

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

18 JUNE 2020

6

Report Title	COVID-19 – RECOVERY STRATEGY			
Purpose of Report	To propose a strategy and associated governance arrangements, setting out the Council's approach as a community leader in the local recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES: a) To endorse the approach as outlined in the Draft Recovery and Renewal Strategy document, attached as Appendix 1. b) To endorse the draft governance arrangements attached as Appendix 2.			
Consultation and Feedback	Strategic Leadership Team has shaped the proposals in this report, taking account of feedback from all members of Strategy and Resources Committee.			
Report Author	Brendan Cleere, Strategic Director of Place Email: brendan.cleere@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	The proposed approach has been developed in consultation with members, officers and partners involved in recovery efforts. No alternative options are proposed.			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Recover, Reset and Renew: A Strategy for Stroud District 2020 – 2021 Appendix 2 – Proposed Governance Arrangements Appendix 3 – Principles of Recovery			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 From the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, and especially since 'lockdown' measures were introduced on 23rd March 2020, the Council's primary focus has been on the response to this crisis. This has been a huge effort, involving close co-operation and partnership with public, private and voluntary agencies across the Stroud district, Gloucestershire and beyond. The response has included the distribution of financial support and advice for businesses and community organisations and assistance for vulnerable residents, customers and the wider community.

- 1.2 Council services have continued throughout the pandemic, with innovative changes to methods of service delivery being introduced to protect staff, customers and communities from the risks of Covid-19. Significantly, all of this has been achieved while the main offices at Ebley Mill have been closed to the public and the vast majority of staff have been working from home, enabled by the rapid introduction of remote working support and technology.
- 1.3 The Covid-19 pandemic continues to cause significant impact and hardship in many different ways across our communities and early predictions are that this is set to continue. There is a need for clear leadership by the Council and partners to work with our communities, moving forward from the response phase of the crisis towards longer term recovery.
- 1.4 'Recovery' is defined by the Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum as 'a co-ordinated process of rebuilding, restoring, rehabilitating and regenerating the Gloucestershire Community following any emergency; physically, emotionally and socially'. It is acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic is unlike other emergencies of a more localised and short term nature, such as a major storm or flood event. The approach to recovery therefore needs to cater for more complex and protracted scenarios, which may involve reverting to 'response' type activity when necessary, whilst also considering strategic opportunities to achieve longer term culture change, greater resilience, regeneration and economic development. Principles of Recovery, adapted from the Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum, are provided at Appendix 3.
- 1.5 The crisis and its restrictions have impacted on the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan, as key actions have had to be delayed and may need to be reviewed in the light of the ongoing impact of the crisis. This crisis, and the postponement of the district elections until 2021, has also delayed the work that was going to be done to consider and consult on what the Council's vision, priorities and delivery plan would be for the coming years.
- 1.6 This report sets out a proposed approach (a strategy) for the Council to facilitate recovery and renewal in the Stroud District. The focus of the strategy is external, to address the key challenges and opportunities faced by our places and communities, although it recognises that the internal recovery of the Council is also important and will be taken forward.

2. THE PROPOSED RECOVERY AND RENEWAL STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 The draft Recovery Strategy (*Recover, Reset and Renew: A Strategy for Stroud District 2020 – 2021*) is attached as Appendix 1. The Committee's endorsement is sought for this document and the associated governance arrangements, attached as Appendix 2. Whilst seeking approval for these documents, Members' attention is also drawn to the following complementary points, which have arisen during discussions prior to this meeting:

- 2.2 The Strategy sets out the proposed approach to facilitating recovery through a series of four connected work streams: (i) Economy, Market Towns and Rural Vitality, (ii) Community Resilience and Wellbeing, (iii) Affordable Housing and Homelessness and (iv) Environment and Climate Change. These work streams have been identified through discussion with Members and partners, as well as through experience over the recent weeks in responding to the crisis. The work streams also reflect the Council's previously agreed priorities in the existing Council Delivery Plan and 2020-2021 Budget.
- 2.3 Recovery from Covid-19 will require great flexibility and ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, new guidance and unforeseen impacts, including the possibility of switching into 'response' mode in the event of increased prevalence of the disease. Acknowledging this continuing uncertainty, activities within each work stream will comprise shorter term and more immediate tasks in responding (for example) to the latest government guidance, together with more strategic plans and initiatives to build longer term recovery and resilience.
- 2.4 Detailed action plans and objectives have yet to be established and this will be a priority as each work stream is mobilised, following endorsement of this Committee. Recovery and renewal plans will take account of existing or emerging strategies and plans from service committees.
- 2.5 Strong engagement and collaboration with key partners and communities will be crucial to the development and delivery of work stream objectives and activities, not least because the Council cannot effect recovery alone. Consultation and engagement will be carried out by all work streams, and opportunities will be actively pursued to 'join up' conversations where possible, to reduce consultation overload and fatigue. Effective engagement will be a hallmark of our approach both in the immediate and short term, for example in the best use of national funding to help with the safe re-opening of high streets across our district, as well as in setting longer term plans for recovery and renewal.
- 2.6 Continuing the approach taken so far, engagement and collaboration will be carried out within the District and also with agencies across Gloucestershire (such as other district councils and the County Council, GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership) and beyond. This will be important for a number of reasons, including defining the most appropriate level for activities to be planned and delivered, aligning local interventions with wider strategies and priorities and securing financial support for recovery activities.
- 2.7 The governance arrangements attached as Appendix 2 describe a clear programme management approach, whereby responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly defined and officers and members from across the whole authority are effectively and efficiently informed and engaged in the recovery effort.
- 2.8 Progressing recovery through the approach set out in this report provides opportunities to link longer term objectives and activity to inform the next iteration of the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan.

2.9 More details on the approach and values proposed to recovery and renewal are provided on page 2 of the Strategy.

3. OPTIONS

3.1 There is no 'set' approach to facilitating recovery from a pandemic such as Covid-19 but the approach described in this is recommended as the most effective, based on discussion with members, officers and partners and understanding of the local context. It is acknowledged that we are at present still in an emergency, with much uncertainty in the next few months. Therefore, preparedness and flexibility to adapt our approach as the situation changes will be important.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The report relates to the recovery and renewal strategy and therefore has no direct financial implications. Each work stream will require identification of resource requirements and funding will then be identified to meet these requirements.

The outturn process for 2019/20 will consider the allocation of sums for recovery work.

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4.2 Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations made in this report which relate to an overarching strategy. There may well be legal implications arising from the work necessary to progress the individual work streams and these can be considered as and when they arise.

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4.3 Equality Implications

There are no specific equality implications to report at this stage, although future recovery and renewal actions may have implications that will require further consideration and equality screening will be undertaken where appropriate.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications to report at this stage, although future recovery actions may have implications that will require further consideration.