

## **Appendix III: Draft Recovery Plan - September 2020**

### **Introduction**

The government's overarching approach to recovery is published in a 50-page recovery strategy (our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy). With this in mind, the council turned its attention from emergency response to the 'recovery phase' back in June 2020.

The concept of recovery may be understood differently by different people and that is understandable. This is not a normal recovery due to the scale of the Covid-19 impact. Normally we would return over time to business as usual, but in this situation, this will not happen and so we are in uncharted waters. This recovery is unique.

Recovery may require some form of realignment of services and processes of the council, with short, medium and long-term choices to make. To help the council be clearer in its approach, a plan was developed in June which is evolving over time.

The draft Recovery Plan was agreed by Cabinet on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and then discussed in a member forum 22<sup>nd</sup> July. Feedback from these sessions has been taken into account in this update of the plan. This version has also been updated to take account of progress and changes since June 2020.

What is clear is that we still face huge challenges both nationally and locally, and the need to be flexible and agile is still of upmost importance. Working together with our partners is crucial as is timely messaging and support to our residents when needed.

### **What is the Recovery Plan?**

It is an attempt to address the different phases of recovery as we move through them. We are working to immediate (June – Sept), medium term (October - March 2021) and longer term (March 2021 +).

The plan sets out what the council intends to do throughout the process of recovery, accepting that there will be different responses depending on local, specific circumstances. We are seeing that recovery is not linear. We may have to return to emergency response depending on if another spike hits and we enter into what is now termed a local lockdown, as is being seen in the north of England. It also needs to be sustainable for the longer term. Whilst since June further information and guidance has emerged, this is a moving feast and we still await national responses and interventions that we will respond to, the most recent being local lockdowns to prevent a second wave.

So in that context, a plan was prepared as robustly as possible, balancing the need to sustain core services, to continue with the Administration's programme of change and to meet the pressures of what will be a changed social and economic environment.

Coronavirus has amplified some of the issues the borough faces – struggling high streets, health inequalities - but it has also shown the strengths that it has – community spirit, quality open spaces. The Recovery Plan aims to address the underlying issues but also build on the strengths.

### **Why do we need a Recovery Plan?**

To help focus and prioritise the council's approach and ensure that is a safe, sustainable, managed recovery. Also, as a statement to the borough and wider partners, of its commitment and the role it has to play.

We have been initiating our recovery not only within the national framework, but also at a county level. In accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the County Council, along with District councils, have a statutory responsibility regarding recovery, with the county taking the lead as it effects more than one district. However, the council, working within this broader context, continues to develop its own response for its own activity, but also more broadly in relation to Swale's communities and economy.

The framework will be used to assess both the impact and opportunities as a result of the pandemic, particularly in regard to changing trends and behaviours, social and environmental evolution, but also economic, social, environmental and health impacts.

### **What are the priorities for the Recovery Plan?**

The Administration made clear its priorities last May. These are now articulated through its emerging Corporate Plan. The pandemic has magnified these priorities and enhanced their relevance and importance for the borough and so the Recovery Plan focuses itself around these in terms of action related to recovery. These priorities for recovery are set out below with high level actions as they evolve in Table One.

**Economic Improvement:** Support our local economy so that it can survive and be strong, resilient, dynamic, and adaptable to change. Encourage a local economy that fosters good, clean, sustainable growth. Play our part in helping meet some of the immediate challenges the boroughs' economy now faces but also take advantage of the untapped potential, for longer-term benefit.

**Affordable Housing:** Provide sustainable housing for local people by pursuing all viable opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable and social housing across the borough. Work in partnership to respond to those in need of housing, anticipating demand as we move out of lockdown.

**Climate and Environmental Emergency:** Seize the opportunities arising from the pandemic to a renewed commitment to investing in our environment and addressing climate change. Explore new approaches as a result of behavioural change and its impact on the environment. Ensure ecological issues are not squeezed out.

**Communities and Social Inclusion:** Enable our communities to be resilient and cohesive. Capitalise on the community spirit engendered through the pandemic and our changed relationship with the voluntary and community sector as a result – supporting it to bring about social change and quality of life. Focus on the vulnerable groups hardest hit by the pandemic, and address health and wellbeing implications arising from it. Recognise the impact COVID has had on social isolation and respond accordingly.

