

RECOVERY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 15 th July, 2021
Report Subject	Corporate Recovery Objectives
Cabinet Member	Collective Cabinet
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wales, and the North Wales region, is now in a second phase of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report provides an update on the corporate objectives adopted by the Recovery Committee at the June meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee is assured by progress in meeting the recovery objectives.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	RECOVERY STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE
1.01	Wales, and the North Wales region, is now in a second phase of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
1.02	<p>The overall recovery aims of the organisation are</p> <p><u>Overall Organisational Recovery</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To ensure the financial resilience and sustainability of the organisation in budget planning for 2022/23 and the medium-term;2. To make a managed transition to a new operating model for working arrangements for the workforce;3. To continue to protect the health and well-being of the workforce;4. To continue to maintain good governance;5. To restore public access to, and participation in, democratic meetings;6. To continue to ensure organisational business continuity, and contingency planning for unforeseen developments with the pandemic’. <p>An update on the corporate recovery objectives for this Committee are shown below:</p> <p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>To ensure the financial sustainability of the organisation We were able to successfully navigate our way through the last full financial year of the pandemic due in part to the assistance received from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. Ensuring the overall financial sustainability of the Council is a key consideration in the current work on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2022/23.</p> <p>To continue to maximise national assistance from the hardship fund and other government funding We are continuing to make monthly claims for additional costs and quarterly claims for income losses from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. It is uncertain at this stage what will happen when the current scheme ends in September. The financial impacts of the claims are included in the monthly budget monitoring reports to Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>To continue to recover and restore income to target levels The Income loss Hardship Fund continues to assist with any existing shortfalls in budgeted income. Portfolio Business Recovery Plans include income recovery considerations which have been made in conjunction with the annual uplift arising from the corporate fees and charges policy.</p>

To continue to recover and restore debt to target levels

Income collection continues and we actively engaging with tax-payers, tenants, customers and businesses to offer flexible arrangements. We are also taking steps to enforce payment against residents and businesses who have not paid nor engaged with the Council over several months

To maintain reserves and balances at levels that meet our needs

The Council will need to utilise its reserves to meet the additional costs of any elements 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 Budget 2022/23.

Workforce**To ensure that the legal and ethical duties of the employer continue to be 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 pandemic e.g. overseas travel, annual leave, working from home, quarantine and self-isolation. Working with Public Health Wales (PHW) and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) we have provided the workforce with an opportunity to undertake a supervised lateral flow device (LFD) test. Those who have participated have returned a negative test which gives assurance over the safety measures in place in the workplace and the levels of compliance with those measures among the workforce.

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

The Council continues to review its policies and practices with a view to establishing new ways of working which achieves a range benefits for both the organisation and our employees, including a better work-life balance, saved commuting time and costs, IT upskilling and higher levels of motivation.

To agree and implement a new operating model and working arrangements which maximise the use of technology and digital workplace solutions

We have implemented a number of technology solutions to enable those who are able, to work remotely and maintain contact with service users. The Council needs to determine the optimum operating model for its workforce which delivers the strategic objectives of the Digital Strategy and achieves a happy, secure, effective hybrid workforce

To continue to review opportunities for organisational re-design based on the learning from the emergency response and recovery phases

Changes in working the practices and patterns of our front-line services, and the effectiveness of technological solutions in supporting home working 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.

Governance

To restore collection rates of Council Tax, NNDR, Sundry Debt and housing rents to target levels

After diverting resources to pay grants/rate relief to small businesses, the Service is now able to focus fully on collecting monies due to the Council. There are still limitations on some recovery methods, e.g. court action to enforce payment of rent, so the expectation is that recovery rates will be better than last year but not at the levels seen in previous years.

To complete the transition to a settled model for modern meetings

The Council needs to decide the format for its meetings in the medium to long term as part of recovery but also to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

To restore accessibility to, and participation by, the public in member meetings

The Council is now live streaming meetings and will restore public participation in meetings from July.

To continue to support and expand digital means of service delivery

The Council has approved a refreshed digital strategy that will continue to drive forward the digitisation of Council services, improve connectivity across the County and region and ensure that no one is excluded by reason of not having access to the skills, devices or connectivity.

Service Recovery

To ensure the business continuity of all services

All five service portfolios are operating their recovery business plans. The plans are being reported to this Committee in sequence. The Committee will have reviewed and assured all five plans by the close of its third meeting.

