

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>9 July 2020</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Recovery Planning</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Regeneration and Planning</b>
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	<b>Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>To inform, and seek the Cabinet's views on plans being developed to support the sustainable and economic recovery of the district and the council following the Covid19 lockdown period.</b>
<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Non-key</b>
<b>Officer recommendation(s):</b>	<p><b>Cabinet is recommended to note the report, and in particular;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a) The work to reprioritise the Corporate Plan over the summer (para 3.4)</b></li> <li><b>b) The commissioning of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies to support our implementation of community wealth building principles into all our key priorities as a council (para 3.5)</b></li> <li><b>c) The Recovery Summit to be held in July 2020 (para 3.6)</b></li> <li><b>d) Particular areas of future focus (para 3.8), and</b></li> <li><b>e) The intention to revise the focus of future performance reporting (para 4.2).</b></li> </ul>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<b>The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown has resulted in a significant downturn in the local economy and subsequent impact on local people. This report sets out what the council plans to do, in its community leadership role, to tackle this in the Lewes District.</b>
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## **1 Introduction**

**1.1 The past three months have seen unprecedented social and economic changes.**

The Covid-19 pandemic and the national 'lockdown' response to this, resulting in the virtual shut down of the economy, have created a hugely altered local picture, to which the council needs to respond.

- 1.2 This report provides an oversight and context for the council's recovery planning, both for ourselves as an organisation and in our community leadership role, for the district.

## **2 The new challenges**

- 2.1 Lockdown measures are being gradually lifted but it is recognised that the pandemic is by no means over. At the time of writing the downwards trajectory of infection continues, but we cannot overlook the possibility of a second wave or localised outbreaks. However, it is clear that we need to start planning now for the sustainable recovery of our district. Indeed this planning is already well underway.

- 2.2 The district is now a very different place. Unemployment levels are higher, and are likely to rise dramatically as government funded furlough schemes come to an end. Some businesses have already folded and it is expected that more may follow. Social distancing continues to mean that some businesses simply cannot operate and are unlikely to be able to do so for some considerable time.

- 2.3 The impact of this on people's lives cannot be understated. Without the right support and interventions we could see;

- Debt issues –use of payday lenders, mortgage arrears, rent arrears
- Lack of food security and increased reliance on foodbanks
- Housing issues and homelessness
- Potential increasing incidences of domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour
- Potential negative mental health impact of long term self-isolation / shielding
- Fear/anxiety relating to returning to public places
- Digital exclusion, particularly in rural areas
- Isolation due to limitations on public transport

We continue to monitor and map changes in the experiences of local people in relation to these things, and work with our partners to support those experiencing such difficulties.

- 2.4 In addition, the council has its own issues, as set out in other recent reports to the Cabinet, with regard to increased pressures on services and a very challenging financial position.

## **3 Recovery Planning**

- 3.1 These changes and challenges require a strong, coordinated and planned approach to tackle them, in order to ensure the best outcomes for the district. Commentators are suggesting that the recovery is an opportunity to build back in a more sustainable and just way, reforming the inequality in our existing economic structures and systems. As a council we have a key role to play in

leading the dialogue about what a greener and more equal recovery might look like. Whilst we do not hold the solutions alone, we can play an important role in harnessing and focusing the energy and commitment of local communities and local businesses.

