commuters across the borough, and helping establish a welcoming gateway into South Shields for the 7 million passengers who travel by metro or bus to or from South Shields each year.

Following the junction improvement works at the Lindisfarne Roundabout in previous years, further works took place to strengthen the A19 strategic economic corridor, including **improvements at Testo's Roundabout and Downhill Lane (through Highways England)**, and a **northbound lane gain on the approach to the Tyne Tunnel**, improving access to and from Jarrow. Access improvement works also got underway around major industrial sites at Nissan and the International Advanced Manufacturing Park.

The Council **invests up to £4.5m each year on road and footpath maintenance**, and in

the last year, additional road projects including a £900,000 scheme to improve traffic signals and lane markings at key junctions on the A185 between Jarrow and Hebburn, and a **£1.2m road widening improvement scheme at Follingsby Lane**, have also strengthened the borough's road network. These traffic improvements have also been complemented with smaller safety improvement schemes across local roads, such as a new one-way system and 20mph speed limit in Grotto Gardens, and efforts spearheaded by the Place Select Committee to find solutions to improve air quality around schools and other car idling hot-spots.

While road and public transport use was temporarily reduced during the peak of the pandemic, good transport infrastructure remained essential for key workers and will be essential to economic recovery, so has remained a priority for the Council. The immediate Coronavirus lockdown saw parking services stood down, car parks closed and a pause on fines, but **statutory duties were maintained throughout, including emergency road repairs and safety inspections**, and non-essential services were restarted when appropriate to align with gradual re-opening of the economy. **Emergency highways works for utilities were prioritised throughout the lockdown** and

strategic planning works continued as normal.

Sustainability has also become an increasingly important element in infrastructure development, a trend that was clear prior to the pandemic, but which the pandemic has only served to strengthen. This year saw the **£8.1m Arches junction-improvement project** (completed early 2019) win a prestigious international **Green Apple environmental award, claiming the award in the 'Transport, Road and Highways' category** due to efforts to reduce pollution, enhance safety and minimise the carbon footprint of the project. The Council has also worked to **install additional electric vehicle charging points across the borough**, including three new charging posts at Council business centres, to support continued uptake in electric vehicles. Going forward, from bike lanes to metro improvements, sustainable transport will be a key element in local economic recovery, and South Tyneside is already working, in consultation with residents, to take advantage of new opportunities presented through the Government's **Emergency Active Travel Fund**.



South Tyneside Festival

Performance, Culture and Leisure

2019 saw South Tyneside further consolidate its reputation as a quality visitor destination. The latest available figures indicate that there were **6.6 million total visitors to South Tyneside last year, bringing in a £331m economic boost to the local area.** This represents a **26% increase in visitor numbers since 2010**, reflecting the strengthened appeal of the local area, following a decade of investment in the Foreshore and town centre public realms and new attractions and leisure facilities such as the Haven Point leisure centre and the The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word.

More recently, the coronavirus pandemic and associated initial attraction closures, social distancing measures and consumer nervousness, have brought a number of challenges to the local hospitality and tourism sectors. However, the Council is working hard, including with the **development of a Tourism Recovery Plan**, to ensure, now that restrictions have eased, that South Tyneside is well-placed to resume its position as an attractive UK visitor destination, especially as more people are temporarily looking for a holiday closer to home.

The Council's spectacular free event programme is beloved by residents and also plays typically a key role in attracting visitors. The **2019 South Tyneside Festival**, which comprised over 40 events, including Sunday Concerts, Proms in the Park and the much-loved Festival Parade, **drew in a combined 120,000 spectators – a 12% rise on 2018 numbers** – with people coming as far away as Aberdeen, Plymouth and the Isle of Man, **boosting the economy by £3.6m.** The 2019 festival saw 66,000 people attending the free-to-access Sunday Concerts, which brought stars such as Marti Pellow, Midge Ure and Gabrielle to perform live at Bents Park. The colourful space-themed Festival Parade, one of the biggest carnival parades in the region, and which an estimated 30-35,000 people lined the streets of South Shields to watch, was another highlight in the programme. The parade, which is put on by community groups and arts companies, was a **finalist in the Performance of the Year category at the 2019 Living North Awards.** The Christmas Wonderland programme of events which took place across the festive period was another well-received, with thousands lining



The Word, South Shields



South Tyneside Festival

South Tyneside streets to celebrate colourful, star-studded lights switch-ons in Hebburn, Jarrow and South Shields, and to watch the Camel Parade, fireworks and festivities at the seafront. Christmas fayres and carol services took place at venues across the borough, and, combined the free festive parking initiative in Council-owned town centre car parks, helping to boost seasonal shopping in local shops.

While **the 2020 South Tyneside Festival unfortunately had to be stood down this year due to coronavirus, the music stars who had been due to perform have now been rescheduled for the 2021 Festival.**

Throughout the pandemic, Council-run museums and other cultural partners, including the Custom's House, have **also facilitated continued access to local cultural opportunities and home-schooling learning activities**, including by providing free online content and activities. The Local Cultural Education Partnership Mental Health Working Group is also now working on a **plan to use cultural programming to support schools in getting children back into class** in September.

