



To:
All members of the
Cabinet

Please reply to:

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Date: 17 May 2021

Supplementary Agenda

Cabinet - Wednesday, 19 May 2021

Dear Councillor

I enclose the following items which were marked 'to follow' on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting to be held on Wednesday, 19 May 2021:

12. Recovery Strategy Summary

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Councillor M. Attewell

To consider the Recovery Strategy Summary report.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Beaumont
Committee Services

To the members of the Cabinet

Councillors:

J.R. Boughtflower
J. McIlroy
M.M. Attewell

R.O. Barratt
S. Buttar
R. Chandler

A.J. Mitchell
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Cabinet

19 May 2021



Please Enter Title	Summary Recovery Plan
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Lee O'Neil, Deputy Chief Executive Sandy Muirhead, Group Head for Commissioning and Transformation
Cabinet Member	Councillor Maureen Attewell
Confidential	No
Corporate Priority	Housing Economic Development Clean and Safe Environment Financial Sustainability
Recommendations	Cabinet is asked to: Note the contents of the Summary Recovery Plan, which will form the basis of a more detailed Action Plan to follow.
Reason for Recommendation	Not applicable

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the biggest challenge this Council has ever faced.
- 1.2 Following the national response to the outbreak of coronavirus and the introduction of the Government's first national lockdown, Spelthorne had to provide a rapid response to protect those at most risk within our communities.
- 1.3 As the pandemic progressed, the work of the Council increased significantly, with the authority given additional responsibilities to support vulnerable people, protect public health, enforce new regulations, and support businesses, including overseeing the distribution of a range of government grants.
- 1.4 A report on the emergency response was taken to Full Council on 21 May 2020. Councillors have since received regular briefings on work undertaken by the Council in response to the pandemic and a number of infographics have been released to outline the immense response provided by this authority over the last 14 months. The latest of these can be found in **Appendix 1**.

- 1.5 It should be noted that some services remain under considerable pressure as a result of having to continue distributing grants to businesses and responding to new requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19, e.g. Environmental Health's involvement in test and trace work.
- 1.6 Although our initial work was focused primarily on responding to the immediate and developing threats posed by COVID-19, the Council has also been planning and introducing a range of measures to assist in the borough's recovery, as the Government implements its roadmap out of the latest lockdown. This work can be categorised into two main elements:
- (a) The Council's own organisational recovery programme, including plans to return to new 'normal' modes of operation, with more staff returning to Knowle Green and other operational sites, the introduction of more 'hybrid' working arrangements and returning to on-site Council and Committee meetings.
 - (b) The development of a wider-borough recovery plan, outlining the measures the Council will be taking to assist our communities (both residential and business) to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

The attached Summary Recovery Plan (**Appendix 2**) ('the Plan') focusses on how the Council will lead and assist with the wider-borough recovery under five key areas:

- (a) Supporting Community Recovery
 - (b) Supporting Economic Recovery
 - (c) Supporting Green Recovery
 - (d) Keeping People Informed, and
 - (e) Delivering Key Services.
- 1.7 Under each of these areas the Plan outlines a range of key issues which must be tackled and the core principles and processes the Council will be pursuing to address these matters.
- 1.8 A comprehensive Action Plan is in development, which will accompany and build on the Plan. This is nearing completion and will be published shortly. It will list a range of key tasks to deliver each action, with target dates and desired outcomes.
- 1.9 It is important to note that the Plan and associated Action Plan will be 'live' documents, which will need to be adapted to take into account any future changes in the Government's recovery roadmap, any new responsibilities given to the Council and any new outbreaks of the virus which may arise.
- 1.10 Although the Plan is presented for Cabinet to note at this stage, it is proposed that future progress with the Plan will be reported to the new Policy and Resources Committee. Other committees may also wish to review relevant elements of the Plan and input into any future changes.

2. Options analysis and proposal

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the attached Summary Recovery Plan, which has been produced following extensive work with Portfolio Holders, in particular the Deputy Leader with responsibility for Community Wellbeing.

2.2 Councillors will have an opportunity to input into the future development of the Plan through the new Committee system as outlined above.

3. Financial implications

3.1 During the pandemic, significant additional expenditure has been incurred by the Council. This has included costs associated with supporting vulnerable residents, putting in place COVID-19 safe measures for service delivery, moving to home working and providing additional support to homeless residents.

3.2 The Council, like most organisations, has been significantly impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic and there remain ongoing risks to the Council's income streams, as outlined in **Appendix 3**. The full extent of these impacts will not become clear until at least the autumn, when we will better understand the impacts on our residents and businesses of elements such as the national furlough scheme ending, landlord evictions resuming and court debt recovery processes getting back up to speed.

