Title of Report	COVID-19 RECOVERY	
Presented by	Bev Smith Chief Executive	
Background Papers	None	**Public Report:** Yes
Financial Implications	None directly in the report, a separate Financial Impact report is being considered by the committee.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	Legal advice has been provided on the Coronavirus Act 2020 and other associated regulations and government guidance as necessary throughout the response/recovery phase of dealing with the COVID19 pandemic.	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	These will be covered through the recovery process outlined in the report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To update members on the plans for recovery following the COVID19 pandemic.	

Recommendations	**MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO :**
	   I. NOTE THE REPORTS CONTENT AND ACTIONS
	  II. ENDORSE THE APPROACHES AND DIRECTION SET OUT FOR THE RECOVERY PLAN
	 III. MAKE ANY COMMENTS ON FUTURE AREAS OF WORK FOR THE RECOVERY PROCESS TO CONSIDER
	 IV. NOTE THE LIKELY NEED TO INCORPORATE ISSUES RAISED IN THE REPORT IN THE REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN
	  V. AGREE FUTURE REPORTING ON COVID-19 RECOVERY TO COME TO THIS COMMITTEE	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The COVID 19 major incident has caused significant disruption to services, the organisation and the wider community. Resources have been allocated to the response stage contributing fully to the Leicestershire Resilience Forum (LRF) command and control structures. It is important that the Council continue to work together with partners in both response and to help communities recover from this incident as quickly as possible.

1.2 'Recovery is the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency'. This process may take months to complete as it seeks to address the enduring human, community, environmental and economic consequences.

1.3 The Recovery process aims to reduce demand on services to the level at which they were before the incident occurred, often described as 'return to normal'. However it is likely that

the recovery process will need to assess and respond to different levels of 'normality' as the government eases restrictions on behaviour and movement. There is a high likelihood that there will be a 'new normality' which will not reflect the situation prior to the incident taking place.

1.4   The Council also needs to recognise that the processes and changes to working practises may well have changed how we work for the better. Therefore, this work will also need to pick up the good things that may of come from this event and capitalise on these positive impacts. It presents a once in a lifetime change of working style, pace, practise and approach that may well be of wider benefits to the organisation, staff and customers in the future and should not be lost in a race to return to 'normal'. Likewise a number of services have been 'suspended' and it does not necessarily follow that they all are resumed, and/or in their current form.

1.5   The impact of COVID 19 on the financial resources of the Council through loss of revenue streams from service postponements, delays of purchases, along with loss of business rates and council tax and extended debt recovery processes will inevitable affect the Medium Term Financial Strategy and our journey to self-sufficiency plans. This element will cross all aspects of the Recovery Plan.

1.6   This summary report sets out the issues and proposed approach to managing these issues over the coming months. It does not go into detail on the approach to tackling these issues as this is constantly changing and operational in nature. However it is important to note that significant planning and preparations are already being made across the organisation on many of these areas. The report proposes how the Council and its members will be engaged in the recovery actions via normal governance arrangements where possible.

1.7   The report also recognises that alongside the 'recovery actions' there is likely to be significant ongoing activity related to the ongoing response to tackling Coronavirus and this in itself presents a significant challenge for the organisation in terms of capacity and resources.

1.8   This report covers the following:

- Organisational recovery issues
- Service-level recovery issues (significant risks and issues only)
- Cross-agency recovery issues (those things that link to LRF recovery work)
- Strategic / longer-term recovery issues
- Ongoing response requirements
- Recovery – governance
- Recovery – next steps

1.9   To bring the report more to life, and ensure members are aware of the latest information, the Chief Executive will give a summary presentation to the committee at its meeting.

2.   CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

2.1   The COVID-19 Pandemic is probably the most significant issue that has faced the world in the last 50 years. Globally there have been over 300k deaths, and trillions of currency spent in supporting people, their communities and their economies as well as searching for a viable treatment/vaccine.

2.2   At a national level we have seen unprecedented changes to the way society operates, with over 30k deaths in the UK. At a regional level we have seen organisations come together through both formal (such as the Local Resilience Forum (LRF)) and informal arrangements such as East Midlands Councils, working together to focus our efforts,

support each other, and come to a common approach to address literally hundreds of issues that have faced us.

2.3   The response to COVID-19 has resulted in major disruption and change for both the organisation and many aspects of life across NW Leicestershire. This report focuses on both sustaining the response and the issues presented by the need to return to some form of new normality. The report is informed by:

- The work supporting our internal recovery planning ;
- Scenario-based testing across the LRF
- Issues raised by the Strategic Co-ordination Group and Recovery Co-ordination Group;
- Issues and discussions arising from our staff surveys and HR input;
- Local Resilience Forum (LRF) initial recovery information gathering and analysis
- Our wider connections with local government support groups such as the LGA and District Council Network.

