



Policy and Resources Committee

17 June 2020

Title	Covid-19 Recovery Planning
Report of	Councillor Daniel Thomas
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	Yes
Key	Yes
Enclosures	None
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Summary

The purpose of this paper is to update Committee on Covid-19 recovery planning and to outline the council's proposed Recovery Framework. This is an organisation-wide effort involving all service areas, as well as key partners across the borough and beyond. The Framework focuses both on the council's external-facing role in the wider community and economy, as well as on internal operations. Over the longer-term, recovery efforts will directly shape and support delivery of the council's Corporate Plan objectives.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee approve the council's proposed Covid-19 Recovery Framework and the proposed next steps (as set out in Section 4).

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Coronavirus, or Covid-19, is widely recognised as being the single biggest issue facing the country since the Second World War. There have been over 285,000 confirmed cases of the virus and over 40,000 associated deaths. The imposed lockdown, while necessary to protect health, has had widespread individual, social and economic impacts: the UK has experienced the sharpest economic contraction since the financial crisis in 2008 and, in March, the biggest single-month fall in output since records began. There have been over two million new claims for unemployment benefit and a 50% increase in the number of firms going bust since lockdown began.
- 1.2 Beyond the immediate cases, Covid-19 has had a considerable impact on health and wellbeing. There are negative effects of prolonged isolation on mental health, an increase in the levels of domestic violence during lockdown, as well as broader health impacts for those not accessing care for other health needs. As well as deaths directly associated with Covid-19, there will be increased mortality over the long-term.
- 1.3 In order to respond to the impacts of Covid-19, the council has mobilised resources across virtually all service areas (see Urgency Committee of 27 April 2020 for further detail on measures taken).
- 1.4 With the country now emerging from the worst of the health emergency, council officers have turned attention to recovery planning. A Covid-19 Recovery Planning programme has commenced, led by the council's Deputy Chief Executive and with input from all service areas as well as CSG, Re, The Barnet Group and Cambridge Education.
- 1.5 There are a number of objectives associated with the recovery programme, as summarised below. These are indicative only and will be refined over time following further engagement and consultation:
 - Facilitate the social and economic recovery of Barnet
 - Take opportunities for council and civic society to enhance and improve the borough
 - Ensure an effective, co-ordinated multi-agency and cross-sector approach to recovery
 - Review, update and embed organisational change
 - Restore (an updated set of) council services, full governance processes, project delivery and financial sustainability
 - Recognise the skills people have gained and support career change
 - Recognise effort and commitment of staff and community during crisis
 - Support the healing process, following the loss of friends and colleagues
 - Secure successful, timely step down of the recovery phase
- 1.6 It is too early to set out a firm timetable for recovery. We do not know yet whether there will be a second or subsequent peak in new infections, and we do not know at what speed the rate of infection in the community will decline. It is anticipated that the impact of Covid-19 will continue to be felt in health and care services for the next 18 months. Overall, the general phasing and approach that each service area is likely to go through is as follows:

- Phase 1 – Immediate response: Weathering short-term shock; establishing new services; business continuity
- Phase 2 – Living with uncertainty: Maintaining continuity; ensuring children are educated; protecting vulnerable groups (underlying conditions, those at risk of or experiencing domestic violence, risk of mental health conditions); planning for recovery
- Phase 3 – Exiting lockdown: Extending school openings; re-opening public buildings and open spaces; promoting on-going healthy behaviours and good public health; implementing contact tracing; supporting businesses to practice social distancing; supplementing data collection on impacts
- Phase 4 – Implementing short-term measures: Reviewing and learning from what works; solidifying responses to new patterns of demand; supporting business to succeed; retraining residents for new employment; some staff returning to on-site working; understanding long-term impacts; iterating and entrenching new ways of working
- Phase 5 – Responding to and harnessing long-term change: Maintaining emergency preparedness; embedding new practice and focus in partnerships; responding to economic impact; protecting the most vulnerable; normalisation (e.g. of remote working); remodelling town centres; utilising new regulatory powers

1.7 It is also recognised that many decisions will need to be made while there remains continued uncertainty. For example, some of the ‘known unknowns’ include:

- Future waves of the virus – number and severity;
- Public response to easing of lockdown;
- Extent to which businesses can adapt;
- Impact on unemployment and demand-led services, e.g. safeguarding, homelessness;
- Which communities are hit hardest, both by the virus and the related economic shock;
- Level of ongoing support required for the most vulnerable residents;
- The impact of the virus on council and partner finances; and
- Central government interventions and priorities for recovery.

