

Subject:	Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme Update		
Date of Meeting:	3 March 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Julie Nichols, Corporate Portfolio Lead	Tel: 01273 291656
	Email:	julie.nichols@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the progress of the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme, following a previous update to the Policy & Resources Committee on 3 December 2020.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the report provides an update on progress to early/mid February and given the fast moving nature of the pandemic, aspects of the report may have been superseded by events by the date of the committee meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee notes this progress update report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Recovery & Renewal Programme was established in May 2020 to help prepare and steer the council and city through the transition from emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic towards recovery. The programme seeks opportunities for the city to emerge from the pandemic as a healthier, equitable and more sustainable place to live, work and visit.
- 3.2 Circumstances with regard to the pandemic have shifted throughout this period and again, significantly over Christmas and since the New Year. Whilst the focus on recovery is being maintained, it is being managed alongside emergency response to the pandemic and throughout the recent lockdowns. Since the initiation of the Recovery & Renewal programme, its working groups have been working on both response and recovery. In recognition of the recent escalation in Covid-19 cases and the third lockdown, the Food, Vulnerable People and Welfare Reform & Financial Hardship working groups are only able to focus upon emergency response, and therefore, do not form part of this recovery update (there is, however, a separate report on food being presented to this committee).
- 3.3 All other working groups continue to balance recovery and response but the Recovery & Renewal programme has reduced its requirements on them in terms of reporting and meetings during January to March. The programme's Senior

Responsible Owner (SRO) and Programme Manager are, however, maintaining contact with the working group leads during this time to keep track of progress and pick up on any issues. The position and scope of the programme will be reviewed in March 2021.

3.4 The following are updates from the working groups currently able to focus upon some, if not all, aspects of recovery:

3.5 **Children & Young People**

The Children & Young People working group continues to meet fortnightly. Recent meetings have been more response focused, for example, offering partners the opportunity to update each other on activities, escalate urgent matters and discuss anything that needs to be worked on collaboratively. The working group has proved to be a productive working arrangement and is providing a solid foundation for future work.

There are three upcoming themed discussions in the group that will form some areas of focus of its activity going forward and these link from emergency response through to recovery: mental health of children (immediate issues and the longer term impact of the pandemic), disadvantaged families within the city and employment and skills. These discussions will involve inviting relevant guests and colleagues from other working groups to join the meeting, considering latest feedback from the services and reflecting on lessons learned for this area so far in the pandemic. The discussions are likely to lead to a series of actions for partners to take forward.

3.6 **Crime & Community Cohesion**

The updated [Community Safety & Crime Reduction Strategy 2020-23](#) was agreed by Full Council in July 2020. There is a strategic assessment of the Strategy and its action plans each year to check they are still relevant and fit for purpose, as they run to three year cycles. Recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is an integral part of the Strategy and its action plans. The Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee review the Strategy and action plans annually, alongside the work the council is doing in partnership to address its key aspects, which include community cohesion, exploitation and domestic abuse.

A [briefing note](#) was prepared for Full Council in July regarding, for example, increases in domestic abuse and attacks on public sector staff. The Community Safety Partnership Board meets quarterly with Covid recovery as a standing item. A review of the Community Safety Strategy's action plans is presented to each meeting, alongside data from the Police to highlight potential areas of concern.

A Community Tensions Meeting has been established; this was initially set up in relation to the potential impact of Brexit but now includes the impact of the pandemic. There are no major issues and the council, Police and other partners are not reporting particular concerns. There is some reporting by residents regarding the behaviour of their neighbours but this is being picked up as part of usual council activity, for example, as part of noise complaint response. There have been a few reports regarding businesses not complying with restrictions but

again, this is being picked up by usual enforcement work. Any anti-Covid and lockdown protests are being addressed via emergency response in liaison with the Police.

3.7 Customers

The Customer Experience Steering Group is currently focusing on two main issues – consistency of customer service provision and vulnerability/equalities. Individual service responses since the outset of the pandemic mean there is no longer a consistent customer offer across the council. There are service by service differences in terms of access and response via the telephone, digitally and in person via the Customer Service Centres. There is also the need to ensure that vulnerable customers and those who are unable to interact with the council digitally are still able to contact the organisation when required.

The Customer Experience Steering Group has initiated an accessibility review of potential customer access models for the council and for each, will identify which customers may be adversely affected by the proposal and how to mitigate those impacts. The review will include consideration of face to face customer service delivery and of the council's telephone Switchboard offer (Switchboard staff are currently helping customers to access digital solutions). It will consider all significant telephone customer access points, and whether these should be consolidated either virtually or structurally. A customer satisfaction survey will be conducted, which will seek customer views on the issue.

The Customer Experience Steering Group and Customer Experience Ambassadors will be fully engaged in developing future options and recommendations, and the capacity of frontline and support staff to engage with and implement any proposed solutions will be fully considered. Equalities implications will be at the heart of developing future solutions, including digital inclusion. Alongside the review, the council continues to strengthen its digital offer to customers and work is underway on core products, such as the main website, MyAccount functionality, Customer Index/Customer Viewer and Contact Management solution.