**Renewing Local Democracy and making the council fit for the future:** Improve the council’s engagement with communities and stakeholders across the borough to get buy in for a collective recovery. Be innovative in our ideas on how we do things as an organisation given the cultural, behavioural and environmental changes the pandemic presents.

### **Overarching/ Cross Cutting Themes**

In addition to the priorities above, there are some overarching/ cross cutting themes that run throughout the approach to recovery:

**Working in collaboration:** The council is committed to working in collaboration with a wide range of partners to facilitate and enable recovery. The changed social and economic circumstances have provided an opportunity look again at the role public sector organisations, like the council, plays. There is no single agency responsible for ‘delivering’ recovery - we will need to work together. Success will depend on coordination across a range of partners and a communitarian approach to partnership working based on shared objectives, across the public, private and community sectors in Swale.

**Communications and messaging:** It is important that we communicate effectively and timely and get our messaging right so people know what the council is doing and how it is able to support them. Making the most of our assets and using the attributes of each area of Swale to promote places and the borough as a whole as a great place to visit and invest will be key to recovery. Recognising and promoting positive outcomes including reduced traffic and pollution, better work/life balance, community spirit.

**The Local Plan Review:** This major project pulls all other strands together. Driving good, sustainable growth through the Local Plan Review will address all the priorities – economic improvement, affordable housing and good design and standards, community infrastructure, climate change agenda and so on.

**How will we deliver?**

In terms of delivery structure and governance, Cabinet subgroups for priority areas have been established, that meet monthly. We also fed into the Kent wide recovery structure until it was stepped down in August 2020. This structure will be stepped up again should the need arise should Kent experience local lockdowns.

The council will need to be mindful that recovery, as with response, has a huge potential impact on the Council's finances. Delivery will need to be within the financial parameters of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and ensure the ongoing financial viability of the council. There has been government and other external funding provided to the council up to this point, and this may or may not continue.

Actions have already been undertaken to prepare a detailed estimate of the projected revenue budget impact so far of the pandemic. A base position has been established which will be subject to regular review through the recovery phases, and impacts are based on a variety of assumptions, some for a limited period and others assuming an ongoing impact through the year.

**What is our exit strategy out of recovery?**

It is still hard to know when recovery will end. What is known is that any withdrawal of support or focus will need to be managed sensitively and at the right time, working locally and collaboratively.

**Table One: Actions for focus**

Priority	Areas of Focus – Short term June – Sept 20	Areas of Focus – Medium Term Oct 20 – March 2021	Areas of Focus – Long Term March 2021 +
<b>Economic Improvement</b>	Deliver the various business grant schemes	Review our response to Business support (sector specific eg SME, Tourism as well as business start-ups?)	Investigate the evolution of a 'one business account' approach within the Council
	Link into any emerging regional/ national schemes – Kickstart launches September 2020	Link into any emerging regional/ national schemes – Kickstart implementation begins November 2020	Link into any emerging regional/ national schemes that support Council ambitions.
	Develop EIP short term actions	Endorsement and adoption of the Economic Improvement Plan (EIP)  Implement the EIP actions Commence work on wider set of the EIP actions  Deliver EIP short term actions	Review the EIP actions
	Develop VEF quick wins	Endorsement of the Visitor Economy Framework (VEF)  Implement the VEF actions  Deliver VEF quick wins	Review the VEF actions
	Deliver the Opening up the High	Continue to review the Opening	Develop high street place

	Streets Project across Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Faversham	<p>up the High Streets Project across Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Faversham</p> <p>Develop the wider Sittingbourne High Street Project, reflected in the Sittingbourne High Street SPD/ Vision</p> <p>Deliver initial public realm improvements in Sheerness and enhance capacity for future delivery</p> <p>Determine the future approach to the High Streets for the longer-term</p>	<p>making and strategic visioning</p> <p>Develop and deliver public realm improvements through Capital Projects team</p>
	Continue to explore FE opportunities and opportunities for retraining	Participate in discussions with key stakeholders to seek a consensus for improving future provision.	Participate in discussions with key stakeholders to seek a consensus for improving future provision.
			Look at the opportunity for business start-ups/ incubator space/ commuter provision
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Assess the impact on demand for housing service as a result of changes to Government support	Work in partnership to secure TA and affordable accommodation once Section 21 notices reintroduced	Insist on affordable housing as part of the planning process
	Deliver landlord tenancy sustainment work and prevention work	Review landlord tenancy sustainment work and prevention work	Adapt where necessary landlord tenancy sustainment work and prevention work

