

FORM 2

NOTICE OF DECISION OF CABINET MEMBER

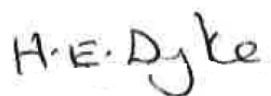
Pursuant to Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended by section 63 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1st December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

In accordance with the authority delegated to me, I have made the following decision:

Subject	Decision	Reason for decision	Date for Decision to be taken
COVID-19 Recovery Plan - Update	To endorse the update to the recovery plan as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.	To update the COVID recovery framework that was adopted in July 2020, in order to reflect current and future workplans.	20 August 2021

I confirm that the appropriate statutory officer consultation has taken place with regard to this decision.

Dated: 20 August 2021

Signed: 

Councillor: Helen Dyke
Leader of the Council

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

STRONG LEADER REPORT

COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN – UPDATE

OPEN	
DIRECTOR:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Ian Miller
DATE:	20 August 2021
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1: updated recovery plan

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To approve an update to the COVID-19 recovery plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to endorse the update to the recovery plan as set out in Appendix 1.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Cabinet approved a COVID-19 recovery framework at its meeting on 7 July 2020. The formal restrictions related to the pandemic were lifted by the Government last month. It is opportune to review and update the planned actions set out in the recovery framework, recognising that some aspects of the Council's work have long returned to normal operation while in other respects final preparations are being made for the new hybrid working model that was endorsed by full Council last year.

4 KEY ISSUES

4.1 The updated plan is wide-ranging and covers service delivery as well as economic recovery. It seeks to summarise actions already taken as well as those that are yet to be fully implemented or completed.

4.2 In respect of the Cabinet's own operation, Cabinet resolved in July 2020 to continue to use remote meeting technology wherever possible for all informal meetings involving Cabinet members including Cabinet advisory panels and, if legislation is changed permanently to allow its formal meetings to be held remotely, to continue to use remote meeting technology for such meetings. Despite demands from across local government, the Government did not legislate to extend the ability to hold remote formal meetings and action is awaited from it following the recent call for evidence. Thus the Cabinet will be reverting to formal meetings in person from September, and its resolution of July 2020 can be implemented in full only in light of new legislation.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No specific additional costs arise as a result of this report. The Council has faced significant costs and loss of income arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has provided significant funding to help meet these but they do not cover the full impact: for example the income guarantee covers only 71.25% of eligible lost income. The relevant figures are reported in quarterly budget monitoring reports.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In implementing outstanding actions in the plan, the Council will need to comply with all relevant legislation, including employment legislation in respect of changes that affect staff.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Equalities Impact Screening Assessment have been undertaken where relevant, such as on the changes to working arrangements for staff.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The recovery framework and the updated plan help to mitigate risk by ensuring that change is planned through a clear structure.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Cabinet is invited to endorse the update to the recovery plan.

10. CONSULTEES

- 10.1 Cabinet/CLT

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – updated recovery plan

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Reports to Cabinet on financial impact of COVID-19, May and July 2020; Q1, Q2 and Q3 budget monitoring reports for 2020-21

Report on the provisional final accounts outturn 2020-21, 19 July 2021

COVID-19 Recovery Framework, Cabinet, 7 July 2020

Response to homeworking consultation, Cabinet, 10 November 2020

Recommendations to Council about staff working arrangements and response to homeworking consultation, 15 July 2020 & 9 December 2020; report about members' survey, 23 September 2020

Appendix 1

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COVID-19 Recovery plan – update: August 2021

Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic created an unprecedented emergency response by the Council which is unique in its history. Working as part of the wider West Mercia Local Resilience Forum, the Council is a Category 1 responder and was and remains a central part of the response to this major incident. It continues to work closely with other principal councils in Worcestershire under the “One Worcestershire” principle.

While the legal restrictions under the third lockdown were lifted in July, there remains work to do in providing financial support for businesses and people on benefits who are self-isolating, and in continuing to convey and support public health messaging about appropriate working arrangements in businesses and personal behaviour by individuals. Most council staff continue to work from home and the transition to new hybrid working arrangements – under which many staff will spend only part of their time in office buildings – is approaching. Staff who cannot work from home continue to be supported to work in a COVID-safe way. Councillors have recently reverted to meetings in person for formal meetings of the Council and its committees but remote meeting technology continues to be used for informal meetings.

Over the last year, the Council has continued to plan for the recovery phase, in line with established planning procedures. Its recovery plan aligns as appropriate with wider plans across Worcestershire or the LRF area and also has regard to Government guidance as it emerges. The framework adopted in July 2020 correctly predicted that the recovery phase for this crisis was highly likely to be a prolonged one, and also that the response phase would continue alongside any recovery.

The local authority sector experienced wide-reaching impacts and in particular for district councils these included such matters as governance, service delivery, financial pressures, unplanned expenditure and loss of income, workforce matters and increased (or reduced) demand for some services. The profound changes to the day-to-day operations of the Council forced by the response have resulted in valuable learning, such as the productivity and benefits of remote working. For some aspects of workforce management, service delivery and governance, the plan does not presume that ‘business as usual’ will mean a return to how things used to be done prior to the pandemic: the opportunity has been taken to review temporary arrangements that have been made and to embed some of them permanently.

