

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 11 th February, 2021
Report Subject	Recovery Strategy Update
Cabinet Member	Collective Cabinet
Report Author	Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Corporate Finance Manager and Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has developed a corporate Recovery Strategy for the pandemic emergency situation.

Cabinet requested each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to support recovery in their respective portfolio areas, and specifically to have oversight of:-

1. The portfolio risk register(s) and the risk mitigation actions, both live and planned;
2. The objectives for recovery for the portfolio(s);
3. The immediate strategic priorities for recovery for the portfolio(s) extracted from the draft Council Plan for 2020/21; and
4. The set of revised performance indicator targets for the portfolio(s) for 2020/21.

This report provides the Committee with an update on the portfolio risk register and risk mitigation actions (shown at Appendix 1 and 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee review the latest updated risk register and risk mitigation actions within the corporate portfolios.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE EMERGENCY RECOVERY
1.01	<p>The Council has developed a corporate Recovery Strategy for the pandemic emergency situation. The Strategy covers:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The chronology of the emergency response phase and transition to recovery2. The handover arrangements or recovery3. Organisational recovery of the corporate organisation4. Community recovery of the communities we serve5. Strategic priorities and performance for the remainder of 2020/216. The roles the Council will play in regional recovery7. The democratic governance of recovery
1.02	<p>The development of the Recovery Strategy was overseen by a cross-party Member Recovery Board. Cabinet endorsed the Recovery Strategy at a special meeting on 15 September.</p>
1.03	<p>Cabinet invited each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to support recovery in their respective portfolio areas, and specifically to have oversight of:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The portfolio risk register(s) and the risk mitigation actions both live and planned;2. The objectives for recovery for the portfolio(s);3. The immediate strategic priorities for recovery for the portfolio(s) extracted from the draft Council Plan for 2020/21; and4. The set of revised performance indicator targets for the portfolio(s) for 2020/21.
1.04	<p>The latest version of the risk register (Appendix 1) and table of risk mitigations (Appendix 2) for the Corporate Services portfolio are attached.</p>
1.05	<p>The recovery aims for the organisation are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the stabilisation of the finances of the organisation• assuring the financial resilience of the organisation through medium-term financial planning• a managed transition to new ways of working as an organisation e.g. greater digitisation, and expansive home/remote working• the protection of the health and well-being of the workforce in the resumption of services <p>An update on the recovery objectives for the service portfolio(s) for this Committee is shown below:</p>

Governance

- **To restore collection rates of Council Tax, NNDR and housing rents to improve income levels**
Welsh Government has issued further rounds of grant funding for businesses which have been delivered. This is challenging capacity to collect income which remains slightly below previous years' performance. Performance is comparable to that of other councils who have likewise experienced a reduction.
- **Registrars Service**
Marriage services continue to be held at Llwynegrin Hall though numbers are very low. We have temporarily limited numbers of guests to 8 for safety. Income levels are badly affected due to the closure of licensed wedding venues. Other registrations continue at normal levels.
- **To restore full democratic oversight**
We are now holding Council meetings and all of our committees with remote 'attendance' via Webex technology. The recordings of these meetings are available on our website. Live streaming of meetings will be piloted during April with a view to streaming all meetings from May 2021. Public participation in meetings is likely to be delayed until June, when the Council changes its video conferencing software.
- **To continue to support and expand digital means of service delivery**
The number of services available digitally continues to grow e.g. digital forms are created for businesses to apply for each new round of grant funding, and school broadband capacity is being increased to enable remote learning.
- **To restore the internal control environment and audit inspections**
The Council has maintained high levels of internal control and assurance throughout the pandemic. The Internal Audit Service remains on track to complete sufficient audits to be able to deliver an assurance opinion.

Workforce

- **To ensure that the legal and ethical duties of the employer are met in recovery**
We continue to navigate new legislation and provide guidance for complex situational questions, to tackle the short and long-term obstacles from the impact of the emergency e.g. Furlough, the Job Support Scheme, annual leave, working from home, quarantine and self-isolation. In exceptional circumstances, where it becomes evident that not all vials will be used by the end of a session, the vaccine is being offered at very short notice to people who meet the eligibility criteria of the UK Independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority list. We are working closely with health colleagues in BCUHB to help fill these appointments to avoid waste

through the use of reserve lists of eligible key workers.

- **To return the workforce to safe and productive working environments**

There are no plans to return everyone to the workplace yet and we have readied our buildings for a gradual return. This includes the development of a variety of materials including an animation, video and guidance documents to support managers and employees in their return. All are accessible via a newly created Living and Working with COVID-19 hub on the Infonet.

- **To restore and protect the well-being of the workforce over time**

The emergency situation has had an impact on all of us, how we live, work and interact. In work it has impacted on how we interact and communicate with each other, as teams, with managers, colleagues and friends. We provide a range of ongoing support at an individual, manager, and team level both practical and emotional and will continue to look for alternative methods of providing ongoing help and support.

- **To recommend and implement working practices for the immediate future e.g. use of technology and digital practices, remote working, distance learning**

We have implemented a number of technology solutions to support the workforce working remotely and maintain contact with service users. Moving forward we continue to explore technologies to allow a hybrid approach to methods of working.

- **To review opportunities for organisational re-design based on learning from the emergency response phase**

Changes in working the practices and patterns of our front-line services, and the effectiveness of technological solutions in supporting home working during the height of the pandemic has demonstrated that services can operate successfully without the need to be physically co-located. It is important that where feasible to do so, we capitalise on these changes and build on them where it is right to do so.

Finance

- **To ensure the liquidity of the organisation**

We are continuing to monitor our cash flow on a daily basis to ensure that we have sufficient available resources to undertake our business. Ensuring the overall financial sustainability of the Council is a key consideration in the current work on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and a report on a proposed legal and balanced budget is also included on this agenda.

- **To maximise national assistance from emergency and other government funds**

We maintain a financial 'tracker' with the details of all additional costs and income losses arising from the pandemic and continue to make monthly claims for additional costs and quarterly claims for income

	<p>losses from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. Reports are made on a monthly basis to Cabinet and to this Committee within the standard revenue budget monitor report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• To recover and restore income over time The Income loss Hardship Fund is assisting with the immediate shortfall in budgeted income. Work on the resilience of Portfolio Business Recovery Plans for income recovery, and the specific work on debt recovery, continues.</p> <p>• To recover debt over time We are continuing to engage with residents and businesses to provide advice and to set-up realistic and affordable re-payment agreements for corporate debts. Invoices payable to the Council are due within 30 days of invoicing but we are adopting a pragmatic approach by setting up longer term payment plans on a case-by-case basis. We have recommenced debt recovery processes and initially targeted high-debt values as a first priority. A review of the adequacy of the level of bad debt provision has also been undertaken and changes made where appropriate.</p> <p>• To restore reserves and balances over time The Council will need to utilise its reserves to meet any emergency additional costs not claimable from the Hardship Fund and also to deal with any overall in-year overspend. The level of reserves held will be a key consideration of the current work on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Annual Budget 2021/22. The budget monitoring update report 2020/21 shows that expenditure is currently projected to be within budget, and the 2021/22 budget report includes an additional contribution to reserves to further safeguard the Council against the risks of a protracted emergency situation.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no specific resource implications from this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None specific as this report is based on documented response and recovery work.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	This report specifically covers emergency situation risk management.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Updated Corporate Recovery Risk Register Appendix 2 – Updated Corporate Risk Mitigation Actions

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Colin Everett Telephone: 01352 702101 E-mail: chief.executive@flintshire.gov.uk