

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **1 December 2020**

Title: **COVID-19 Recovery Plan Progress Update**

Portfolio Area: **Governance and Assurance**
Cllr Neil Jory - Leader of the Council

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **Upon the expiry of the Call-in period on Wednesday 9 December 2020**

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Recommendations:

That the Hub Committee:

- 1. Note the Council's continuing response to the COVID-19 Pandemic;**
- 2. Note the Council's progress in developing and delivering the Recovery and Renewal Plan;**
- 3. Note the progress of the Localities and Communities and the Consultation and Engagement Task and Finish Groups; and**
- 4. Request that Officers finalise the Recovery and Renewal Plan in-line with the approach outlined in this report and present it to Council on 8th December for adoption.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Hub Committee considered a report on 15 September 2020 (minute HC15) on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging Recovery and Renewal Plan ('The Plan')
- 1.2 To progress key emerging priorities around our community support and the role of the localities team and how we consult and engage with our communities, Members formed two Task and Finish groups.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the progress of the Task and Finish Groups, and the Council's ongoing response and recovery activity.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic has impacted the lives of everybody in our Borough. The response has by necessity been large-scale and complex involving all sectors of the community from the Government through to individual volunteers.
- 2.2 The pandemic continues and, at the time of writing, we are in the midst of a second National lockdown. The impacts are many and varied including the tragic loss of lives, major disruption to education and, as yet, unmeasured economic shock.
- 2.3 The Council continues to play a key role, alongside partners, in both response and recovery to the short, medium and long term impacts of the pandemic and in the implementation of a range of essential support for individuals, the wider community and business.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 This report sets out an update on the Recovery and Renewal Plan considered by Overview and Scrutiny at their meeting on 1 September 2020.
- 3.2 Further work has been undertaken to refine the Recovery and Renewal Plan which is presented to the Hub Committee for consideration and recommendation to Council for adoption.

4. Recovery and Renewal Plan Updates

- 4.1 A significant amount of activity has taken place to ensure that the Council begins to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 while also planning for, and now delivering, activities to support our businesses and residents through the second National lockdown.
- 4.2 Members will be re-assured to note that the Council continues, during this lockdown, to deliver all core services to the public through a combination of in-person and on-line channels.
- 4.3 The following are some of the key activities undertaken since the last update.
Ongoing Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

- 4.4 While developing our recovery plans, officers have also needed to implement measures to support the second National lockdown which commenced on 5th November 2020.
- 4.5 To support the newly announced Local Restriction Support Grants for businesses, a new IT process has been implemented to allow impacted businesses to make claims. There has been a significant demand already with 1,556 applications being received within the first week. Each claim will need to be assessed and verified before being processed although we hope that the number of claims received for this fund will be lower than during the first national lockdown.
- 4.6 There has also been a marked increase in the number of applications received from individuals for emergency welfare support. We processed 40 claims during the first national lockdown and have received a further 19 since 5th November. To provide additional capacity to manage the scheme, we have extended our contract with Homemaker (who provide our Money Advice Service) while we recruit a Vulnerability Support Officer. This role will be a two year contract in order to help meet the increased demand for welfare support. The post will be funded through funds from Devon County Council.
- 4.7 The Council continue to work with partners through a range of strategic and operational partnership arrangements including the Local Resilience Forum and the Health Protection Board.
- 4.8 These arrangements are crucial to secure the capacity and resilience to continue to support the community through these challenging times and will be vital if, as expected, we return to tiered, local restrictions when the National lockdown is lifted.

Recovery Actions

- 4.9 Prior to the November restrictions being implemented, the Council provided funding to each Town within the Borough through a Town Centre Kick-start grant. It is up to each of the Town Councils to decide how they wish to use this funding but will provide a condition free funding source to support any measures to restart the high-street.
- 4.10 In addition to the kick start funding, we are finalising agreements with the Ministry Housing, Communities and Local Government for funding to contribute to activities related to reopening the High Street safely. West Devon will receive £49,919 which will need to be spent by 31st March 2021. Town Councils have been asked if they require any support from the fund and these applications will be considered in early December.
- 4.11 To further support safety of the high-street, two COVID-19 compliance officers have been appointed for a six month period. The primary focus of these roles is to enable customers to better understand the current COVID-19 rules and guidance in order to ensure future compliance. The roles will also assist in taking enforcement action in relation to COVID-19 regulations where necessary while ensuring confidence in as safe a shopping experience as possible.