Prior to the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, 2019 also saw leisure services go from strength to strength, including receiving external endorsement, with South Tyneside being **shortlisted for the 'Future Places' category of the prestigious LGC Awards** in recognition of the Council's forward-thinking investment in leisure facilities and state-of-the-art digital facilities and the impact this investment has had on local people's health, prosperity and outlook. Bucking a national trend of leisure centre closures over recent years, South Tyneside made a conscious decision to invest in leisure, including with the development of high-quality sites such as Jarrow Community Pool and



Hebburn Central, and continued investment in sites like Monkton Stadium and Temple Park. The award shortlist comes after a **successful first year of the gym facilities at Jarrow Focus**, as well as the installation of new cinematic digital screens and the expansion of the virtual gym offer at leisure venues across the borough, including at Haven Point. This futuristic offer has supported a **35% increase in studio use in the last year** and is beginning to have a real impact on local people's health, **with South Tyneside one of just 20 local authority areas in the country to see a statistically significant reduction in inactivity levels over the last few years.** Looking back even further, **since the opening of Haven Point in 2013, leisure membership numbers have increased by 1621%, and overall visitor numbers have risen by 42%, to 1.26m** – statistics which show that local people have really appreciated and enthusiastically taken up the Council offer.

While the coronavirus pandemic necessitated the temporary closure of Council leisure centres and the suspension of memberships, **following robust risk assessments and the implementation of a range of enhanced hygiene and social distancing measures, as of late July, the Council has once again been able**

to reinstate its swim, gym and fitness class offers, with changes including time-limited pre-booked sessions, and it is hoped that state-of-the-art facilities will support a strong bounce back.

South Tyneside's libraries serve various important functions for local people, and both prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has worked hard to ensure people have been able to access library resources in a range of ways that suit their needs. In recent years, the Council has invested in 'hub' libraries, working to ensure that they are engaging and accessible to families, including Jarrow Focus, which recently celebrated its first birthday, and which offers designated zones for teenagers and young children and families. At the same time, a policy of **community asset transfer has enabled local people to take ownership of smaller branch libraries**, allowing for communities to upgrade, renovate and strengthen beloved facilities, including at Whitburn Library, which reopened earlier this year. The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word, has now consolidated its value as a community focal point and visitor attraction, having celebrated its **millionth visitor in summer 2019**, and collected the **'Best Programming at a Venue'** award at the 2019 Living North Awards.



Hebburn Central



Safe re-opening of Gyms

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, March 2020 saw local libraries were closed to the public in line with Government guidance to prevent the spread of coronavirus. However, library users retained **access to a wide range of online resources, including audiobooks and e-books**, and as Government guidance was relaxed, libraries have been able to begin a **phased re-opening approach**. As of early July, people were able to return and collect pre-ordered books in person on an appointment-only basis; as of mid-July, the public have similarly been able to access library computers for time-limited periods.

Over the last year, the Council has also continued to facilitate the commemoration of important historical events. 2019 saw the Council **mark the centenary of World War One Peace Day 1919, with the installation of a poignant 9ft silhouette-style steel 'Tommy' sculpture**, donated by BT, at Haven Point Plaza to remember fallen British and Commonwealth First World War soldiers. More recently, although formal services were not possible due to the lockdown, the Council **marked the 75th anniversary of VE day by encouraging people to take place in at-home commemorations** such as picnics and afternoon teas. Armed Forces Day and VJ Day were also commemorated, with memorial planters installed at South Shields Town Hall and themed seating at Westoe Cenotaph and Carr Ellison Park, Hebburn.



and a **northbound lane-gain at the Tyne Tunnel approach**. Together with the South Shields Transport Interchange, which improved travel for commuters and passengers across South Tyneside, these strategic roadworks were already promoting improved business logistics and connectivity between local people and jobs.

The Council continued to press forward with plans for the **International Advanced Manufacturing Park**, which will be situated on the land north of Nissan and is expected to attract **£400m in private investment, creating 7000 new jobs that local people will be supported to access**. This year saw further detail firmed up on plans for the **Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (CESAM)**, the 126,279 sq. ft. facility which will be at the heart of the industrial hub, and will support research, development and innovation, as well as training facilities.

Unfortunately, the global and national economic downturn that has come about as a result of the impact of the coronavirus has now drastically curtailed and even reversed progress that had been made prior to March 2019. South Tyneside has been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 economic shock due to our geography as a coastal community reliant on highly-impacted sectors, and economic forecasts suggest the effect will continue for some time yet. As of June 2020, South Tyneside has seen unemployment increase from 6% to 9%, alongside a large rise in 18-24 year olds out of work and a nearly 10% fall in job vacancies. 16,000 residents are on furlough schemes and business failures are likely, given cash flow, future growth and supply chain issues faced by many companies.

However, throughout the pandemic and lockdown, the Council has offered a range of support to aid businesses through this difficult period, by **setting up a Business Support Hub with a dedicated team for facilitating uptake of government grants and loans and providing business advice**. Since being set up, the Business Support Hub has handled hundreds of inbound calls and made hundreds of outreach calls, ultimately **facilitating £24.5m of grant funding being paid out to 2,290 eligible businesses** between mid-March and June. As well as supporting local businesses to take advantage of Central Government funding, the Council also launched the **£1.4m South Tyneside Small Business Recovery Fund** which, in Phase One, has already **provided grants of £10,000 to 140 businesses**.

As Government has gradually relaxed lockdown guidance, the Council has supported businesses to safely re-open where possible, including by introducing **new social distancing signage**,

Road, also continued to support the uplift of shopping areas across South Tyneside. **Attractive new housing developments, including at the likes of Whitburn Towers, also played a role in ensuring the ongoing appeal and economic viability of varied communities**, and the Local Plan, published this year, set out plans for future high-quality developments in the various town centre and villages across South Tyneside.

