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TO	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE	21 January 2021
EXECUTIVE MEMBER	Council T. Schofield, Executive Member for Finance

SUBJECT	COVID-19 RECOVERY
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RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>That the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Notes the observations of the Recovery Scrutiny Panel in relation to the progress of the Recovery workstreams and the proposals for future recovery (ii) Agrees that the Recovery Scrutiny Panel be wound up and that future oversight of this activity takes place via the usual mechanisms with regular updates to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (iii) Considers the Recovery Scrutiny Panel's recommendations that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Assurance is sought that work will continue to ensure that the Council's communications strategy to residents is effective, especially in relation to Covid messaging; and (b) Recognising that new ways of working established during the pandemic will become business as usual, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Policy & Resources is requested to review relevant ICT arrangements and provide an update to the Committee in due course.
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS
In order that comments and recommendations from the Panel are considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and to confirm arrangements for future member oversight.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Since the Recovery structures and governance arrangements were established, they have played a central role, firstly in supporting transition out of the first lockdown while ensuring

vital services were provided safely; and secondly returning the wider range of Council services to a more normal footing as the pandemic has continued.

At the time of finalising this report, the country within a third lockdown period.

Despite the ongoing rollout of the vaccination programme, it is clear that we will all need to continue to respect enhanced hygiene and social distancing measures; and living and working with coronavirus will become 'business as usual' for us all. It therefore follows that ongoing recovery and transformation activity should become business as usual for the Council.

The Recovery workstreams (which have seen Executive Members and Heads of Service working in a collaborative way) have proved valuable in ensuring that, in recovering from previous lockdowns, robust decisions were able to be made in a timely manner. Importantly, their work has also meant that we now have well-established processes in place to manage our response to, and recovery from, this third (and any future) lockdowns.

On that basis, the Recovery Steering Group has agreed that future recovery and transformation activity will be taken forward as 'business as usual' (and reported via established governance structures) and as such, the Recovery workstreams and Recovery Steering Group should be wound up.

BACKGROUND

1. The Recovery Scrutiny Panel was established in June 2020 with the main objective of examining and discussing the work being undertaken by the five Recovery workstreams that were set up following the initial emergency response to the pandemic.
2. In July 2020, the Panel met and considered the Recovery governance arrangements. This included the focus of each of the five workstreams¹, as well as the anticipated timescales for the Recovery work, that is:
 - a. **Transition:** Supporting gradual transition out of lockdown for residents and ensuring vital services are provided safely (to July 2020)
 - b. **Strategic Recovery:** Returning the wider range of Council services to a more normal footing (to December 2020); and
 - c. **Transformation:** changing how we deliver services in the light of the pandemic experience (2021 onwards)
3. At that meeting, the Panel also considered the outcomes of the 'Transition' phase work undertaken by the workstreams.
4. At its October 2020 meeting, the Panel reviewed the progress being made in the 'Strategic Recovery' phase and considered an update on the Council's ongoing second wave response planning work.
5. This paper provides a summary of Recovery progress and sets out the approach that will be taken for the 'Transformation' phase. The content of this paper was

¹ Community connections, including supporting vulnerable residents; Supporting local businesses and the local economy to recover; Council services and project recovery; Finances and income to fund future services; and New Ways of Working and models of service delivery.

considered by the Recovery Scrutiny Panel on 14 January, and their discussions are recorded in the minutes of the meeting also attached to the agenda.

6. It is worth reiterating that the scope of the Panel is confined to Recovery activities and does not include the Council's statutory emergency response activity (for example to the third lockdown period), which is led by the Council's Incident Management Team.

SUMMARY OF RECOVERY PROGRESS

Transition phase (to July 2020)

7. As noted above, progress during the Transition phase was reported in detail to the Panel in July 2020. This phase focused on the recovery of services from the initial lockdown, which had seen a number of Council activities impacted in different ways, including:
 - a. Core services and activities unable to operate due to lockdown restrictions
 - b. New services and activities implemented as part of the emergency response
 - c. Non-core 'business as usual' services and activities placed on hold to enable the emergency response.
8. The Recovery workstreams, and the Recovery Steering Group, oversaw the restarting of paused services, as well as the winding down of welfare support activities over the summer months. These Recovery elements were recorded on the Recovery Overview document which has been shared regularly with the Recovery Scrutiny Panel.
9. At the same time, the Recovery process and structures also allowed (through the New Ways of Working group) consideration of how the Council should respond to the wider range of challenges and opportunities arising from 'the new normal'.
10. Finally, this phase ensured oversight of the financial and commercial impacts of Covid at a time when business as usual structures and processes were disrupted.