3.   ORGANISATIONAL RECOVERY ISSUES

3.1   The following are issues which cut across the organisation and where a corporate approach and consistency is needed:

- **Workforce issues** – this includes a range of issues relating to annual leave, staff wellbeing and mental health, training backlogs, childcare implications where schools and settings do not fully open, ongoing issues relating to staff who remain shielded, recruitment backlogs and alternative virtual methods for the recruitment process, and supporting the staff who may be reluctant to come back to work. Ongoing engagement with the Trade Unions is already in place and they are being regularly updated.

- **ICT** – this includes supporting ongoing home working, managing and phasing returns to office-based working where appropriate, heavy involvement in establishing virtual council meetings, as well as consideration of the wider implications of the major shift in using technology for our future ICT strategy.

- **Safe working practices and PPE** – this includes ensuring the supply and management of PPE provision and clear guidance and advice on safe working practices for our workforce in relation to Covid-19. These are currently being updated to reflect the latest government guidance.

- **Reopening of buildings and measures needed in buildings** – this relates to managing our estate, reopening of buildings and how to ensure the safety of our workforce and the public through arrangements to support social distancing within our buildings.

- **Contracts and procurement** – this relates to the significant implications in relation to existing contracts and future procurement activity, such as concerns around supplier failure, how to support suppliers and contractors in relation to application of terms and conditions and cash flow and possible impacts on future procurement exercises including potential for increased costs.

- **Information Governance** – this relates to the appropriate handling, storage and deletion of personal data collected specifically for the purposes of responding to the Coronavirus incident.

- **Governance** – this relates to the ongoing implications in relation to the Council's governance including the operation of formal meetings as well as implications in terms of

civic office holders and activity. The regulations which came into force on 4 April permitting virtual meetings remain in force for 1 year.

- **Financial impacts** – this relates to capturing and managing the immediate financial impacts - costs, lost income, delays to savings delivery. These issues are the subject of a further report on the agenda.

- **Reporting and compliance locally and nationally** – this relates to returns and reports which may be required by Government and other statutory bodies in capturing the impacts and implications of the Coronavirus response.

- **Communications** – effective communications support will be critical in managing all of these above issues and particularly the messaging for staff and consistency of approach and ensuring our communities are well engaged and informed about how both our services and those in the wider community are operating.

3.2   These issues are all reflected in a Recovery Plan owned by the Recovery Co-ordination Group as part of the formal structure addressing the COVID-19 emergency.

4.   SERVICE LEVEL RECOVERY ISSUES

4.1   There are many wide-ranging implications for services which this report does not seek to capture. Below are the more significant service issues/risks:

- **Managing backlogs of activity** – across a range of services certain activity has been on-hold and this therefore presents back-logs which will need to be addressed. Some of the key areas where this is an issue include housing repairs and tenancy management, events work, non-essential enforcement work etc. Wherever possible services have prioritised ensuring services of particular importance to our community are kept running, where it is safe for our staff to do so. No major service has halted operations fully.

- **Project impacts** – in relation to projects there are delays and potential cost impacts which will need to be addressed. Work is already underway on reprofiling the programmes where this is a significant issue. Where possible projects have kept working (for example the new Leisure Centre in Coalville where reprofiling of some work packages has been done to ensure progression); equally some stopped and have restarted (for example the new Market in Coalville, this was possible once the supply chain re-established itself). There are also major systems procurement/implementation which have been impacted such as the replacement of our Housing Systems, and a delayed start to a number of others – such as a procurement of our new finance system.

- **Service changes** – there are other impacts arising from changes to the way services have had to work during the crisis and in some cases will continue to have to work for the foreseeable future such as customer services, housing repairs, and our corporate landlord function. This also includes positive changes we may wish to sustain and build on such as the increased demand and use of on-line services grows.

4.2   These service issues are being dealt with through our governance structures, which are managed through our Heads of Service and Directors. Where there are significant impacts on finance these may result in revised decisions and where necessary these will be brought back through the normal decision making routes.

5.   CROSS-AGENCY RECOVERY ISSUES

5.1   As noted earlier there are a number of issues which do have wider impacts in terms of other partner agencies and many of these are being reflected in the LRF recovery planning work, and these include:

- Increases in safeguarding referrals;
- Community safety impacts including increased Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Violence, street lifestyles;
- Economic Recovery
- Rough Sleeping / Homeslessness
- Public transport and wider network management; and
- Communications across LLR.

5.2   The above are being overseen by the LRF recovery arrangements but are largely following the principle that where possible they are managed through existing arrangements.

6.   STRATEGIC / LONGER-TERM RECOVERY ISSUES

6.1   There are a number of strategic and particularly longer-term recovery issues and these are summarised below:

- **MTFP** –in terms of the impacts on the Council's own financial strategy and changes we may need to make to this across revenue and capital – see separate agenda item.

- **Service impacts as a result of economic impacts / financial hardship –** an inevitable downturn in the economy will lead to increased demand on a number of key services such as Housing and Revenues and Benefits as well as impacts on income generating services. Such issues will be managed by Directors and collectively by the Corporate Leadership Team and tie into the MTFP.