3.8 Employment & Skills

Confirmation is awaited from the Department for Works & Pensions (DWP) regarding the council's application for a physical and virtual Employment Hub. A City Employment & Skills Recovery Plan has been drafted, containing nine objectives which will form the focus of recovery. Positive feedback on the Plan has been received by the Adult Learning & Skills Partnership, who will play an integral part in its delivery.

The Employment & Skills working group continues to meet, and terms of reference and a project plan are being drafted. The council has just appointed an Adult Learning Manager which should assist with capacity within the Employment and Skills team. The Employment & Skills working group are linking with other local authorities, where possible, to ensure a common understanding regarding city and regional developments, to avoid duplication. There is a good working relationship with the DWP. A detailed report regarding Employment & Skills,

including the City Employment & Skills Plan, forms a separate item for this committee meeting.

3.9 Events & Economy

The Events & Economy working group continues to focus on both the emergency response to the pandemic and on recovery plans. The group continues to distribute current grants to sustain businesses and [a report](#) was agreed by the Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-committee on 4 February regarding the council's discretionary powers to distribute the latest grant. The group is mindful that it may well have more grants to manage in the future. The working group is also taking a longer term view regarding visitor economy and retail recovery and is developing plans for the utilisation of the Reopening the High Street Safely funding. It is also trying to predict and prepare for reopening following lockdown from March 2021, with the ongoing challenge of needing to respond at short notice to guidance from central government and manage public safety.

The working group is looking at recovery via the city's visitor economy and creative sectors in the knowledge that preparations will be needed for as soon as lockdown is lifted and throughout 2021/22. An ambitious outdoor events programme is planned for the city over the second half of the year and the Festivals programme is still intact. A separate report regarding the city's economic recovery is being presented to this committee meeting.

3.10 Homelessness & Housing

The Homelessness & Housing working group continue to support the housing of a significant number of rough sleepers. While many have been moved on to more suitable and sustainable accommodation (and targets met relating to funding conditions), the Policy & Resources Committee commitment to maintain the Everyone In offer to rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping is keeping the number of individuals being accommodated and supported high. The Housing Committee received [a report on 20 January 2021](#) providing an update on the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) and associated funding, and highlighting current year budget pressures, which are likely to extend throughout 2021/22 and have been flagged corporately.

Discussions will continue with central government regarding potential capital funding for homes for those with more complex needs. Over the coming months, in addition to the ongoing commitment to support rough sleepers, there are concerns regarding the council's statutory homelessness responsibilities with the end of the moratorium on private sector evictions, the end of furlough and subsequent family breakdowns. The Homelessness & Housing working group continue to meet weekly to monitor and respond to the situation.

3.11 Procurement

The Procurement Team have been involved in two main activities in relation to Covid: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and supplier relief negotiations. The Brighton Centre is very well stocked with PPE and there is now no further procurement activity. The team are supporting three supplier relief negotiations and guiding providers through the grants process. Firstly, providers of home to

school transport are facing a reduction in income due to school closures (for example, taxi drivers who are self-employed and not eligible for furlough) and the council is passing on central government funding for the service so they remain in business. Secondly, public transport providers, again to supplement lost income. Thirdly, leisure centres whose requirement to pay income to the council has been significantly reduced. In terms of social care contracts, a number were deferred because of Covid but it is expected these tendering processes will be back on track during March to June 2021. There are no reports of any issues with regard to the council's supply chain as a result of the pandemic.

3.12 Ways of Working

The Ways of Working group had started to plan for the council's recovery from the pandemic in terms of its staff, council buildings and technological infrastructure. An engagement exercise is being planned to help shape what the organisation will look like in the future. It will consider, for example, what has worked well since the start of pandemic, what lessons have been learned, and what service users and customers want for the future, and how the employment offer might be improved based upon more choice of ways of working for staff. Feedback from the exercise will enable plans to be developed, supported by a Workstyles accommodation strategy and digital/IT strategy. The exercise was due to commence in January and run to March but in light of the current lockdown, this will now commence in February and run to April. An awayday has been held with the Executive Leadership Team in January to understand the key drivers and principles to inform the planning, and a second workshop will be held in February.