Strategic Recovery phase (to December 2020)

11. The Strategic Recovery phase ran through the summer months and into the Autumn, prior to the country moving into its second lockdown.
12. In the early stages of this phase, evidence gathering was undertaken through the staff and member surveys to identify continuing areas of challenge and concern.
13. This phase then focused on ensuring that appropriate measures were in place for all Council services and activities to be delivered in a safe way (for both staff and customers), consistent with national coronavirus regulations. This included health and safety considerations and identifying different ways of providing services and activities that could not be made Covid safe.
14. The phase also allowed consideration to be given to the outcomes of the survey work and of measures that could be put in place to address the issues raised.
15. Within this phase, the Recovery process allowed for the consideration of learning points to inform future response/recovery planning and decision making. This work complemented that of the Incident Management Team, such that the Council was well prepared to respond when the second lockdown was announced.

Second lockdown

16. Since the Panel met in October, we have seen the introduction of the Tiers system a second national lockdown; and at the time of writing, the country is in a third lockdown period (covered below at para 29 onwards).
17. The second lockdown meant that some of the initial response activities that had been recovered needed to be re-implemented as the second wave response plan was instigated. For example, welfare calls were re-commenced, and certain Council facilities were closed again to comply with national regulations.
18. In line with agreed procedures, all emergency response activity that would require recovery was documented and tracked to ensure a smooth transition back at the appropriate time.

Governance and working arrangements

19. As part of the 2020/21 Internal Audit plan, SIAP were invited to review the Council's Recovery governance. The audit concluded that the Recovery governance structure was working well and that the controls in place were effective.
20. Through both the Transition phase and the Strategic Recovery phase, the structure of the Recovery workstreams (bringing together Executive Members and Heads of Service to work in a more collaborative way) proved valuable in ensuring robust decisions were able to be made in a timely manner.

NEXT STEPS AND TRANSFORMATION PHASE

Looking to the longer-term future

21. When the Recovery process and structures were established, it was not known how long the pandemic would continue, or with what severity the impacts would continue to be felt at a local level.
22. The current system of tiered restrictions is expected to continue until at least March; with a growing hope that the nationwide rollout of a vaccination programme will mean that the severest restrictions will not need to be re-introduced beyond this point.
23. What is also clear, however, is that we will all need to continue to respect enhanced hygiene and social distancing measures, and that the wider economic fallout of 2020 restrictions will continue to be felt for the foreseeable future.
24. In this regard, living with the coronavirus will become business as usual for us all. It therefore follows that recovering our services from the pandemic should also become business as usual for the Council.
25. In late 2020, we were already seeing this happen, with service planning and decision making structures back up and running; and with individual services incorporating Covid-safe working practices, and consideration of current and proposed coronavirus regulations incorporated within business as usual service planning and delivery processes.
26. On that basis, in mid-December, the Recovery Steering Group agreed that, instead of progressing with the Transformation phase via the Recovery workstreams, this work would be taken forward as follows:
 - a. Firstly, the day-to-day process of 'working with coronavirus' to become business as usual for all Council services; with any remaining Recovery

elements being developed and discussed with Executive Portfolio Holders through the usual briefing and decision mechanisms

- b. Secondly, as a result of the above, the Recovery workstreams and Recovery Steering Group be wound up.
27. Recognising the longer term strategic focus of the New Ways of Working workstream, the Recovery Steering Group have agreed that this be refocused as a strategic change / transformation programme to be overseen by the Organisation Board and a steering group of relevant Executive Members.
28. It should be noted that the above changes relate to the Recovery programme and do not impact on the Council's Emergency Planning responsibilities or structures, which will continue to be deployed as required by the Surrey Local Resilience Forum to respond to (for example) any future lockdowns.

Third lockdown period

29. At the time of writing this report, the country is in a third lockdown period. The Council's Incident Management Team has been meeting to agree and monitor our response to this lockdown. As lockdown measures are broadly similar to Tier 4 requirements, there are not expected to be major additional actions required.
30. Certain facilities remain closed in line with government requirements. The Council will also continue to have a role in administering additional grants/funding streams, and the provision of welfare referrals and support. Consideration is also being given to business continuity arrangements to ensure we can continue to deliver essential service in the event that some staff are unable to work due to shielding or illness.
31. As was the case for the second lockdown period, activity that will require recovery will be documented and tracked to ensure a smooth transition back at the appropriate time.
32. The experience and procedures developed throughout 2020 by the recovery workstreams (and as reported to this Panel) means that we now have well established processes in place to manage our response to, and recovery from, this third (and any future) lockdowns as 'business as usual'.