3.3 Whilst Spelthorne has received a range of financial support from the Government to cover some of the costs of this additional work and loss of income, this does not fully cover the expenditure incurred by this authority. The Council previously agreed the allocation of reserves to cover any unrecoverable net costs associated with the pandemic. In implementing and further developing our recovery plans it will be important for the Council to continue to monitor and evaluate the financial impacts on the authority and, if necessary, draw on these reserves to support the essential work required.

3.4 There is strong and clear linkage between pursuing an effective economic development recovery plan for the Borough and aiding the recovery of the Borough Council's finances, as if we help our local businesses to prosper and employ residents, then the Council's own income streams, in particular business rates and council tax, will recover more quickly.

4. Other considerations

4.1 Equality and diversity issues will need to be carefully considered in delivering each element of the plan to ensure that we can reach vulnerable people from all sections of our communities.

4.2 Working with faith groups, the voluntary sector and other key stakeholders, as outlined in the Plan, will help to ensure that we can reach all those most in need.

5. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

5.1 The Summary Recovery Plan makes specific reference to actions aimed at delivering a Green Recovery, thus assisting in mitigating climate change.

6. Timetable for implementation

6.1 A number of actions within the Summary Recovery Plan are already in progress. The detailed Action Plan to accompany this document is well into development and will be published shortly.

6.2 Any future updates to the Plan/Action Plan will be provided to the Policy and Resources Committee once this is in operation.

Background papers:

None

Appendices:

APPENDIX 1 – Infographic outlining the response from the Borough Council to the COVID-19 pandemic (up to February 2021)

APPENDIX 2 – Summary Recovery Plan

APPENDIX 3 – Risks to Council income streams

Appendix 1.

COVID19 – Spelthorne’s response, one year on...



17,144 welfare calls, visits and checks to vulnerable residents

Supporting school children with nutritious meals.



Over **559,309** meals distributed by food banks to families



supporting **NHS** and partners with the vaccination programme and local testing sites

community helpline; over **28,549** phone calls to residents



Support4Spelthorne community hub



Support4Spelthorne



26 rough sleepers have been placed into settled accommodation

39 COVID-19 Champions recruited



Spelthorne Covid Champions

financial and equipment assistance to food banks, leisure centres and community groups



31,538 tonnes of waste and recycling has been collected



2,062 fly tips cleared

parks, playgrounds, cemeteries and toilets **open, clean and safe**




Supporting recovery of **highstreets and Staines Market**

£16m in business and discretionary grants



£18m of business rates 12 month reliefs



over **2,684** Covid19 business compliance checks



21 Enews publications
5,161 social media posts
180,000 Bulletin magazines delivered
1.2m page views on website



Total number of meals on wheels delivered **39,184**

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SUMMARY RECOVERY PLAN (Version 1 - updated 14.05.21)

KEY AREA	KEY ISSUE	CORE PRINCIPLES/PROCESSES
SUPPORTING COMMUNITY RECOVERY	Provide strong leadership within our communities	Ensure we ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our engagement within our communities, capturing, harnessing and further developing their energy and commitment to support the delivery of services. • Include all sections of our communities, particularly hard to reach groups (including the voluntary sector and faith groups). • Develop and implement a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy, taking into account lessons learnt from the impact of COVID-19.
	Support those most in need in our communities to help them to stay safe and healthy	Continue to ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local food banks; work with the charity sector to increase capacity and resilience. • Review our existing meals-on-wheels provision. • Explore a range of options to expand provision to other vulnerable members of the community. • Ensure the Community Centres offer provided by our Independent Living Team is appropriate and safe for all community groups. • Enhance cross-agency working with health professionals and Surrey County Council to ensure a holistic approach is taken to improving the health and social wellbeing of the community. • Undertake joint projects directed at specific vulnerable residents. • Recognise and prepare to support the emotional needs caused by the pandemic on the community – to do this with the assistance of partner organisations and all council services.
	Help prevent or reduce debt or financial hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse and evaluate the financial impact of the pandemic on our community – including residents and businesses. • Ensure our residents and businesses are informed and directed to appropriate government support/benefit schemes. • Support partner agencies to enable them to provide financial advice and assistance to the community.
	Reduce and help prevent homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain momentum of the Council’s affordable housing development schemes. • Provide appropriate resources to address the predicted increase in numbers and breadth of homelessness provision. • Assist and support vulnerable families to remain in their existing homes. • Facilitate and advise those in financial hardship, with direct support when appropriate.

