**NEREO North East Regional Member/Officer Network**

**Suggested topics for a work programme**

| **Topic Area** | **Background** | **Potential Scope** |
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| Housing | A lot of work has been done regionally to tackle homelessness. A number of councils throughout the North East have reported experiencing with private sector landlords and antisocial behaviour from tenants of these properties. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on housing. The economic downturn has resulted in businesses furloughing, laying people off or reducing the hours of employees. This has resulted in increased rent arrears in some cases. The government has introduced a moratorium on evictions and has extended the deadline a number of times.  | Regional work to tackle homelessnessInitiatives to tackle housing standards and tenant antisocial behaviour in the private rental sector e.g. selective licensingImpacts of COVID-19 on housing |
| Transport  | Transport provision impacts on the economy, on health outcomes and on educations. Having easy access to key employment sites, retail and leisure opportunities and vital services is a key issue for residents. Public transport helps knot communities together. However, since the 1980s, local authority responsibilities for public transport have been eroded. The policy landscape has also been overlaid by combined authorities having a role in transport governance.  | Policy landscape regarding transport provisionHow can local authority scrutiny play a role in helping to shape transport within their area?  |
| Skills and employability | The recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to failure of a number of businesses. This could lead to an economic restructuring of the economy with new businesses being created which require different skills sets and a reskilling of the labour force.  | Impacts of COVID-19 on the economy and the labour marketForecast of future skills requirementsThe national Industrial Strategy and Skills Strategy (to be developed)Regional approach |
| Poverty | Some communities in the North East suffer some of the highest deprivation in the country with income deprivation being a significant factor. This will be further impacted by COVID-19. Closely related to poverty issues. Has been increasingly highlighted due to COVID-19 restrictions with families struggling to home school and large numbers working from home. | An overview of income and deprivation levels within the North East Poverty and all its facets (child poverty, fuel poverty etc)Impacts of COVID-19Poverty commissions and scrutiny work of NE authorities |
| Climate change | Climate change is a global issue and one that has been recognised nationally and locally.  | The global climate emergencyRegional pictureWork of individual local authorities in tackling climate changeChallenges and opportunitiesRole of scrutiny |
| High streets | There has been a steady decline in high streets nationally as retailers have pulled out of maintaining a retail presence in towns and cities and moved towards more of an online presence. There has also been a number of high-profile collapses of major household names in the sector. Their company names and goodwill have been purchased by online only companies such as Asos and Boohoo This has been recognised by parliament who has conducted more than one select committee inquiry into this issue. The situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.  | Regional studies into the state of our high streetsHow can town and city centres be redesigned and repurposed? |
| Transformation | Most local authorities have a transformation programme which involves exploring the use of new technology and ways of working, alternative delivery models and innovative ways of providing services to our residents. | Tour of transformation programmes of authorities represented in the network and what they coverExemplars from these programmesScrutiny and the transformation agenda  |
| Arson and deliberate fires | County Durham and Darlington has the highest rate in the country for deliberate primary fires in the country, Tyne and Wear and Cleveland are a close second and third. Cleveland has the highest rate in the country for deliberate secondary fires, Tyne and Wear is second and Durham and Darlington is third. Arson is a crime and its impact can be devastating and long lasting. It is an issue requiring a multi-agency approach involving fire, police and councils and may benefit from some cross boundary working. | Facts and figures relating to primary and secondary fires, arson convictions. Work done by agencies in partnership to tackle the issue.  |
| Mental Health – Adults and Children | Mental health problems are one of the main causes of the overall disease burden worldwide. One in four people will experience poor mental health in their lifetime and an estimated one in six people experienced a common mental health problem in the last week (one in five women and one in eight men.) In 2018, there were 6,507 deaths by suicide in the UK. Men accounted for three-quarters of these deaths. The mental health and wellbeing of communities has been highlighted during the pandemic. Coronavirus restrictions, loneliness, loss of employment or earnings, anxiety and fears for the future have all contributed to worsened mental health problems across all age groups in the last year.  | Key statistics. Impacts of COVID-19 on mental health of people in the North East and local services provided to people with poor mental health. The role of local government scrutiny in mental health.  |
| Waste | The government has a developing strategy for making a step change with regard to waste and has legislative plans for the provision of targets, plans and policies for the environment and making waste collection and disposal more sustainable. | Government strategy and legislation. A regional approach to waste disposal. Making refuse collection more sustainable. How to challenge and scrutinise the performance of refuse collection, recycling and waste disposal services. |