

RECOVERY COMMITTEE

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| Date of Meeting | Thursday 3 rd March 2022 |
| Report Subject | Corporate Recovery Objectives |
| Cabinet Member | Collective Cabinet |
| Report Author | Chief Executive |
| Type of Report | Strategic |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wales, and the North Wales region is currently in a second period recovery from what was a further phase of infection created by the Omicron virus. As Wales starts to move cautiously out of a pandemic phase and the pandemic switches from pandemic to endemic, the work of recovery will require sustained and focussed activity within our communities to ensure that they are in a position of economic growth, strength and resilience.

This report currently provides an update on the corporate objectives adopted by the Council from a recovery perspective only.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1 | That the Committee is assured by progress in meeting the recovery objectives. |
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REPORT DETAILS

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| 1.00 | RECOVERY STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE |
| 1.01 | <p>Wales, and the North Wales region is currently in a second period recovery from what was a further phase of infection created by the Omicron virus. As Wales starts to move cautiously out of a pandemic phase and the pandemic switches from pandemic to endemic, the work of recovery will require sustained and focussed activity within our communities to ensure that they are in a position of economic growth, strength and resilience.</p> |
| 1.02 | <p>The overall recovery aims of the organisation are:-</p> <p><u>Overall Organisational Recovery</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To ensure the financial resilience and sustainability of the organisation in budget planning for 2022/23 and the medium-term;2. To make a managed transition to a new operating model for working arrangements for the workforce;3. To continue to protect the health and well-being of the workforce;4. To continue to maintain good governance;5. To restore public access to, and participation in, democratic meetings;6. To continue to ensure organisational business continuity, and contingency planning for unforeseen developments with the pandemic’. <p>Updates on progress in meeting the corporate recovery objectives which underpin these aims are given below:</p> <p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>To ensure the financial sustainability of the organisation We were able to successfully navigate our way through the last full financial year of the pandemic due in part to the assistance received from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. Ensuring the overall financial sustainability of the Council is a key consideration in the ongoing work on the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Council on 15 February approved a balanced budget for the 2022/23 financial year.</p> <p>To continue to maximise national assistance from the hardship fund and other government funding We are continuing to make monthly claims for additional costs and quarterly claims for income losses from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. It has previously been confirmed that this funding will end at the end of the current financial year.</p> <p>The financial impacts of the claims will continue to be included in the monthly budget monitoring reports to Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The approved budget for 2022/23 includes a contribution of £3.250m to the Council’s Emergency Reserve to</p> |

safeguard against the continuation of additional costs and lost income arising from the pandemic where mitigations cannot be found.

To continue to recover and restore income to target levels

Income levels across most Council Services have returned to budgeted levels with the exception of car park income. It was previously confirmed that the Hardship Fund will continue to assist with any existing shortfalls in budgeted income in the current financial year. Portfolio Business Recovery Plans include income recovery considerations which have been made in conjunction with the annual uplift arising from the corporate fees and charges policy.

To continue to recover and restore debt to target levels

Income collection continues and we are actively engaging with tax-payers, tenants, customers and businesses to offer flexible arrangements. We are also taking steps to enforce payment against residents and businesses who have not paid nor engaged with the Council over several months.

To maintain reserves and balances at levels that meet our needs

The Council will need to utilise its reserves to meet the additional costs of any elements not claimable from the Hardship Fund and also to deal with any overall in-year overspend. The level of reserves held has been a key consideration of the ongoing work on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the setting of the Budget for 2022/23.

Workforce

To ensure that the legal and ethical duties of the employer continue to be met in recovery

We continue to navigate new legislation and provide guidance for complex situational questions, to tackle the short and long-term obstacles from ongoing impact of the pandemic e.g. working from home, self-isolation and long Covid. Key workers will be offered a flu vaccination again this year to ensure maximum protection. We will continue to provide revised guidance as the position changes.

To continue to restore and protect the well-being of the workforce over time

The Council continues to review its policies and practices with a view to embedding new ways of working which achieves a range of benefits for both the organisation and our employees, including a better work-life balance, saved commuting time and costs, IT upskilling and increased levels of motivation whilst maintaining service levels.

To agree and implement a new operating model and working arrangements which maximise the use of technology and digital workplace solutions

We have implemented a number of digital and technological solutions to enable those who are able, to work remotely and maintain contact with service users. A draft hybrid working protocol is being reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose as we move from pandemic to endemic and continues to support the principles of hybrid working (home/office). In recognition of Welsh Government's aspirational target for 30% of the Welsh workforce to work remotely, homeworking will continue to be the main option for

employees whose role allows it. The overriding objective of the protocol is to maximise flexibility which can be both effective and productive for both the Council and its employees, whilst promoting best practice in the management of hybrid working. We will regularly review our position to ensure that it is legally compliant and reflects best practice.

