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| Subject: | Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme Update | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 3 December 2020 | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Culture | | |
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| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the progress of the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme, following a previous update to the Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-committee on 9 September 2020.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the report provides an update on progress to mid November and given the fast moving nature of the pandemic, aspects of this report may have been superseded by events by the date of the committee meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee notes this progress update report.

3. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Policy & Resources Committee agreed to establish the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Programme on 30 April 2020 to help prepare and steer the council and city through the transition from emergency response to recovery. In doing so, the programme seeks opportunities for the city to emerge from the pandemic as a healthier, equitable and more sustainable place to live, work and visit.
- 3.2 Circumstances with regard to the pandemic have shifted significantly over recent weeks. Whilst the focus on recovery is being maintained, this is now being managed alongside emergency response to the escalation in Covid-19 cases and the second national lockdown. Recovery working groups are, therefore, alternating between response and recovery in recognition that this will be the required way of working for some months to come.
- 3.3 Clear Recovery & Renewal governance arrangements are in place, with reporting from the working groups to the Executive Leadership Team and Members, through to regional and national structures.
- 3.4 Programme management arrangements continue, including project planning at working group level, highlight reporting to update on progress, management of risks and issues, and completion of Equalities Impact Assessments.

- 3.5 The fifteen working groups have been reduced to thirteen, as a reflection of Public Health and Finance being embedded across the programme and reported on regularly to Members via other processes. A brief update on the working groups is as follows:

Citywide recovery:

3.6 **Children & Young People**

This working group has started to review lessons learned so far and recommendations from the Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME), Education and Disadvantaged Task & Finish groups. Support to education and other settings has continued as cases have risen in the city. A weekly notification report process has been embedded with Members and the Trade Unions. The group is considering a full lesson learned report with recommendations, and how best to manage both rising cases and the need for a continued focus on recovery.

3.7 **Crime & Community Safety/Cohesion**

Consultation has started on the review of the Statement of Licensing Policy (for the Licensing Committee in November). A clear multi-agency communications strategy is being developed with key partners (Sussex Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group) via the Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership Exploitation Sub-group. Retendering of domestic abuse services in the city started in October 2020. A social media campaign was developed around hate crime, to support understanding/reporting for Hate Crime Week. A Community Tensions meeting was held in October and will be linking into work on Brexit (a further meeting will be held by mid December). There are monthly meetings set to take place that include the Violence Reduction Partnership, Tactical Tasking & Co-ordination Group and Exploitation Group. A pilot for third party reporting centres for hate crime is being developed. An annual Review of a Strategic Assessment linked to the Community Safety Strategy is planned to be undertaken with lead officers. Work has been initiated to develop Unauthorised Encampment Protocols.

3.8 **Employment & Skills**

The working group has now formed and is being led by the Executive Directors of Economy, Environment & Culture and Families, Children & Learning. Physical and virtual Youth Employability Hubs are being created working with the Department for Work & Pensions and the Kickstart Scheme that provides funding to create job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment is being explored. A paper exploring Employment & Skills across Brighton & Hove, and East and West Sussex has been produced.

3.9 **Events & Economy**

The Licencing Team has been carrying out weekend joint patrols with the Police; the main issue has been curfew times, both from premises still operating but also large gatherings immediately after 10pm on West Street and Queens Road. A stepped approach to enforcement has been taken, with a series of warnings given to premises, moving onto penalty notices. Hot spots of youths gathering at Preston Park and other open spaces have been dealt with by the Police. Messaging around how to enjoy Halloween safely and while minimising Covid-19

transmission has been shared. £6 million from the Cultural Recovery Fund has been allocated to cultural institutions across the city. A survey of charities and the Community & Voluntary Sector is being carried out to inform recommendations relating to the end of Covid funding, the impact of the loss of events, and moving the workforce and infrastructure to dual delivery of face to face and digital work in the long term. Statistics have been compiled on unemployment and business insolvencies in the city, and the impact on the Third Sector is being monitored. Possibilities for pop-up shops/exhibits to make use of vacant shop properties are being explored.

