

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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| Report to: | Executive Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 10 June 2020 |
| Subject: | Tewkesbury Borough Council Recovery Plan Framework |
| Report of: | Deputy Chief Executive |
| Lead Member: | Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Economic Development |
| Number of Appendices: | None |

Executive Summary:

This report seeks to set out the principles and a framework for the development of a Tewkesbury Borough Council COVID-19 Recovery Plan. The report references the need and importance of developing a Recovery Plan. Views are sought from Executive Committee prior to the preparation of a detailed Recovery Plan.

The principles and framework sets out how the subsequent Recovery Plan will support local recovery, as well as wider partnership working with strategic partners where a collaborative approach is in the interests of the Council, its communities, businesses and voluntary sectors.

A detailed Recovery Plan will be presented to a future meeting of the Executive Committee and subsequently to Council for adoption, setting out the detail and actions that will be implemented as part of the recovery process.

Having an agreed Recovery Plan will help inform future decision making and ensure resources are aligned to focus on areas that will make the biggest difference to residents, communities and businesses in light of COVID-19.

Recommendations:

- 1. To approve the allocation of £500,000 from the Business Rates Collection Fund Surplus to support the Tewkesbury Borough Recovery Plan.**
- 2. Agree that Officers prepare a detailed recovery plan based on the principles and framework set out in the report and subsequent adoption of the plan.**

Reasons for Recommendations:

The report updates Members on the need for a detailed COVID-19 Recovery Plan and asks for their views on the principles set out and upon which this detailed plan could be based, together with a request to create a specific COVID-19 recovery fund.

Resource Implications:

None directly associated with this report however there will be staff resource implications arising from the recovery and these will be set out in the plan.

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| <p>Legal Implications:</p> <p>None directly associated with this report.</p> |
| <p>Risk Management Implications:</p> <p>The report proposes that a detailed Recovery Plan is developed. Having such a plan will assist in risk identification and risk management in relation to COVID-19.</p> |
| <p>Performance Management Follow-up:</p> <p>Further reports will be submitted as required.</p> |
| <p>Environmental Implications:</p> <p>None associated with the report.</p> |

1.0 INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 COVID-19 has presented local authorities, businesses and the community at large with significant challenges. Across Gloucestershire, there has been a collective response effort to protect, shield and support our communities, distribute grant funding to many of our businesses and implement remote working practices in order to manage the crisis and continue to deliver services.

1.2 The Council will continue to work tirelessly to respond to COVID-19 and to support the emergency response for as long as it is however, like the government, it is important for the Council to start preparations and set out the approach that will be adopted to leading and managing the recovery process that will support businesses, communities and the economy at large.

1.3 The government has set out its approach to recovery in the national recovery plan:

1.3.1 ***OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy.***

Recovery plans will be created at a national, regional and a local level and it will be important to recognise this interconnectedness together with the role of partners in order to have a cohesive approach to implementation.

Locally, the Council's Recovery Plan will need to reflect the national approach of setting out the short, medium and long term support needed to address the challenges associated with COVID-19. This can be done by considering the need to *refocus*, *recover* and *rebuild* communities, businesses and the voluntary sector.

- **Refocus:** reflects the short-term analysis of the implications of COVID-19. Working closely with partners to understand how and what resources may need to be refocussed and where opportunities to collaborate on emerging recovery plans can help gain a better understanding of what recovery looks like.
- **Recover:** reflects the medium term, primarily focussing on the creation of a Recovery Plan, that sets out the strategy and actions that will support businesses, communities and voluntary groups, allowing them to survive, stabilise and adapt to the challenges of COVID-19.
- **Rebuild:** reflects the longer term measures required to allow businesses, communities and voluntary groups to rebuild and develop resilience to a post COVID-19 environment.

1.3.2 The Recovery Plan will detail key actions, milestone dates and key Officers responsible for leading on each workstream.

1.4 Governance and Structure

1.4.1 The 2020-2024 Council Plan sets out the Council's priorities for the next four years. The proposal is to use the Council Plan priority headings and monitoring mechanisms to keep the Recovery Plan aims central to the Council's priorities, and coordinate the Recovery Plan actions with existing Council Plan objectives.

