

Cabinet

10 September 2020

Council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. approves the Council's Recovery Plan included as **Appendix A**, subject to actions being costed and affordability assessed against the available investment funds, with any on-going implications being considered in the Medium Term Financial Strategy refresh for 2021/22 onwards; and
2. approves the next steps for development of the Council Plan for 2021/22.

1.0 Background and context

- 1.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic is a global public health emergency that has created an unprecedented impact on our communities and economy. While immense, generational challenges lie ahead, and opportunities exist to learn from the immediate response.
- 1.2 Following an intense period of response started in March, Cabinet considered and approved three key reports on 11th June 2020, covering:
 - overview of the WCC recovery approach;
 - place shaping; and
 - economic recovery.
- 1.3 All Overview and Scrutiny Committees then considered the report and the detailed analysis of our response in June.
- 1.4 Over the period of June, July and August, we have subsequently developed our recovery approach and plan, working with partners and aligning with regionally agreed phasing, to conclude the Foundation stage and frame the two stages that follow:

Foundation stage (0 - 3 months)	Consolidate stage (3-9 months)	Accelerate stage (9 months plus)
<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 for 2021/22

1.5 This report provides Cabinet with details of the approach we have taken to date and asks for approval of the proposed recovery plan to inform the *consolidate* and *accelerate* phases of recovery.

2.0 Recovery approach

2.1 The key impacts of COVID-19 on Warwickshire have included:

Challenging impacts and key risks	Positive impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged and significant economic impacts, including those on key sectors and employment, affecting previously strong GVA growth. • Increasing levels of financial instability • Widening of inequalities and creation of new vulnerabilities • Delayed/Build-up of demand for services • Continued threat of & living safely with COVID-19 over a longer period • Quality and pace of delivering education, and cancellation of examinations, leading to predicted results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong partnership working, collaboration, faster integration of processes and systems (especially health & social care) and WCC system leadership role • Flexible and committed workforce and rapid adaptation of service delivery utilising digital and other means • Opportunities for changes in the way we work • Increase in community action, mutual aid and volunteering • Use of data and insight to improve delivery and performance • Opportunity to enhance green recovery & sustainability

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detriment to our mental health and well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable in our communities • Impaired progress on climate change with the addition of increased waste from single use PPE 	
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2.2 Our approach to recovery planning has been robust and comprehensive. We have taken time to understand these challenges and opportunities in detail by engaging with our Elected Members, staff, public and partners. This approach has included:

- **Evidence of the impact of COVID-19** on Warwickshire’s economy, communities, our services, including future demand, learning from our response to COVID-19, including our role and relationship with our communities and partnership working.
- **National, regional policy scan** – We continue to review national policy to inform our plan, including the COVID-19 response and our engagement with national and regional partners and agencies.
- **Partner engagement on Warwickshire’s recovery** - has been through the Warwickshire Recovery Advisory Group (District & Borough Council Leaders and Chief Executives, Police and LEP) and with health partners, town and local councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector. Of particular note is the joint recovery statement agreed by the Warwickshire Recovery Advisory Group, which Cabinet approved in June. This has provided a key foundation for the Member Working Groups and development of the recovery plan.
- **Member working groups** – We established cross-party member working groups to ensure Members had the opportunity to be engaged, influence and help shape the recommendations and priorities for our recovery plan. The member working groups covered the four workstreams of:
 - Health and Wellbeing and Adults and Children’s social care;
 - Economy, Place and Climate Change;
 - Education and Community recovery; and
 - Organisation and our resources.

Each group met 3 times to consider the impact of COVID-19, identify and consider in detail a set of priority areas and make recommendations for the Recovery Plan. These member groups have been very successful and influential in engaging Members and shaping our final plan.

To take advantage of this success, we have surveyed the views of Members and received overwhelmingly positive feedback with some useful lessons to pick up as we evolve this approach for use in the future. See **Appendix B** for the survey's findings.