In South Shields, 2019-20 saw **Phase 2 of the South Shields 365 masterplan move towards completion**, following the **opening of the impressive South Shields Transport Interchange**, which established a clean, attractive, simple gateway into South Shields town centre, building on the foundations for economic growth already established with The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word, and public realm improvements at the Marketplace, Mill Dam and Ocean Road.

Strategic transport investments had continued to support improving connectivity and a strengthened economy. In particular, 2019-20 saw further upgrades to the critical A19 economic corridor, including **improvements at Testo's Roundabout**

Regeneration and Economy

At the start of 2020, South Tyneside Council's range of strategic investments and interventions was supporting increased opportunity for local residents, increased growth for local businesses and a stronger local economy. South Tyneside had seen a **39% growth in enterprises operating in the borough since 2010**, with the rate of growth notably larger than equivalent growth over the same period both compared to regional and national growth rates (a 26% and 30% increase respectively). There had been a **0.5% increase in the self-employment rate, and a marked growth in entrepreneurial confidence, shown through the annual business start-up rate doubling over the last decade**. **Survival rates for new start-ups are also consistently above regional and UK averages**. Collectively, this was translating into greater opportunities for local people. **There were 18% fewer local people claiming benefits compared to 2010**, and the number of 18-24 claimants had almost halved over the previous five years. South Tyneside's **employment rate had improved by 8% since 2010, with 4,300 more people in employment compared to**

2010, and the proportion of 'better jobs' had grown by 17%. Local people were (and still are) more skilled than ever before, with the **proportion with at least NVQ2 equivalent (5 A-C GCSES) qualifications or above up to 75.8%, compared to just 64.1% in 2010**.

Following a period of strategic investment in town centres, town centre hubs were playing an ongoing role in revitalisation and strengthening the community and economic pull of these key economic areas. Celebrating **its first birthday, Jarrow Focus consolidated its role as a key community hub** which has buoyed and complemented the existing local offer. Hebburn Central continued to support development of Hebburn Town Centre, with **a new Aldi a welcome addition to the existing shopping offer**.

Other areas of the borough, including Boldon, Whitburn and Cleadon, continued to maintain their own unique economic draws, with independent shops and restaurants supported by initiatives such as Restaurant Week. Rolling upgrades at Council-owned shopping fronts, including at Henderson



hand sanitiser stations and layout changes to town centres, high streets and the foreshore, and by re-opening sites such as the South Shields Market Place.

The Council is also already identifying new opportunities for future growth and recovery, including with the **development of a comprehensive Economic Recovery Plan** that aims to foster an inclusive, sustainable bounceback from Covid-19 and to remove some of the long-term structural barriers to growth.

While the Covid-19 pandemic has of course led to dramatically changed consumer behaviour and threatened the viability of many local businesses, it is hoped that **during the economic recovery key town centre investments will continue to anchor economic growth** for each area, and may take on new significance as employees working from home begin to look increasingly to local town centres for their shopping needs.

The last year already saw South Tyneside Council articulate a more consciously environmentally-sustainable approach to economic development, and it seems the coronavirus experience has added further urgency to this demand for sustainability.

In July 2019, the Council declared a **Climate Emergency**, committing to a journey towards carbon neutrality by 2030. Following six months of community consultation, March 2020 saw the Council endorse the **'Sustainable South Tyneside' Climate Strategy and 5-Year Action Plan**, which set out ambitious, concrete priority actions to be taken for the Council to cut its own carbon emissions in coming years, as well as leading the community and local businesses in being more environmentally friendly. In line with these plans, recent months have already seen progress on the **Jarrow-based Viking Energy Network, a UK-first scheme which will work by harnessing heat from the River Tyne and transferring it to council buildings around the area.** Detailed designs are now being drawn up for the project, which has attracted a £3.5m grant for its innovative approach, and a second cutting-edge district heating scheme, **the £7m Hebburn Minewater scheme, which will draw geothermal energy from flooded abandoned mines in the former Hebburn Colliery,** has similarly secured £3.5m ERDF funding, with both of these schemes together expected to deliver an annual carbon dioxide reduction of over 1,000 tonnes, alongside savings of £817,000 per year.



Artist's impressions of how Holborn might look



While the Council is reviewing and revising some of its plans and ambitions in light of the new challenges of Covid-19, continued regeneration will be an important element of recovery. **Plans for Phase 3 of South Shields 365, which will provide an enhanced town centre leisure and retail experience, are currently being refined.** The Council has been successful in an initial bid which puts it among 50 areas in the running for an allocation from the £675m Future High Street Fund to further strengthen South Shields Town Centre. Success at the next phase of the assessment could support further improvements in the high street, complementing existing regeneration activity, including potential re-shaping of vacant buildings and enhancing digital infrastructure.

