

Cabinet

7 December 2021

COVID-19 Recovery Plan

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

1. Notes and comments on the progress made on the implementation of the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan;
2. Supports the inclusion of the ongoing themes identified in section 2 below in the development of the refreshed Council Plan 2022-2027;
3. Notes that actions that require a continued focus at Council level will be included in the Integrated Delivery Plan which will accompany the Council Plan (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5); and
4. Gives approval to the publication of a document that summarises the impact of COVID-19 on Warwickshire and the progress contained in this report as part of the public communications for the new Council Plan.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic continues to be a global public health emergency that has created an unprecedented impact on our communities and economy. From the end of January 2020 when the first case was recorded in the UK to the present date, the UK has lived through nearly two years of COVID-19.
- 1.2 The UK Government set out its COVID-19 Winter Plan 2021 on 14 September 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-autumn-and-winter-plan-2021/covid-19-response-autumn-and-winter-plan-2021> which states:

“Between March and July this year, the Government’s roadmap for England reopened the economy and lifted restrictions in four steps..... The country is learning to live with COVID-19, and the main line of defence is now vaccination rather than lockdown. The Test, Trace and Isolate system is reducing the number of positive

cases mixing in the community. Rules and regulations have mostly been replaced with advice and guidance on the practical steps people can take to help manage the risks to themselves and others.”

- 1.3 As the national focus moves towards learning to live with COVID-19, it is timely to review the Council’s COVID-19 Recovery Plan, assess progress against the priorities identified and embed those themes that now need to transition into the refresh of the Council Plan for 2022 and beyond.
- 1.4 Following an intense period of response started in March 2020, and further to review by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet considered and approved three key reports on 11th June 2020, covering:
- overview of the Council’s recovery approach;
 - place shaping; and
 - economic recovery.
- 1.5 Over the period of June, July and August 2020, the recovery approach and plan were developed, working with members, partners and aligning with regionally agreed phasing, to conclude the “Foundation” stage and frame the “Consolidate” and “Accelerate” stages that followed:

Foundation stage (September to December 2020)	Consolidate stage (January to June 2021)	Accelerate stage (June 2021 Onwards)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up and reinstating Council services and work settings • Picking up immediate opportunities and activity to support communities and business • Establishing recovery governance and approach • Engaging with regional approach to setting recovery priorities • Taking stock of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed regional impact assessment • Establish recovery programme at regional, county level • Mobilise the Council’s Recovery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer term recovery for the Council, communities and economy • Taking time to understand the scale of future challenges • Reproduce the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Plan

- 1.6 Cabinet approved the final COVID-19 Recovery plan on 10 September 2020 which set out key principles to shape the Council’s response:

Recovery Principles

- **Target recovery activity and support to where most needed** through evidence-based decisions and focusing on priority outcomes and agreed priorities.
- **Stabilise and accelerate the recovery** for Warwickshire's people, places and businesses, including the recovery of Council Tax and Business Rates.
- **Tackle inequalities** - helping our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens and communities overcome the negative impacts of COVID-19.
- **Join up and work in Partnership** - maximise connections with partners (public services, private sector, communities, voluntary sector and citizens) to speed up recovery.
- **Focus on long-term environmental challenges** - use recovery efforts to accelerate Warwickshire's climate change ambitions.
- **Apply our learning from COVID-19** - utilise learning and good practice to improve the Council as an organisation, deepen collaboration and partnership working, and strengthen place and systems-based working across Warwickshire.

- 1.7 The full COVID-19 Recovery Plan comprised 10 recovery priorities (outlined below in section 2), a series of identified actions and 25 indicators of success. The full Recovery Plan is available upon request.
- 1.8 The early work on our COVID-19 response (Foundation stage) saw the need to move at speed to put in place services to support the handling of the pandemic. Some headlines on that initial response are given below.
- 1.9 In March 2020, the Customer Service Centre rapidly implemented a virtual contact centre to ensure no disruption to the service whilst keeping staff safe. This significant achievement was operational in a matter of days, included no disruption to service whilst routing all the contact centre telephony to multiple homes, ensuring everyone had the right equipment at home (procuring, collecting and delivering to colleagues), developing guidance and supporting each other in adapting to this new way of working.
- 1.10 Also in the initial response phase, Warwickshire County Council put in place a dedicated freephone hotline which continues to operate in November 2021. During the first lockdown, the Customer Service Centre took over 5,000 incoming calls for support with COVID-19 related issues and made over 6,000 calls to vulnerable residents who were shielding to ensure they had the support they needed such as support with food parcels, online supermarket delivery slots and befriending calls.

- 1.11 Despite the increased call volume and challenging circumstances, individual customer feedback has remained overwhelmingly positive, and this is reflected in the customer satisfaction levels which was 90% in October 2021.
- 1.12 A seven-day service was stood-up to support new hospital discharge legislation (Adult Social Care) and ensure support was available at weekends (Shielding Hub hotline).
- 1.13 To meet the demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), a central PPE acquisition and distribution centre was set up, providing essential equipment to staff, partners and residents. This service is still ongoing and has delivered circa 12.5m pieces of protective equipment to date.
- 1.14 A brief video highlighting the Council's collaborative effort on the COVID-19 response was produced and can be viewed here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe-T0hW2L04>
- 1.15 At the time that the Recovery Plan was written, the trajectory of the virus was an unknown and the Council and its partners were preparing for possible future waves.
- 1.16 Over a year on, pandemic events have overtaken some of the original assumptions in the Recovery Plan:
- The NHS and care system has been put under significant pressure with a second, third and fourth wave of infections since September 2020;
 - Both national lockdowns and local restrictions have been implemented at various stages.
 - National policy schemes such as furlough, business loans and changes to examination regimes have been introduced, extended, adjusted and ultimately closed.
 - A nationwide testing, tracing and vaccination programme has been rolled-out at speed.
 - Community efforts to help the vulnerable have increased.
 - The narrative around supporting mental health and wellbeing has accelerated.
 - COVID-19 has highlighted more starkly health and other inequalities in our society.
 - There have been major shifts in how we live, interact and work which may never return to pre-pandemic ways.
- 1.17 The Foreword from the Recovery Plan stated: "Our priority will be protecting health and containing the virus, but we also need to focus support for our economy, young people's education, and those who are vulnerable or

isolated. The way we live and work will never be quite the same again. But we will use this recovery plan as a springboard to ensure we continue to make Warwickshire the best it can be.”