The primary focus for the Ways of Working group in recent weeks has been around the health and well-being of staff. A range of information, advice and guidance has been issued to staff, and the focus may now need to shift to ensuring this is reaching staff and they are accessing the support that they need. The Ways of Working group will be liaising with staff and managers to understand specific issues and how they can most appropriately be addressed.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 As the democratic body of the city, the council has a role in leading the governance and delivery of the recovery phase of the pandemic. The consequences of this public health crisis force the city to respond in ways that are different from what has been considered normal. The recovery programme is designed to ensure that the city is able to respond in an agile way as it transitions through different phases of the pandemic and moves in and out of response.
- 4.2 The pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge for Brighton & Hove and a major shock to the city's economy and communities. It also presents the city with an opportunity to shape its future. The recovery programme is designed to provide the governance structure for initiating and organising a series of coordinated, multi-agency actions during the recovery stage(s) following the pandemic affecting the communities and/or environment of Brighton & Hove. Those leading Recovery & Renewal are working closely with colleagues supporting outbreak control and emergency response to ensure approaches are co-ordinated.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The programme is engaging with the city's partnerships and governing bodies, and the Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) as part of the recovery process. The city's partnerships have been consulted as part of the programme's initiation via a scenario planning exercise where they were asked to consider the implications of the pandemic on their sectors and a response.
- 5.2 The CVS and Clinical Commissioning Group are represented on the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Group, where the leads of each working group share progress in order to identify issues, links and dependencies, and cross-cutting areas of work (meetings of this group have been paused during January to March in acknowledgement of the reduced capacity within the working groups at this time). Each working group has also been reviewed to determine whether it has appropriate CVS representation. The working groups will undertake engagement and consultations specific to their theme, as appropriate.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Covid-19 pandemic and the council's response to it have been fast paced, agile and in partnership with others, and this ethos is being carried forward into recovery. The programme will plan ahead as far as it is able, adapt in line with outbreak control and emergency response, and each working group will review its approach as circumstances change. The organisational capacity required to respond to the initial crisis, recover from it, respond again and manage business as usual cannot be under-estimated. Officers remain committed to delivering for the city, and the council and its staff, and will continue to update Members as the programme progresses.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The governance structure of the Recovery & Renewal Programme is generally provided for within the council's existing resources. Except where specific delegations have been approved by committee, actions or recommendations arising from the programme that have financial implications are reported through the council's standard governance and decision-making routes, normally Policy & Resources Committee, or its Recovery Sub-Committee, and in accordance with Financial Regulations.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell

Date: 14/02/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Recovery and Renewal Programme is entirely consistent with the Council's powers and duties under the Local Government Act 2000 (economic, social and environmental wellbeing) the Coronavirus Act 2020 and function-specific laws.

Lawyer Consulted:

Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis

Date: 09/02/2021

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Equality is fundamental to the city's and council's recovery from the pandemic, along with addressing the inequalities that it may have worsened. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been completed, as required, by the working groups and include actions to gain the best outcomes for all service users and staff. Each group is considering what existing inequalities have been revealed by the pandemic and social restrictions, what inequalities have been created or worsened, and what can be done to tackle these by the council, its partners and communities. In addition, the groups are also considering whether recovery from the pandemic creates any opportunities to narrow pre-existing inequalities. The council's Equalities Managers are supporting the process. Progress towards delivery of each EIA is checked via regular working group highlight reports as part of the governance of the programme. The Equalities & Access workstream, which is part of the Vulnerable People working group, has produced an interim report, which was shared with the Policy & Resources Committee in December and the Equality & Inclusion Partnership. An action plan has also been developed and has been shared with the Corporate Equalities & Diversity Group and a progress update will be presented to a future meeting. A range of data is available in relation to the impact of the pandemic on the city and its communities. Themed analysis and reporting can be drawn from that available but there are often time lags or a lack of baseline data. It will also be important when analysing the data to distinguish Covid-19 as the determining factor and to appreciate the data may change over time in line with local and national circumstances.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 The sustainability of its recovery plans is a key aspect of the programme's approach. This ranges from the plans to facilitate the movement of people around the city, to the sustainability of food provision, to the sustainability of the council's finances. As well as responding to the challenges thrown up by the pandemic, the programme will similarly seek to optimise any opportunities that are presented to support delivery of the council's priorities.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 The challenges of city and council recovery from the pandemic are being considered alongside the implications of Brexit. The council's Brexit Implementation Lead attends Covid Recovery & Renewal Group meetings and those of the working groups, as required. Services have been encouraged to plan their delivery in light of both Covid-19 and Brexit, and business continuity plans were refreshed with a similar focus. Opportunities to join up messaging and actions around Covid-19 and Brexit are being proactively identified, including the identification and management of risks.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.6 A Crime & Community Safety/Cohesion working group is part of the recovery programme, as detailed previously in this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

7.7 Risk management is an integral part of programme management and is being considered throughout the recovery process. The working groups have conducted risk analyses to identify the risks relevant to their area of focus and have captured these in risk logs, which are regularly monitored. Working group level risks are managed by the relevant working group and only reported to the Programme Board if they need to be escalated. Programme level risks are included in working group highlight reports and reported monthly to the Programme Board, if the working group feels they are of corporate interest. The Covid-19 Programme Manager will maintain a programme risk log comprising the programme level risks from the working groups, escalated risks, corporate risks and those that cut across more than one working group. The Programme Board will escalate risks to the Sussex Resilience Forum, as appropriate. As mentioned previously, opportunities that arise in the course of the city and council's recovery from the pandemic will be explored and pursued, as appropriate.

Public Health Implications:

7.8 Public Health is at the heart of the council's response to, and recovery from, the pandemic and is mainstreamed throughout the Recovery & Renewal programme. Colleagues from Public Health and the Recovery & Renewal programme are coordinating their responses to the pandemic and meet regularly to discuss progress and any issues.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

7.9 The programme is structured around the council and city's recovery from the pandemic and the implications to both are integral to the plans of the respective working groups.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None.

Background Documents

None.