

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2020

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CROSS-PARTY RECOVERY PANEL – COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to establish a Cross-Party Recovery Panel with the aim of shaping, informing and advising Cabinet on the Council's recovery planning to form the basis of the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-
1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 23 March 2020 the UK Government imposed a nationwide lockdown in an effort to help minimise the spread of coronavirus. The Council has undergone significant change during this period, in that some services have been created, some services stopped and some staff have been redeployed.
- 3.2 The recovery of the County Borough following the Covid-19 pandemic is a significant and complex programme that has a key role to play in the economic vitality and community resilience of the Borough and its residents.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive presented a report to the meeting of Cabinet on 30 June 2020 for a proposed approach to recovery planning from Covid-19. The recovery programme has the following 3 strands:

Restart

- Immediate response to the critical issues/priorities identified;
- Operational planning to move from essential services model now being completed.

Recover

- establish a Recovery Panel to help shape, inform and advise on the Council's recovery planning;
- develop an integrated recovery report based on the service area returns due by the end of July 2020;
- Develop an amended budget for 2020-21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and repurposed and readjusted 2020/21 Corporate plan and corporate risk assessment by September 2020.

Renew

- Work to commence on an engagement programme with partners, Members, staff and citizens over the summer and autumn, and assess the proposed Community Impact Assessment to be carried out by the Public Services Board (PSB).
- Develop a new policy framework and new corporate plan based on what the new normal will need to look like for the Council to deliver sustainable and effective services for the next 5-10 years.

3.4 Some key recovery priorities and considerations were identified in the report to Cabinet including:

1. Reopening Schools in September
2. Responding to the economic crisis
3. Future sustainability of culture and leisure venues (and sector)
4. Safe streets, active travel and public transport
5. Homelessness: provision and services post lockdown
6. Supporting the most vulnerable, and those who care for them, including nurturing the excellent relationship with the Third Sector and developing and enhancing community resilience
7. Stopping the spread and return of the virus: Health and Safety; provision of a stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); ongoing Contact Tracing
8. Waste: Returning all services safely
9. Reopening and enhancing community Hubs and Libraries
10. Digital services: Opportunities and Risks, for example increased public appetite for digital services but also risk of digital cyber fraud.

3.5 Cabinet at its meeting on 30 June 2020 also approved the commencement of a process of Local Economic Recovery Planning and, in so doing, established a Bridgend County Economic Task Force. The Task Force will develop an economic plan for the future of the County Borough which will include action to help businesses adapt to the changing economic landscape and improve resilience, as well as support for residents to develop new skills, training and employment opportunities. The work of the Task Force will be invaluable to the role of the Recovery Panel.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The scale of change that will need to be effected will be considerable. It is crucial that the impact of proposed changes on residents, including those with protected characteristics, as well as the financial impacts of the changes are fully considered as part of the recovery exercise. The proposed establishment of a Cross-Party Recovery Panel will inform, support and challenge the recovery exercise and also ensure that Members of Scrutiny have an opportunity to feed into and shape thinking.
- 4.2 The remit of the Recovery Panel is as set out in the draft Terms of Reference attached as **Appendix 1**. Any expansion of the remit should not be undertaken without the agreement of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.3 The Panel should take a structured approach to the examination of the recovery process with the aim of identifying key issues to examine in more detail and make recommendations to Cabinet. It is proposed that at the first meeting of the Recovery Panel the Panel will approve the attached draft Terms of Reference and will identify key issues to examine in greater depth for future meetings.
- 4.4 Membership of the Recovery Panel will comprise the 12 Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC). There is representation from all three Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees (SOSCs) on the COSC, including Group Leaders and Scrutiny Chairs. The knowledge and experience gained through their work as members of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel can be utilised within the recovery process and will provide an opportunity to help develop and shape future strategies that could feed into the Authority's Corporate Plan and MTFs.
- 4.5 The Public Service Board is committed to playing a role in supporting the recovery and for a co-ordinated approach to be undertaken across all partners of the County Borough and to help align efforts to rebuild the economy while also minimising the impact of the crisis for disadvantaged communities and the environment. The PSB will be undertaking a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) in order to understand how the pandemic and lockdown has affected services and communities within the County Borough and what that means for wellbeing. The information gathered in the CIA will be used to consider where to adapt service delivery, to respond to communities most affected or at risk, how to benefit from positive changes and how partners can work together both in the short term and to improve resilience in the longer term. The assessment will be done as much as possible across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area in conjunction with Cwm Taf PSB. It is recommended that the Recovery Panel works closely with the PSB and regional partners to ensure that people and businesses across the regions they represent are getting the support they need.
- 4.6 The Local Government Association as part of its conference programme has held a series of webinars which will be of particular use to Members in the recovery planning (<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-annual-conference-webinars>). In addition, the Local Government Association has also provided some helpful information via its Covid-19 Good Council Practice page, which sets out the work being undertaken

by local government to address the challenges brought by Covid-19 across all local government services (<https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-good-council-practice>).

4.7 The recommendations and or findings of the Panel will be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken to identify any disproportionate effect of the pandemic on some communities and individuals.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The establishment of the Panel and its considerations will have regard to the sustainable development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five ways of working.

8. Financial implications

8.1 This report has no direct financial implications. The Panel will operate within existing budgets.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the report and approve the establishment of a Cross-Party Recovery Panel comprising the 12 Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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Background documents: None

Covid-19 Cross-Party Recovery Panel

Draft Terms of Reference

Purpose of Panel

The Panel has no decision making powers, but it shall inform, support and challenge the recovery exercise and ensure that Elected Members, officers and key partners have an opportunity to feed into and shape thinking.

It will support and advise on approaches that could form the basis of the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, including:

- To conduct a thorough examination of the recovery process with the aim of identifying key issues to examine in more detail and make recommendations to Cabinet;
- To test proposals for resuming council functions and services against current government guidance and other relevant considerations;
- To call for evidence from key partners and work alongside the Public Service Board and commission research and advice;
- To work in conjunction with the Bridgend County Economic Task Force on Local Economic Recovery Planning;
- To consider the evidence and its impact on policies, protocols and plans to take account of a new economic reality;
- To review the evidence and its impact on communities and continue this throughout this period which will support future strategic focus and ultimately support a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Plan;
- To ensure sound financial estimates of the response and recovery phases are developed;
- To ensure the adequacy of governance arrangements to support the recovery phase;
- To focus on developing strategies and collective action to rebuild the economy whilst also minimising the impact of the crisis for disadvantaged communities and the environment;
- To present recommendations and findings of its work to Cabinet.

The Panel will also receive updates from the Public Service Board on the various internal and external workstreams as they are delivered.

The administration and functions of the Panel will be held to the same standards expected by the relevant legislation in relation to local authority overview and scrutiny committees.

Membership

Membership of the Recovery Panel will comprise the 12 Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There is representation from all three SOSCs on the COSC, including Group Leaders and Scrutiny Chairs. The knowledge and experience gained through their work as members of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel can be utilised within the Recovery process and will provide an opportunity for the Panel to help develop and shape future strategies that could feed into the Authority's Corporate Plan and MTFs.

Meetings

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel shall be appointed by the Panel at its first meeting.

The meetings will be supported by the Chief Executive and the Scrutiny Team and by other relevant officers as required.

Meetings will be held monthly, but these may vary in frequency as the situation requires and based on need. Meetings may be rearranged, cancelled or additional meetings scheduled with the agreement of the Chair.

Meetings are to be held in private session but Members may request access to information on a confidential basis.

The quorum will be a minimum of six of the members of the Panel.

Review

The work of the Recovery Panel will be subject to monitoring and evaluation in six months.