1.8 Given this uncertainty, the process is unlikely to be linear. For example, it may become necessary to revert to an earlier phase should there be a second peak.

1.9 It is clear that – as well as being a pressing social and economic need – recovery provides an unparalleled opportunity for the council to work with partners to collectively re-think how we operate individually and together. There are numerous examples of positive changes that have been implemented throughout our response to Covid-19 that we should build upon and retain in the future. For this reason, the council’s Recovery Framework has been founded on the following three principles – the “3-Rs”:

- **Restore** – What do we want to return to the way they were? E.g. reopening libraries and play areas in parks or resuming routine highways maintenance.
- **Reinvent** – What do we want to bring back in a different way? What do we want to stop doing entirely? E.g. in relation to supporting the future vibrancy of town centres or developing new models for working with our partners in the NHS to deliver improved outcomes for residents.

- **Retain** – What do we want to keep? What advantages are there to the new arrangements and models of service delivery? Which activities are completely new that we would want to continue? E.g. closer working with the voluntary and community sector to meet community need, or maintaining integrated health and care services established through the pandemic.

1.10 The approach to recovery set out here reflects the fact that different geographical areas and tiers of government are working in a coordinated way to support recovery:

- At the **borough level** we are working to support individuals, communities and businesses to recover and thrive locally, for example by supporting people with the greatest immediate levels of need; assisting our town centres to respond to the impacts of Covid-19 and requirements for social distancing in the public realm; and working with health and community partners on ongoing support and care for vulnerable residents.
- At the **sub-regional level**, the council is coordinating with its partners at the West London Alliance group of local authorities, particularly in relation to our response to economic recovery, and with partners in the North Central London Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (NCL STP) in relation to health and care.
- At the **pan-London level** the council is engaged with a range of activity to support the response to Covid-19 and associated recovery, for example in relation to environmental services, health and care services.

1.11 At this stage, it is intended that the Recovery Framework will be in place for between six and 12 months. After this time, activities will be folded into Barnet's new Corporate Plan. This approach will act to embed recovery into the council's long-term vision for the borough.

1.12 It will be important to log lessons learned by the council and our partners into the approach taken to recovery, and to ensure these are applied to every aspect of the programme.

Financial sustainability

1.13 Financial sustainability needs to be a central element to the recovery programme, which needs to deliver a robust MTFs in order to support the continuation of council's operations to support residents. All councils are experiencing significant, unplanned financial pressure and some organisations within the sector face a significant risk of failure, even with the current level of funding provided by the Government. The process will need to ensure the council, over a four-year horizon, needs to return to a balanced budget and live within its means throughout the MTFs.

1.14 The council set a robust and sustainable budget in March 2020 which resourced the corporate plan priorities. The MTFs presented to Council in March 2020 comprised a balanced position for 2020/21, with a £36.830m gap anticipated for 2021-2025. Current forecasts indicate a net potential impact of Covid-19 on 2020/21 budgets of £26.2m, £14.2m of which is expected to impact in 2020/21.

1.15 The council maintains balances and reserves in order to deal with unexpected fiscal events and manage risk. However, it is important to note that the impacts of Covid-19 are unprecedented in scale. Additionally, the sector has just emerged from a financially

challenging period of austerity and it is extremely difficult for organisations to free up significant resources.

- 1.16 The financial context of the organisation has fundamentally changed following the Covid-19 pandemic and whilst some likely impacts can be estimated at this point, others depend on variables which are still unknown. The remodelling of the MTFs will be co-designed with the borough's recovery plan to ensure that the Long Term Change phase delivers a balanced budget that allows for the investment needed to allow the borough to thrive. Each workstream will be responsible for contributing to the financial sustainability within the corporate budget setting process.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 In aligning the Recovery Framework with the new Corporate Plan, we propose to structure work around the four outcomes previously agreed by Council and to add additional workstreams focused on the way we work and prevention. The four outcomes are inherently cross-cutting and require input from a range of council committees and services. More detail of each theme is set out below alongside service/activity areas, an indication of the lead Committee and officer, and a summary of recovery priorities.

- **Outcome 1: Thriving**

Lead Committee: Housing & Growth

Lead officer: Deputy Chief Executive

Service/Activity areas: Housing & Development; Businesses & Town Centres; Employment & Skills; Infrastructure; Climate Change.

Immediate priorities: Gathering data/intelligence on health of economy and high streets; understanding differential impacts on economic sectors and identifying priorities for support; supporting town centre businesses by opening up public realm, managing space between different travel modes, queues and pavement trading; re-starting construction; stepping up existing employment, welfare support, and skills programmes; maintaining regular communication with businesses and networks, facilitating B2B support; ensuring safe re-opening of places of worship.