1.4.2 All Members will play an important role as the recovery process develops in terms of community support and community contact. These areas will continue to be needed as the Council moves into recovery planning. By utilising the Council Plan priorities for the Recovery Plan framework, Executive Committee Members will have a lead role in the recovery process as it relates to their portfolio. Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take a key role in the monitoring and management of the Recovery Plan, together with the process of broader Member engagement.

1.4.3 The following section provides a framework and headlines some of the principles that will be considered in greater detail as part of the Recovery Plan.

1.5 Finance and Resources

1.5.1 Financial provision will need to be made for managing the recovery phase, identifying where additional resource may be required to implement recovery measures and evaluating the ongoing impact of reduced income streams.

1.5.2 The financial elements of the Recovery Plan will consider the implications and potential impacts as part of the budget and budget setting process.

1.5.3 The Council is set to benefit from a substantial release of accumulated provisions against historic business rate appeals within 2020/21. £3.56million is due to Tewkesbury Borough Council within the current financial year. This is an unbudgeted for sum and is therefore free to be directed to the needs of the Council within the year without causing any impacts on the existing budget.

1.5.4 It has been recommended through the financial impact report that the entire sum of £3.56million is set aside to finance the ongoing impact of COVID-19 including support to balance the budget in the coming years. One of the recommendations of this report is that £500,000 is set aside as a 'Recovery Fund' to support the costs of the recovery phase.

1.5.5 A recovery fund will demonstrate our commitment to supporting the recovery effort to communities, businesses and partners. It could support additional staffing resource and contribute to local and countywide recovery initiatives. The Recovery Plan will provide more detail around how the recovery fund will be used to support the actions set out in the plan.

1.6 Economic Growth and Tourism

1.6.1 Critical to our Recovery Plan will be the need to continue to support our Businesses. In the short term, almost £16m of business grants to over 1,300 eligible businesses has already been provided within the borough. The ongoing gathering of business intelligence, predominantly through the Growth Hub, will determine what businesses need from the Council in the medium to long term.

1.6.2 There will be a continuation of close working with business partners, including GFirst

LEP, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Town Trader federations, to ensure contribution to the regional economic recovery process.

- 1.6.3 The Recovery Plan will reflect upon the objectives set out in the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, to ensure the needs of these sectors are fully considered in light of COVID-19.

1.7 Housing and Communities

- 1.7.1 The impact of COVID-19 is unprecedented and far reaching. The collective response to supporting our communities has been second to none, with people working collectively to support those that need it most.
- 1.7.2 The countywide Community Help Hub has been incredibly successful, with over 1,500 calls made to Council staff by those either needing support or offering help (approximately 500 were those requiring some low level support) since its inception in March. However the immediate function of the hub, that of connecting those who could offer support to those that needed it, will inevitably come to an end in due course.
- 1.7.3 The Recovery Plan will detail how any current dependencies on short term support set up as part of the response to COVID-19 will be managed or transitioned to longer term support measures. It will identify which organisations are best placed to provide that support. In particular establishing the medium and long term roles of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Alliance, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) and Caring for Communities and People (CCP) as part of a refocused community support programme will be important in the 'recover' and 'rebuild' phases.
- 1.7.4 With regard to homelessness and rough sleeping, the pandemic has seen a substantial rise in those presenting as homeless as self-isolation and social distancing measures were initiated. In Gloucestershire, a COVID-19 Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Cell was initiated as part of the local response. At present there are around 145 people in temporary hotel accommodation in the county. The key task will be identifying suitable long-term accommodation solutions.
- 1.7.5 As part of the development of the Recovery Plan, there will be continued engagement with the Gloucestershire Housing Associations, to identify solutions to assist in the medium and longer term in relation to homelessness. This will include identifying suitable housing supply, led via the creation of a countywide officer group set up specifically for this purpose. The outcomes of these discussions will then be reflected in the actions within the Recovery Plan.