	Deliver rough sleeping and hidden homeless project	Deliver Next Steps Accommodation Programme	Review rough sleeping and hidden homeless projects
	Explore feasibility of establishing a Housing Company	Set up Housing Company  Progress the development of the Mormon site and Fountain Street Assess options for Cockleshell walk	Progress the development of the Mormon site and Fountain Street Assess options for Cockleshell walk
<b>Climate and environmental emergency</b>	Deliver the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan	Deliver the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan	Deliver the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan
	Developing plans for Swale House refurbishment	Determining what is feasible for Swale House refurbishment	Refurbishment started
	Clean Air Zone	Consultants commissioned to develop a proposal	Implementation subject to KCC
	Green staff travel plan	How to reduce business mileage and commuting mileage	Actions implemented after staff and trade union consultation
	Work with Children and Families Ltd to recruit a Fuel and Water project worker	Implement work programme for the Fuel and Water project worker to help residents who may be struggling financially and are in fuel poverty.	Review work programme for the Fuel and Water project worker to help residents who may be struggling financially and are in fuel poverty.
	Park Improvement projects to encourage greater activity and access to green space and the health and wellbeing outcomes that brings	Park Improvement projects to encourage greater activity and access to green space and the health and wellbeing outcomes that brings	Park Improvement projects to encourage greater activity and access to green space and the health and wellbeing outcomes that brings
	Active Travel Project tranche 1	Active Travel project tranche 2	

		Agree the Transport Strategy through the Local Plan	
<b>Communities and Social Inclusion</b>	Develop a health and wellbeing recovery plan	Develop and implement a health and wellbeing recovery plan	Review health and wellbeing recovery plan
	Deliver community support hub	Review support and reinstate community support hub in event of a local lockdown	
		Undertake targeted interventions (door knocking) with our most disadvantaged families and communities	Work in partnership to tackle mental health and improve the scope of such services
		Preparation for holding small community engagement events in local areas as per govt guidance	Run small community engagement events in local areas as per govt guidance
	Work with Swale foodbanks to ensure a coordinated effort of support	Work with Swale foodbanks to ensure a coordinated effort of support	Work with Swale foodbanks to ensure a coordinated effort of support
	Grant support and work with Swale CVS, CAB, to support communities	Grant support and work with Swale CVS, CAB, to support communities	
	Run the member community grant scheme	Run the member community grant scheme	
	Developing an ongoing volunteer scheme building on those who helped with community hub	Developing an ongoing volunteer scheme building on those who helped with community hub Implement the scheme	Implement the scheme



	Deliver work programme of the Community Engagement and Social Inclusion Officer and the Health and Wellbeing Officer	Deliver work programme of the Community Engagement and Social Inclusion Officer and the Health and Wellbeing Officer	Review work programme of the Community Engagement and Social Inclusion Officer and the Health and Wellbeing Officer
	Develop an approach to the Emergency Assistance programme and allocate funding	Monitor the emergency assistance programme	
		Ensure compliance with Track and Trace app launched 24 <sup>th</sup> September	
	Contribute to the development of the Kent Local Lockdown Plan	Support the Public Health Local Lockdown Plan and utilise the £50k grant	
<b>Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future</b>	Introduce Area Committees	Evolution of Area Committees	Area Committees established and sustained
	Planning the introduction of Cabinet Committees	Cabinet Committees introduced	Cabinet Committees functioning
	Redesign and risk assess Swale House to comply with Govt guidance for safely getting people back to the office. Determine process of getting staff back in phases	Continue phased return of staff Review introduction of opening reception and getting other services back	Embed homeworking/ flexible working within the culture of the Council in the longer term.
	Explore the use of technology and digital for home working and holding virtual meetings		