Longer-term considerations: Building upon and continuing to enhance relationships with the community, businesses and VCS; understanding and filling longer-term skills gaps; developing thinking on future role of high streets given changes in retail and that more people will be working from, or closer to, home; understanding long-term impacts on development of housing, commercial space and infrastructure, land use, and the economy, and supporting the emergence of new businesses and sectors including the low-carbon economy.

- **Outcome 2: Family Friendly**

Lead Committee: Children, Education & Safeguarding

Lead officer: Executive Director, Children's Services

Service/Activity areas: Education; Corporate Parenting; Help & Protection Services; Child Friendly City; Parks.

Immediate priorities: Transitioning children and young people back into school and the community; ensuring safe travel to and from school; delivery of the wellbeing programme; planning for a possible child poverty and mental health emergency; planning for the expected increase in demand for social care services post-lockdown; restoring face-to-face contact where needed/possible; restoring 0-19s hubs through 'school bubbles' approach; restoring friends and volunteer groups within parks.

Longer-term considerations: Continuing to transform operating models to meet community needs; identifying opportunities to reduce exclusion, improve educational outcomes and promote skills development through wider use of technology; delivering park improvements, including development of a forward plan and an enhancement of the programming offer within parks; continuing delivery of the Child Friendly City Initiative, led by UNICEF; reinventing our approach to placement sufficiency through retaining the pan-London placements programme.

- **Outcome 3: Healthy**

Lead Committee: Adults and Safeguarding

Lead officer: Executive Director – Adults and Health

Service/Activity areas: Promoting independence; boosting physical activity; tackling domestic abuse; poverty reduction; homelessness reduction; integrated health and care.

Immediate priorities: Determining future of essential supplies hub; restoring in-person social care assessments and reviews where urgent; restoring full respite offer including day support; adapting procurement and commissioning options; restoring user engagement; restoring full care quality services; continuation of integrated discharge functions; restoring Healthy Child Programme, Sexual Health clinical services and CYP Sexual Health Promotion; minimising the negative impacts of the pandemic through Adult Physical and Mental Health services, e.g. social isolation, mental ill health, lack of physical exercise; maintaining progress made in supporting vulnerable members of community including rough sleepers; reopening leisure centres and safe re-instatement of community sport and physical activities.

Longer-term considerations: Continued use of technology to transform service delivery and support as many residents as possible; reviewing service models to ensure services are as flexible and accessible as possible; preventing an increase in homelessness presentations; poverty reduction; working with government to maintain changes, e.g. to hospital discharge processes.

- **Outcome 4: Clean, Safe & Well Run**

Lead Committees: Environment; Policy & Resources

Lead officer: Interim Executive Director, Environment

Service/Activity areas: Streetscene, Customer Service; Enforcement; Safer Neighbourhoods; protecting and generating income.

Immediate Recovery Priorities: Restoring debt recovery and enforcement activities through a softer approach to businesses/residents; financial planning to underpin

recovery strategy, including capital programme; restarting birth registrations and weddings; restoring contact centre to full service; enhancement of street cleansing service; restoration of parking enforcement; restoring key programmes, including LED conversion, electrical vehicle charging and digital advertising installation; resuming highways maintenance, asset condition surveys, vehicle crossover service and development control service.

Longer-term considerations: Delivering long-term financial sustainability, recognising that council revenues may not return to pre-Covid-19 levels; move resources to support priority areas; determining long-term governance arrangements for virtual committees; ensuring sufficient emergency response capacity for future incidents; optimisation of recycling and waste collection rounds; review opportunities around greenspaces and leisure, including pitch hire and sponsorship.

- **Workstream A: The Way We Work**

Lead Committee: Policy & Resources

Lead officer: Director of Finance

Service/Activity areas: Office re-entry, Organisational Development, IT, Communications, Insight.

Immediate Recovery Priorities: Supporting continued home-working, re-opening LBB estate and defining requirements for buildings; ensuring building compliance; operational buildings; updating the council's recruitment strategy to account for remote working.

Long-term considerations: Maintaining a dynamic, skilled and flexible workforce through greater/different use of technology and other means; promoting and facilitating wellbeing and other benefits of home working among staff to ensure a healthy work-life balance; building on improved relationships with the VCS; greater use of insight.

- **Workstream B: Prevention**

Lead Committee: As appropriate

Lead officer: Director of Public Health and Prevention

Service/Activity areas: Development of a long-term prevention strategy, embedding prevention in health and social care partnerships, effective interventions to reduce demand on statutory services (e.g. social care, housing).

