

Part I

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**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 19TH MAY 2020
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING
AND GOVERNANCE)**

COVID-19 RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report proposes a draft framework with which to initiate the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is envisaged that the aim and objectives of the structure will be finalised by the groups themselves once the structure is operative. The framework detailed here sets out broad parameters and objectives for the groups to consider themselves once established and once partners and stakeholders are engaged.

1.2 The strategic aim for this work is:

To support the recovery of Welwyn Hatfield Borough from the Covid-19 pandemic.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Members:

- Approve the structures recommended as the starting point for recovery.
- Initiate the process of stakeholder engagement.

3 Explanation

Core Principles

3.1 Recovery is an integral phase of the emergency management process and can be defined as:

“The process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency”

3.2 Essentially, the recovery process will have certain key focus points and features:

- Co-ordination – it should act in line with an agreed aim and objectives, and be managed in line with accepted the co-ordination and decision making processes.
- Focus points – recovery should support the restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing. A key point here, which is very

pertinent, is that the process of restoration may reflect a 'new normality' as for many, life may never be the same again.

- 3.3 The concept of a new normality may also represent strategic opportunities to go beyond restoration and to effect improvements to the previous situation. Two obvious organisational examples here may be the modernisation and transformation of working practices through use of new technologies, and improvements to partnership working resulting from relationships formed during the response phase. As a council these can link to our existing modernisation and transformation programme. There are many community oriented opportunities as well. Recovery should therefore be considered as developmental, as well as being solely about replacement, rehabilitation and restoration.
- 3.4 It is good practice to commence the recovery process at the earliest opportunity, and it can overlap with the response phase until such time as the response phase is stood down.
- 3.5 In respect of the current pandemic, a Hertfordshire wide Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) has already been established, chaired by our Chief Executive. The RCG is a multi-agency group with clear linkages and reporting lines to the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), and at an appropriate time, it will assume primacy. I
- 3.6 Individual agencies will also establish their own recovery processes and internal groups, and it is important that we establish a suitable framework, guided by a robust strategy, to enable us to link in to county wide structures, whilst leading a co-ordinated effort in respect of our own communities. Whilst local recovery effort should be tied in with the county effort, it is important that these are nuanced to suit the needs of individual localities.

Core Principles

- 3.7 The principles of our recovery phase should include:
 - Ensuring that the process enables and supports our communities and businesses to recover from the pandemic's impacts.
 - Consideration of the changing needs of affected groups over time, and allowing for a long term process.
 - Active participation from the affected communities, businesses and stakeholders
 - Integration between the work stream groups within the borough's recovery operation, and also with the county wide RCG.
 - Early commencement of the recovery phase at an agreed point in the response.

Trigger Points

- 3.8 Recovery structures can go live while the response phase is ongoing, and at an agreed point, primacy will pass from the Strategic Co-ordination Group and the Recovery Co-ordination Group. This process may be flexible depending on any second wave of the virus and have to switch back to SCG primacy. The situation will be kept under review and a Corporate Management Team decision taken to ensure appropriate timing.

What Does 'Recovered' look like?

- 3.9 Recovery does not necessarily mean restoration to the normality that existed before the pandemic. It may reflect a 'new normality', recognising that things may not be the same again and it may be a very long term process, for example Aberfan in South Wales is still deemed as being a recovering community following the tragedy there in 1966. It is therefore important that the Recovery Group and sub groups, develop a holistic vision for their work. Part of the work may also be regenerative, noting that the pandemic will have had significant impacts on the local economy.
- 3.10 A useful tool in helping to develop this vision is to compile a Community Impact Assessment, which may be a localised version of the county wide assessment. This is deemed as an essential precursor in the National Recovery Guidance and will assist in the provision of base data, but is also an iterative process that considers the dynamic and protracted nature of recovery, and changing community needs over time.

Linkages to Wider Local Resilience Forum Recovery Structure

- 3.11 The County RCG will assume primacy from the SCG, and this will be formally handed over. The WHBC structure will, like the county structure, have already been working at this point, but the handover of primacy should happen at the same point.
- 3.12 The recovery sub groups operating at county level will mirror the work of the suggestions above to a large extent (with the exception of the Internal Processes Sub-Group). Care should be taken to ensure that there is effective liaison between similar work streams at county and borough levels, ensuring that there are neither gaps nor duplication of effort, and that objectives are aligned to ensure consistency.

The Role of Members

- 3.13 The key aspects of Member roles may include:
- Be a focus for community concerns and a conduit to recovery structures.
 - Identify issues within their own wards.
 - Build/utilise local community links.
 - Provide visible community leadership.
 - Maintain liaison with other local elected representatives (LA, MP).
 - Maintain community and business liaison.
 - Encouragement and support to those working on recovery in their communities and businesses.
 - Consider recovery proposals and made appropriate democratic decisions connected to these.