- 4.12 We have extended our contract with Business Information Point ('BIP') who have provided 58 hours of business support and advice to 8 pre start-up businesses and 15 existing businesses in the period April 2020 – September 2020.
- 4.13 The localities team were a key frontline service supporting our response through the COVID-19 lockdown. Overview and Scrutiny have formed a Task and Finish in order to consider opportunities to develop further the Localities function and consider how we might continue with some of the positives from the Community Cluster structure that we implemented during the first national lockdown.
- 4.14 The Task and Finish group, chaired by Cllr Ratcliffe have received a number of briefings from officers as to the current localities arrangements and will conclude their deliberations early in the New Year, making recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny.
- 4.15 Ensuring that we build on the positive relationships and communications delivered through the pandemic was a key theme from the Member workshops. To take this work forward, a Task and Finish has been formed to develop a Consultation and Engagement Framework for the Council. Chaired by Councillor Cheadle, the group have considered best practice and developed a draft framework. This work will be concluded in the New Year with recommendations being made to Overview and Scrutiny.
- 4.16 The first of a series of briefing sessions has been held for Members setting out the work that is being undertaken to develop COVID-19 response plans and the impact that this may have on service delivery should there be any local outbreaks or further changes in restrictions.
- 4.17 We continue to ensure that we support wellbeing of all staff and have trained a number of staff to be Mental Health First aiders. The First Aiders are now trained with tips on spotting the early warning signs of mental ill-health and how to support colleagues, guiding them towards appropriate professional health.
- 4.18 The above provides a summary of some key actions taken to date in both supporting the response to COVID-19 and in delivering some of the Recovery Plan actions set by Members earlier this year.

5. Refining the Recovery and Renewal Plan

- 5.1 It is essential that the adopted Plan focusses on the key work needed to support recovery across the Borough. In view of this the Plan is being refined and where actions are better delivered through, for example, existing or emerging strategies or activity, then they are being reallocated to allow the Plan to focus on core Recovery and Renewal activity.
- 5.2 The approach, which is ongoing, is outlined in Appendix 1 and it is proposed to finalise this work with a view to adopting the revised Plan at Council on 8 December 2020.
- 5.3 The Plan will remain a living, interim document whilst work continues on the development of a new Corporate Strategy.

6. Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 It is proposed that committee note the update on actions taken both in responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the development of recovery plans.
- 6.2 A refined version of the Recovery and Renewal Plan will be taken to Council on 8 December for adoption.

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	In accordance with the Council Constitution, the Hub is required to give formal consideration to the recommendations that are generated from formal meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>The areas being actioned are set out within the Financial Stability Recovery and Renewal Theme of the COVID19 Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Monthly Government returns on COVID costs and loss of income have been completed.</p> <p>Regular Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports have also been presented to the Hub Committee.</p> <p>The next Revenue Budget Monitoring report is an item on the Hub Committee agenda for 8th December, alongside Draft Revenue Budget Proposals for 2021/22.</p> <p>On 16th November, the Financial Stability Review Group (FSRG) reviewed the current Capital Programme for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy has been updated and was considered by the Hub Committee on 20th October.</p> <p>The Audited Accounts will be published by 30th November, having been approved by the Audit Committee for publication, subject to the finalisation of the audit work of Grant Thornton.</p> <p>On 22th September, Council approved an Amended Budget for 2020-21.</p> <p>The Council has responded to Government consultations, in particular on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), to lobby for fairer funding, early notification of some of the financial elements of the next Finance Settlement for 2021/22 onwards and a change in some of the 'rules' affecting Local Government finances.</p>

Risk	Y	The risk implications are outlined in detail within the original published report to the Meeting (Appendix A refers).
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	The action plan accompanying this report contributes to all corporate strategy themes
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	The report recommends that a number of actions from the Member Recovery workshops be included within the Climate and Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	There are no direct Equality and Diversity Impacts as a result of this report
Safeguarding	N	There are no direct safeguarding impacts as a result of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	None
Other implications	N	None

Supporting Information

Appendices:

- Appendix A – Revised Recovery Plan

Background Papers:

- Item HC15 –Coronavirus Recovery & Renewal Plan Development Update [Click here for link to Item HC15 - September 2020 Hub Report](#)

Approval and clearance of report

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed/sign off	Yes
SLT Rep briefed/sign off	Yes
Relevant Heads of Practice sign off (draft)	Yes
Data protection issues considered	Yes
Accessibility checked	Yes