KEY AREA	KEY ISSUE	CORE PRINCIPLES/PROCESSES
	Promote and increase leisure activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and develop a broad range of activities and family-orientated leisure pursuits. • Work in partnership with a range of local leisure, art and sport clubs to provide a range of activities to help promote good mental health and fitness. • Introduce 10 new outside gyms and continue to encourage extensive use of parks and open green spaces. • Continue to develop and improve our outdoor leisure facilities and options for all groups. • Work with our partners 'Everyone Active', providing financial assistance and support with communications to enable them to continue to operate the leisure centres in our borough.
SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY	Minimise unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and measure the impact of COVID on local businesses and assist in how they can respond and adapt. • Ensure effective implementation of relevant government initiatives – including business rate relief and payment of business grants – through strong and effective communications. • Keep under review the Council's discretionary grant policy and ensure the funds available are put to best use supporting individual businesses to survive and assisting with the broader economic recovery of the borough.
	Develop skills and getting people back in work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement our new Economic Development Recovery Plan (including addressing any impacts caused by Brexit). • Continue to work with the 'Jobs and Recovery Task Group' (including reps from Spelthorne BC, Department for Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Brooklands College, Heathrow Academy and A2Dominion) to help develop new employment opportunities for local residents. • Support and promote employment and training initiatives – including a 'Virtual Jobs Fair'; 'Kickstart' scheme; 'Job Fuse' (working with EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership). • Work with partners to bid for funding for a 'Youth Hub' in the borough, focused on helping specific groups between the ages of 18 – 24 to access employment opportunities and assist with 'work readiness' and resilience.
	Assist future business growth and adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and promote our new business incubator to help local fledgling businesses to rent collaborative desk and meeting space and include training and mentoring to ensure new business development and sustainability. • Promote and encourage businesses in the 'Green Economy' to establish themselves in the Borough thereby creating greater opportunities for employment within the green sector. • Promote 'shop-local' to our residents and visitors. • Promote 'buy-local' for business-to-business procurement. • Through our new Town Centre Managers, help provide additional frontline support for Ashford, Sunbury and Shepperton businesses and retailers. • Work in collaboration with Staines-upon-Thames Business Improvement District to support businesses and retailers in the town.

KEY AREA	KEY ISSUE	CORE PRINCIPLES/PROCESSES
	Placemaking, regeneration and development of infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain momentum of the Council's regeneration schemes. • Deliver the Staines-upon-Thames Development Framework as part of the review of the Local Plan up to 2035. • Improve broadband speeds in the borough (full fibre to premises up to 1GB), starting with Sunbury and expanding to Staines-upon-Thames and Ashford. • Consider bids for future rounds of the Government's Levelling Up Fund for smaller transport projects, town centre and high street regeneration and maintaining and expanding cultural and heritage assets.
	Attract visitors back into the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote Spelthorne as a place to live, visit and do business through the Visitor Economy Forum (SBC and business). • Continue to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of guidance for the safe use of our town centres, open spaces and other areas, providing relevant information to businesses on operating safely under COVID restrictions. • Utilise EM3 LEP funding and government support in opening-up town centres post-COVID (using, for example, the Welcome Back Fund).
SUPPORTING A GREEN RECOVERY	Climate Change Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on actions to lower the Borough's carbon emissions in line with government targets or sooner. • Explore and devise a future financial treasury management strategy that takes into account Environmental, Social, Governance and Responsible Investments.
	Reduce the carbon footprint of Council operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to develop a more environmentally sustainable economy post-COVID and Brexit. • Explore further opportunities provided by agile working of council staff to enhance and accelerate climate change initiatives by reducing commuting and requirement for office space. • Continue to develop our programme to use more electric vehicles by staff to reduce CO2 emissions. • Purchase electric fuelled equipment when existing liquid fuelled equipment reaches end of life. • Consider opportunities to create and support carbon-sink initiatives within the Borough including more tree planting where possible. • Improve all council-owned properties and facilities through better insulation, investment in alternative heating and ventilation and aim to reduce utilities costs where possible. • Review and improve, where possible, our waste management strategy.
	Increase use of clean energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with businesses and communities to promote and support cleaner and greener living and working. • Develop opportunities for increased locally generated 'clean' energy through renewable sources.

