

Subject:	Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme Update		
Date of Meeting:	9 September 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Culture		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the progress of the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme, following a previous update to the Sub-committee on 24 June 2020.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the report provides an update on progress to 18 August 2020 and given the fast moving nature of the pandemic, aspects of this report may have been superseded by events by the Sub-committee meeting on 9 September 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Sub-committee notes this progress update report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Policy & Resources Committee agreed to establish the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme on 30 April 2020 to help prepare and steer the council and city through the transition from emergency response to recovery. In doing so, the programme seeks opportunities for the city to emerge from the pandemic as a healthier, equitable and more sustainable place to live, work and visit. The programme will require a co-ordinated effort over the next eighteen months.
- 3.2 A programme structure and governance arrangements have been put in place with clear reporting lines from the council and citywide working groups, to the Executive Leadership Team as Programme Board and to Members, through to governance structures at regional and national level. Appendix 1 depicts these governance arrangements.
- 3.3 Programme management arrangements have been established, including project/action planning at working group level, highlight reporting to update on progress to the Programme Board, identification and management of risks and issues, and completion of Equalities Impact Assessments. A programme plan is attached at Appendix 2 to provide a high level overview of activities within each working group.

- 3.4 The programme comprises fifteen working groups, which have been established to lead recovery at city and council level. A brief update on these working groups is as follows:

Citywide recovery:

3.5 **Children & Young People**

The scope and terms of reference have been agreed to provide strategic leadership to the recovery and renewal work for children and young people's services in the city. An agreed focus is on Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME); disadvantaged; education and early years; Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND); emotional wellbeing and mental health; safeguarding; and young people. The working group meets fortnightly and active links have been established with other working groups. Partners are engaged, including Families, Children & Learning leadership; council colleagues from Health & Safety, Communications and Human Resources; the Clinical Commissioning Group; Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise organisations; and schools. An action plan has been developed around remaining dynamic in order to respond to any future peaks of the virus, and the main group and all task and finish groups will conduct a 'stop, start, continue' exercise to report back in September.

3.6 **Crime & Community Safety/Cohesion**

The Community Safety Strategy was presented to Full Council in July. The Community Safety Partnership Board meets quarterly and will include Covid recovery as part of its business. A recovery action plan is in development.

3.7 **Employment & Skills**

Discussions have been initiated and officers are looking at commonalities across Brighton & Hove, and East and West Sussex. The focus of this working group crosses sectors and a partnership approach is being taken including the Universities of Brighton and Sussex, and local colleges. Once initial conversations have concluded, the scope of the work will be clarified and the working group established.

3.8 **Events & Economy**

The working group has been focused on establishing the Discretionary Grant Fund and Business Grants Fund to ensure they deliver the maximum possible funding for businesses across the city to support key sectors of the economy with cashflow issues, helping them to survive the pandemic and protect jobs. Moving into recovery, the group is supporting the reopening of the city's visitor attractions, ensuring there is alignment in the opening of different attractions across the city and enabling the use of the city's open spaces for events to restart. The group is also liaising with businesses to understand how well the city is preparing for the possibility of a local outbreak and facilitating the sharing of best practice. This includes working with Public Health to ensure a rapid and effective response to any localised outbreaks. The group is working to enable the city's cultural institutions to find new ways to function and revitalisation of the city centre following the economic impact on the retail sector. Opportunities to make the best use of already allocated, and potential, funding for the city are being explored and support provided to the Third Sector with managing the financial sustainability of its offer to residents. The group is liaising with regional bodies

and central government to ensure the needs of Brighton & Hove are reflected in policies and strategies for the purposes of securing maximum possible investment in the city.

Work has commenced on an arts recovery plan for the city, funded by Arts Council England and Brighton and Hove City Council. A partnership which includes the Arts and Creative Industries Commission is preparing a strategic plan to which will lead to concerted actions in support of the sector over the next three to five years. Fifty paid participants from the city are currently being recruited, in addition to four facilitators already appointed.

The majority of city's Outdoor Events Programme has been cancelled as a result of the pandemic, however, events group The Warren are successfully managing a 300-seat outdoor venue on the seafront during the month of August. Indoor events are still greatly limited by physical distancing requirements, which is why the Brighton Centre remains closed. However, the Royal Pavilion re-opened at the end of July, with Preston Manor expected to open on 11th September, followed by Brighton Museum and Art Gallery towards the end of the month.

Indoor sports facilities are now able to re-open and the Withdean Sports Complex was the first to do so in the city on 27th July. King Alfred Leisure Centre has subsequently re-opened on 15th August and a phased re-opening of the other sport centres in the Sports Facilities Contract has been agreed with Freedom Leisure the operator. A Special Policy & Resources Committee on 14th August agreed to the extension of the Sports Facilities Contract by three years until the end of March 2024.