Ambitious plans are also ongoing to develop the Holborn Riverside from South Shields Town Centre in the coming years, transforming disused dock land into attractive offices and housing that will attract private investment and complement the existing South Shields offer. Prior to the pandemic, a £200m masterplan had been developed, targeted at digital and professional services, alongside the marine and offshore energy sectors, with Phase 1 entailing a 50,000 sq. ft. riverside office development at Harton Quay, while a further 200,000 sq. ft. is earmarked for Grade A office accommodation and 400 new homes. More recently, April saw plans for Holborn take a step forward, with Cabinet's approval of the appointment of a residential development partner, Keepmoat, to deliver 365 homes on the site. The Holborn scheme has already secured £4.2m of grant funding from the Homes England Local Authority Accelerated Construction fund, as well as £9.4m from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership for the delivery of the office accommodation phase. Though some elements of these plans may need to change to respond to changing business and consumer trends as a result of Covid-19, it is likely that riverside housing will take on a new appeal to many prospective buyers.



Area Management and Community Safety

The coronavirus pandemic, which saw people suddenly spending more time in their homes and local areas than ever before, has highlighted for many the importance of safe, comfortable neighbourhood areas and reliable, high-quality area management services. South Tyneside Council works year-round to maintain safe, comfortable neighbourhoods that people want to live in, and throughout the coronavirus lockdown has continued to deliver the services residents expect.

The Council has **invested more than £15m in flood prevention over the last decade**. This year saw a further **59 properties on Newcastle Road and Elberfeld Court in Jarrow receive modifications**, including flood doors and brickwork treatment, to improve their resistance to damage from flooding. Plans are also now underway to progress with **Cleadon Flood Alleviation Scheme**, which is set to protect 129 households and commercial properties in the Cleadon Village area. In June, the Council was also

awarded a **Sustainability Award at the Flood and Coast Project Excellence Awards for the innovative, sustainable work undertaken on the £2.5 Monkton Flood Alleviation Scheme**, which helped manage surface water and reduce flooding risks across Monkton and Hebburn South.

The Council works hard to maintain high quality parks, partnering with local community groups and 'friends of' parks groups to ensure important community green spaces are protected and promoted. A **considerable programme of tree planting has taken place across the last year, with community support, with thousands of trees added to parks and woodland**, including at West Park and Temple Memorial Park. This year saw South Tyneside once again secure **'Green Flag' awards** in recognition of the quality of South Marine Park and West Park, Jarrow. The Council has also in the last year **begun works on the £3.2m North Marine Park restoration**, which will see the historic seafront park restored to its



North Marine Park restoration



Sandhaven Beach

original Victorian splendour, with the reinstatement of original elements and the installation of new facilities, including a themed play area. Our parks and green spaces have been a haven for many people required to stay close to home throughout the coronavirus lockdown, and, while certain spaces such as play parks and car parks were temporarily closed to minimise risks of spreading the infection, the Council has worked hard to make sure local people have been able to continue to use parks to exercise and, as soon as it was deemed safe, socialise outdoors.

South Tyneside's foreshore is likewise a major asset to the borough, and has been greatly valued by local residents throughout the Covid-19 lockdown. The Council takes care to ensure beaches are safe and clean, with **Sandhaven Beach once again receiving the 'Seaside Award' quality mark** from Keep Britain Tidy in recognition of the quality of facilities, safety and cleanliness. Throughout the coronavirus lockdown, the Council has worked to manage risks to ensure local people, and when appropriate, visitors from further afield, were able to safely enjoy the foreshore, including by **closing but then gradually re-opening car parks and public toilets and introducing new measures to facilitate social distancing** such as installing new signage and encouraging use of the cashless car parking payment app.

Effective, sustainable waste management is an ongoing priority for South Tyneside Council.

The Council's current waste management partnership has supported a **decrease in the proportion of waste going to landfill from 66% in 2010 down to under 1%**. However in recent years, promoting recycling has become a growing priority for the Council. **A pilot recycling trial in Whitburn had a positive response**



from residents and resulted in lower levels of waste contamination. The construction of a new £1.8m recycling transfer station, now underway at Middlefields, will be another major tool in the Council's arsenal to reduce waste and promote recycling. The new sorting and storing facility for blue bin recyclable materials will also promote the Council's green objectives in other ways, by saving 140,000 litres of fuel from being used up in transporting recycling to existing out-of-borough provision, cutting vehicle emissions by 400 tonnes per year, and by generating 80,000kw of electricity annually from the solar panels installed on the roof of the new facility. Efforts to make waste management cleaner are also boosted by the ongoing £3.8m fleet investment programme replacing ageing bin lorries with cleaner, more efficient new vehicles.

Most waste services were successfully maintained through the Covid-19 lockdown, with 1.5m bins emptied even though there were more cars in the streets and a 30% increase in waste output due to more people being at home. Green waste services and the recycling village were suspended for a short time, but services were re-started when it was safe to do so, with new safety measures and restrictions introduced

to support the re-opening of the Recycling Village. Businesses were also supported to manage waste collections over the lockdown, including with the offer of temporary suspension collections and charges.

The Council also works with residents in a range of ways to keep neighbourhoods clean and tidy. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, fly tipping rates had stabilised over recent years, with improvements seen in litter complaints and resident perceptions of area quality. A People's Select Committee Commission into Litter and Fly-tipping has also supported ongoing improvement in this area, which nationally has seen a decline driven by consumer behaviour during the pandemic.

The Council also works with partners to minimise anti-social behaviour and crime, to ensure residents feel safe and comfortable in their homes and are able to take pride in their neighbourhoods. Much of this work has continued throughout the Covid-19 response period.

Crime and anti-social behaviour levels in South Tyneside show a gradual reduction across 2018/19 and 2019/20. The latest available data on public perceptions of safety in local neighbourhoods also

remains high, with 97% of people surveyed reporting "feeling very safe or fairly safe living in their neighbourhood".