The [portal](#) to administer Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSGs) and Additional Restrictions Grants (ARGs) opened week commencing 16 November on the council's website, following agreement by the Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee to a report on 13 November. Administration of the ARGs will seek to balance the need for the grants to be targeted, with the need for them to be issued quickly so the money is flowing within the city's economy. The council has been awarded £5,817,700 to distribute as ARGs over the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years. It is proposed that about 50% of the grant pot is distributed very quickly through an initial round, and the remaining 50% is retained and either used in a similar fashion in the event of a future lockdown or partial lockdown affecting key sectors. If that does not happen, then the money can be used more strategically for grants for rebuilding businesses to support economic recovery. The entire pot will be spent before the end of the 2021/22 financial year to ensure the money is used to boost the local economy and does not have to be given back to government. The working group will communicate with businesses and Community & Voluntary Sector organisations to outline the criteria and encourage applications to these grants.

3.10 **Food**

For the October half term school holiday, on the day emergency food parcels were re-instated and citywide communications issued regarding how and where families could get food. Payments of £500 for individuals self-isolating and in poverty to buy food and essentials went live on 12 October with around sixty applications in the first week. A grant from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, in the order of £320,713.25 to assist those struggling to afford food and other essentials, has been received and is being allocated. Two surveys have been completed - one regarding demand on the food banks and another on the experience of food bank beneficiaries. The University of Sussex lead for food attended the Food working group meeting to make links and share intelligence. The council run central Brighton food hub and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership central food processing hub have been given notice at the Brighton Centre and must vacate by 18 November; a new venue is being investigated. The working group will be issuing lockdown guidance regarding the operation of food banks and hubs, and issuing volunteer letters. The provision of medically appropriate food in emergency food parcels will be explored and the food referral flowchart will be updated. Meetings will be scheduled with the hospitality sector to develop a food provision scheme for vulnerable families over Christmas, along with a Free School Meals voucher scheme. Officers are initiating recruitment to a dedicated post to hold the lead for food, and work with the Food Partnership and council's Recovery & Renewal programme.

3.11 **Homelessness & Housing**

The revenue bid grant allocation of £3,428,766 has been received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG). News of the capital bid is awaited. A committee report on the Next Step Accommodation Programme and bid conditions is being prepared. Teams and resources have been mobilised to deliver on the bid conditions, including 40% (148 people) accommodated in Everyone In emergency accommodation, 27 of whom have moved on as of 19 October. Replacement provision has been agreed for the Symptomatic Hub. Accommodation for the Severe Weather Emergency Protocols (SWEP) shelter is to be agreed. The working group is to complete the Homes England Investment Management System application and sign up for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme data sharing agreement. The Youth Hostels Association is to be transitioned to No Second Night Out provision to manage the new flow of rough sleepers. A report to the Homelessness Reduction Board and Housing Committee is to be finalised.

3.12 **Safer Public Spaces**

The working group is currently dormant following activity to lay out social distancing measures in spring/early summer. The group will be 'stood up' as and when required.

3.13 **Welfare Support & Financial Hardship**

A Landlord Forum has been held with attendees from the social sector, along with representatives from the private sector and housing. A bid has been approved for a Debt Mental Health Co-ordinator to strengthen links between health services, debt collection and debt advice services. A consultation on Council Tax Reduction is underway, which closes on 1 December with the aim of making the scheme more financially supportive. Further meetings are planned with the Department for Work & Pensions to discuss potential Flexible Support Fund bids.

3.14 **Vulnerable People**

Community Hub: Additional staff are being recruited to scale the offer back up as and when needed. An operational sub-group is being established with key partners to look at joining up referral pathways. Ways of moving the Hub offer to business as usual are being explored. Digital and physical mail outs are being planned to vulnerable people regarding self-isolation. Working towards local contact tracing becoming a function of the Community Hub.