KEY AREA	KEY ISSUE	CORE PRINCIPLES/PROCESSES
	Encourage greater use of cycling and walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a borough-wide feasibility study to identify potential walking and cycling routes in conjunction with Surrey County Council. • Increase opportunities for exercise through walking and cycling and improving air quality by reducing car dependency, working with the highways authority where necessary.
	Improve and increase provision of public open spaces and enhancement of biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance our parks and open spaces to adapt to climate change. • Provide clean, accessible, outdoor spaces with access to nature for education and well-being purposes. • Seek to landscape and enhance planting to assist with carbon capture. • Increase management of the land to provide greater biodiversity to encourage wildlife and insect populations.
	Improve energy efficiency of housing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote residential development that is sustainably constructed and located, that allows safe and easy access for residents to existing services and transport hubs. • Seek and support the retrofit of existing residential housing to enable alignment with more demanding energy efficiency standards.
KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED	Communicate regular updates using a range of different media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the strategic briefing and dissemination sessions for community partners through the COVID Champions initiative. • Maintain welfare and information-sharing calls to vulnerable community members and prepare for new and, as yet, unforeseen demands due to COVID. • Continue to update and maintain the accessibility of our website, responding to changes in national and local guidance. • Continue to use and develop our social media to ensure rapid communication of key messages. • Continue to regularly publish eNews publications and encourage residents to subscribe to the platform. • Ensure residents and businesses can continue to contact the Council by phone, letter or digitally. • Work with the Surrey-wide Communications Group to share information and best practice. • Work with other stakeholders including Councillors, Residents' Associations, businesses, charities, faith groups and other voluntary organisations to disseminate information and utilise support from their outside communications.

KEY AREA	KEY ISSUE	CORE PRINCIPLES/PROCESSES
DELIVERING KEY SERVICES	More resilient services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remodel services to adapt to new challenges and new ways of working. • Continue to review and update the Council’s Pandemic Plan – taking into account lessons learned to ensure greater resilience in future. • Further develop our new telephony system, implementing additional useful functions to assist the customer and provide them with a better experience, linking this to Council’s digital transformation. • Take steps to ensure the Council maintains its financial sustainability.
	Workforce development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train and equip our staff to adapt to new ways of working and any future restrictions. • Ensure all staff understand the Council’s focus on best working practices to tackle the climate emergency.
	Protecting staff and clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure continued use of strict Personal Protective Equipment/social distancing requirements for site/face-to-face visits and enhanced cleaning regimes. • Continue to offer ongoing health and wellbeing support to our staff.
	Maintaining mobile and flexible working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the experience of enforced remote working to develop future plans for more flexible working methods to further reduce costs and enable more efficient service delivery.
	New ways to access services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it as easy as possible for customers to access our services remotely. • Deliver more services remotely (e.g. Spelthorne’s community alarm network - SPAN). • Implement a plan for the safe transition back to public meetings.

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APPENDIX 3 – Financial pressures/risks faced by Spelthorne

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a range of potentially significant financial risks to the Council including:

1. **Fees and charges income** - A significant drop in the Council's services' fees and charges income, particularly car parking. Whilst the Government's 71.25% sales, fees and charges scheme runs until the end of June 2021, it is unclear as to the full extent of longer-term behavioural changes, and when/if these income streams will recover to the levels they were before the pandemic.
2. **Homelessness** - There is a risk that there could be a surge in numbers presenting themselves as homeless once furlough fully ends and landlord evictions have recommenced. This will potentially put pressure on the Council's housing budget and reinforces the need for the Council to maintain the momentum of its affordable housing delivery programme.
3. **Business rates/council tax** - It is anticipated that it will be more challenging to collect business rates and council tax in the coming financial year. There is additional uncertainty in 2022-23 as to what will happen to collection rates if the Government ends the partial business rates relief for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses.

As a result of the economic impacts of the pandemic, more of the Borough's residents have moved onto Localised Council Tax Support, which means the Council will receive less council tax support and the council tax base will be reduced for 2021-22.

4. **Commercial rents** - The pandemic has created challenges for businesses as some tenants have struggled to pay their property landlords. The Council has, however, done very well so far in collecting rent from its commercial assets. By working pro-actively with our tenants, Spelthorne has collected more than 98% of the rent invoiced in the year from its investment assets. The Council has set aside £25m into sinking funds to protect taxpayers from any future dips in commercial rental income and undertakes regular 10-year worst case scenario projections.

Clearly the retail sector has been significantly impacted by the pandemic and the shape of high streets will never be the same again. The economic impacts of COVID-19 have been seen in the retail rental income from the Council's Elmsleigh Centre. Although the Council has again set aside funds to help smooth the drop in rental income from the centre, the change in shopping trends has reinforced the need for this authority to continue pursuing its regeneration plans for the centre, diversifying usage, developing additional affordable housing and bringing in a mix of leisure and community usage.

5. **Staff related costs** – Whilst the threat of COVID remains, there will be inherent corporate costs to ensuring that the Council continues to minimise the risk of our staff contracting and/or spreading the virus, including appropriate training, testing, self-isolation (where necessary), provision of PPE and social distancing provisions within Council buildings, as well as the need to equip staff with the necessary ICT equipment to continue remote working, where appropriate.

It is anticipated that it is going to take a number of years for the Council to recover from the above impacts.