- **Corporate Board session and resilience assessment** – Corporate Board held a series of facilitated sessions over June and July to review ambition and test organisational resilience.
- **Staff survey** – A series of staff surveys, called “check-ins”, have been conducted over the past few months with a focus on recovery and staff wellbeing. The results are informing the approach to service reinstatement as well as the longer-term recovery work, always with an expressed focus on staff health and wellbeing. The outcomes from the “check-ins” are summarised as **Appendix C**.
- **Public, community and business engagement** - We have engaged with businesses through a regular survey and the West Midlands Citizen panel to inform the Recovery Plan. In addition, Public Health are leading on conducting a population health impact survey across Warwickshire which will complete at the end of September. The findings of that survey will be used to ensure the Recovery Plan remains relevant and has the required impact. New actions derived from the survey will be added to the Recovery Plan.
- **COVID-19 Health Assessment** – Detailed research as part of the Coventry & Warwickshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has just been published. It presents two significant findings. The need for an *integrated recovery*, meaning a recovery that addresses all the determinants of health and wellbeing including care system, lifestyles, place and community. And addressing the *double impact*, meaning not just the impact of the virus itself but also the wider social and economic impact on more vulnerable and deprived groups and the impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. This research will continue to inform the Recovery Plan to ensure it remains relevant and has the required impact. Again, any new actions derived from the research will be added to the Recovery Plan.
- **Change portfolio stocktake** – Our existing change programme has been fully reviewed to bring wider change and recovery activity together.

2.3 All these elements have been triangulated and refined over August to inform the Recovery Plan.

2.4 Additionally, we have continued with our immediate and on-going response to COVID-19 through the following:

- **Early response/recovery work:**
 - Establishing the CSW Test and Trace beacon with associated governance and local outbreak response models
 - Delivering and concluding the Shielding hub offer
 - Delivering additional support for the vulnerable/at risk of our community post shielding
 - Undertaking 2nd wave contingency planning
 - Putting in place COVID-19 specific business support, area specific regeneration schemes/projects and key sectors
 - Measures ensuring COVID-19 safe towns and the re-opening of town centres
 - Support for care homes and care home staff
- **Service Reinstatement** - Ongoing reinstatement of Council services and work settings based on a risk-based programme that balances national guidance, staff well-being and business need.

3.0 Recovery priorities

3.1 Based on the Member Working Groups priorities, our Recovery Plan focuses on the following 10 priorities that are linked to our Council Plan outcomes:

Recovery priorities

Council Plan 2025 Strategic Outcome - Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent

- **Contain the virus and promote physical and mental health and wellbeing:** 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.
- **Maintain resilient and sustainable services:** Manage increased demand for services, especially hospital and social care services, and strengthen the care market.
- **Help our children and young people catch up on their education:** By returning to learning, improving access to digital resources and tackling attainment gaps.
- **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.

Council Plan 2025 Strategic Outcome - Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure:

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

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

- **Climate change:** Make sustainability and tackling climate change central to our recovery so that we lay the foundations for a sustainable long-term future.
- **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.
- **Deliver high performance by harnessing digital, data and making the most effective use of our resources:** Use data and technological solutions to drive investments and high performance; and develop a new framework to measure performance, investments and financial management.

3.2 Each of these priorities will be supported by a set of specific actions and the Council will track its progress using a recovery dashboard and metrics. This will enable the presentation of our performance measures to demonstrate delivery and impact.

3.3 Our Recovery Plan is under-pinned by a revised set of principles (since the June Cabinet paper on Recovery) which reflect the input of our cross-member working groups discussions. These principles will guide how we deliver each of our 10 Recovery priorities:

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.

4.0 Recovery Plan

4.1 The COVID-19 Recovery Plan is attached as **Appendix A**.

4.2 Key features include

- it sets out how we will deliver key immediate priorities during the *Consolidate* stage of recovery and how we will prepare for the *Accelerate* stage;
- our commitment to deliver specific change, and a commitment to measure and present our performance with a new recovery dashboard and metrics;
- clear actions aligned to each priority;
- it is aligned with 2020/21 Business Plans and Commissioning Plans that have been updated to reflect the impact of the Pandemic;
- the Change Portfolio will be reprioritised to align with the Recovery Plan;
- retain flexibility at a time of uncertainty; and
- one council approach, addressing cross cutting themes.

5.0 Timescales and Next steps

5.1 Our phased recovery plan sets out how we are moving swiftly to invest effort, activity and resources across Warwickshire to support recovery from COVID-19 working with our partners for our communities, businesses and the County.

5.2 Our Strategic outcomes remain more relevant than ever. Specific action on climate change will further under-pin our recovery efforts as will our commitment to equality and supporting the most vulnerable.