Immediate recovery priorities: Any prevention and early help services in the borough which are currently suspended due to Covid-19 pressures; building on improved relationships with the VCS, increased emphasis on prevention, enthusiasm for volunteering across the borough.

Longer-term considerations: Development of a long-term prevention strategy to improve outcomes for vulnerable residents, including homeless individuals, and to reduce cost and demand of statutory services.

- 2.2 The recovery planning process will be co-ordinated on a central basis by a core programme team. Each theme is being led by a member of the core programme team or a member of the wider recovery group, drawn from relevant service areas. The split into themes will allow for the wide-ranging nature of the recovery process, while the core team will help to ensure alignment, integration and consistency of approaches. Service areas will maintain any statutory roles or responsibilities.
- 2.3 Members' views and input will continue to be sought throughout recovery planning, through ongoing interaction with services. Formal decision-making will happen through regular governance arrangements, including consideration at theme Committees and in consultation with the Leader and Committee Chairmen as required.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 No recovery planning. The council could opt to respond to Covid-19 on a purely reactive or emergency basis. This would, however, miss opportunities to build on new ways of working and result in a less sustainable approach to recovery. There would also likely be greater insecurity for council revenues.
- 3.2 Waiting until lockdown is over. This option could increase the risk of a second wave as many of the measures being put in place to support recovery also mitigate against further spread of the virus.
- 3.3 Enabling services to plan and deliver recovery activities independently. This option would miss out on important opportunities for more effective delivery models that are integrated across service areas and would undermine dependencies across services. For example, with the Contact Centre, IT and distribution of PPE equipment. It would also reduce the important organisational development aspects of the Recovery Framework.
- 3.4 A council-only recovery framework. This option would downplay the significant impact of external partnerships in managing the response to Covid-19 and reduce the effectiveness of any future recovery, given the widespread nature of impacts on the community and economy.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Following Committee, actions will comprise:
- Further internal and external stakeholder engagement, including with end-users of council services
 - Continued activity planning across the themes; identification of key deliverables
 - Establish programme monitoring/reporting requirements
 - Continued monitoring of financial implications of recovery
 - Regular updates to Theme Committees and future Policy & Resource Committee meetings on the progress of the programme
- 4.2 Individual decisions on recovery actions by services will be taken by the appropriate Theme Committee, Chairman and Senior Officer in line with the relevant scheme of delegation.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1 As noted, the Recovery Framework will directly shape the borough's new Corporate Plan.
- 5.2 Many of the measures taken already and those that will be taken in the next phases of recovery help to deliver strategic priorities identified prior to the virus, for example, as set out in the Growth Strategy, emerging Local Plan and Transport Strategy.

Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.1 Officers will continue to ensure the costs of Covid-19 are forecast on a robust basis, will continue to engage with MHCLG proactively and will keep Councillors abreast of the emerging financial picture.
- 5.2 In order to regain the momentum in being a high performing organisation, financial stability must be achieved through the recovery planning process. This includes minimising the call on reserves and setting a balanced budget from 2021/22 onwards. This budget must deliver the required strategy in relation to reserves required to withstand future economic shocks.
- 5.3 Where there are financial implications or decisions associated with recovery activities, these will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The delivery of the Recovery Framework will be undertaken within the existing capacity and resources of the council.

Social Value

- 5.4 The council must take into account the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to try to maximise the social and local economic value it derives from its procurement spend. Social value is a core part of the Recovery Framework and will be maximised throughout.

Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.5 Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 sets out the duties of the responsible officer as regards reports:

(2) The chief finance officer of a relevant authority shall make a report under this section if it appears to him that the authority, a committee [of the authority, a person holding any office or employment under the authority, a member of [the relevant police force], or a joint committee on which the authority is represented—

(a) has made or is about to make a decision which involves or would involve the authority incurring expenditure which is unlawful,

(3A) It shall be the duty of the chief finance officer of a relevant authorityin preparing a report in pursuance of subsection (2) above, to consult so far as practicable—

(a) with the person who is for the time being designated as the head of the authority's paid service under section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; and

(b) with the person who is for the time being responsible for performing the duties of the authority's monitoring officer under section 5 of that Act.