- 3.2 To this end we are bringing together key statutory, voluntary, community and business representatives from across the area to plan our recovery together. Our recovery work will focus on ensuring a sustainable and resilient economic, social and environmental future for the district. We will, in particular, focus on how best to support those 'furthest from the job market', that is, those who are most likely to find it difficult to secure work.
- 3.3 The council does not want to see 'Recovery' as being a route back to where we were before. There is a real opportunity to re-design and re-invent our local economic landscape in a resilient way that serves local people better; retaining and reinvesting local wealth. Alongside this, the lifestyle changes made during lockdown, for example with less car usage and more walking and cycling, can also be seen as an opportunity to create lasting change which can significantly contribute to our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.
- 3.4 In February 2020 we adopted a new Corporate Plan. This set out our vision for the district which focused strongly on; community wealth building, sustainability and climate change, providing affordable housing and getting our services right first time. These four themes continue to have real relevance and they will continue to underpin our work. We do not need to change our Corporate Plan, but may need to refocus our priorities to ensure we deal first with the most pressing and critical issues facing us now. This 're-prioritisation' work will be undertaken over the summer and reported in the early autumn.
- 3.5 Community wealth building, in particular, is a critical part of achieving a successful and sustainable recovery, as its focus is on; local investment, local jobs and skills development, supporting locally owned businesses and procurement choices which support local contractors and suppliers. To this end we have commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to work with us and advise on how we can work to reshape local energy systems; create workforces compatible with a post-carbon economy and; convene the financial resources needed to support economically-just transition towards a more resilient district in the future.
- 3.6 Next steps

A very important first step is to bring together the key statutory, voluntary, community and business representatives from across the area to plan our recovery together. A Recovery Summit is being held shortly to formulate a shared approach for the district.
- 3.7 This will complement and build on the countywide economic recovery work already underway. The countywide recovery work is being led by East Sussex County Council, with guidance from Team East Sussex.
- 3.8 Following the Recovery Summit, more detailed plans for the district will be developed, alongside the countywide plans. These will draw out how the

community wealth building approach can best be applied practically in the district. The work commissioned from CLES will assist with this. Particular areas of focus within these plans will be;

- Maximising use of local businesses and services through reviewing and making changes to our procurement rules
- Supporting economic regeneration through the way we use the council's Capital Programme
- Maximise benefit to the local area in our investment decisions
- Explore how we can continue to support local people experiencing social and welfare issues holistically, working with other agencies, building on the Community Hub approach used during the lockdown period
- Continuing to drive down carbon emissions through our work to decarbonise our housing stock, in collaboration with other stockholding local authorities

3.9 More detailed plans will be drawn up and progressed over the summer, in close collaboration with partners from across the business, public and community sectors. A further report will be brought to Cabinet thereafter.

#### **4 Outcome expected and performance management**

4.1 Throughout the lockdown period, close attention has been paid to performance data to enable us to judge the effectiveness of the interventions the council has been making, such as the Community Hub helpline, the provision of food, the payment of business grants, processing of benefit claims etc.

4.2 Going forward, we will continue to closely monitor the council's own performance data alongside other key statistics which will provide an indication of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the district. We will use this data to track the recovery journey and to ensure our plans remain responsive to the changing situation. The council's regular performance reports will be revised to reflect this focus.

#### **5 Financial appraisal**

5.1 The direct costs/revenue consequences arising to the Council as a direct result of commissioning the Centre for Local Economic Strategies to advise on community wealth building plans and any other costs associated with the report's recommendations are to be funded from the previously allocated resources for sustainability.

#### **6 Legal implications**

6.1 There are no substantive legal implications arising from this report, as the contents are purely for noting. The recovery planning proposals set out in section 3 above are executive functions, corporate in scope, which make Cabinet the proper forum for consideration.

## **7 Risk management implications**

- 7.1 This report identifies at para 2.3 the risks for the district resulting from the Covid pandemic and the national lockdown. The report sets out ways in which the council can work with others to help reduce these risks. However, it should be noted that many of the issues set out at para 2.3 are beyond the direct scope of the council to address alone and therefore a partnership approach will be essential to achieve significant impact.

## **8 Equality analysis**

- 8.1 A full equality analysis will be undertaken as part of the development of recovery plans. The Community Wealth building approach set out in this report aims to achieve economically-just outcomes which would not disadvantage those with protected characteristics.

## **9 Environmental sustainability implications**

- 9.1 This report sets out how the council intends to approach its recovery planning in light of the Covid pandemic. The Community Wealth Building approach uses sustainability principles and is in line with the council's emerging Sustainability and Climate Change strategy framework, a report on which can be found elsewhere on this agenda.