

RECOVERY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 4 th November, 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, continues to be in a second phase of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. We are now managing an ongoing endemic situation.

This report provides an update on the corporate objectives adopted by the Council.

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, continues to be in a second phase of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. We are now managing an ongoing endemic situation.
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>Updates on progress in meeting the corporate recovery objectives which underpin these aims are given 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 which is just entering its third stage. The Welsh Government’s Provisional Budget at a national and local level is scheduled to be announced on 20/21 December.</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 has previously been confirmed that this funding will continue until the end of the current financial year although some changes to the eligible criteria have been made from 1 October which will impact on our claims. The financial impacts of the claims will continue to be 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 It was previously confirmed that the Hardship Fund will continue to assist with any existing shortfalls in budgeted income in the current financial</p>

year. 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.

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 long term impact of the pandemic e.g. working from home, quarantine and self-isolation. Working with Public Health Wales (PHW) and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) we have provided our social care workforce with an opportunity to have their booster vaccination and continue to support them in the testing scheme developed specifically for health and social care staff work in a user facing so that they can continue to provide care to those most in need. We will continue to provide revised guidance as the position changes.

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 of 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 whilst maintaining service levels. We have increased our Occupational Health capacity and introduced additional counselling capacity in addition to the internal provision of Physiotherapy as a more cost effective alternative to present arrangements, enabling greater control for the organisation to support employees based on clinical need.

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. A draft hybrid working protocol is being developed which supports the principles of hybrid working (home/office) and in recognition of Welsh Government's aspirational target for 30% of the Welsh workforce to work remotely, homeworking will continue to be the main option for employees whose role allows it, until advised otherwise. The overriding objective of

the protocol is to maximise flexibility which can be both effective and productive for both the Council and its employees, whilst promoting best practice in the management of hybrid working. We will regularly review our provisions to ensure that they are legally compliant and reflect best practice.

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

Changes in working 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

Recovery rates for council tax and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) have improved and we are on track against the target (noting that the target is lower this year than before the pandemic). Rent arrears have increased across the summer though is in line with the national picture. We still await the impact of the end of the furlough scheme and also the reduction in universal credit.

To complete the transition to a settled model for modern meetings

The Council has agreed that a working group reporting to the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee will look at the format for meetings in the medium to long term and also the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The detailed terms of reference will be set at that Committee's meeting in November.

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

This is now complete and the public have the same opportunity to participate in meetings as before the pandemic.

To continue to support and expand digital means of service delivery

The Council successfully implemented a new admissions module ahead of the start of the school year to improve the customer experience of arranging a school place. Work is underway on linking the revenues and benefits systems to My Account which will increase the number transactions and level of information available to residents who have signed up for a My Account.

Service Recovery

To ensure the business continuity of all services

All five service portfolios are still operating their recovery business plans. The plans have been reported to this Committee in sequence. A summary report on all five plans is included on this same agenda.

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 resilient contingency planning arrangements in place. These can be drawn upon as necessary.

Community Recovery

To protect the health and well-being of local communities

Refer to the report made to the previous two meetings of this Committee. There are no changes of significance to report.

To support and protect the most vulnerable in society

Refer to the report made to the previous two meetings of this Committee. There are no changes of significance to report.

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 as priorities:

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

The Joint Public Service Board met on 7 October where commitment was made to continue to work together with Wrexham CBC to address these themes.

To support the economic recovery of communities and local business sectors

A report is to be prepared outlining the current state of Flintshire's economy and the issues that have arisen from the pandemic. This report will also be shared with Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in due course.

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. 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 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. Work across all six county-level Prevention and Surveillance groups is coordinated by the six respective chairs.</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 is under continuous pressure due to the number of cases we have to manage on a daily basis and given the limitations of recruitment and retention for a workforce based on short-term fixed contracts. The activities of the service have been prioritised and Welsh Government is due to publish a revised plan for Test, Trace and Protect imminently. The national funding for the service has been extended to the first quarter of the 2022/23 financial year.</p> <p>To play a full part in the planning and delivery of partnership programmes e.g. the vaccination programme</p> <p>Flintshire continues to play a full part in the development and local implementation of all regional programmes. 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 regional booster programme is now operating for cohorts 1-9 of eligible residents (cohorts are defined nationally by age, occupation and medical vulnerability) and Deeside Leisure Centre will continue to be used as a vaccination centre until the end of March 2022.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	None specific
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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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.
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4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	None specific.
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

6.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
6.01	Contact Officer: Neal Cockerton Telephone: 01352 702101 E-mail: chief.executive@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.