Because the economy of Brighton & Hove stretches beyond the administrative boundary of the city council, the strategic approach to the recovery of the city region's economy is being led by the Greater Brighton Economic Board (GBEB). GBEB met very shortly after the lockdown started and moved immediately to commission work to understand and then address the economic stresses created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Economic consultants Hatch were quickly commissioned to prepare a detailed report to gain an understanding of the challenges facing the city region's economy based on existing intelligence and the composition of the local economy. This looked at overall impacts, did a detailed sector analysis and considered potential Covid-19 recovery activities the board could undertake in line with delivering its existing five year strategy. The Economic Board is now overseeing a recovery plan for the city region's economy which will be based on the findings of that report and will also accord with the Local Enterprise Partnership's recovery plans. Furthermore, at the June meeting of the Economic Board there were a number of other reports agreed which will contribute towards recovery. Energy and water plans were agreed which look to stimulate green growth in the city region; and detailed proposals for driving new economic growth through attracting inward investment were also supported.

3.9 **Food**

Reviews are taking place across the emergency food network and by neighbourhood in order to revise provision based upon an assessment of need. Liaison is taking place with food projects to ensure they have up to date guidance on operating safely in relation to Covid-19. The council has received funding from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs in the order of

£320,713.25 to assist those struggling to afford food and other essentials (there is a separate report to this committee on that matter). Officers are initiating recruitment to a dedicated post to hold the strategic lead for food, and to work with the Food Partnership and the council's recovery programme.

3.10 **Homelessness & Housing**

Those accommodated during the pandemic are being assessed in relation to their health and underlying conditions, which will inform the specification of their future accommodation requirements. A report was presented to the Policy & Resources Committee on 14 August to seek approval for the extension and acquisition of interim accommodation. A funding proposal for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme will be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on 20 August. The result of the proposal should be known in September.

3.11 **Public Health**

The working group has completed and published the Local Outbreak Plan at the end of June and started initial priority actions. The Public Health team are involved with all working groups providing advice, support and guidance. As part of plans to test the Local Outbreak Plan, the working group will be taking part in a co-ordinated exercise with Sussex partners to run trial scenarios and incorporate learning into revision of the Plan.

A dedicated Communications Officer has been appointed to work on the Local Outbreak Plan supporting preventative messages and communication in the event of an outbreak. Local Outbreak Plan communication aims, objectives and key messages were presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board in July.

3.12 **Safer Public Spaces**

The working group has been focusing on effective crowd management in key locations across the city, enabling physical distancing in public places while people are moving around (for example, pavement widening) and providing clear and effective enforcement measures to encourage businesses to comply with physical distancing requirements.

As part of a first tranche of emergency active travel measures, funded by a grant of more than £660k from the Department for Transport (DfT), a number of temporary transport changes have been implemented, including on-road segregated cycle lanes, pavement widening in busy retail areas, and restricting vehicle access to provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists. Further active travel measures will focus on strategic walking and cycling improvements along well-used 'travel corridors' in the city, and areas where there is a high demand for public transport. The outcome of further bid to DfT for £2.68m to support these measures, as outlined in the Council's Urgent Response Transport Action Plan, is expected in September.

3.13 **Welfare Support & Financial Hardship**

The working group has developed a Council Tax Collection Strategy, which is fair and proportionate in line with the Corporate Debt Policy. The approach is one of empathy and being supportive of residents, whilst transitioning from Covid-19 crisis support to a 'new normal' recovery. The new recovery phase will potentially begin in the autumn and is being kept under constant review as circumstances

change. Residents will be kept up to date via a variety of media. The group is also identifying hardship, poverty and financial vulnerability in relation to Covid-19, in order to support residents through the crisis. It is liaising across sectors to co-ordinate the existing provision of welfare rights, crisis help, fuel poverty assistance, debt and other hardship advice.

3.14 **Vulnerable People**

The working group has a number of workstreams covering those grouped by characteristic including BAME; refugees; migrants; Gypsy Roma travellers; van dwellers; vulnerable council tenants; older people living alone; people with learning or physical disabilities or sensory impairment; faith communities; LGBTQ+ communities; carers; Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and those shielding; and those with no recourse to public funds. Other workstreams include the Community Hub, medicines, health improvement, data, digital inclusion and neighbourhood based resident response. The working group has been meeting throughout the pandemic to highlight and respond to issues raised in relation to all of these workstreams.