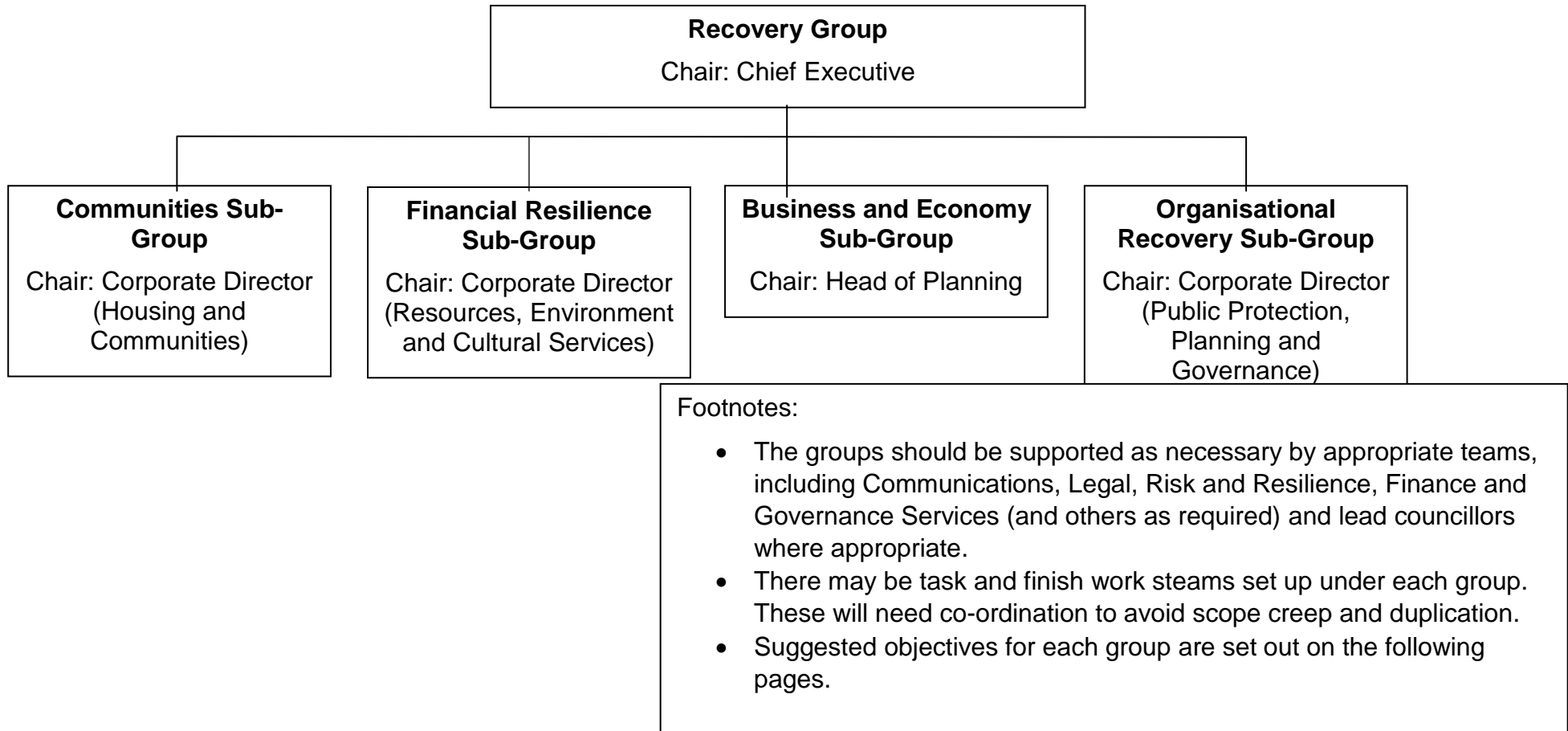
A Proposed Recovery Structure for WHBC

- 3.14 The way we approach our recovery strategy and process is set out in the suggested possible structure on the next page, along with the aim and objectives which follow.
- 3.15 It is envisaged that all activities and decision making will be made in line with principles set out in the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Protocol

(JESIP) which sets out a clear decision making frameworks and arrangements for shared situational awareness between partners/agencies.

- 3.16 The suggested starting structure is below, and suggested starting Terms of Reference are set out at appendices A to E. It is worth noting that this structure is not prescriptive and can be dynamic and flexible to meet needs. It may be desirable to have smaller, but more numerous, sub-groups, for example, if the suggested groups are felt to be unwieldy.

Suggested WHBC Recovery Structure



Implications

Legal Implication(s)

- 3.2 The recovery process is part of the duties conferred upon us by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Recovery activity will of course be subject to a whole range of laws and regulations to ensure that it is a process carried out in a lawful way.

