

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **3 December 2020**

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

Portfolio Area: **Governance and Assurance**  
**Cllr Judy Pearce - Leader of the Council**

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: Upon the expiry of the Scrutiny Call-in period – 5.00pm on Monday, 14 December

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#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

##### **That the Executive:**

- 1. Note the Council's continuing response to the COVID-19 Pandemic;**
- 2. Note the Council's progress in developing and delivering the Recovery and Renewal Plan;**
- 3. Consider the recommendations of the Localities and Communities Task and Finish (as set out in Section 4.15) and the Consultation and Engagement Task and Finish (as set out in Section 4.18); and**
- 4. Request that Officers finalise the Recovery and Renewal Plan in-line with the approach outlined in this report and present it to the Council meeting to be held on 17 December for adoption.**

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Executive considered a report on 17 September 2020 (minute E.15/20) on the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging Recovery and Renewal Plan ('The Plan')
- 1.2 To progress key emerging priorities around our community support and the role of the localities team and how we consult and engage with our communities, Members formed two Task and Finish groups.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the Council's ongoing response and recovery activity and the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish groups

## **2. Background**

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

## **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 This report sets out an update on the Recovery and Renewal Plan considered by Overview and Scrutiny at their meeting on 3 September 2020 and includes a revised Recovery and Renewal Plan at Appendix A. Further work has been undertaken to refine the Recovery and Renewal Plan which is presented to the Executive for consideration and recommendation to Council for adoption.
- 3.2 Having concluded their work, the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups have made recommendations for Executive to consider which are set out in section 4.14 and 4.18 of this report.
- 3.3 If Executive support those recommendations, Officers will take steps to implement a revised Locality Service and a Consultation and Engagement Strategy for the Council.

## **4. Recovery and Renewal Plan Updates**

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

#### Ongoing Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

- 4.4 While developing our recovery plans, officers have also needed to implement measures to support the second National lockdown which commenced on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.
- 4.5 To support the newly announced Local Restriction Support Grants for businesses, a new IT process has been implemented to allow impacted businesses to make claims. There has been a significant demand already with 1,317 applications being received from businesses in the South Hams. Each claim will need to be assessed and verified before being processed although we hope that the number of claims received for this fund will be lower than during the first national lockdown.
- 4.6 There has also been a marked increase in the number of applications received from individuals for emergency welfare support. To date we have received and processed 82 applications for Welfare Support. To provide additional capacity to manage the scheme, we have extended our contract with Homemaker (who provide our Money Advice Service) while we recruit a Vulnerability Support Officer. This role will be a two-year contract in order to help meet the increased demand for welfare support. The post will be funded through funds from Devon County Council.
- 4.7 The Council continue to work with partners through a range of strategic and operational partnership arrangements including the Local Resilience Forum and the Health Protection Board.
- 4.8 These arrangements are crucial to secure the capacity and resilience to continue to support the community through these challenging times and will be vital if, as expected, we return to tiered, local restrictions when the National lockdown is lifted.

#### Recovery Actions

- 4.9 Prior to the November restrictions being implemented, the Council provided funding to each Town within the District through a Town Centre Kick-start grant. It is up to each of the Town Councils to decide how they wish to use this funding but will provide a condition free funding source to support any measures to restart the high-street.
- 4.10 In addition to the kick start funding, we are finalising agreements with the Ministry Housing, Communities and Local Government

for funding to contribute to activities related to reopening the High Street safely. South Hams will receive £77,370 which will need to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Town Councils have been asked if they require any support from the fund and these applications will be considered in early December.

- 4.11 To further support safety of the high-street, three COVID-19 compliance officers have been appointed for a six-month period. The primary focus of these roles is to enable customers to better understand the current COVID-19 rules and guidance in order to ensure future compliance. The roles will also assist in taking enforcement action in relation to COVID-19 regulations where necessary while ensuring confidence in as safe a shopping experience as possible.
- 4.12 We have extended our contract with Business Information Point ('BIP') who have provided 36.25 hours of business support and advice to 11 pre start-up businesses and 11 existing businesses in the period April 2020 – September 2020.
- 4.13 The localities team were a key frontline service supporting our response through the COVID-19 lockdown. Overview and Scrutiny have formed a Task and Finish in order to consider opportunities to develop further the Localities function and consider how we might continue with some of the positives from the Community Cluster structure that we implemented during the first national lockdown.
- 4.14 The Task and Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Thomas has received a number of briefings from officers as to the current localities arrangements to inform their recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny.
- 4.15 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel met on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and resolved to recommend that Executive consider the following;
  - a. Providing 7 day-a-week Locality Service for the periods
    - i. Easter or 1 April (whichever is earliest) to 30 September; and
    - ii. October half term school holiday week;
  - b. Creating a single point of contact for ward members with increased on-street officer visibility and problem solving capacity within each Locality; and
  - c. Implementing a new Locality Team structure to support the above recommendations which will ensure
    - i. Clearly defined roles that support the delivery of scheduled tasks and the work of Community groups, developing service level agreements where necessary;
    - ii. Improved office based and field support for mobile officers
- 4.16 The Executive are requested to consider these recommendations and propose a way forward.
- 4.17 Ensuring that we build on the positive relationships and communications delivered through the pandemic was a key theme from the Member workshops. To take this work forward, a Task and Finish Group was formed to develop a Consultation and Engagement Framework for the Council. Chaired by Councillor