To meet the specific recovery objectives for each portfolio as set out in their respective business recovery plans

All five service portfolios are operating their recovery business plans effectively (see above).

To plan the full recovery of services against any backlogs and temporarily reduced performance standards

All five service portfolios are operating their recovery business plans effectively (see above).

To ensure that contingency planning is in place should there be a return to a third phase of response

We have learnt much from the experience of two significant 'lockdowns' during the pandemic. We have contingency plans in place should there be any future response phase and the imposition of restrictions by Governments e.g. assignment of employees in non-critical roles for other work, blended/remote learning in schools, restricted visitor access to care homes etc. Should there be a future phase of response then the Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) would be reconvened and the response command structure resumed. This command structure

was highly effective in the two response phases as recognised by members and external partners and regulators.

Community Recovery

To protect the health and well-being of local communities

During the height of the pandemic there was specific support for people who were medically vulnerable, this included food deliveries and prescription collections. The shielding scheme was paused again from 31st March 2021, however, the services and support arrangements are still in place and able to step up should this be required again in the future.

To support and protect the most vulnerable in society

Poverty and vulnerability have had a significant impact on residents during the pandemic and we have learnt many things from the work we have delivered in the last 16 months. We are focussing on the main areas, which are also priorities in the council plan, which are:

- Income Poverty
- Child Poverty
- Food Poverty
- Fuel Poverty
- Digital Poverty

The purpose is to understand where there may be gaps between response and recovery and identifying opportunities where current activities can be re-defined and adapted or where additional intervention is required in order to generate solutions to meet short and medium term need.

To support the recovery of communities and build their resilience

This work is coordinated at the sub-regional level by the combined Public Service Board (PSB) of Wrexham and Flintshire. The joint PSB have identified four themes to work on:

- Mental Health
- Environment
- Poverty and Inequality
- Children and Young People

To support the economic recovery of communities and local business sectors

A report on this recovery objectives is to follow on the agenda. Updates will be provided during this item.

Regional Recovery

To fully engage with the regional recovery strategy and as a member of the regional Recovery Co-ordinating Group

The Council is a category one member of the regional Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) and is an ever-present attendee. Our Chief Executive is the chair. We fully engage in both the development of regional recovery strategy and the implementation of agreed strategy and plans at a local level.

	<p>To effectively manage the local implementation of the regional <i>Prevention and Response</i> strategy for the pandemic</p> <p>The regional Prevention and Response strategy – which covers containment of the virus through a number of plans and enforcement powers – was adopted by all partners including the Council and has recently been revised (the strategy is available on request). The Council implements the strategy, which includes Test, Trace and Protect and the Vaccination Programme, through our local partnership structures. Our local multi-agency Prevention and Surveillance Group (which is currently meeting weekly) oversees and directs all local activity.</p> <p>To effectively manage the local operation of the <i>Test, Trace and Protect</i> programme</p> <p>Flintshire is the lead local authority for this programme in partnership with the Health Board, and is the employing body for the tracing workforce for the whole region. This service performs well. The Council also plans the local testing services in partnership with the Health Board, the Ambulance Services Trust and other partners, and has recently developed a contingency plan for mass community testing – known as ‘surge’ – should this be required. The way in which the Council has supported vulnerable people who have previously being ‘shielding’ is a working example of the ‘protect’ plan in action. The presentation on regional working at this meeting will cover Test, Trace and Protect.</p> <p>To play a full part in the planning and delivery of partnership programmes e.g. the vaccination programme</p> <p>Flintshire plays a full part in the development and local implementation of all regional programmes. Through the Chief Executive the Council is represented on the strategic group that has designed and oversees the vaccination programme which is delivered by the Health Board as the responsible executive agency. The Council has played a major role in the planning and operation of the Mass Vaccination Centre at Deeside Leisure Centre and in promoting access to vaccinations amongst the community and our workforce. We also play a role in planning mobile vaccination units in areas of lower take-up. The presentation on regional working at this meeting will cover the vaccination programme.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None specific

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Consultation on the second phase recovery strategy and governance arrangements has taken place with Chief Officers, the internal Emergency Management Response Team, Cabinet Members, and Group Leaders.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None specific.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Colin Everett Telephone: 01352 702101 E-mail: chief.executive@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.