To continue to review opportunities for organisational re-design based on the learning from the emergency response and recovery phases

Changes in working practices and patterns of our front-line services, and the effectiveness of technological solutions in supporting home working has demonstrated that services can operate successfully without the need to be physically co-located. It is important that where feasible to do so, we capitalise on these changes and build on them where it is right to do so.

Governance

To restore collection rates of Council Tax, NNDR, Sundry Debt and housing rents to target levels

Recovery levels are still on target though below pre-pandemic levels. Housing rent arrears are still higher than last year, largely due to the impact on recovery of not being able to take court action for six months after issuing a Notice Seeking Possession.

To complete the transition to a settled model for modern meetings

We have a settled pattern of remote meetings that is reliable. Equipment has been installed in the council chamber for hybrid meetings but not tested. Testing and the necessary consequent revisions to process will hopefully be completed for the summer (assuming that infection levels/restrictions permit meeting in person).

To restore accessibility to, and participation by, the public in member meetings

This is now complete and the public have the same opportunity to participate in meetings as before the pandemic.

To continue to support and expand digital means of service delivery

We continue to provide an increasing number of services via the website including and in particular to help with the pandemic. The funding from Welsh Government to help with the cost of council tax will be available on line for ease and speed of claiming.

Service Recovery

To ensure the business continuity of all services

All five service portfolios are still operating their recovery business plans. The plans have been reported to this Committee in sequence. A summary report on all five plans is included on this same agenda.

To meet the specific recovery objectives for each portfolio as set out in their respective business recovery plans

All five service portfolios are operating their recovery business plans effectively (see above).

To plan the full recovery of services against any backlogs and temporarily reduced performance standards

All five service portfolios are operating their recovery business plans effectively (see above).

To ensure that contingency planning is in place should there be a return to a third phase of response

We have resilient contingency planning arrangements in place. These can be drawn upon as necessary.

Community Recovery

To protect the health and well-being of local communities

Refer to the report made to the previous meetings of this Committee. There are no changes of significance to report.

To support and protect the most vulnerable in society

Refer to the report made to the previous meetings of this Committee. There are no changes of significance to report.

To support the recovery of communities and build their resilience

This work is coordinated at the sub-regional level by the combined Public Service Board (PSB) of Wrexham and Flintshire. The joint PSB have identified four themes as priorities:

- Mental Health
- Environment
- Poverty and Inequality
- Children and Young People

The Joint Public Service Board met on 7 October 2021 where commitment was made to continue to work together with Wrexham CBC to address these themes.

To support the economic recovery of communities and local business sectors

Refer to the report made to the previous meeting of this Committee. This report has also been shared with Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

Regional Recovery

To fully engage with the regional recovery strategy and as a member of the regional Recovery Co-ordinating Group

The Council is a category one member of the regional Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). We fully engage in both the development of the regional recovery strategy and the implementation of agreed strategy and plans at a local level.

To effectively manage the local implementation of the regional *Prevention and Response strategy for the pandemic*

The regional Prevention and Response strategy – which covers containment of the virus through a number of plans and enforcement powers – was adopted by all partners including the Council and has

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| | <p>recently been revised. The Council implements the strategy, which includes Test, Trace and Protect and the Vaccination Programme, through our local partnership structures. Our local multi-agency Prevention and Surveillance Group oversees and directs all local activity. Work across all six county-level Prevention and Surveillance groups is coordinated by the six respective chairs.</p> <p>To effectively manage the local operation of the <i>Test, Trace and Protect</i> programme</p> <p>Flintshire is the lead local authority for this programme in partnership with the Health Board, and is the employing body for the tracing workforce for the whole region. The service is fully funded, with employees contracted to 30/03/2022 or 30/06/2022 at which time, unless advised otherwise, the service will cease to operate in its current form.</p> <p>To play a full part in the planning and delivery of partnership programmes e.g. the vaccination programme</p> <p>Flintshire continues to play a full part in the development and local implementation of all regional programmes. The Council is represented on the strategic group that has designed and oversees the vaccination programme which is delivered by the Health Board as the responsible executive agency. Deeside Leisure Centre will continue to be used as a vaccination centre until the end of March 2022.</p> |
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| 2.00 | RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS |
| 2.01 | None specific |

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| 3.00 | CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT |
| 3.01 | Consultation on the second phase recovery strategy and governance arrangements has taken place with Chief Officers, the internal Emergency Management Response Team, Cabinet Members, and Group Leaders. |

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| 4.00 | RISK MANAGEMENT |
| 4.01 | None specific. |

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| 5.00 | APPENDICES |
| 5.01 | None. |

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| 6.00 | LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS |
| 6.01 | None. |

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| 6.00 | CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS |
| 6.01 | Contact Officer: Neal Cockerton Telephone: 01352 702101 E-mail: chief.executive@flintshire.gov.uk |
| 7.00 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS |
| 7.01 | None. |