- 1.18 This report highlights progress against the “Consolidate” and “Accelerate” stages and the priorities that were identified in the Recovery plan to enable the County to navigate and emerge strongly from the pandemic.

2. Key Headlines from our COVID-19 Recovery work

- 2.1 Cabinet has previously received an update report on progress against the Recovery Plan (11th February 2021) and the latest project summary report (dated October 2021) is available upon request.
- 2.2 A brief summary of the key headlines from each of the Recovery Priorities is given below, along with some continuing areas of activity. The key themes that are proposed to segue into the Council plan are also highlighted.
- 2.3 Also shown are the original indicators of success from the Recovery Plan, some of which were overtaken by the global, national and local course of the pandemic and factors beyond our local control.
- 2.4 The summary of the activities below highlights the wide-ranging recovery effort in supporting the county through the pandemic.

- 2.5 **Warwickshire’s communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent:**

2.5.1

Priority 1- Contain the virus and promote physical and mental health and well-being: *Promote the health and wellbeing of our communities, contain the spread of COVID-19 locally and target action to protect our most vulnerable residents and communities*

Our indicators of success were:

Health

1. we sustain near zero new cases, week after week
2. we sustain zero deaths, week after week
3. no local lockdowns
4. increasing compliance and confidence in Test and Trace
5. increase in the take-up of the flu vaccination

- Our outbreak control plan was deployed and continues to be utilised where and when required.
- The course of the pandemic has meant that the original ambition to sustain zero new cases, week after week was unrealistic. In line with all other areas of the UK the number of cases per 100,000 has fluctuated widely.
- Over the course of the pandemic, the total number of COVID-19 cases in Warwickshire per 100,000 population (14835) is lower than both the national figure (15026) and regional figure (15480). The county has seen lower death rates (227/100,000) than that recorded at a national (251/100,000) and regional (280/100,000) level. However, it is important to note the differences we have seen across the County in their experience of the epidemic - with the highest case and mortality rates recorded in Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire (higher than national rates).
- The contact tracing team have been operational for over 12 months. In that time, they have developed from a team who focussed on contacting residents who had a positive test and asking them questions about their movements, to a service which from November 2021 has now taken over the role of National Test and Trace contacting 4,000 residents a week and operating 7 days a week with 30 staff.
- Positive feedback has been received from the Department of Health and Social Care regarding the provisions that have been put in place in Warwickshire to successfully transition to Local-0, (*Local-0 is the local contact tracing scheme where the authority contacts individuals rather than NHS Test and Trace*).
- The county has followed Government guidance on national lockdowns and local tier requirements.
- A COVID-19 contact centre was established to support residents with queries and assistance and a programme was established to ensure the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- A Council-led lateral flow testing (LFT) operation was built in December 2020 to provide the main infrastructure for asymptomatic COVID-19 testing. At peak, 6 static testing sites were operational along with a mobile vehicle and a limited door knocking offer.
- The national testing programme refocused from July 2021 onto 'disproportionately impacted groups', and our operation slimmed to fit. Since

December 2020 we have delivered more than 200,000 LFT tests, have contributed significantly to the early identification of positive cases, and employed more than 220 temporary staff (mostly those furloughed or made redundant during lockdowns), and been supported by over 100 volunteers.

- A Warwickshire wide COVID-19 vaccination programme was implemented at speed in line with Government requirements. 77 % of Warwickshire residents are now fully vaccinated as at 24 November 2021 compared to 80.3% nationally.
- A programme of Flu vaccinations was promoted and delivered in the winter period 2020 with all 3 Care Commissioning Groups seeing an increase in vaccination uptake across all groups except pregnant women. South Warwickshire CCG had the highest uptake overall across all groups and Warwickshire North CCG and Coventry Rugby CCG had very similar uptake figures:
 - For 65+ age group there was a 7-13% increase in uptake on the previous year (8.5% nationally)
 - 9-13% increase for under 65s in risk groups (8.1% nationally) and
 - 13-18% increase for children aged 2 and 3 (14.9% nationally).
 - There was little change in uptake for pregnant women (-0.1% nationally) compared with the previous year, and for Warwickshire North there was a decrease.
- Our Winter Pressures plan was implemented successfully.
- Preventative measures and initiatives continue to be implemented to reduce pressures on NHS services: e.g. Wellbeing for Life, Fitter Futures, reducing the pressures on NHS bed-space.
- We are working with Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA) to support and enhance volunteer programmes for informal / unpaid carers, responding to feedback from local residents.
- We have published a Health and Wellbeing strategy which highlights our vision for improving the Health and Wellbeing of our citizens, supporting our local economy and our staff.
- Our Well-being for Life “Plan on a Page” has been finalised covering the promotion of 5 ways to well-being, work-place well-being (Thrive at work), obesity and mental health.
- A £1m Social Investment Fund has been launched to enable targeted interventions to support Warwickshire’s communities and enable community-based support for those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This may include extending or introducing specialist support; or providing additional community-based support where the effects of COVID-19 are felt more keenly. Bids are invited from Thursday 4 November 2021 until Thursday 30 December 2021.

