
Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy 2021 Update

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	10 th June 2021
Portfolio Member:	Cllr Lynne Doherty
Date Head of Service agreed report:	N/A
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	18 th May 2021
Report Author:	Nick Carter
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4054

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To set out the proposed updated Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the Strategy set out at Appendix B.
- 2.2 To note that the Strategy has been reflected within the Council Strategy Refresh (2019-2023) which was approved by Council on May 4th.
- 2.3 That any Recovery funding that is made available is focused on implementing the actions set out in the attached Strategy.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>£500,000 of funding for the delivery of the Recovery Strategy has been allocated from the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">£250,000 from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund – this fund is for public health measures to support ‘proactive containment and intervention measures.’ Many of the Recovery Strategy actions would fit within this remit, especially in respect of reducing inequalities (priority 1), active travel (priority 4), and enhancing our

	<p>communications and community engagement (priority 5).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £200,000 from the non-ringfenced Government Grant of £9.6m in 2020-21 and £3.2m in 2021-22 to support all elements of the Recovery Strategy. • £50,000 from the new burdens funding already received (and where this has been unspent for 2020-21 will be added to the overall non-ringfenced Covid funds) to support the delivery of business grants to support priority 2 (Ensuring Economic Recovery and Renewal)
Human Resources:	<p>This Paper is not proposing the recruitment of additional staff. This may at some point be considered by the Recovery Group if it is felt necessary to fulfil the actions set out in the Strategy.</p> <p>The point is made in the Strategy that staff fatigue and the possibility of further Covid-19 responsibilities being placed on Local Government will have a potential impact on the pace that can be set against this work.</p>
Legal:	None.
Risk Management:	<p>The proposals outlined in this Paper do not create significant negative risks for the Council. The proposals are geared at delivering a set of priorities that have been developed to assist local communities' recover from the impact of Covid-19. Where risks exist they are probably largely associated with the pace with which they can be delivered given remaining uncertainties regarding the future path of the Pandemic.</p>
Property:	<p>No specific property implications are associated with the attached Strategy although specific actions may have an impact and will be considered separately where appropriate.</p>
Policy:	<p>The Strategy supports the implementation of many aspects of the Council Strategy (2019-2023). This updated Recovery and Renewal Strategy has also been used to help shape the Council Strategy Refresh (2019-2023) which has already been approved by Council.</p>

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			Covid-19 has raised a large number of equality issues. The virus itself has affected some groups more than others. The economic impact of the virus has again not affected everyone equally. Children and young people have also not been impacted in the same way. As a result this updated Recovery and Renewal Strategy focuses heavily on addressing some significant issues that have been disproportionately felt by different groups. It is vulnerable groups that have been most impacted by Covid-19.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			See above.
Environmental Impact:	X			One of the priorities set out in the updated Strategy is 'Taking the opportunity to accelerate delivery of our environmental objectives'. A number of specific themes are explored within the attached Paper which are focused around trying to utilise the positive aspects of the Pandemic to generate further impetus into delivery.

Health Impact:	X			Inevitably a Strategy aimed at responding to Covid-19 is going to have a clear focus on health and a range of actions are set out in the attached documents including actions aimed at enhancing mental and physical health and working to preserve some of the benefits seen around health and social care integration during the Pandemic.
ICT Impact:	X			The Recovery and Renewal Strategy will have significant impacts on ICT both from a community perspective and internally. Much of that future strategic direction has already been set. The biggest challenges are going to be around finding the capacity to deliver at pace.
Digital Services Impact:	X			As above but probably with an even greater impact in terms of focusing the Council's activities on an even greater level of digital enablement with its customers.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The proposals in the Strategy should assist in helping deliver many of the Council's priorities. They have also been used to help reshape the Council Strategy Refresh (2019-2023) which is also on tonight's agenda.
Core Business:	X			The opportunities to further enhance our digital and ICT infrastructure alongside the potential implementation of Timelord2 could both bring positive benefits to many areas of the Council's core business.
Data Impact:		X		None.
Consultation and Engagement:	Recovery Group: Corporate Board.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The purpose of the attached Strategy is to update the Council's Recovery Strategy which was approved by the Executive in June 2020 last year. At that time the expectation was that the Council, and the rest of the country, would enter a period of Covid-19 recovery. In reality, by the Autumn the second wave had started to develop and we moved back into response. The national vaccination programme coupled with further Lockdowns have led to a reduction in case numbers. The Government has published a roadmap out of the current Covid-19 restrictions and so whilst there is talk of a potential third wave the focus is now returning back to recovery. It therefore felt appropriate and timely to review the Strategy.
- 4.2 The Pandemic has had a profound impact on the lives of many in West Berkshire and it remains unclear what impact Covid-19 will have over the coming years. The Council will need to remain alert to this and respond as appropriate. Despite this challenge the District does have many strengths and we should therefore look to the future with a sense that we are well placed to respond to the challenges that lie ahead.
- 4.3 The Council's response has not however been one of complacency. The earlier Strategy has been the catalyst for a range of actions which are already in place and as can be seen from the attached document much has already been achieved.
- 4.4 In reviewing the current position, the original Vision has been slightly amended to strengthen the focus on addressing inequalities. It is now:
- 4.5 *To recover three of the core elements that make West Berkshire a great place to live; health, education and the economy, and to ensure a renewed and enhanced focus on our community, environment and engagement. Our Strategy is for everyone but in particular those most affected, now, and into the future, by the Covid-19 Pandemic.*
- 4.6 Seven priorities have been established, largely based on the earlier Strategy. Within these are a range of themes each aimed at focusing the Council's response on specific areas. The priorities in abbreviated form are:
1. Recovering West Berkshire's health and social wellbeing.
 2. Ensuring economic recovery and renewal.
 3. Supporting our children and young people and our schools.
 4. Taking the opportunity to work with our local communities to accelerate the delivery of our environmental objectives.
 5. Enhancing our communications and community engagement.
 6. Improving our customers' experience of us.
 7. Seizing the positives from the Pandemic but not forgetting those we have lost.
- 4.7 The attached Strategy sets out in greater detail what we plan to do. Some actions have already been completed, some are well underway, and others are yet to start.
- 4.8 The future path of the Pandemic remains unclear and so the balance between the Council needing to respond to future challenges and plan for recovery remains equally unclear. For example the impact of 'long Covid-19' is not fully understood and it may well be that the Council will need to reshape some of its services in the future to reflect any ongoing impact of Covid-19. As a result we will need to come back once more to

