

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Date: 3 August 2020
TOPIC: NORTH DEVON LAUNCHPAD 2030 – COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY
REPORT BY: HEAD OF PLACE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring forward an approach to recovery from the COVID-19 (C19) pandemic to guide the work of Council, both within the organisation but also for wider North Devon.
- 1.2 As part of our approach to recovery, it will be necessary to take a strategic look at how the impact of the pandemic may change life on an ongoing basis for our residents, businesses and the Council as an organisation. Whilst further outbreaks may occur it is now time to consider how we maintain resilience of critical services and plan for longer term recovery.
- 1.4 It is likely that a new “normal” will need to be established. It will take time to resume service delivery; some services may be reduced for some time to come, the focus of services may change and some may not return. The way we do things will change with a move to more on-line transactions for our customers and more homeworking for our employees.
- 1.5 There is still much uncertainty about the pandemic, even now that lockdown has been eased. Government guidance is arriving on a regular basis and is being fed into our response and recovery planning. In the meantime, we have begun to formulate a local approach to recovery. This work is in its early stages and the timeline and resources needed will be developed as Council officers’ further detail the work and gain a better understanding as more evidence emerges.
- 1.6 Critical to this work is the wellbeing of our communities and the recovery of our economy. An environment policy is under development by the Council and at every level there is commitment to a ‘green’ recovery. As well as presenting enormous challenges C19 has prompted a relook at what is important. The Council and its partners are taking the approach that there is also opportunity to build back better, aiming for North Devon to be stronger, fairer and greener.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Strategy and Resources Committee:

- 1) Note the activity undertaken so far by the Council and its partners to respond to the impacts of COVID-19.
- 2) Approve the draft 2030 Vision and its use for consultation
- 3) Approve the COVID-19 Recovery Framework.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Effective planning will be essential to aiding the recovery of the district and the Council over the coming months and years.

3.2 The lockdown has changed the way the Council, residents and businesses are operating and this needs to be considered in planning for the future. The Council's priorities and plans made before the pandemic will need to be reviewed in light of these changes and the impact that C19 has had on the district.

4 REPORT

4.1 C19 has had a devastating impact on our community, the local economy and the Council. Planning for recovery, both short and longer term, will be key as we move forward. It is proposed that 'Supporting Recovery' will become the overarching priority for the Council in its service delivery and in its work with partners and community.

4.2 This report presents a framework for recovery from C19, defined by a number of priority themes and actions. These actions will be subject to change as further evidence of the impact of C19 comes forward. We are determined that recovery responds to the desire of many that we build back better than before, therefore we are proposing that the our work is guided by an aspiration vision for the future.

4.3 2030 Vision

Northern Devon in 2030 remains a highly desirable place where people are able to live well, work productively, move freely and benefit from excellent education, health, leisure and cultural facilities in harmony with nature and our world-class environment.

To achieve this our ambitions are:

- A sustainable, inclusive economy
- A net zero carbon society, biodiversity gain and environmental improvement
- The health and wellbeing of our communities

4.4 Themes and Actions

The following themes and actions are proposed to provide a framework for the recovery of the Council and the district:

- 1. Improving overall population health and wellbeing and supporting the most vulnerable** – develop a sustainable approach to tackling homelessness;

work with partners to develop longer-term pathways out of poverty for the most deprived; gather evidence and lessons on long term approaches to reducing inequalities and crisis support.

2. Council services:

1. Critical service resilience - Ensure that critical services are resilient and continue to operate effectively

2. Modernise the Council - maximize the reach of new arrangements which replace pre-COVID-19 systems

3. Reimage local services - transform the Council - reimagine how services are delivered and recast service transformation plans; develop an IT, technology and engagement strategy to improve services and drive efficiencies.

3 Secure the Council's finances – lobby government to fully compensate the Council for the financial impacts of C19; review budgets to identify scope for in-year savings; reduce non-essential spending; begin the process to set the Council's budget for 2021/22; refresh the Council's medium-term financial strategy.

4 Support the local economy, businesses and infrastructure of the District to a position of stability and functionality in a constructive manner whilst seeking to support access to all opportunities for assistance and growth.

5 Housing, regeneration and development – Create a housing strategy; support people in private sector rented accommodation; create Town Plans; encourage good design and genuinely sustainable development; ensure that infrastructure to support growth is delivered in a timely manner, with delivery of affordable housing maximised, and planning powers used effectively to ensure delivery of priorities.

6 Climate change and the green economy – embed in the recovery work – publish the Council's Environmental Policy, Strategy and Action Plan; identify opportunities to reduce carbon emissions across Council operations; consider options to further promote sustainable travel; work to ensure that future housing and regeneration schemes are subject to the highest possible environmental standards.

7 Communities and social capital - ensure that affected communities are fully involved in the recovery process. Harness social capital – adopt an approach which empowers residents and allows for community-led decision making neighbourhoods; communications strategies which create two-way conversations with communities to inform decision-making.

4.5 Governance Structure

4.6 It is proposed that working groups should be set up for each of the themes, led by a member of the senior management team, working with lead members.

- 4.7 The Chief Executive will be the Senior Responsible Officer for the programme. Senior management team (SMT) will maintain oversight of the working groups and function as the Board for the programme. It is anticipated that there will be some overlap between the themes and this will be co-ordinated by SMT. Lead officers will be responsible for providing regular updates and reports to SMT and facilitating discussions to shape work programmes. SMT will review existing Council corporate priorities and identify proposals and options as part of the recovery phase.
- 4.8 Strategy and Resources Committee will be briefed on the plans and progress being made by the work streams. Key decisions, including those arrived at through partnership working will be referred to Strategy and Resources Committee in line with normal working protocols.
- 4.9 It is proposed that the Policy Development Committee will take the lead on scrutiny of the Council's response and recovery plans. In order to engage more widely with scrutiny the Chairs of the other Committees could be invited to attend the Policy Development Committee meetings.

4.10 Devon and the Heart of the South West Recovery

- 4.11 In addition to our own local plans for recovery we are working within the context of the plans for recovery for Devon, led by DCC and for Devon and Somerset, led by the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership and the HotSW Joint Committee. The business and economy recovery work for Devon is most advanced and the recovery prospectus is included as Appendix 2 to this report. Council officers and representatives from North Devon partners such as Petroc have played key roles in the Devon work, participating in the steering and theme task groups.
- 4.12 The HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership has produced a recovery plan and this is included as Appendix 3 to this report.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There will be significant resource implications resulting from delivery of the recovery strategy in terms of officer time, capital and revenue expenditure, however, there is no specific implications in respect of this report at this time. The overall action plan and individual work streams will be subject to a further report to Strategy and Resources Committee.

6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be completed where necessary as part of the recovery planning process.

7 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Article or Appendix and paragraph	Referred or delegated power?	Key decision?
Article 7.12	Appendix 4, para 17	Yes

8 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- NDC Corporate Plan
- North Devon Launchpad 2030
- Team Devon COVID-19 Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus
- HotSW LEP - Covid-19 Route Map to Recovery
- Government websites and other information on Covid-19

Appendix 1 - North Devon Launchpad 2030

Appendix 2 - Team Devon COVID-19 Economy and Business Recovery
Prospectus

Appendix 3 – HotSW LEP - Covid-19 Route Map to Recovery

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

10 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1 The author confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

Lead Members:	Leader
Author:	Michael Tichford
Date:	22 July 2020
Reference:	