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- The ongoing vaccination programme is progressing in line with the NHS requirements to include secondary age children, COVID-19 booster jabs, flu vaccinations and communications to encourage the uptake of the vaccine.
- Work is ongoing to investigate and address the differential impact of COVID-19 on specific communities, those that have specific vulnerabilities and health conditions.
- Local outbreaks are being managed and no longer result in significant hospitalisations Warwickshire has had a rolling weekly average of 119 hospitalisations during the pandemic compared to a national average of 552 (data correct at 6th October 2021).
- Preventative measures continue to be implemented to improve health outcomes and reduce pressures on the NHS and our other health partnerships.
- Health and Well-being projects continue to be delivered across the County to support including the establishment of Community Health Champions.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan: Addressing health inequalities and preventative measures, supporting mental health and wellbeing

2.5.2

Priority 2- Maintain resilient and sustainable services: *Manage increased demand for services, especially hospital and social care services, and strengthen the care market*

Our indicators of success were:

Demand for our services

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| 6. we have caught up with the demand for our services | 9. families and carers feel confident that children can get back to school and access the education they need |
| 7. people can access the quality services they need through a stable care market | 10. children can complete a full academic year, without any impact on their results |
| 8. the health and social care sector managed and coped with winter pressures | |

- New mental health and wellbeing support services for adults are in the process of being commissioned and these services will strengthen our support offer to local residents.
- An overview by a West Midlands regional multi-agency health and social care review team was carried out in 2020 to consider our Local Authority Care Home Support Plans and to provide feedback to the Council to inform the development and publication of those plans. Positive feedback was

received on our strong system working with a number of examples of good practice.

- We have continued to support the care market, taking a mutual aid approach, to respond to infection, prevention and control; testing; vaccination; recruitment and retention and financial pressures. We have passported national funds quickly and maintained our temporary payment terms.
- We are continuing to deliver our start with strengths approach within Adult Social Care following a period of significant transformation and improvement. The recent peer review of Adult Social care in October 2021 highlighted this as an area of good practice that has been sustained throughout the pandemic and is a key enabler to managing demand.
- Voluntary sector opportunities have been leveraged to support our health and care services through community engagement.
- Our guidance and processes for hospital discharge and admission avoidance have been reviewed and a system wide assurance exercise as a COVID-19 response was delivered.
- Our winter pressures plan was implemented successfully.
- In August 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) were commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In summary, HMICFRS were impressed with how Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service maintained its statutory functions and made good use of its staff to carry out additional duties to support the community during the pandemic.
- The demand for our virtual library services increased by 70% during lockdown, with demand still rising.
 - eAudio & eBooks
 - On average, approx. 20,000 eAudio and eBook titles are now downloaded every month (before Lockdown this average was approx. 10,000) – this represents a 100% increase.
 - eNewspapers
 - On average, approx. 50,000 eNewspaper issues are read every month (before Lockdown this average was approx. 25,000) – again, an increase of 100%.
 - Information eResources
 - On average, there are approx. 70,000 searches every month (before Lockdown this average was approx. 40,000) - an increase of approx. 75%.
 - Between April 2020 and October 2021 we have made 7398 Home Library Deliveries. This equates to approx 37,000 books individually selected and delivered (same time period)

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Addressing the increasing demand for foster placements (in line with a national trend for fostering services) through a specific foster carer recruitment drive;
- Aligning our service delivery with updated national guidance arising from the pandemic;
- Continuing to deliver and sustain positive achievements as a result of our adult transformation programme;
- Supporting the provider market to manage workforce capacity issues across a range of children and adult provision;
- Supporting the care homes market to adapt to mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for the care workforce; and
- Taking a flexible approach to delivery of our commissioning plan and tendering activity in response to market pressures and the pandemic response.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Maintaining a focus on delivering our Adults and Children & Families transformation plan; and
- Delivering our Child Friendly Warwickshire strategy.

2.5.3

Priority 3 - Help our children and young people catch up on their education: *By returning to learning, improving access to digital resources and tackling attainment gaps*

- Early years settings, schools and colleges were supported with their COVID-19 response, recovery and resilience plans and ongoing advice was provided to give school leadership, staff, students and parents confidence in COVID-19 and Health and Safety arrangements.
- Despite continued disruption, particularly at the start of the Spring 2021 term with another national lockdown until March 2021, pupil attendance across the majority of the 2020/21 academic year has remained high with an overall attendance rate of 95.9% across all Warwickshire's state-funded schools. This is in line with national (96.0%) and West Midlands (95.7%) attendance rates.
- Our new Children's and Young People strategy has been approved and our Child Friendly Warwickshire programme has launched.
- Early years settings, schools and colleges continued to follow Government and Public Health guidance in managing the impact of the pandemic.
- DfE have published county level data for 2021 with comparisons to National, West Midlands and Statistical Neighbours. In summary:

- Warwickshire performs strongly in GCSE results outperforming National, Statistical Neighbours and West Midlands across attainment 8, average EBACC and 4+ and 5+ at GCSE in English and maths. Eg Achievement at grade 4 + in English and maths GCSEs shows Warwickshire at 76.3% compared to National 72.5%, West Midlands 69.5% and statistical neighbours 73.0%.
 - Warwickshire pupils who have a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Education Health and Care Plan [EHCP] and Special Educational Needs [SEN] support) also perform well achieving above National, West Midlands and Statistical Neighbours (with the only exceptions for pupils with EHCPs falling slightly behind statistical neighbours for attainment 8 (the achievement of a pupils across 8 Key Stage 4 qualifications) and Grade 4+ in both English & maths GCSEs. However disadvantaged Warwickshire pupils do not perform so well against benchmarks and addressing this remains a key focus.
- The above performance reflects the usual pattern of Key Stage 4 achievement in Warwickshire. Please note there is no published data for any other Key Stages in 2021.
 - Pupils were only assessed on the content they had been taught, schools were given the flexibility to decide how to assess their pupils performance for example through mock exams, class tests and non-exam assessments already completed. GCSE results were then determined by teachers based on a range of evidence available and they are referred to as teacher assessed grades. (TAGs). This was a different process to 2019/20 when pupils were awarded a centre assessed grade (CAG). Pupil attainment data should not be directly compared to previous years.
 - 3172 laptops and 750 Mifi dongles were provided aimed at mitigating local outbreaks and children being required to study at home. This included repurposing donated laptops from the Council and the wider community and additional training support on digital technology use for young people.
 - An education safeguarding training and support package was implemented aimed at keeping children and young people safe.
 - Phase 1 of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities transformation programme has been progressed with Phase 2 being planned.
 - All education providers have been given the chance to bid for post 16 transition funding and future careers funding to support the engagement with skills and training programmes.

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Continuing to deliver our Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Change and Inclusion transformation programme incorporating the outcomes of the recent Ofsted local area inspection;
- Increasing career advice to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people including apprenticeships and supported internships;
- Reviewing the SEND transport service; and
- Implementing the Warwickshire Challenge Programme, aiming to develop the confidence of Key stage 3 pupils (school years 7-9) through activities to complete out of school and supporting educational attainment of all children

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Progressing our SEND transformation programme; and
- Enabling educational attainment

2.5.4

Priority 4 – Harness the power of our communities to tackle inequality and social exclusion: *Champion equality and tackle the effects of poverty, vulnerability, isolation, loneliness, and domestic violence: and support this by promoting increased and sustainable social action, volunteering, and community capacity*

Our indicators of success were:

Wellbeing of our residents and communities

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| 11. greater numbers of people are supported to improve their mental health, their well-being and recover well from the effects of COVID-19 including isolation and financial stress | 13. social value is an embedded part of our delivery, procurement and behaviours |
| 12. more of our most vulnerable of our communities impacted most by COVID-19 receive the support they need to sustain resilience against any future impact | 14. poverty and food security is addressed and improved |
| | 15. greater numbers of our communities are supported through social action, mutual aid groups and volunteers to deliver solutions to local priorities |

- Working with New Local, we initiated and progressed an ambitious Community Powered Warwickshire programme, which will underpin the refreshed Council Plan, and launched a £1m Social Impact Fund to support our voluntary, community and social enterprises to address inequalities in areas most affected by COVID-19.
- The Local Welfare Scheme has continued to help our most vulnerable residents at times of unavoidable crisis when they have no other means of help. Since December 2020, Warwickshire's Local Welfare Scheme has successfully distributed its £1.89m allocation of DWP's COVID-19 Winter

Grant Scheme and subsequent £1.63m COVID-19 Local Support Grant. This grant funding supported vulnerable residents particularly affected by the pandemic with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials and received high redemption and take up rates.

- We recently received further funding of £3.47m through the DWP's Household Support Fund. This will continue to support residents most in need of financial support this winter with food, energy and water bills, as the country continues its recovery from the pandemic.
- The Council established a Warwickshire Food Forum to coordinate cross County work to tackle food poverty across Warwickshire including the establishment of a food strategy to understand priorities and gaps in provision. This includes through Food Banks, the development of three community supermarket pilots.
- Warwickshire County Council proactively supported those families eligible for benefits related free school meals with the cost of food for their children over all the school holiday periods. This also included siblings by application. The number of children automatically eligible rose from 10,734 in October 2019 (pre-pandemic) to 16,602 in July 2021, an increase of 54%.
- The Council has ensured there has been food support available to this cohort of children since the start of the pandemic. During the initial lockdown in March/April 2020, 6 weeks of food support was available and for the 20/21 school year, all 6 school holidays have been supported, either through the Local Welfare Scheme's existing School Holiday Support Scheme in October 2020 and, since receiving additional grant funding, the subsequent 5 school holidays through automatic vouchers via grant funding. The latter has continued for the 2021/22 school year following the launch of the Household Support Fund.
- A "Fire-fit" programme was introduced replicating the fitness regimes of Firefighters which reached an estimated 28,000 people.
- The majority of our contracts with voluntary bodies e.g. CAVA, Citizen's Advice and Equality and Inclusion partnerships were extended to March 2022, with engagement to re-orientate support to reflect our emerging community-powered approach, lessons from innovations during the Pandemic and additional pressures arising from the pandemic.
- A network of local volunteers was leveraged to support pandemic requirements.
- We have launched a £1.3m COVID-19 Mental Wellbeing and Resilience Programme with four strands:
 - Sixty seven organisations bid for £750k available through the COVID-19 Mental Wellbeing Resilience Fund. Thirty six bids were successfully awarded funding - details available here:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/warwickshire-covid-19-mental-wellbeing-resilience-fund-2021-1>

- We are now working with schools to allocate £250k to support them to develop their mental wellbeing curriculum.
- We are developing a loneliness and social isolation awareness raising campaign, which will include training for Council staff so that they can be better able to identify people who are experiencing loneliness and know the ways to signpost people to support.
- We are working across our Citizens Advice network to ensure there is appropriate specialist debt provision across the county, focusing on financial difficulties that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 and ensuring an appropriate level of service is in place.
- We are working with WCAVA to support and enhance volunteer programmes for informal / unpaid carers, responding to feedback from local residents.