1.8 Customers First

- 1.8.1 The response to COVID-19 has seen staff and Members adapting to new technologies at an unprecedented rate, to successfully work remotely and participate in remote meetings. The Customer First priorities focus on maintaining a culture of continuous improvement and achieving 'digital by preference, and access for all. By considering the advantages of remote working technology and the flexibility this opens up for staff, Members and customers, the Recovery Plan will capitalise on providing the most flexible approaches to service delivery. COVID-19 has changed the way communities and businesses are willing to interact with the Council and partner agencies and demystified some of the suspicion around online or remote interactions.
- 1.8.2 The response to COVID-19 has required a focus and prioritisation on 'business critical' services. (Services that a local authority is required to maintain at all times including

Finance, IT, Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Planning and Customer Services)
Recovery will see a review of which services can now be restarted and what additional resource may be required in the short term to enable this to happen.

- 1.8.3** As part of the Council's organisational recovery, it will be necessary to put in place safe systems of work to ensure that when the numbers of staff working from the building increase, this can be done in a safe and controlled manner. The ways this will be done will be included in the Recovery Plan.

1.9 Sustainable Environment

- 1.9.1** The importance of continuing to manage the Council's carbon footprint and commitment to the climate change declaration will be an important consideration in the Recovery Plan. There are a number of environmental benefits arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, for example:

- 1.9.2** COVID-19 has probably resulted in an increase in cycling and walking, especially in town centres as people look to alternatives to using public transport. The Council is actively engaging with Gloucestershire County Council around the promotion of cycling and walking schemes within the borough as new funding has recently been made available to fast track the rollout of such initiatives.

- 1.9.3** The Recovery Plan will set out how the Council can provide advice and recommendations to communities and businesses on the use of environmental assets, including open green space. It will also suggest ways in which climate action and nature can be integrated into the wider planning for recovery and how the Council can support this. At a county level, the plan will set out ways in which new infrastructure strategies (housing, transport, and economic) could become more resilient and build on the lessons from COVID-19 as well as the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

1.10 Garden Town

- 1.10.1** Continuing to deliver the Garden Town programme will remain important during the recovery period. Work will need to continue, in particular, in relation to the ways of communicating and consulting with residents, businesses and Members in light of COVID-19. Successful online focussed consultation has already started, with an online sharing of information and a request for feedback in relation to the HIF Bridge programme. This approach could be utilised further in relation to the Garden Town programme to maintain momentum and public engagement. The Garden Town is an important project to promote the long term growth and economic development of the borough.

- 1.10.2** In addition, recovery planning will consider the implications of reprioritisation of some government funding streams in light of COVID-19. Working closely with regional and national partners such as Gloucestershire County Council, Homes England and MHCLG the Council will continue to look at the best ways to maximise opportunities for further funding associated with the Garden Town programme.

1.11 Delivering the Recovery Plan

- 1.11.1** In order to best manage the response to COVID-19, a number of dedicated 'cells' were created at the outset of declaring a COVID-19 emergency. This approach created new teams of Officers from different service areas that worked together to best deliver the support required across the Council, communities and businesses.
- 1.11.2** The Council response via the creation of cells has been very effective. As part of the recovery planning process, consideration will be given to the best way to utilise teams to

deliver the recovery functions.

1.12 Next steps

- 1.12.1** This report sets out the high-level principles and a framework upon which the Recovery Plan could be based. The approach proposes reflecting the priorities in the Council Plan and harnessing the existing governance arrangements to monitor progress and performance.
- 1.12.2** There will probably be a need to consult key partners as the Council's Recovery Plan develops, to ensure the plan works well alongside other county plans, such as those being developed by the Local Enterprise Partnership and Gloucestershire County Council.
- 1.12.3** In terms of timescales, whilst recognising the development of the Recovery Plan will need to be dynamic (should a second national or localised peak in COVID-19 cases emerge for example which would require a need to return to a response focussed approach) the intention is to bring a detailed Recovery Plan to the Executive Committee on 8 July 2020, with a subsequent referral to Council for adoption.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 None.

3.0 CONSULTATION

3.1 None.

4.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES / STRATEGIES

4.1 Council Plan 2020 – 2024.
Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.
Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

5.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

5.1 OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human / Property)

6.1 None directly associated with this report however there will be staff resource implications arising from the recovery and these will be set out in the plan.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

7.1 None.

8.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

8.1 None.

9.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

9.1 None.

Background Papers: Council Plan 2020 – 2024.
Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.
Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

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Appendices: None.