4 Financial Implication(s)

- 4.1 The council is faced with an estimated financial pressure of £7m this year due to COVID-19, however the scale of the impact on the economy and public finances resulting from COVID-19 in the medium-to long-term is unknown. The work of the Financial Resilience Recovery Subgroup will feed into the 2021/22 budget setting process to ensure the council will continue to have a sustainable financial position going forward.

5 Risk Management Implications

- 5.1 There is a strategic risk around the impacts of Covid-19 on our communities, and our organisation. This is assessed as major impact and very high likelihood.

6 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

- 6.1 None directly arising.

7 Procurement Implication(s)

- 7.1 None directly arising.

8 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 8.1 Recovery to a new normality is likely to present opportunities for improvements in sustainability.

9 Human Resources Implication(s)

- 9.1 The recovery effort will require considerable capacity at a time when resources will have been under massive pressure for some time, and where there will be pressures to restore 'business as usual' as well as managing the backlogs of work that have arisen during the pandemic.

10 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

- 10.1 The recovery effort will have community health and wellbeing at its core. Appropriate interventions will be required with partners to ensure full consideration throughout.

11 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

11.1 Every aspect of the recovery effort will depend on strong, consistent, accurate and timely communications, both within and between agencies, and also with affected communities.

12 Link to Corporate Priorities

12.1 The recovery process links to every council objective.

13 Equality and Diversity

13.1 An EqIA has not been completed at this stage. EqIAs should be completed once groups are set up, to ensure that the adopted structure fulfils equality and diversity requirements.

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Appendix A: Suggested Objectives - Recovery Group

Act as a link with the county wide recovery structure.

Act as a link with the county wide SCG while it is running, feeding in recovery issues as required.

Provide strong, visible leadership.

Give a broad overview, ensuring that each agency's interests are represented.

Prepare community impact assessments that inform recovery priorities and activity work streams.

Set and monitor the borough wide recovery strategy, ensuring implementation.

Co-ordinate and monitor the work of the three recovery sub-groups, including their recommendations.

Agree the exit strategy criteria, and the timescales for achieving this.

Determine overall milestones and a vision for what 'recovered' will look like.

Set and monitor the overall action plan arising from the recovery phase.

Communicate the work of the group and sub-groups to stakeholders.

Appendix B: Suggested Objectives - Communities Sub-Group

Restore Welwyn Hatfield's communities.

Engage communities in the recovery process.

Support and facilitate the recovery and ongoing welfare of residents who have suffered hardship, loss and trauma as a result of the pandemic.

Feed in the work of the Recovery Group and ensure that this is properly communicated.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

Put in place mechanisms to identify those with ongoing vulnerabilities and a strategy for addressing these needs.

Monitor the data relating to those with ongoing support needs and work with other agencies to develop support interventions.

Identify funding opportunities to assist in the recovery process..

Deliver and support appropriate memorial and thank you events and initiatives.

Provide community reassurance through effective community leadership.

Contribute towards wider consultations on legislative change etc.

Appendix C: Suggested Objectives - Businesses and Economy Sub-Group

Work with partners to support the regeneration of businesses and the local economy through a jointly devised economic and business recovery strategy.

Provide support to local businesses in conjunction with partners (e.g. BID, Chambers of Commerce).

Collectively pursue relevant opportunities for funding.

Act as a conduit to central government where there are unmet support needs for businesses.

Feed in the work of the Recovery Group and ensure that this is properly communicated.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

Maintain ongoing dialogue with local employers.

Support initiatives intended to support the recovery of local businesses.

Contribute towards wider consultations on legislative change etc

Appendix D: Suggested Objectives - Organisational Recovery Sub-Group

Restore service delivery to agreed business as usual in a planned way.

Ensure the consistent application of appropriate policies during the recovery phase.

Ensure the management of backlogs, identifying any extra resources required to restore normal services.

Identify employee support needs and vulnerabilities.

Ensure that employees are supported and that efforts are acknowledged.

Ensure effective communications with council employees.

Capture learning through a process of debriefing, both single and multi-agency.

Ensure that learning is used to identify opportunities and inform future changes, such as modernisation and transformation, linking to the existing programme.

Ensure that there are appropriate memorial events for colleagues/Members who may have passed away.

Contribute towards wider consultations on legislative change etc

Appendix E: Suggested Objectives - Financial Resilience Sub-Group

Quantify the budgetary impact of the pandemic on the council.

Identify and pursue external opportunities for funding.

Model the effects of disrupted revenue streams.

Ensure the prompt administration of national and local financial schemes during the recovery phase.

Develop draft local approaches to mitigating budget challenges

Assess the impacts of supply chain disruption (including key contractors)

Maintain close links with other Sub-Groups