Tackling domestic abuse is a particular Council and partnership priority and work has been undertaken this year to further strengthen the offer to better identify and support local residents dealing with domestic abuse. In the last year, the Council community safety team has undertaken sector-leading work to tackle child-to-parent domestic violence, generating innovative multi-agency training and communications resources, with officers involved invited to speak at national conferences on the topic. The Council and police, in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner has, along with the wider Northumbria area, secured 'violence reduction unit' funding to address and prevent future serious violence.

Ongoing projects like the annual Lighter Nights and Darker Nights scheme, conducted in partnership with police, fire service and community groups, also play an important role in mitigating the risk of youth crime and anti-social behaviour at times of the year when temptations are high. The Council also recently successfully secured £250,000 from the Youth Endowment Fund, one of just 45 successful bids that beat off competition from 445 other applicants, which will be used run a scheme to target outdoor-education-based early help and support for developing resilience at children at risk of being drawn into criminal behaviour.

As a registered 'Friends Against Scams Organisation' since 2019, the Council has this year delivered advice and practical tips to many local community groups, who have also signed up to become a 'Friend Against Scams'. Between April 2019 and March 2020 the Council investigated 193 scam complaints, saving an estimated £116,680 for local victims. During 2019/20 the Council also created 2 new 'No Cold Calling Zones', meaning 1400 households across 17 zones are now protected with a strong deterrent to unwanted doorstep callers targeting elderly and vulnerable residents.



Recycling Village



Crackdown on Anti-social behaviour



Children, Young People and Families

Over the last year, South Tyneside’s schools have continued to support local children and young people to reach their potential.

As at March 2020, **84% of children and young people (89% of primary school pupils and 56% of secondary school pupils) were learning in schools rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, an increase of 24% since 2010.**

The Council **has invested over £200m in school facilities in the last decade**, and this year saw the **opening of the new state-of-the-art Toner Avenue Primary school**, which has been rebuilt and expanded to support an increase in pupil numbers as a result of growing families in Hebburn. The building, which features a two-storey teaching block, double height hall (also used by community groups), playing fields, hard play areas, multi-use game areas and secure Early Years garden, caters to 630 pupils between 3 and 11, supporting three classes in each year group.

Local young people achieve good exam results which set them up for life, with **61% of GCSE students in the borough achieving a grade**

9-4 (A*-C equivalent) in both English and Maths in August 2019. Importantly, pupils with particular challenges and vulnerabilities are well-supported to achieve their potential, with the **level of full time exclusions in South Tyneside this year reaching the 2nd lowest in the region, a major turnaround from having been second worst at the start of the decade.**

With the arrival of the Covid-19 lockdown, most children were moved to **home-working arrangements, supported with online resources and schemes of work.** To enable home-learning, **the Council has distributed 800+ laptop and tablet devices to eligible pupils through the national digital programme, and has additionally introduced a local loan scheme for families who do not have devices.** The Council has **worked effectively in partnership with schools to keep the most vulnerable children in attendance** (where safe to do so) and, working with Tyne and Wear Sport, has also distributed four hundred activity packs to the most vulnerable households, encouraging play and physical activity.

Although closed to most pupils during the lockdown, **all schools remained open to vulnerable and key worker children throughout, including over the whole Easter holiday and May half term.** Schools continued to host approximately 200-250 children initially, moving to 500-600 children at the mid-point. More recently, in June access was further widened, to support c5000 pupils, following extensive risk assessments and close working between head teachers, governors and local authority colleagues. Building on this, schools are on target **for full re-opening to all children in September** with appropriate public health measures in place and in line with detailed guidance on working in bubbles and outbreak control.

Recognising that school holidays can put additional pressures on many families, particularly those who access free school meals during term time, 2019/20 saw the Council work with third sector partners to deliver **a new Summer Holiday Club**, which offered activities and a free meal for local children for three days over the middle four weeks of the summer holidays. The clubs were open to all South Tyneside children up to the age of 16 at 9 sites across South Tyneside and were enthusiastically received, with over 5000 children taking part over the 4 weeks. Work to minimise the impact of food poverty on children has continued into 2020 and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, alongside providing all vulnerable and key worker children attending school with a free meal, **until the national meals voucher scheme was introduced the Council ensured a free packed lunch was delivered to all eligible children who were not in school.** The Council has also committed to ensuring all children eligible for free school meals, including those who become eligible prior to the return to school, are **supported with a meal during the summer holidays.** The Council extended financial support to the Borough’s three established foodbanks to bolster supplies to reach residents in need during the pandemic.



Meanwhile, **South Tyneside’s Best Start Alliance for children has further developed** during this year, bringing partnership focus to ensure that children, young people and families are able to access services and support to enable them to thrive.

South Tyneside Council’s Children’s Services have worked closely with partners to **embed a strengths-based practice**, a collaborative way of working with families which enhances and supports community assets. Our Connected Carers Team has gone from strength to strength in supporting children and young people living within their own family, and is introducing the Mockingbird Family Model for foster care, having been **selected as an investment site by the Department for Education.**

Our Corporate Parenting approach has been enhanced through partnership engagement and **the views and influence of our Care Experienced young people have grown** through their membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee, the work of our Care Leaver Ambassadors and the further development of MAGIC, our children in care council. A visit from the National Care Leavers Implementation Advisor in May 2019 confirmed that the Council is well on the way to achieving outstanding service, with **“a senior leadership team who are clear about their ambition and aspiration for care leavers.”**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has used a range of **‘virtual’ engagement activities with children and families, accelerating our in-house technology roll out** to ensure that staff have the tools they need to keep children safe.