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Voluntary and community programmes will build on the achievements of the COVID-19 response effort including developing a new approach to leveraging Community Power and engagement.
- Our Councillor Grant application programme, which provides each of Warwickshire's County Councillors a fund of £6k to invest in small-scale projects that will make a difference to their areas, received 259 applications for support.
- A successful time-banking project was piloted which will be rolled-out across the County.
- The Fire Service was mobilised on how they can extend their COVID-19 response work such as mass testing, hospital to home transport service.
- A plan and actions to keep people safe from Domestic abuse has been established in partnership with REFUGE and this work is ongoing.
- We are continuing with implementing the COVID-19 Mental Wellbeing and Resilience Programme.
- Warwickshire CAVA (Care and Volunteering Agency) is developing an action plan for volunteers for carers and are engaging carer organisations to understand both their short and long-term needs.
- An employment pathway into Volunteering placements is being explored in partnership with Warwickshire CAVA.
- We are also developing a service offer specification for our support to the voluntary and community sector.
- Warwickshire CAVA continue to work with the Carers trust, the Trust Partnership, and Warwick Young Carers, to develop volunteer roles and bring volunteers into these organisations.

- We have begun attempting to measure the social value of volunteering to be able to highlight the benefit to the community.
- A participation and engagement framework is being developed, which includes establishing a residents panel for which recruitment is at an advanced stage, and developing our wider approach to consultation with local residents to better inform and test our policy and performance.
- Six programmes are now in delivery with the aim of reducing loneliness and isolation and we have developed a framework with Coventry University to evaluate their impact.
- The commissioning of a domestic abuse support and accommodation service has been concluded. A new contract has been awarded to Refuge who will deliver the service from 2021 to 2026.
- The Council's Cabinet approved a Tackling Social Inequalities Strategy and delivery on this programme of work is now underway.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan: Community Powered Warwickshire, Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, Tackling Social Inequalities strategy

2.6

Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure:

2.6.1

Priority 5 – Support business and grow the economy: *Build confidence in local businesses. Re-purpose town centres and create the conditions for business innovation and investment to drive economic growth*

Our indicators of success were:

Jobs and business

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| 16. greater numbers of individuals at risk of unemployment are supported, and where needed are helped to find work | 18. greater numbers of businesses are involved in training, skills and career based activities |
| 17. greater numbers of businesses are supported to safeguard jobs, and to recover and adjust to drive future growth | 19. we have accelerated delivery of our capital works and infrastructure projects to support growth in housing, business and our town centres |

- Following the onset of the pandemic, and the first lock-down period, the County Council worked quickly and pro-actively with our key partners (including the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Growth Hub), Coventry City Council and the District & Borough Councils to co-ordinate our support measures to ensure a rapid and coherent response to support our economy.

- In addition to the support provided by Government (such as business closure grants delivered via the District & Borough Councils, and the job furlough scheme), we developed an economic recovery package, which included a range of support measures that provided locally tailored help to our businesses and economy. These included:
 - Survive, Sustain, Grow – a programme offering bespoke advice and support to businesses to help them review and refocus their business plan to adjust to the pandemic and explore new growth opportunities. Small grants were also available to help businesses take forward their new plans. Over 600 businesses were supported through this programme, with 472 jobs safeguarded through support provided, and 141 new jobs created;
 - Digital training for retail businesses – providing specialist support to retailers to help them both create and maximise their on-line presence;
 - Adapt & Diversify – a £1.5m grant scheme, allocated over two rounds, providing small grants to businesses to help them invest in new activity that would enable them to exploit new growth opportunities. 120 businesses received grants, helping create 236 new jobs;
 - Providing £1.5m of much needed additional investment in a locally run Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) as it became apparent many businesses were struggling to access this through the mainstream banking sector;
 - Extending the Council’s employee well-being support programme to make it accessible for small businesses across the county to access to provide help and advice to employees who may be struggling. 22 small businesses covering 232 employees have taken up this offer and we have received positive feedback on having considered the need for well-being support; and
 - Undertaking a tourism marketing and promotion campaign for Warwickshire to help support a sector particularly hard hit through the pandemic. Through a series of marketing campaigns, engaging national press and media outlets, we reached a combined audience of around 47m people, and had over 50,000 people actively engage in campaigns and competitions.

- Wider work was also undertaken to support different places and their local economies during the pandemic and focus on future growth opportunities. These included:
 - Tech Challenge – a small competitive fund which challenged our local digital creative sector to develop innovative new approaches to support our town centres recover from the pandemic. Three projects were supported through this, creating new digital platforms that town centres and local businesses can utilise;

- Art Challenge – utilising external funding available through the Getting Building Fund, a programme working with local artists and creatives to develop a number of art installations across our town centres to create new focal points. Eight installations will be undertaken across the county in Q1 of 2022;
 - Warwickshire Future Places work – working with the Institute of Place Management, a series of interactive workshops and learning sessions with partners, stakeholders and representatives of our town centres to explore future drivers of change and opportunities and providing a toolkit to help local areas to develop recovery and growth plans for their towns; and
 - Making use of funding available through the Getting Building Fund, investment in the development of new employment space for the digital creative and gaming sector in Leamington Spa, providing much needed additional space to support a priority sector for the county which experienced strong growth during the pandemic.
- In total, through all our economic recovery work over the period April 2020-October 2021, we have:
 - engaged with 4,300 businesses;
 - provided direct support and assistance to 1,425 businesses;
 - supported 4,446 jobs and help create 764 new jobs; and
 - given out £2.7m in grants to businesses and enabled £3.1m of loans to be provided.