The Framework

The Council’s approach to recovery is centred on the following 4 main and inter-linked pillars

Resetting the corporate plans of the council	Recovery of the organisation “Finding the new normal”	Councillors and democracy	Our communities and the local economy
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RESET THE CORPORATE PLANS OF THE COUNCIL

Area of Focus	Action taken/required	Lead officer
Revise Corporate Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy	<p>Corporate plan reviewed and reduced to two priorities, February 2021</p> <p>All assumptions reviewed for medium term financial planning, including income from all sources, December 2020 and February 2021</p> <p>Complete monthly finance data returns to MHCLG</p>	Ian Miller & Tracey Southall

RECOVERY OF THE ORGANISATION "FINDING THE NEW NORMAL"

Area of Focus	Action taken/required	Lead officer
<p>Strategic asset management plan</p> <p>Facilities asset management plan</p>	<p>Plans for 2021-26 refreshed and approved, May 2021</p> <p>Review under way of future accommodation needs, in particular office space in light of move to hybrid working – business case on proposals for change expected late 2021</p>	Mike Parker/Elaine Brookes
Resetting expectations on "office work"	Move to hybrid working approved by Council, December 2020	Mike Parker/ Elaine Brookes/ Rachael Simpson

	<p>Hybrid working arrangements developed for roll out with effect from 1 September 2021</p> <p>Continue to maximise use of remote meeting technology for staff meetings</p> <p>Continue to support staff in respect of well-being</p> <p>Continue to provide support for managers for effective management and coaching of staff in hybrid working environment, including dealing with any reluctance to return to WFDC buildings</p>	
Workforce planning – realignment of workforce to service demand	<p>Management review agreed by Council, May 2021 to be implemented by 31 December</p> <p>Review to align management capacity and tasks in light of new management structure to be completed by October 2021</p>	Ian Miller, Rachael Simpson
Emergency Plan and Business Continuity Plan	Business continuity plan reviewed to cater for pandemic situations; emergency plan updated	Rebecca Pritchett, CLT
Resetting customer expectations	Building on greater use of digital and other service delivery models that do not depend on face-to-face customer service – continue promotion of self-service on website, MyWyreForest app etc. and maintenance of appointments for face-to-face services	Lucy Wright/ Suzanne Johnstone-Hubbold

COUNCILLORS AND DEMOCRACY

Area of Focus	Action taken/required	Lead officer
Arrangements to support formal meetings	<p>Remote meetings operated successfully, April 2020 to mid-July 2021; reverted to in person from 19 July 2021</p> <p>Review future arrangements in light of any Government legislation (Cabinet has already resolved to use remote technology for its meetings if legislation is changed, July 2020)</p>	Ian Miller/ Caroline Newlands
Arrangements to support informal meetings	<p>Remote meetings operated successfully since April 2020.</p> <p>Review with Group leaders continued use of remote meeting technology, September 2021</p>	Ian Miller/ Caroline Newlands

OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Area of Focus	Action taken/required	Lead officer
Rough Sleeping and Homelessness	<p>Continue to support people to minimise rough sleeping, ensuring a legacy for initiatives taken during the crisis</p> <p>Respond to expected increase in homelessness as protections from eviction are removed and financial protection comes to an end</p>	Kate Bailey

	<p>(Detailed actions for the above are set out in the housing COVID recovery plan)</p> <p>Deploy MHCLG specific grant funding effectively for above activities</p> <p>Progress business case for new temporary accommodation unit in Kidderminster, September 2021</p>	Kate Bailey/Helen Ogram
Wyre Forest Leisure Centre	Finalise principles for financial support for Places Leisure following end of restrictions, July 2021; and agree arrangements for recommencement of management fee as soon as possible	Steve Brant/Jane Alexander
Economic recovery	<p>Continue with implementation work on Future High Street Fund projects, through to March 2024</p> <p>Deliver Community Renewal Fund projects (by March 2021) and Levelling Up projects (by March 2024) if bids are successful</p> <p>Continue working with Worcestershire Economic Recovery Group to deliver "One Worcestershire" programme of interventions to support economic recovery</p> <p>Complete issue of additional restrictions grant, phase 1 by end July 2021</p>	<p>Ostap Paparega</p> <p>Ostap Paparega/Steve Brant/Kate Bailey (CRF)</p> <p>Ostap Paparega (LUF)</p> <p>Ostap Paparega</p> <p>Ostap Paparega</p>

	<p>Implement delivery of additional restrictions grant, phase 2 by end March 2022</p>	Ostap Paparega
	<p>Continue issuing self-isolation payments at least to end September 2021 and other welfare support for affected households, including council tax reduction scheme</p>	Lucy Wright
	<p>Ongoing monitoring of collection rates for council tax and business rates, and taking appropriate recovery action</p>	Lucy Wright