Rose, the group has considered best practice and developed a draft framework.

- 4.18 The draft framework was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 who resolved to recommend to Executive to consider and adopt the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy (Appendix B)
- 4.19 The first of a series of briefing sessions has been held for Members setting out the work that is being undertaken to develop COVID-19 response plans and the impact that this may have on service delivery should there be any local outbreaks or further changes in restrictions.
- 4.20 We continue to ensure that we support wellbeing of all staff and have trained a number of staff to be Mental Health First aiders. The First Aiders are now trained with tips on spotting the early warning signs of mental ill-health and how to support colleagues, guiding them towards appropriate professional health.
- 4.21 The above provides a summary of some key actions taken to date in both supporting the response to COVID-19 and in delivering some of the Recovery Plan actions set by Members earlier this year.

## **5. Refining the Recovery and Renewal Plan**

- 5.1 It is essential that the adopted Plan focusses on the key work needed to support recovery across the District. In view of this the Plan is being refined and where actions are better delivered through, for example, existing or emerging strategies or activity, then they are being reallocated to allow the Plan to focus on core Recovery and Renewal activity.
- 5.2 The approach, which is ongoing, is outlined in Appendix A and it is proposed to finalise this work with a view to adopting the revised Plan at Council on 17 December 2020.
- 5.3 The Plan will remain a living, interim document whilst work continues on the development of a new Corporate Strategy.

## **6. Proposed Way Forward**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Executive note the progress update of action taken both in responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the development of a Recovery plan.
- 6.2 A refined version of the Recovery and Renewal Plan will be considered to Council on 17 December for adoption.
- 6.3 In respect of the Overview and Scrutiny recommendations;

### Localities and Community Clusters Task and Finish

- 6.4 It is proposed that Executive consider the options set out by Overview and Scrutiny and if supported, that Officers work with the Lead Executive Member to take steps to implement the proposals.

- 6.5 If supported by Executive, the proposals may have a financial implication which will need to be considered as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process

Consultation and Engagement Task and Finish

- 6.6 It is proposed that Executive consider the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy for adoption, recommending any changes and requesting that officers take steps to finalise the Strategy. Officers should also, with the Lead Executive Member, develop a Year 1 delivery plan for the Strategy.
- 6.7 The Strategy will then be considered by Council at their meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The recovery plan includes actions related to the governance of the Council. This report itself makes no specific recommendations on those actions.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	The areas being actioned are set out within the Financial Stability Recovery and Renewal Theme of the COVID19 Recovery Plan. Monthly Government returns on COVID costs and loss of income have been completed. Regular Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports have also been presented to the Executive, which included details of the current capital programme for review. The Medium Term Financial Strategy has been updated and was considered by the Executive on 22nd October. The Audited Accounts will be published by 30 <sup>th</sup> November, having been approved by the Audit Committee for publication, subject to the finalisation of the audit work of Grant Thornton. On 24th September, Council approved an Amended Budget for 2020-21. The Council has responded to Government consultations, in particular on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), to lobby for fairer funding, early notification of some of the financial elements of the next Finance Settlement for 2021/22 onwards and a change in some of the 'rules' affecting Local Government finances.
Risk	Y	The risk implications are outlined in detail within the original published report to the Meeting (Appendix A refers).
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	The action plan accompanying this report contributes to all corporate strategy themes

Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	The report recommends that a number of actions from the Member Recovery workshops be included within the Climate and Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan.
<b>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</b>		
Equality and Diversity	N	There are no direct Equality and Diversity Impacts as a result of this report
Safeguarding	N	There are no direct safeguarding impacts as a result of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	None
Other implications	N	None

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Appendices:**

- Appendix A – Revised Recovery Plan
- Appendix B – Consultation & Engagement Draft Strategy framework

#### **Background Papers:**

- Executive 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Item E.15/20 – Coronavirus Recovery & Renewal Plan Development Update [Click here for link to open item E.15/20](#)
- Overview and Scrutiny 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 Item 10 <http://mg.swdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=1497&Ver=4>