Council recovery:

3.15 **Customers**

The Customer Experience programme and Customer Experience Steering Group (CESG) are being utilised to drive forward the council's response to customers during the pandemic. An action plan has been developed to respond to issues and make the most of opportunities presented by Covid-19. Individual services are taking forward a corporately agreed approach and the Customer Experience Team are working on cross-cutting priorities identified by the CESG.

3.16 **Finance**

The council's financial position in relation to the pandemic has been reported to committee each month since March 2020. The position has been updated as more accurate estimates of emergency response costs and losses of income and taxation have become known, together with the impact of funding announcements from government. The focus continues to be on tracking all government funding announcements of support to the council and ensuring they are reflected in service's financial projections, as well as all announcements of funding managed by the council on behalf of other organisations.

As reported to Policy & Resources Committee on 9 July, the potential financial impacts on the council's finances in 2020/21 and 2021/22 are very severe. Taking a 'moderate view' of the potential recovery of incomes, particularly parking revenues, as the economy and visitor numbers recover, and assuming further government funding support of at least £10m, a deficit of £27.5m is estimated in the current financial year. Subject to confirmation of government funding announced in July, Policy & Resources Committee will consider in October how to address this potential deficit through either spending restrictions or the use of the Authority's reserves and balances, or a combination of both.

Although using reserves can deal with the immediate problem, the majority of reserves need to be repaid over time, potentially leaving the council in the position of not only managing these debt repayments over many years but also managing the ever growing costs and demands on Adult Social Care as well as

any lasting economic impacts of the pandemic, particularly on incomes and taxation revenues. The corollary is that the council's ability to support Recovery & Renewal could be severely hampered, both in terms of the levels of public spending locally but also in terms of its capacity to provide the wide range of support and investment to the City that are needed to contribute to its longer term sustainability.

In the meantime, the working group and finance colleagues continues to track and project cashflows to ensure there is sufficient cash available to meet expenditure, complete MHCLG Financial Data returns on financial impact and recover all eligible costs through the furlough scheme. The council's Executive Leadership Team is developing potential mitigations for 2020/21, whilst also beginning the annual budget setting process for 2021/22. A further update on progress will be contained in a report to Policy & Resources Committee on 8 October 2020.

3.17 Governance & Accountability

The working group is identifying and responding, as appropriate, to the changing needs and ways of working in the council. This includes the management of committee meetings; legal advice on recovery proposals; the Performance Management Framework; business continuity; information governance; communications and transparency; review and alignment of citywide partnerships with recovery; impact upon Bereavement Services and Registrars; and accountability and assurance regarding Covid-19 recovery.

The council's Communications Team has been undertaking extensive work on communications since the first Covid-19 outbreak in Brighton & Hove in early February 2020. The approach from the start has been to be open about all information that could be shared and provide reassurance and guidance to our city's residents and businesses, as well as Members and staff. The focus has been on informing media (regional and national), local politicians, local stakeholders and staff, and speaking directly with our communities to gain as wide a reach as possible. The Communications Team have worked rapidly to understand complex information and tailored approaches to ensure key messages and resources reached city and internal audiences. A dedicated section of the [council's website](#) has been created for information in relation to Covid-19, along with an archive of all [city briefings](#). The team will continue its work with traditional media and be more creative and bold on social media platforms to stand out. The team's approach has been praised by the government's Communications Service at the Cabinet Office.

3.18 Procurement

The working group is continuing the support provided to managers in their procurement exercises and identifying the impact of the pandemic on the council's supply chains.

3.19 Ways of Working

The group covers recovery aspects relating to human resources, information technology and property. The group's scope and terms of reference have been agreed, membership extended to the trade unions and staff fora, and lead officers confirmed for each workstream. An action plan and communications plan have been created, and Equalities Impact Assessments completed. Short term

recovery actions have been completed, including an online toolkit for managers; Site Responsible Persons' briefings; main corporate sites prepared for return of essential office users; risk assessments for all main corporate sites; re-induction process rolled out; wellbeing support package updated; Always on VPN rolled out and the Windows 10 project restarted. Medium term recovery plans have been scoped to include support for non-essential office workers; increased support for home working; policy review and future office needs of the organisation.