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Continuing and extending our mainstream business start-up and business support programmes, and investing more in support for more disadvantaged groups to consider self-employment as an option;
- Delivering the £140m Warwickshire Recovery & Investment Fund to stimulate the economic, support growth in our future growth sectors, help local businesses expand and grow, and create new jobs within the local economy;
- Continuing to promote Warwickshire as a location for inward investment (building on the robust figures for Foreign Direct Investment that we achieved in 2020/21 which bucked the national trend), and as tourist location to support our key visitor economy;
- Focusing specifically on supporting our hospitality and leisure sector to recover and grow via our new business support programme providing specialist support to this area of the economy;
- Supporting businesses in their recruitment and skill needs, particularly at a time of labour shortages; and
- Continuing a focus on supporting our town centres to recover, diversify and prosper.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan

- Proactively supporting and facilitating economic recovery and growth;
- Supporting the development of future growth sectors, and ensuring we have the workforce with the necessary skills;
- Supporting the development and growth of the low carbon economy; and
- Place-shaping and the creation of diverse and prosperous town centres and local economies.

2.6.2

Priority 6 – Stimulate job creation and skills: *Work with our partners in the Local Enterprise Partnership and higher and further education, to invest in getting people back into employment, or starting their careers, supporting skills, training and re-learning*

- We prepared for the end of the Government’s Furlough scheme by creating a service to provide redundancy support for employers, working with partners across Coventry and Warwickshire to pro-actively engage and support those who may be facing job losses.
- A digital careers offer has been developed providing video content to showcase the availability of career opportunities within the county. To date, 21 videos have been created showcasing a range of different sectors and the different career opportunities and training options available. A further 20 films are being created, and conversations being held with many more who are keen to get involved.
- Provision of grant funding support to schools to adapt their careers offer in light of restrictions preventing work experience in workplaces, and a transition fund enabling Further Education and training providers to undertake activities and induction programmes over the summer for school leavers.
- A Warwickshire Skills Hub has been developed which launched in September 2021 to support residents to make the most of their employability through upskilling and / re-skilling. We have seen an 80% increase in employer enquiries wanting to offer training and work opportunities as they build back their workforce.
- We have promoted inclusivity and diversity within the workplace and through recruitment programmes.
- Adult Community Learning has been reviewed to take account of the changing requirements as a result of COVID-19.

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Digital Skills Training for businesses is continuing for 2021/22 to help increase and maximise online presence;

- Launching and promoting the Fair Chance Employer Programme, supporting businesses to become more inclusive and provide opportunities for key priority groups including care leavers, older workers, and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); and
- Continuing the Apprenticeship Progression Programme which continues to see a steady flow of applications. New training programmes such as the Government's "Restart Scheme" is supporting us to meet many emerging skills gaps.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Employment and Skills

2.6.3

Priority 7 – Invest in regeneration and a sustainable future: *Invest in the regeneration of local areas, support housing growth, a fit for the future digital infrastructure and sustainable transport*

- The £140m Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund has been established to stimulate the county's economy, create jobs, support local businesses and bring investment into the County over the next 5 years, and is expected to deliver;
 - Up to 3,400 new jobs;
 - Safeguard a further 3,900 jobs;
 - Support 118 businesses;
 - Leverage of up to £104m from the private sector;
 - Leverage of up to £35m from the public sector; and
 - Provide an annual regional Gross Value Added of up to £160m.
- We have established our own property company, the Warwickshire Property and Development Group, to support area regeneration and make the most of our land assets; the company's business plan anticipates delivering approximately 2,200 units of housing, as well as many other developments in the industrial, tourism and retail markets.
- We are actively working in partnership with the District & Borough Councils and Homes England to deliver the housing needs of Warwickshire and support the recovery of our local economy; the Council has developed a local priority worker help to buy scheme as an option for new builds developed by the Warwickshire Property and Development Group.
- An ambitious £12.2m programme of cycling infrastructure schemes is delivering 18km of new or upgraded cycling infrastructure with funding secured from a range of internal and external sources. A further 11km of cycling infrastructure with a value of between £6m and £8.4m is being delivered as part of funded wider transport infrastructure schemes.

- We are promoting and encouraging active travel through road safety education and support to schools, businesses, partners and communities to develop sustainable travel plans.
- Utilising funding secured from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles and the Getting Building Fund, we are installing 90 twin headed charge points (180 charging points) across the county, predominantly located in District & Borough off-street car parks, with some located on-street in our town centres and smaller market towns.
- Securing funding for Project Gigabit (roll out of fibre broadband) for Warwickshire, and proactively support the roll out of 4G and 5G mobile phone connectivity.
- Investment of £79.5m of Housing Infrastructure Grant (HIG) in the A5 in North Warwickshire, to support the delivery of the Local Plan and bring wider economic benefits to the corridor and the key sectors it supports (Logistics/Distribution and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering).