In summer 2019, our local area SEND Leadership Board agreed an **improved strategy to deliver better and more integrated services for children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs.** Since then we have improved our EHCP and Review offer, extended our SEND Information and Advice Service, and are working closely with schools to ensure that every child achieves their full potential.

Through South Tyneside’s Best Start in Life Alliance, we are **moving to locality working with four multi-agency Locality Hubs** that will include local authority early help staff, commissioned health visitors, school nurses and school mental health practitioners. Two areas have now moved to this model however progression has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Independence and Wellbeing

Prior to the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, 2019-20 saw the Council and partners continue to promote residents' health and wellbeing, **enabling them to be as independent as possible within their own communities.**

The Council continued to implement the **innovative 'Let's Talk' approach**, which involves building relationships, and having a different conversation, with people, getting a better understanding of their strengths, resilience and assets, and using this to help them to live better, more independent lives with minimal formal support by leveraging these strengths and connecting them to their community. The approach was recently **shortlisted for an LGC Health and Care Award**, and was also publically **endorsed by the King's Fund think tank**, whose researchers noted that **'South Tyneside uses its strengths-based approach to avoid over-prescribing packages of care that may not be needed'**, and commented that this achievement **'should be celebrated'**. The approach has already garnered national attention, with the Council having been invited to **share experiences and learning at**

the National Children and Adult's Services Conferences in November 2019.

The last year also saw external recognition of the transformation journey that has enabled the success of this approach. Feedback from the 2019 Adult Social Care Peer Review observed **'positive working relationships'** across the Council and partners in adult social care, and noted that **staff had 'the autonomy and peer support...to enable them to provide the best solutions for individuals'**. The **Integrated Hospital Discharge Team was also shortlisted for Adult Service Team of the Year at the Social Worker of the Year Awards.**

The Council's adult social care approach has also been complemented through the development of an **Accommodation Strategy** which helps to ensure the right kind of supported accommodation is available to those who need extra help to live as independently as possible. In line with this strategy, plans have developed for **investment in five new accommodation schemes to be built across the coming years – two supported**

living schemes, targeted to individuals with complex learning disabilities, and three extra care schemes.

2019/20 also saw the launch of a number of new, improved services for people with particular needs. 2019 saw the **new 'South Tyneside Sensory Service' launched to support people with sight or hearing impairments. People with a learning disability in South Tyneside and their families now have access to a new team of learning disability nurses, the Assertive Outreach Team, together with a safe space** (one of two 'safe haven apartments') where they can receive specialist support if they find themselves in a crisis. The offer will help people with a disability going through crisis, and will also help those looking to move towards more independent living in the community by helping them develop skills and confidence. A new autism hub has also opened to provide support and advice to people with autism and their families

In the last year, the Council has also worked closely with partners across the local system **and it's collaborative, person-centred 'alliancing approach'**, which is supporting joined-up working, closer integrated ways of working ensuring better experiences and outcomes for our residents. This way of working has also supported **closer multi-agency relationships, including facilitating social worker/third sector 'speed-dating' and a strong focus on how we work** to embed the alliancing principles and ways of working into the everyday practises of professionals from across health and social care within South Tyneside.

The last year also saw the Council support people to avoid unhealthy behaviours and better look after their own health. **Despite a national decline in the numbers of people accessing stop smoking services, South Tyneside is in the top 20 local authorities nationally for smoking quit dates set and rates of successful quitters.** The percentage of adult smokers in the borough has fallen from 22.7 to 16.3 over the last decade, and the rate of smoking among pregnant women has almost halved in the last five years, reducing from 25.9% to 13.9% of expectant mothers. Efforts have also taken place to reduce risks for vulnerable people for alcohol related hospital admissions and deaths by influencing the raising of costs of the cheapest, strongest shop-bought alcohol. Local employers were supported to promote physical and mental health in the workplace through the South Tyneside Better Health at Work Award, which has recorded a **tripling of the number of engaged businesses since it was started in 2016.**

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's public health and adult social care functions became central to the Council's efforts to keep residents safe.

From the arrival of the pandemic, **Adult Social Care has played a key role in leading and advising the local care sector to minimise coronavirus infection risks for those most at risk and in need of support.** The Council has directly **supported care home and domiciliary care with advice and additional resources to cover additional pandemic-related costs**, including staff sickness, agency costs and PPE. The Council has also **helped proactively source personal protective equipment** for care providers where they were unable to procure it through their own channels, providing over £65,000 worth of equipment over the course of the lockdown. Council staff have become infection control trainers, providing training to infection control leads within care homes. Council staff have also supported improved digital ways of working with care homes and residential homes, providing digital tablets which have enabled improved remote collaboration between providers, GPs, pharmacies and other community services.

Benefiting from the strong co-working arrangements already in place, Council staff have also worked closely with colleagues in partner agencies to **to support new hospital discharge arrangements, working closely with partners to support people to leave hospital in a safe and timely manner, with a focus on recovery and where possible a return home.** The focus is on preventing admissions to hospital, as well as responding to discharges, and, building on existing positive work in respect of reduced delayed discharges, positive reductions in lengths of hospital stays are already being observed. A **new small outreach team has also been created to provide domiciliary care** to a number of people across the borough, which has further helped minimise unnecessary delays in hospital discharges.

