

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 10 th December 2020
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). A presentation will be made at the meeting on the main changes and live issues on risk and recovery within the corporate portfolios.

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**

Recovery continues whilst the service has delivered a second round of grants and relief to businesses during the recent 'fire-break'.

Collections are still improving but remain under close scrutiny. We have resumed court enforcement for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates but there are delays collecting rents due to longer lead in times before action is permitted and backlogs in the County Court.

- **Registrars Service**

Services have resumed including marriage and civil partnership ceremonies. The number of ceremonies scheduled for the remainder of 2020-21 is low due to the current restrictions on the number of people who can attend a ceremony, and further restrictions on wedding receptions. There are very few ceremonies scheduled to take place at approved premises (hotels) this year where the Council is able to charge more.

- **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. In quarter four of 2020/21, we intend to have all of our remote or virtual meetings available to be watched live by the public and other interested parties.

We are currently exploring the use of additional software to enable increased public participation in meetings such as Planning Committee before the end of quarter four of 2020/21.

- **To continue to support and expand digital means of service delivery**

The Council enabled applications to be made on line for a range of services over the summer such as childcare, waste collections and key worker accommodation. It continues to add new services to *My Account* and will shortly be upgrading methods for online payment.

- **To restore the internal control environment and audit inspections**

A revised Internal Audit plan, with sufficient scrutiny to enable a full assurance statement to be prepared, has been approved by the Audit Committee.

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 associated with the impact of the emergency e.g. Furlough, the Job Support Scheme, annual leave, working from home, quarantine and self-isolation). In addition, we have extended our

seasonal flu programme to all key workers and are currently working with colleagues in health to co-ordinate key worker access to the oncoming vaccination plan.

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

There are no plans to return everyone to the workplace just 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.

- **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

	<p>monthly claims for additional costs and quarterly claims for income losses from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. Reports are made regularly to Cabinet and to this Committee.</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 on 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.</p> <p>To restore reserves and balances over time 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 2021/22.</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