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Continue to deliver plans and outputs from the Warwickshire Property Company.
- Roll-out the initiatives under the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund against its three pillars.
- The Local Transport Plan (LTP) Public consultation regarding the proposed four key themes of Environment, Wellbeing, Economy and Place has ended and been supplemented by a citizens' panel. The results of these consultations are now being fed into the drafting of the LTP, which will be completed next year.
- Continue to promote and support active travel and modal shift away from car use and towards sustainable transport.
- Continue the roll-out of the charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- Continue to facilitate the roll out of fibre broadband and 4G/5G connectivity by the market, and identifying gaps in delivery that need to be addressed.
- Evidence from Mobile Network operators continues to show progress against the upgrade to masts, providing improved 4G in rural areas and 5G delivery in more urban areas including Warwick, Nuneaton, Leamington, Kenilworth, Stratford and Atherstone.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Regeneration;
- Developing infrastructure and assets; and
- Sustainable transport

2.7

Support delivery of our outcomes by making the best use of resource and tackling climate change

2.7.1

Priority 8 – Climate Change: *Make sustainability and tackling climate change central to our recovery so that we lay the foundations for a sustainable long-term future*

Our indicators of success were:

Climate Change

20. carbon dioxide emissions have been reduced further towards our target of being carbon neutral by 2030

22. Greater investment in sustainable transport e.g electric vehicles, cycle routes and public transport

21. increased biodiversity and tree planting

- Our carbon emissions in 2020/21 were 7,822 tonnes, a reduction of 31% compared to pre-pandemic levels of 11,395 tonnes, comprising;
 - 31% reduction in total
 - 58% reduction in staff business travel emissions.
- We have completed a Climate Change impact assessment which has identified those areas and services most at risk of future extreme weather, with a second phase planned to identify vulnerabilities, mitigation and priority actions.
- Green Energy purchasing options were implemented for residents and local businesses to join a collective energy purchasing scheme.
- We participated in a “Switch and Save” scheme for residents to take advantage of cheaper energy suppliers.
- Plans have been developed for energy reduction within the Council’s buildings which are in the process of being rolled-out.
- We implemented the first Local Government Biodiversity Net Gain in the UK further to our previous participation in a pilot initiative. This requires developers to deliver a wider range of environmental benefits over and above the full environmental impact of the proposed development (e.g. air quality, flood risk management).
- We are in the process of developing an options appraisal for mounted solar panels at several of our farms and smallholdings.
- We instigated the “Green Shoots” programme where local organisations could bid for to support green initiatives with 110 applications to a total of £1.3m having been received, and £625k for 69 schemes,; Green Shoots has been featured as an LGA case study and was showcased at COP26 on the LGA stand.

- The Road Safety team has been working with Warwickshire Schools as part of the Safe and Active Travel Awards programme which combines road safety, environment and health activities. 80 schools are taking part in a series of supported active travel events, implementing travel plans with the support of a dedicated officer which combined, will deliver health, safe and sustainable travel and environmental benefits. Work is also ongoing on the Safe and Active Travel scheme with workplaces and the wider community.
- Our Digital Roadmap is reducing the need for energy heavy local servers in our premises.
- An ambitious £12.2m programme of cycling infrastructure schemes is in progress to deliver 18km of new or upgraded cycling infrastructure with funding secured from a range of internal and external sources. A further 11 km of cycling infrastructure with a value of between £6m and £8.4m is being delivered as part of funded wider transport infrastructure schemes.
- The heat decarbonisation plan has progressed and we have been awarded a grant to develop a plan for net zero heating in several Council premises, we have also made decisions to reduce our office footprint and progressed an ambitious estates rationalisation strategy to reduce our carbon footprint.
- The rural tree planting scheme will contribute to Warwickshire's commitment to plant one tree for every resident, working closely with our District and Borough colleagues, with over 2000 trees being planted this year in 2021 and to be recorded on the West Midlands Virtual Forest.

The areas from the recovery plan we are continuing to focus on are:

- Develop our Climate Change action plan to encompass the initiatives that will make a difference to achieving our net zero targets as a Council.
- Cabinet has considered proposals for commissioning external support to produce a costed net zero strategy and plan for Warwickshire, working with key partners to align various plans into a coherent overall strategy for the county.
- A Coventry and Warwickshire COP26 conference is being developed, with key partners, to take place in March 2022 involving key public, private and voluntary sector partners across the sub-region to share good practice, align plans and jointly commit to collaboration on decarbonising Coventry and Warwickshire.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Our Net zero commitments

2.7.2

Priority 9 – Develop our people and future ways of working: *Invest in a sustainable and resilient workforce through recovery, learning from COVID-19 to embed flexible working, promote well-being and develop new ways of working*

Our indicators of success were:

Our Organisation

23. metrics show improved staff wellbeing e.g. mental health and wellbeing indicators, absence, staff turnover and employee engagement
24. the cost and carbon footprint of the council's property reduces
25. digital delivery of more council services means they are better and at less cost than before COVID-19

- We have developed our Employer Brand, which focuses on the powerful impact our people can have on others through their work and comprises of 3 'pillars'; Working with passion and purpose, Explore and further your career, Improving at every opportunity.
- We have strengthened our focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion particularly in terms of our corporate oversight, we revamped the council EDI group, growing our staff networks to engage with staff on a range of issues.
- Our pay gap information is positive and favourable compared to the national picture. From our surveys 83% of staff agree that the Council values equality and diversity in the workplace.
- Our Agile working programme has been implemented to enable work to be “what you do and not when and where you do it”. There continues to be a less cars on the road as a result of the agile working approach which will contribute to our environmental ambitions.
- A staff engagement strategy has been developed to build on our “staff check-in” approach implemented during COVID-19, with our staff engagement index increasing from 70% to 76% compared to a benchmark average of 57% and the Local Government benchmark of 54%.
- We have achieved bronze Thrive at Work accreditation, while our sustainable and resilient workforce project has been implemented to support the well-being of our staff achieving a reduction in sickness absence from 10.9 days per FTE, to 7.45 days in March, although since lockdown has ended we have seen a modest increase. Alongside this we also saw a 14% increase (to 86%) in our staff agreeing that employee well-being is promoted at work.
- The Council’s landline telephone numbers have migrated to Microsoft Teams to support our Agile working approach and allow staff to work from flexible locations.
- Our Contact Centre telephony system is in the process of being re-tendered to streamline our processes.
- Our buildings and offices have remained open throughout the Pandemic, maintaining service and digital access for vulnerable people through our ‘front door’ and library services.