Throughout the lockdown, the Council's public health team have played a critical role in shaping all aspects of the local Covid-19 response, including distributing rapidly changing public health advice, analysing infection data, and **developing the South Tyneside Outbreak Control Plan.**



Councillors and Volunteer Rangers Tree Planting at Temple Memorial Park 2019

Voluntary Sector Partnerships and Cooperatives

Voluntary sector and community partnerships have in recent years become a notable strength in South Tyneside. 2019 saw South Tyneside named as **'Co-operative Council of the Year'** following an extensive national public vote, solidifying the Council's reputation as collaborative and co-operative organisations. More recently, 2020 has seen local people and the third sector, bolstered by a range of tools and campaigns, come together and step up like never before in order to play a part in protecting the most vulnerable in the community from the worst of the coronavirus.

Service-user co-production, engagement and participation opportunities and forums have continued to be strengthened over the last year, including with the Young People's Parliament hosting events like **the intergenerational debate during Democracy Week, and the Young Health Ambassadors engaging with council officers and health practitioners to improve service-user experience, and school children meeting with and learning from inspirational local women to mark International Women's Day.**

Although the coronavirus pandemic has more recently curtailed face to face interaction opportunities, social media and digital resources have enabled creative engagement between the Council and service-users throughout the lockdown, such as in the case of the Young People's Parliament's videos promoting recycling.

Council partnerships with the third sector have gone from strength to strength over the last year. The Holidays Clubs scheme saw community associations, church groups and the Council work in tandem to **support over 5000 children to access a meal and activities during the 2019 summer holidays.** The Happy at Home befriending scheme is another community-led scheme which is improving outcomes, tackling social isolation by helping to connect vulnerable older people. **Each week as many as 40 people who might otherwise be socially isolated are now supported to visit the scheme's 'Happy Hubs',** to socialise with others, take part in activities and take part in activities such as cards, knitting, bingo or crafts. Community groups and volunteers have also played a key role **strengthening local green spaces,**

planting trees and improving bio-diversity, and promoting the sustainability agenda, including by contributing ideas to the consultation for the Sustainable South Tyneside strategy. The South Shields-based **324 Air Cadets Squadron, the squadron which hosts the Mayor's cadet, was also this year awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service,** in recognition of their community and fundraising work.

More recently, the Coronavirus pandemic has also seen established third sector groups like Age Concern step up to take on **widened roles in providing advice and support to a much-broader group of residents made vulnerable by the virus threat,** and has also **spurred the creation of many new groups, such as South Tyneside Mutual Aid,** which successfully mobilised over 280 volunteers from across South Tyneside, collaborating with the Council to safely provide additional help to their vulnerable neighbours during the crisis. Charities and voluntary groups in South Tyneside collectively **secured over half a million pound in grants to help local people through the coronavirus pandemic,** and third sector umbrella organisation Inspire South Tyneside has played a critical role in distributing advice and information, and overseeing the **matching of hundreds of volunteers to local opportunities,** taking into account individuals' preferences, skills and lived experiences.

During the Coronavirus Lockdown, the voluntary sector has played a **supportive role in the newly established South Tyneside Shielding Hub** which has coordinated food and medicine deliveries, alongside other support, including wellbeing and financial advice, to thousands residents asked by the Government to 'shield' between March and August. Over the time the Hub was running, the Hub **supported 5,047 residents, handled 21,106 contacts, delivered 4932 parcels of food and basic supplies, delivered 878 prescriptions, offered a welfare check or advice 14,910 times and signposted 297 to a volunteer service.**

The **#LoveSouthTyneside social action campaign,** launched in early 2019, has further expanded its reach over the last year, being taken up by an ever wider set of residents, and playing a significant role in the success of the local coronavirus response.

Throughout the pandemic, the Council also increased its financial support to the Borough's three established foodbanks, which have been a critical resource in providing food, wellbeing support and signposting services to those in need during these unprecedented times.

Having initially been taken up enthusiastically by existing community groups and community-minded residents from across the borough, prompting everything from litter-picks to self-care, early 2020

saw the campaign further **expanded to encourage businesses to take part in local social action opportunities,** including through the business-focused #LoveSouthTyneside event which took place during Business Week in February 2020. The spirit of the #LoveSouthTyneside campaign was also used to engage schools and young people to take part in volunteering. **As at January 2019, young people from 15 schools were already signed up to collectively achieve the Cleaner, Greener Communities Board target of 150,000 hours of volunteering.** The local Clinical Commissioning Group even made use of the #LoveSouthTyneside brand over the last year in their recruitment campaign, seeking to **attract skilled medical staff to in the South Tyneside area by showcasing local strengths including community passion and assets** like the foreshore and local green spaces. In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, the #LoveSouthTyneside brand has more recently been used to successfully mobilise residents in a huge increase of volunteering, as well as to galvanise a surge of community spirit shown by individuals, organisations and businesses. The campaign has helped connect volunteers to volunteering opportunities, including at the newly-created Shielding Hub, as well as the NHS and with a range of third sector organisations across South Tyneside.

Throughout the Coronavirus response, the Council has proactively worked to **promote civic pride and a sense of comradery,** including with a new **'Proud to Support' campaign.** Linked to the wider #LoveSouthTyneside social action campaign, 'Proud to Support' has enabled local people to nominate somebody who deserves recognition for going the extra mile during the Covid-19 response. The campaign, which has seen local unsung heroes - from carers to delivery workers to local business owners - celebrated via press releases and the #LoveSouthTyneside website, helping bolster community pride and encourage people to come together during difficult times.