5.3 Our approach for refreshing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2020/21 has been set out in the paper to Cabinet in July.

5.4 In line with this approach and following agreement of this report, work will begin on the refresh of the Council Plan and MTFS for 2021/22 as part of the annual business planning cycle, with a refreshed Council Plan to be presented

to full Council in February. The refreshed Council Plan will consolidate the priorities and actions from the Recovery Plan from April 2021. This will be supported by the development of an updated outcome-based performance framework and an enhanced approach to risk management from April 2021.

- 5.5 To ensure alignment of our core strategies to the new Recovery Plan, our core strategies will be reviewed in Autumn. Part of this will include reviewing core strategies this financial year which have a relevance and importance to the direction of our recovery work including the Local Transport Plan, Child Poverty and Health & Wellbeing.
- 5.6 Alignment with EU Exit planning will take place during the autumn. This will need to cover the impact on recovery planning in line with our established approach to EU Exit which has consistently looked at the impact on business continuity, communities and business.
- 5.7 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commissioning (CQC) will be working collaboratively with local areas to understand the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families during the Pandemic, and to support local areas to prioritise and meet their needs. These visits are not inspections and are likely to take place during the Autumn term of 2020. They will not replace the current area SEND inspection cycle. The visits will give insights into how the SEND system is working from the autumn term, while the area SEND inspection cycle remains on hold (likely to resume from January 2021 onwards).
- 5.8 HMICFRS have also been commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic of the fire and rescue sector in England. The commission has been issued under section 28A(3) of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004. The inspectorate has been asked to consider:
 - (a) what is working well and what is being learnt;
 - (b) how the fire sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis;
 - (c) how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and
 - (d) what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

This inspection is due to take place week commencing 28th September.

- 5.9 To ensure the Council prepares and co-ordinates its resources to get the best from these and future inspections, a cross-Council co-ordination inspection group was created prior to COVID-19 and this has been reinstated and focuses its initial work on these forthcoming inspections.

- 5.10 The Recovery Plan has been designed to ensure we deliver key products that support recovery and we also retain flexibility at a time of heightened uncertainty to respond to any future events.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The initial response phase for COVID-19 has already led to significant additional costs to support communities, service providers, businesses and staff to manage the immediate implications of the pandemic. Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy is also assuming a significant impact over the next few years on our tax base revenue, increasing financial pressure. We are also seeing increased predictions around some service demand pressures, particularly for vulnerable groups.
- 6.2 The Government has commenced a Comprehensive Spending Review process which we hope will provide a three year settlement and significantly greater certainty about the medium-term funding envelope for the Council. Work has commenced to refresh the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which will be presented to Cabinet in December and full Council in February.
- 6.3 The combination of the £24m revenue investment funds and unallocated capital investment funding agreed in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy signed off in February 2020 will be the primary source of funding for the recovery plan.
- 6.4 Work is progressing to cost and quantify potential benefits from the targeting activity within the proposed plan, designed to accelerate and support the recovery of the Council, service providers, our communities and businesses. Initial work suggests the investment funds and current year budgets should be sufficient to support the recovery plan. However, there are other critical investments required outside of COVID-19 recovery that still involve a level of uncertainty e.g. further expansion of the SEND transformation programme, which is subject to additional business cases being developed that may require further investment.
- 6.5 Consequently, it is recommended that Cabinet agree the recovery plan, subject to ongoing monitoring of the detailed costs, affordability and benefits across the recovery programme to ensure the investment funding remains sufficient to cover all ambitions.
- 6.6 A financial assessment is also establishing any ongoing revenue implications of the plan in order to feed these into the MTFS refresh currently underway. The expectation is that some options may also provide key benefits e.g. accelerated recovery of lost Council Tax and Business Rates, which would positively impact the current MTFS planning projections.
- 6.7 Where one-off funding is identified appropriate projects will be fed into the Gateway process for the relevant investment fund, and where funding requests are over £100k for revenue bids or for all capital bids these will come back to Cabinet for formal approval.

7.0 Environmental Implications

7.1 The importance of environmental considerations within the Council's recovery approach are reflected in both the proposed recovery priorities and principles.

Background papers

None

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

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Cllr Warwick, Cllr O'Rourke, Cllr Boad

Appendix A – the Recovery Plan

Appendix B – findings from the Member Working Groups survey

Appendix C – summary of outcomes of the Staff Check-In surveys