A response to shielding is being planned. More support to BAME communities is underway with targeted communications and engagement, including translations, representation and working with group leaders. Written communications are being sent to people previously identified as shielding with information on current guidance and where to go for local support. A summary of mental health support has been shared with professionals and partners. The volunteering workstream is being merged with the city Volunteering Partnership.

Council recovery:

3.15 **Customers**

The Brighton Customer Service centre is now ready for services to use for appointments with customers where there is no other way of delivering the

service. The Customer Feedback Team and Family Information Service now have a live phone offer, with officers taking calls from home using new functionality. Parking services will be improving their offer to customers by amending telephone options and website content. Work is continuing with Customer Experience Steering Group to outline any changes to services as a result of the national lockdown and to develop appropriate communication plans. Work will be undertaken with the Webcontent and Digital Communications team to improve service information accessibility on the council's website. Service provision via key contact channels will be expanded to include digital channels and more services. Services will be supported to provide face to face appointments. The virtual phone solution will be expanded to enable high volume contact services to take live phone calls.

3.16 Governance & Accountability

A review of the top governance challenges faced by the organisation as a result of the pandemic was started in October. The Audit Plan has been agreed and is in the process of being delivered. Life Events have undertaken a review of the impact of Covid-19 on their services; several changes have been implemented as a result to ensure the services can react quickly. This includes Registration staff able to work from home and the office, with face to face contact with customer, as necessary; Bereavement Services have contingency plans in place, including working 24 hours per day, if required and plans for extra 'stewards' in cemeteries during lockdown periods; Electoral Services contacting customers digitally as part of annual canvassing and planning for a Covid secure Police & Crime Commissioner election next year.

3.17 Procurement

All existing supplier relief negotiations will be reviewed in light the second lockdown and renegotiated, where required. Meetings will be held with a selection of local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) through the Chamber of Commerce to explain tendering processes. The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) process will be reviewed to ensure consistent stocks.

3.18 Ways of Working

The Workstyles Team have attended all Directorate Management Team meetings to present the revised priority office user criteria, current office capacity and usage, and proposed changes to office capacity. Guidance has been sought from Public Health regarding face coverings and masks. Staff will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings while moving around office buildings. Workstyles have reviewed what office equipment has been borrowed and the implications if office capacity increases. Consideration is being given to confirm no further equipment to be borrowed. Refreshed wellbeing messages for staff commenced in November. A meeting will be held to start the workstream regarding longer term office accommodation, and the future approach to working arrangements to optimise employee engagement and performance.

3.19 Community impact of Covid-19 and equalities

Work is underway to gather and analyse data to understand the community impact of Covid-19 by geography and characteristic. It will be important when analysing this data to distinguish Covid-19 as the determining factor and it should be noted that the data may well change in reaction to national and local factors, such as businesses closing, furlough eventually ending, and unemployment and benefit claims increasing. When the data analysis is complete, officers will set out