3.20 Community impact of Covid-19 and equalities

Work is underway to gather and analyse data to understand the community impact of Covid-19 by geography and characteristic. It will be important when analysing this data to distinguish Covid-19 as the determining factor and it should be noted that the data may well change after the autumn when aspects such as the ending of furlough, the impact upon businesses and employment, and an increase in benefit claims are likely to have an impact. When the data analysis is complete, officers will set out a plan of action and consult with stakeholders, including Members, the Executive Leadership Team and Corporate Equality & Diversity Group. In addition, each working group has been requested to consider what it is trying to achieve from an equalities perspective, whether completion of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required and to produce an action plan to get the best outcomes for all service users and staff. In doing so, each group is considering what existing inequalities have been revealed by the pandemic and social restrictions, what inequalities have been created or worsened, and what the council can do (with partners and communities) to tackle these. In addition, the groups will also consider whether the recovery stage from the pandemic creates any opportunities to actually narrow pre-existing inequalities. The council's Equalities Managers are supporting the process. Equality is fundamental to the city's and council's recovery from the pandemic, along with addressing the inequalities that may have worsened over this period. In order to monitor delivery against each EIA, an equalities section has been included in the regular highlight reports the working groups complete as part of governance of the programme.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 As the democratic body of the city, the council has a role in leading the governance and delivery of the recovery phase of the pandemic. The consequences of this public health crisis force the city to respond in ways that are different from what has been considered normal. The recovery programme is designed to ensure that the city is able to respond in an agile way as the city transitions through different phases of the pandemic.
- 4.2 The pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge for Brighton & Hove and a major shock to the city's economy and communities. It also presents the city with an opportunity to shape its future. The recovery programme is designed to provide the governance structure for initiating and organising a series of co-ordinated, multi-agency actions during the recovery stage(s) following the pandemic affecting the communities and/or environment of Brighton & Hove.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The programme is engaging with the city's partnerships and governing bodies, and the Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) as part of the recovery process. The city's partnerships have been consulted as part of the programme's initiation via a scenario planning exercise where they were asked to consider the implications of the pandemic on their sectors and a response. The CVS is also represented on the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Group, where the leads of each working group share progress in order to identify issues, links and dependencies, and cross-cutting areas of work. Each working group will also be reviewed in order to determine whether it has appropriate CVS representation.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Covid-19 pandemic and the council's response to it have been fast paced, agile and in partnership with others, and this ethos is being carried forward into the recovery phase. The programme will plan ahead as far as it is able and each working group will review its approach as circumstances change and evolve. The organisational capacity required to respond to the crisis, recover from it and respond again to any local outbreaks cannot be under-estimated. Officers remain committed to delivering for the city, the council and its staff, and will continue to update Members as the programme progresses.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The governance structure of the Recovery & Renewal Programme is being provided for within the council's existing resources. Actions or recommendations arising from the programme that have financial implications are reported through the council's standard governance and decision-making routes, normally Policy & Resources Committee, in accordance with Financial Regulations.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell

17/08/20

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Recovery and Renewal Programme is entirely consistent with the Council's powers and duties under the Local Government Act 2000 (economic, social and environmental wellbeing) the Coronavirus Act 2020 and function-specific laws.

Lawyer Consulted:

Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis

17 August 2020

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The equalities implications of Covid-19 recovery have been covered in the main body of this report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 The sustainability of its recovery plans is a key aspect of the programme's approach. This ranges from the plans to facilitate the movement of people

around the city, to the sustainability of food provision, to the sustainability of the council's finances. As well as responding to the challenges thrown up by the pandemic, the programme will similarly seek to optimise any opportunities that are presented to support delivery of the council's priorities.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 The challenges of city and council recovery from the pandemic are being considered alongside the implications of Brexit. Services have been urged to plan their delivery in light of both and business continuity plans are being refreshed with a similar focus. Opportunities to join up messaging and actions around Covid-19 and Brexit are being proactively identified.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 A Crime & Community Safety/Cohesion working group has been established as part of the recovery programme, as detailed previously in this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 Risk management is an integral part of programme management and is being considered throughout the recovery process. Each working group will conduct a risk analysis exercise to identify the risks relevant to their area of focus and capture these in a risk log. Working group level risks will be managed by the relevant working group and only reported to the Programme Board if they need to be escalated. Programme level risks will be included in the working group's highlight report and reported monthly to the Programme Board, if the working group feels they are of corporate interest. The Covid-19 Programme Manager will maintain a programme risk log comprising the programme level risks from the working groups, escalated risks, corporate risks and those that cut across more than one working group. This will be shared periodically with the Programme Board. The Programme Board will escalate risks to the Sussex Resilience Forum Recovery Co-ordination Group, as appropriate. As mentioned previously, opportunities that arise in the course of the city and council's recovery from the pandemic will be explored and pursued, as appropriate.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 Public Health is at the heart of the council's response to, and recovery from, the pandemic. A Public Health working group has been established as part of the recovery programme, as covered previously in this report and a Local Outbreak Control Plan is in place to respond to any future local outbreaks.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.8 The programme is structured around the council and city's recovery from the pandemic and the implications to both are integral to the plans of the respective working groups.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1 Recovery & Renewal Governance Structure
2. Appendix 2 Recovery & Renewal Programme Plan

Background Documents

None.