5.6 The council's Constitution, Article 7 Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships, sets out the functions of the Policy and Resources Committee:

(1) To be responsible for:

- Strategic policy, finance and corporate risk management including recommending: Capital and Revenue Budget; Medium Term Financial Strategy; and Corporate Plan to Full Council
- Finance including: Treasury management Local taxation; Insurance; Corporate procurement; Grants; Writing-off debt; Virements; Effective use of resources
- Procurement Forward Plan
- Local Plans (except for matters reserved to Full Council)
- Information Technology
- Strategic Partnerships
- Customer Services and Resident Engagement
- Emergency Planning

(2) To be responsible for those matters not specifically allocated to any other committee affecting the affairs of the Council.

(3) Consider for approval budget and business plan of the Barnet Group Ltd.

(4) To determine fees and charges for services which are the responsibility of the committee and to note decisions taken by Theme Committees, the Planning Committee and Licensing Committee on fees and charges within the remit of those committees.

5.7 Under 7.5 of the constitution if any report appears to come within the remit of more than one committee, to avoid the report being discussed at several committees, the report will be presented and determined at the most appropriate committee. If this is not clear the report will be discussed and determined by The Policy and Resources Committee.

5.8 This is a cross cutting report and that is why it is before Policy and Resources Committee but as indicated in section 4 above the theme committees will be involved in the plan and decisions.

Risk Management

5.9 The council has an established approach to risk management, which is set out in the Risk Management Framework. Strategic and operational risks are being reviewed in light of our response to Covid-19 and priorities for recovery and the new Corporate Plan. Managing risk will be an essential part of programme management and will be used to inform key decisions.

Equalities and Diversity

- 5.10 The Equalities and Diversity Act, 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act, 2010;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups; and
 - Foster good relations between people from different groups.
- 5.11 Relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- 5.12 The council's Recovery Framework is intended to benefit all communities and groups who live, work and visit the borough, including those with protected characteristics. While there has been some consideration at national level of the impact of Coronavirus on different groups, the differential impacts of the economic shock are not yet known and will need to be fully reflected as we develop our thinking.
- 5.13 Where individual decisions are required in relation to the recovery programme, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure no group is disadvantaged or left behind. As required, officers will undertake Equalities Impact Assessments (EQIA) and review them in order to fully appraise the impacts associated with any proposed course of action.

Corporate Parenting

- 5.14 In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in all decision-making. These will be considered as specific plans for recovery are further developed.

Consultation and Engagement

- 5.15 Officers are clear that the Recovery Framework cannot be developed in isolation if it is going to be fully responsive and effective in enabling the borough to emerge stronger from the Covid-19 pandemic. Consultation with partners, service users and the wider community is critical to ensuring that our recovery activities are focused on the end user.
- 5.16 External stakeholders, including Middlesex University, the Federation of Small Businesses and local Town Teams, have already begun to feed into development of the Recovery Framework and have indicated their willingness to continue to work in partnership throughout its development and delivery.
- 5.17 As noted above, sub-regional colleagues at the West London Alliance are coordinating a number of recovery activities focused on shared priorities for economic recovery that will be captured in Barnet's Recovery Framework as required. Workstreams include Town Centres, Housing and Infrastructure, Employment and Skills, Growth Sectors, Microbusinesses and the Self-Employed and Low Carbon Economy.
- 5.18 The council is similarly working closely with NHS partners and the four other councils in the NCL STP on recovery planning in health and care. This is considering the potential need for surge capacity for future peaks, models for expanded community health services, reinstatement of elective care while maintaining sufficient intensive care capacity,

increasing the use of digital and virtual working in health care, and primary care support to care homes.

- 5.19 The council will continue to consult and work with both the London Transition Board and the London Recovery Board to ensure that activities in Barnet are complementary to those elsewhere across the capital and that we benefit from lessons learned in other boroughs. I also think this should be referred to in the wider borough/London recovery. Through this work, officers will continue to promote the shift to remote working for employees across the borough, given the many health and well-being benefits which this brings.
- 5.20 Finally, council officers are working with central government ministries on a range of Covid-19-related workstreams that will feed into borough recovery planning. For example, joint work is underway with the Rough Sleeper Initiative and the Homeless Advice and Support Team to better understand the needs of Barnet's rough sleepers and to feed into the government's next steps strategy.

Insight

- 5.21 There is an opportunity in the recovery phase to significantly improve the way in which we use data, insight and analysis to drive decision making and service delivery.
- 5.22 Officers are currently in the process of establishing a cross-service insight approach that will enable this to happen. At present we are mapping council-wide insight requirements and questions of each service in order to structure further insight and data analysis.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Urgency Committee, 27 April 2020: Approval of Emergency Decisions and Delegation to Chief Officers
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s58641/Urgency%20Committee%20-%20Emergency%20Decisions%20Final.pdf>