Throughout the lockdown period, the Council has also taken a range of other steps to signal appreciation for key workers and others who have gone the extra mile to help the local community during the Covid-19 crisis. This has included everything from raising the rainbow 'Support the NHS' flag at South Shields Town Hall to coincide with weekly 'clap for carers' events, to producing social media content to show support for local volunteers, and **committing to confer the borough's highest honour, the Freedom of the Borough, to all local key workers and volunteers** who have played a part in keeping the community going through the lockdown and local pandemic response



Artist image of Holborn development

will attract £400m private investment and create 7000 new jobs in the next 10-15 years. While the whole of the UK continues to plan for the current challenges facing us as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, South Tyneside Council also continues to plan for the long-term. **Phase 3 of South Shields 365 will get underway**, bringing an expanded retail and leisure offer to the town centre. **Phase 1 of Holborn Riverside will see work get underway on a new 500,000 sq. ft. riverside office development.** Meanwhile, the **Local Plan has set out a blueprint for 5000+ new homes across the borough**, which will help to ensure that there are high quality local housing options available as our population grows and young people move from family homes to start their own families. With an eye to the future, the Council also continues to work with regional partners to ensure the right skills networks and strategic infrastructure to support local residents and businesses. As part of this, the Council has ambitions to **collaborate with NEXUS and other partners to further strengthen local transport links** and, if feasible, extend the metro line to better serve emerging strategic employment areas including the IAMP.

Following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in July 2018, and the commitment of the council to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, sustainability will be a particular priority in the coming years. The recent launch of the **'Sustainable South Tyneside'** Strategy has set out ambitious plans for the Council to become increasingly environmentally-friendly and efficient over the coming years, and to use its influence to support residents to live greener, healthier, more sustainable lives.

When it comes to supporting children and families, **the Council is continuing to roll out, in the coming years, the new 'Best Start Locality Partnership' model of neighbourhood-based integrated services for families and children.** Initial work has already been undertaken in relation to identifying appropriate buildings in each 'locality' where families can access support, interventions and services, with plans for renovations and new layouts already underway. These partnerships will enable families to access early help from multi-agency professionals co-located near to them, supporting them to meet a range of needs and receive a range of advice depending on their circumstances.

In the last decade, the Council has come a long way in bringing our transformation and improving opportunities and outcomes for people across the whole of South Tyneside. In the coming decade, despite the new obstacles we are currently encountering, the Council will build on these strong foundations, and go even further, towards achieving an outstanding place to live, work and bring up families.

As EU Exit plans are finalised and the UK's future relationship with EU is agreed, the Council will continue to monitor the impact of proposed arrangements and put in place appropriate plans to support businesses and communities smoothly through the transition.

A new Council strategy covering the next stage of the 20 year vision, over the period of 2021 to 2024, is under development, and will set out organisation-wide priorities and plans for the medium to long-term, which will no doubt be shaped by ongoing national policy as we work through these unprecedented times.

While some elements of our strategy will continue to adapt, we remain determined to progress our vision to raise prosperity for our communities. With our recently developed **South Tyneside Economic Recovery plan**, which is aligned to the wider North East Economic Recovery Plan, we have set out a path forward which will enable us to navigate through and capitalise upon emerging challenges and opportunities, and get the local economy back on track. While our economic recovery will see a new focus on skills, support for businesses and promotion of the low-carbon sector, we will continue to press forward with flagship long-term regeneration projects aimed at bolstering our existing strengths and assets. This will include moving forward with the **construction phase of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park**, which we expect

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Especially with the arrival of the coronavirus, the last 18 months has seen more change than most. While in many ways, it is as yet uncertain exactly what the future will bring, the Council is undeterred in its long-term ambitions for South Tyneside, and, alongside planning a Covid-19 recovery, will in the coming years continue to press ahead with a number of priorities and objectives.

The Covid-19 challenge is not over; the coming year will see us, at a local and national level, continue to grapple with the challenges of living in a society where Covid-19 remains a serious threat. But the last six months has seen us adapt our services and ways of working, and **across many service areas we have begun to find our 'new normal'**, a position from which we can continue to meet residents needs and provide essential services, and in which we can once again plan for the future. **As we begin to bring back those services which have so far proved more difficult to safely reopen**, including across education, leisure, events,

libraries and even elections we are already finding we can draw on the lessons we have learned from this initial response period. Although the risk of a second national wave or a local outbreak remains, we have put in place tools like our **South Tyneside Outbreak Control Plan** to ensure we are able to respond quickly and comprehensively and minimise the damage to our communities and our economy.

With the Government Spending Review now underway, and major fiscal changes expected in the Autumn Budget, together with upcoming White Papers on Social Care and on Devolution and Local Recovery, it is possible that the fiscal and legislative context in which we work could change considerably in the coming months and years. However, with our **robust Medium Term Financial Plan**, and with our track record of being able to identify efficiencies and adapt to resource pressures, we are in a strong position to adapt and take advantage of emerging funding opportunities as their details become clearer.

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Marsden Grotto



Jarrow Focus



Littlehaven Promenade and Seawall



Whitburn Towers



The Word



Hebburn Central



365 Phase 3



Cleadon

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