

<b>Cabinet Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
<b>Report Title</b>	Swale Borough Council and its approach to recovery
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Roger Truelove, Leader of the Council
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration
<b>Head of Service</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That Members agree the draft Recovery Plan (set out in Appendix One), subject to future amendments as the recovery phases evolve.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 As the government eases the country out of lockdown, attention has been turned from emergency response to the 'recovery phase'. This is not a normal recovery due to the scale of the Covid-19 impact - we are in uncharted waters.
- 1.2 Recovery may require some form of realignment of services and processes of the council, with short, medium and long-term choices to make. A plan is being developed for recovery which will evolve over time. This draft plan is set out in Appendix One.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The draft Recovery Plan attempts to address the different phases of recovery as we move through them. At the time of writing these phases are still not entirely clear, but we are assuming immediate (June – Sept), medium term (October - March 2021) and longer term (March 2021 +).
- 2.2 The plan sets out what the council intends to do throughout the process of recovery. Recovery will not be linear, and we may have to return to emergency response depending on if there is another spike.
- 2.3 There is much we still don't know about what Government will decide around lockdown phases, withdrawal of support etc. As such the plan will evolve over time as we learn more and gain more feedback which will inform the plan.
- 2.4 So in that context, a plan has been drafted as robustly as possible, balancing the need to sustain core services, to continue with the Administration's programme of

change and to meet the pressures of what will be a changed social and economic environment.

### 3 Proposals

3.1 The draft Recovery Plan is set out in Appendix One, but in summary the priorities are:

**Economic Improvement:** Support our local economy so that it can survive and be strong, resilient, dynamic, and adaptable to change. Encourage a local economy that fosters good, clean, sustainable growth. Play our part in helping meet some of the immediate challenges the boroughs' economy now faces but also take advantage of the untapped potential, for longer-term benefit.

**Affordable Housing:** Provide sustainable housing for local people by pursuing all viable opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable and social housing across the borough. Work in partnership to respond to those in need of housing, anticipating increased demand as we move out of lockdown.

**Climate and Environmental Emergency:** Seize the opportunities arising from the pandemic to a renewed commitment to investing in our environment and addressing climate change. Explore new approaches as a result of behavioural change and its impact on the environment.

**Communities and Social Inclusion:** Enable our communities to be resilient and cohesive. Capitalise on the community spirit engendered through the pandemic and our changed relationship with the voluntary and community sector as a result – supporting it to bring about social change and quality of life. Focus on the vulnerable groups hardest hit by the pandemic, and address health and wellbeing implications arising from it.

**Renewing Local Democracy and making the council fit for the future:** Improve the council's engagement with communities and stakeholders across the borough to get buy in for a collective recovery. Be innovative in our ideas on how we do things as an organisation given the cultural, behavioural and environmental changes the pandemic presents.

#### **Overarching/ Cross Cutting Themes**

In addition to the priorities above, there are some overarching/ cross cutting themes that run throughout the approach to recovery:

**Working in collaboration:** The council is committed to working in collaboration with a wide range of partners to facilitate and enable recovery. The changed social and economic circumstances have provided an opportunity look again at the role public sector organisations, like the council, play. There is no single agency responsible for 'delivering' recovery - we will need to work together. Success will depend on coordination across a range of partners and a communitarian approach to partnership working based on shared objectives, across the public, private and community sectors in Swale.

**Communications and messaging:** It is important that we communicate effectively and timely and get our messaging right so people know what the council is doing and how it is able to support them. Making the most of our assets and using the attributes of each area of Swale to promote places and the borough as a whole as a great place to visit and invest will be key to recovery. Recognising and promoting positive outcomes including reduced traffic and pollution, better work/life balance, community spirit. Also, any improved people’s perception of the public sector and local councils role in the pandemic.

**The Local Plan Review:** This major project pulls all other strands together. Driving good, sustainable growth through the Local Plan Review will address all the priorities – economic improvement, affordable housing and good design and standards, community infrastructure, climate change agenda and so on.

#### **4 Alternative Options**

4.1 The council doesn’t have a Recovery Plan. This isn’t recommended as we need a plan to help focus and prioritise the council’s approach and ensure that is a safe, sustainable, managed recovery. In accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the County Council, along with District councils, have a statutory responsibility regarding response and recovery.

#### **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

5.1 The Recovery Plan is in draft and it will evolve over time as the phases of recovery roll out nationally. The intention is to regularly review and seek feedback. This starts with a member forum being held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. As area committees emerge, the intention is to utilise them to engage more widely, along with the commitment to engage and collaborate to deliver the actions in the plan.

#### **6 Implications**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Corporate Plan	The priorities of the Recovery Plan mirror those of the emerging Corporate Plan and actions are aligned across all 4 priorities
Financial, Resource and Property	On 3 June Cabinet received a Finance Coronavirus update. The report identified an initial estimate of £4.1m of additional costs and lost income. To date the Council has received £1.576m towards this deficit and there may well be no additional Government funding. This is an extremely serious position for the Council not just for this year but beyond given the likelihood of longer term shortfalls in Council Tax, Business Rates and other income.  The 3 June report set out an approach to balancing the in year budget position and it needs to be recognised that this will need to

	be adhered to and the ability of the Council to fund new initiatives over and above those already identified is non-existent.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	There are various statutory, regulatory and licensing powers that the council can use to help rebuild the local economy and support communities.
Crime and Disorder	We are working with the Police to ensure open and public spaces stay safe as we move out of lockdown and will continue to monitor the situation throughout the recovery phases.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Any opportunities arising from the pandemic will be explored, as will new approaches as a result of behavioural change and its impact on the environment.
Health and Wellbeing	<p>The plan looks at opportunities to promote health and wellbeing, capitalising on a new interest in walking and cycling and enjoying the outdoors that the pandemic has brought.</p> <p>It also will focus on the vulnerable groups hardest hit by the pandemic, and address health and wellbeing implications arising from it such as fuel poverty, mental health.</p> <p>This is also a focus for the work being done to get staff back to the office, where mental health issues of isolation are an issue.</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	<p>The council is adhering to government guidance in all areas of work and service delivery to ensure the safety of staff, members and residents.</p> <p>A risk assessment will be need to completed before staff can return to Swale House</p> <p>Risk assessments have also been completed for outwards facing staff working in the community</p> <p>We also support staff and volunteers with PPE.</p>
Equality and Diversity	The Recovery Plan will enable our communities to be resilient and cohesive and support social change and quality of life, focusing on the vulnerable groups hardest hit by the pandemic.
Privacy and Data Protection	Consideration has been given as part of the community response project and the handling of sensitive data of the shielded cohort.

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix One: Draft Recovery Plan

## 8 Background Papers

None