- **Economic recovery –** this will be one of the most significant strategic issues encompassing business recovery, tourism and inward investment impacts, employment, town centre recovery and promotion, ongoing capture of intelligence on local economy – this work is being led by our Business Focus team in conjunction with the LLEP and LRF Business Cell.

- **Health and wellbeing** – there will be ongoing impacts on the health of the local population including impacts on mental health and implications for screening and other prevention programmes as well as any positives to build on in terms of behaviour change.

- **Climate change –** importantly the existing work on the climate strategy and action plan will need to consider how it can build on the positive climate change impacts seen during the crisis, this is linked to the already agreed Carbon Neutrality work.

- **Commemoration and recognition** – there will be a need to plan for appropriate commemoration and recognition events following the crisis – and will need to align with anything proposed nationally and via the LRF.

- **VCS/Volunteering/Faith organisations** – the issues to be considered here include sustainability of the VCS and also how to build on the community volunteering response that has been seen during the crisis – this is linked to our Community Hub work which is ongoing (and likely to for some time) which supports the most vulnerable in our community.

- **Housing and Homelessness** – it will be key to consider and manage impacts in relation to rough sleepers and street lifestyles following the work during the crisis to provide accommodation and support, including what options are available for those with No Recourse to Public Funds. This is being picked up at the LRF level as well as our own teams.

- **Changed ways of working & Accommodation –** it will be important to capture and build on new ways of working that have been put in place during the crisis including how to maximise the significant shift to using technology in the way we work in order to work more efficiently and effectively in future – these will be picked up as part of our accommodation work which was already underway prior to the pandemic.

7.   ONGOING RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

7.1   These are the areas we are likely to continue to have ongoing involvement in to sustain the existing response. This does present capacity and resourcing issues including where staff are currently primarily or wholly involved in these response activities but who need to be released from that to return to the 'day job' and where we will need to find other ways to support this activity:

- Support for ongoing LRF structures and reporting
- Testing and contact tracing
- Preparation for further waves of infection and reintroduction of measures
- Preparation for a potential vaccine and mass vaccination programme
- Support for those who are shielding, food poverty and ongoing crisis support
- Volunteers/volunteering and VCS/faith engagement and support
- Supporting social distancing and ongoing compliance
- PPE and safe working practice
- Economic Recovery
- Communications

7.2   Currently the ongoing response phase is being managed via the LRF structures regionally and locally via our Recovery Structures. The need for and the resources committed to these activities will impact on our ability to bring back all services, or at the very least impact on how these are delivered in the coming months. Where are how this impact will fall is not yet fully understood whilst we continue to react and respond to almost daily changes in demand.

8.   RECOVERY – GOVERNANCE

8.1   The above sections indicate how the different aspects of recovery and the ongoing response are managed. In the main it is proposed the use existing governance arrangements through Scrutiny, Cabinet, Council and formal decision making where required, and via delegated decision making already in accordance with the constitution. It is proposed that this committee receives regular updates on the COVID-19 situation due so as to ensure oversight.

8.2   As an emergency situation still remains (and is likely to for some time) there are some special governance processes in place regarding Recovery Structures and urgent decision making. These are powers the Chief Executive and the Leader control and are used in times of urgent decision making. These will remain but will only be exercised when time does not allow for the normal decision making process.

8.3   There are likely to be some short-term and longer-term policy change and decisions throughout recovery and it is important that the appropriate governance and decision making is followed in relation to these, this may include for example HR policy changes, financial policy changes and wider issues in areas such as homelessness. Where necessary these will go through formal decision making, but may do so in a more compressed timeline or via urgent measures as set out above.

8.4   There are likely to be implications for a number of the Council Delivery Plan commitments, we will commence a review of these as soon as it is practical to do so. This is likely to be in conjunction with any revised MTFP.

8.5   Work is currently underway on the review of strategic and operational risk registers and it is important that those are adjusted to reflect changes to risks and risk ratings in light of the Covid-19 response and recovery, and to ensure that our organisational approach to risk is followed including use of robust risk assessments. A COVID-19 specific risk register is being maintained and updated in response to the changing situation.

8.6   Engagement of partners and other stakeholders and clear and consistent communications will remain a priority, including internally with staff and Trade Unions, and externally.

9.   RECOVERY

9.1   As this report demonstrates there is a significant range and volume of work associated with both the ongoing response and recovery. The Committee are invited to identify any particular priorities that they would want earlier and more detailed engagement in as the work is taken forward. The Chief Executive presentation to the committee will provide the latest update on these and other related issues.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	- Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected
Policy Considerations:	None
Safeguarding:	Not at this level
Equalities/Diversity:	None
Customer Impact:	Contained in report and individual service changes
Economic and Social Impact:	See report
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None
Risks:	Dedicated Risk Register for all COVID-19 activity in place and reviewed in line with policy.
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