- Our Estates masterplan programme is being developed to reflect our ongoing needs across the Council and reduce our carbon footprint.
- We have developed our building re-instatement plan to ensure our buildings are COVID-19 safe and to support hybrid working through digital technology.

The areas we are continuing to focus on are:

- Continue to implement our people strategy and ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in all we do.
- Embed our agile working offer.
- Continue to develop a sustainable and resilient workforce, with a focus on wellbeing, working towards Silver Thrive Accreditation and maintaining our reduction in sickness absence.
- Progress with our refreshing our People and Organisational Development programme to support the new Council Plan.

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Our continuing approach to ensuring we develop our people, have effective ways of working and have supportive policies.

2.7.3

Priority 10 – Deliver high performance by harnessing digital, data and making the most effective use of our resources: *Use data and technology solutions to drive investments and high performance; and develop a new framework to measure performance, investments and financial management*

- We have progressed with our plan to digitise our records and remove our reliance on paper across our operations with over 4900 boxes and circa 29,000 files submitted through our records storage process.
- We have continued to develop our Microsoft functionality and to create a common approach to records storage.
- Our strategy to be evidence-led has developed, with considerable work undertaken on how we use our data to provide real-time reporting and performance information.
- A new Council Performance Management Framework is in development, linked to the creation of the refreshed Council Plan.
- An independent review of our customer service standards was carried out during the COVID-19 recovery period, and despite the changing working practices and increased demand on our customer-facing services, we continued to comply with the standards and were able to demonstrate many areas of good practice.

The areas we are continuing to focus on are:

- Continue to review, upgrade, replace and simplify our technology to support new ways of working and customer service

Key themes to embed in the refreshed Council Plan:

- Continue to develop our strategies for digital, data and performance management

3. Development of the Refreshed Council Plan 2022

- 3.1 Cabinet will be aware of the current work underway to refresh the Council Plan, the intention for which featured in the original “Accelerate” phase of the COVID-19 recovery work.
- 3.2 As can be seen from the summary above, significant progress has been made on the original actions identified in the Recovery Plan. Key moving forward is to:
- Ensure that pandemic response approaches are embedded in relevant services’ operations and business continuity plans and can be deployed again should the need arise;
 - Use the insight gained from the pandemic to focus on the “Accelerate” phase; and
 - Embed those continuing themes that require an ongoing focus within the refreshed Council Plan.
- 3.3 The analysis of the Recovery Plan supplements various other sources of information on identifying themes and priorities for the refreshed Council Plan. Engagement sessions have been held with members about the strategic priorities and Areas of Focus for the refreshed Council Plan and a public consultation has been undertaken to seek the view of residents on their key priorities. Details on these activities are referenced in the Council Plan papers to be received by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December so are not replicated here.
- 3.4 Following the approval of the Council Plan, more detailed work will be undertaken to create the prioritised 2 year Delivery Plan to support its implementation.
- 3.5 Those themes and actions from the Recovery Plan that require a continuing Council level focus will segue into that Delivery Plan where they align to one of the proposed specific 7 Areas of Focus. Continuing work that is now

embedded in service delivery and which does not require a specific focus in the Delivery Plan will continue under normal Council business as usual.

- 3.6 Current and proposed projects will remain subject to prioritisation and appropriate consideration on value for money and affordability prior to approval, with the requirement for business cases to highlight benefits.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of the response to and recovery from COVID-19 to Warwickshire County Council is currently estimated to be in excess of £78m, with the figure continuing to grow as communities are heading into an uncertain winter.
- 4.2 The direct response cost has so far been covered in full by Government funding, and it is anticipated these direct costs will continue to be covered in the same way. However, the on-going work on the refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) indicates that there are longer term pressures resulting from COVID-19 (both in terms of increased cost and reduced tax revenue) that are likely to extend beyond the currently confirmed government funding.
- 4.3 In addition to government grants, the Council continues to use the remaining revenue and capital investment funds to support the actions in the recovery plan to accelerate and aid the recovery of the Council, service providers, our communities and businesses.
- 4.4 The MTFS refresh has also highlighted that there are other critical areas requiring continuing investment such as the SEND transformation programme and the delivery of our climate change commitments.
- 4.5 Consequently, it is important that the actions carried forward from the recovery plan remain subject to ongoing monitoring of the detailed costs, affordability and benefits across the activities to ensure the investment funding remains sufficient to cover all ambitions.
- 4.6 The refreshed MTFS, which will be presented to Cabinet in December, will present a joined-up approach to delivering any outstanding COVID-19 recovery plan priorities as well as the other priorities of the Council in a sustainable way over the medium term, taking into account the impact of the upcoming Spending Review and the autumn Budget announcement.

5. Environmental Implications

- 5.1 Specific activities with environmental implications have been reported on above. Climate change is one of the proposed three key pillars of the refreshed Council plan with achieving our climate change action plan one of the proposed seven areas of focus.
- 5.2 The activities that were specifically focused on recovery will be evaluated as part of that ongoing Climate action plan and encompassed within the refreshed Council plan.

6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 6.1 This paper provides context for the paper on the proposed refreshed Council Plan and enables work to transition into the subsequent Delivery Plan.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A
Other members: N/A