the Recovery and Renewal Strategy however at this point we have some understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead and this Strategy seeks to clarify how we will respond.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The updated Strategy has been written as a self-standing document and is set out at Appendix B.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 None.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The Country and the Council have swung between periods of response and recovery over the past 12 months or so as we have sought to manage the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The first Recovery Strategy was written and approved at a time when it appeared we were moving into a period of prolonged recovery. This proved short lived and response has subsequently become the theme since last autumn. Once again as spring 2021 approaches it appears recovery is coming to the fore and we have therefore sought to update our Strategy.
- 7.2 Whilst the Council may have had to return to response during the autumn of 2020 a great deal of recovery work has already been undertaken or is underway. Some of this has been strategic. The Council's Economic Development Strategy has been refreshed and a new Communications and Engagement Strategy has been approved. Both are a response, at least in part, to the Pandemic. The Council's Recovery Group has also instigated and funded a range of new initiatives and programmes to assist with recovery work and many of these are referenced in this updated Strategy.
- 7.3 This new Recovery and Renewal Strategy has sought to reflect on three issues:
1. The progress with recovery work that we have already made over the course of the past year.
 2. The learning that we have taken with regard to the impacts of Covid-19 on our local communities and the things that are important to them going forward.
 3. The need to focus our activities on what will be most impactful, mindful that our own capacity is limited.
- 7.4 This updated Strategy also coincides with the refresh of our Council Strategy (2019-2023). We have sought to align both so that the key elements of our Covid-19 recovery and renewal are built into the Council Strategy Refresh.
- 7.5 No one yet knows how the Pandemic will develop from this point. It is however already clear what some of the main impacts have already been and also what some of the opportunities are that the Pandemic might present. It is important that we do not delay in implementing our proposed actions otherwise challenges will be left unresolved and opportunities for beneficial change lost. It may well be that we will need to come back once more to this Strategy in the months ahead. The Pandemic is not over but we recognise that we must continue to respond to the challenges that we face whilst also

recognising that the road to recovery and renewal will be a long and potentially uncertain one. Over the medium to long term it may well be that Council Services will need to be reshaped to reflect the ongoing impact Covid-19 may have on our communities and on the demand for services.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

8.2 Appendix B – Updated West Berkshire Council Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy

Background Papers:

West Berkshire Council Recovery Strategy – June 2021

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: All

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Document Control

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Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:***
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;***
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:***
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;***
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;***
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.***
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.***
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.***

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	To support approval and implementation of the updated Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy.
Summary of relevant legislation:	n/a
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?	No.
Name of assessor:	Nick Carter
Date of assessment:	17 th March 2021

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New or proposed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Function	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Is changing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Service	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To respond to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic both on the Council and its communities.
Objectives:	Several as set out in the Strategy
Outcomes:	Several as set out in the Strategy
Benefits:	Communities are able to recover more quickly from the negative impacts of the Pandemic and the Council is able to capitalise on the potential opportunities that the Pandemic has created.

Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.		
(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	A significant element of the updated Strategy is focused on addressing the unequal impact that the Pandemic has had	
Disability		

Gender Reassignment	across our communities. Older age groups, ethnic minorities and those defined as clinically extremely vulnerable have been the most adversely impacted by the virus itself and it is in these groups that the majority of deaths have taken place. The economic impact of the Pandemic has hit younger age groups, women and poorer households. Lockdown has had an impact across a range of groups with a notable impact on children and young people who have been unable to attend school.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	
Pregnancy and Maternity	
Race	
Religion or Belief	
Sex	
Sexual Orientation	
Further Comments relating to the item:	

Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide an explanation for your answer: The Strategy is specifically focused on addressing inequality not contributing to it.	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide an explanation for your answer: As above. The Recovery and Renewal Strategy is specifically focused on mitigating the adverse impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No.
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	

Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
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Name: Nick Carter

Date: 16th March 2021

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality & Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.