a plan of action and consult with stakeholders, including Members, the Executive Leadership Team and Corporate Equality & Diversity Group. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been completed, as necessary, by the working groups with actions in order to get the best outcomes for all service users and staff. In doing so, each group is considering what existing inequalities have been revealed by the pandemic and social restrictions, what inequalities have been created or worsened, and what the council can do (with partners and communities) to tackle these. In addition, the groups will also consider whether the recovery stage from the pandemic creates any opportunities to actually narrow pre-existing inequalities. The council's Equalities Managers are supporting the process. Equality is fundamental to the city's and council's recovery from the pandemic, along with addressing the inequalities that may have worsened over this period. In order to monitor delivery against each EIA, an equalities section has been included in the regular highlight reports the working groups complete as part of governance of the programme.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 As the democratic body of the city, the council has a role in leading the governance and delivery of the recovery phase of the pandemic. The consequences of this public health crisis force the city to respond in ways that are different from what has been considered normal. The recovery programme is designed to ensure that the city is able to respond in an agile way as the city transitions through different phases of the pandemic and moves in and out of response.
- 4.2 The pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge for Brighton & Hove and a major shock to the city's economy and communities. It also presents the city with an opportunity to shape its future. The recovery programme is designed to provide the governance structure for initiating and organising a series of co-ordinated, multi-agency actions during the recovery stage(s) following the pandemic affecting the communities and/or environment of Brighton & Hove. Those leading Recovery & Renewal are working closely with colleagues supporting outbreak control and emergency response to ensure approaches are co-ordinated.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The programme is engaging with the city's partnerships and governing bodies, and the Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) as part of the recovery process. The city's partnerships have been consulted as part of the programme's initiation via a scenario planning exercise where they were asked to consider the implications of the pandemic on their sectors and a response. Action plans are now being drawn up as a result of this exercise. The CVS and Clinical Commissioning Group are represented on the Covid-19 Recovery & Renewal Group, where the leads of each working group share progress in order to identify issues, links and dependencies, and cross-cutting areas of work. Each working group has also been reviewed to determine whether it has appropriate CVS representation.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Covid-19 pandemic and the council's response to it have been fast paced, agile and in partnership with others, and this ethos is being carried forward into recovery. The programme will plan ahead as far as it is able, adapt in line with outbreak control and emergency response, and each working group will review its approach as circumstances change. The organisational capacity required to respond to the initial crisis, recover from it, respond again and manage business as usual cannot be under-estimated. Officers remain committed to delivering for the city, and the council and its staff, and will continue to update Members as the programme progresses.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The governance structure of the Recovery & Renewal Programme is being provided for within the council's existing resources. Except where specific delegations have been approved by committee, actions or recommendations arising from the programme that have financial implications are reported through the council's standard governance and decision-making routes, normally Policy & Resources Committee, and in accordance with Financial Regulations.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell 19.11.20

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Recovery and Renewal Programme is entirely consistent with the Council's powers and duties under the Local Government Act 2000 (economic, social and environmental wellbeing) the Coronavirus Act 2020 and function-specific laws.

Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland 20.11.20

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The equalities implications of Covid-19 recovery have been covered in the main body of this report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 The sustainability of its recovery plans is a key aspect of the programme's approach. This ranges from the plans to facilitate the movement of people around the city, to the sustainability of food provision, to the sustainability of the council's finances. As well as responding to the challenges thrown up by the pandemic, the programme will similarly seek to optimise any opportunities that are presented to support delivery of the council's priorities.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 The challenges of city and council recovery from the pandemic are being considered alongside the implications of Brexit. The council's Brexit Implementation Lead now attends Covid Recovery & Renewal Group meetings. Services have been urged to plan their delivery in light of both Covid-19 and

Brexit, and business continuity plans are being refreshed with a similar focus. Opportunities to join up messaging and actions around Covid-19 and Brexit are being proactively identified, including the identification and management of risks.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.6 A Crime & Community Safety/Cohesion working group has been established as part of the recovery programme, as detailed previously in this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.7 Risk management is an integral part of programme management and is being considered throughout the recovery process. The working groups have conducted risk analyses to identify the risks relevant to their area of focus and have captured these in risk logs. Working group level risks will be managed by the relevant working group and only reported to the Programme Board if they need to be escalated. Programme level risks will be included in the working group's highlight report and reported monthly to the Programme Board, if the working group feels they are of corporate interest. The Covid-19 Programme Manager will maintain a programme risk log comprising the programme level risks from the working groups, escalated risks, corporate risks and those that cut across more than one working group. This will be shared periodically with the Programme Board. The Programme Board will escalate risks to the Sussex Resilience Forum, as appropriate. As mentioned previously, opportunities that arise in the course of the city and council's recovery from the pandemic will be explored and pursued, as appropriate.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.8 Public Health is at the heart of the council's response to, and recovery from, the pandemic and is mainstreamed throughout the Recovery & Renewal programme. Colleagues from Public Health and the Recovery & Renewal programme are co-ordinating their responses to the pandemic.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.9 The programme is structured around the council and city's recovery from the pandemic and the implications to both are integral to the plans of the respective working groups.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None.

Background Documents

None.