

## Supporting Our Communities Thanet District Council's Plan for Recovery

Cabinet	<b>18 June 2020</b>
Report Author	<b>Madeline Homer - Chief Executive</b>
Portfolio Holder	<b>Cllr Rick Everitt - Leader of the Council</b>
Status	<b>For Information</b>
Classification:	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Key Decision	<b>No</b>
Previously Considered by	<b>Not applicable</b>
Ward:	<b>District Wide</b>

### **Executive Summary:**

This report provides an overall summary of the proposed approach to the recovery phase to the Covid-19 pandemic for Thanet District Council and the district of Thanet. It emphasises the importance of a safe, sustainable, managed recovery, sets out some overarching objectives and a proposed structure for the response phase of the crisis.

### **Recommendation(s):**

Cabinet note the proposed approach for the recovery from the consequences of COVID-19.

### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Financial and Value for Money</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.
<b>Corporate</b>	<p>The Government funding so far goes nowhere near covering our Covid-19 losses. The numbers are likely to change over time; but</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TDC was starting from a position of a relatively low level of financial reserves.</li> <li>• Covid-19 has created a major financial crisis across local government.</li> <li>• Thanet is no different in terms of the effects of Covid-19, in some ways worse off.</li> <li>• We will have to make some tough decisions in the near future to bring our finances onto an even keel.</li> </ul>

	<p>Estimated Financial impact of Covid-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The estimated headline loss of £5.5m (additional costs and lost income) is subject to change</li> <li>• Government funding so far £1.5m</li> <li>• This £4.0m net loss is the same as a £4.0m overspend</li> <li>• Our net annual budget is £17m</li> </ul>								
<p><b>Equality Act 2010 &amp; Public Sector Equality Duty</b></p>	<p>Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy &amp; maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage &amp; civil partnership.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="424 1021 1382 1279"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td style="text-align: center;">✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Having dealt with the immediate response to COVID-19 and the Government led lockdown, it is now time to consider how we maintain resilience of critical services and plan for longer term recovery.</p> <p>As part of our approach to recovery, it will be necessary to take a strategic look at how the pandemic situation may change life on an ongoing basis for our residents, businesses and the Council as an organisation.</p> <p>It is likely that a new “normal” will need to be established. The way we do things will change with a move to more online transactions for our customers and more homeworking for our employees.</p> <p>There is still much uncertainty about the pandemic, when and how the lockdown might be eased and ultimately lifted. In the meantime, we have begun to formulate a local approach to recovery. This work will be developed as officers gain a better understanding of the emerging picture.</p> <p>The Council will continue to remain in the response phase for some time to come and this will occur in parallel with the challenges that the</p>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,	✓	Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it		Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	
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	recovery will bring.
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<b>CORPORATE PRIORITIES</b>	
Growth	✓
Environment	✓
Communities	✓

## **1.0 Introduction and Background**

1.1 In 'normal' emergencies, local authorities and local resilience forums deal first with an emergency and then the Recovery – getting back to 'business as usual' (for example, when the flood waters recede, work takes place to repair any damage and to get people back into their homes). The Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic will be unlike any other in our lifetimes. The crisis has gone on for longer, been more extreme and will have more profound consequences than anything we have prepared for before.

We will also be simultaneously working on Recovery in tandem with the Response phase and have the potential to return to Response at any time if there is a second wave of infections. There is also the likelihood that the Recovery will span other Emergency Planning events including the end of the Brexit Transition Phase and that for much of it, staff and partners will be working remotely. Finally, the sheer scale and breadth of the social and economic impacts means that we will be entering uncharted territory and it is hard to predict where we will end up.

1.2 The Council's Response to the Pandemic - the Council works alongside a number of other bodies within the 'Kent Resilience Forum' (KRF) to coordinate our response to emergencies and to manage our obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act. Government guidance states that recovery should be co-ordinated by a Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) within local resilience forums.

## **2.0 The Current Situation**

2.1 On 10 May the Prime Minister set out the overarching approach for the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. That approach has been outlined in greater detail through a 50-page recovery strategy ([Our Plan to Rebuild: the UK Government's Covid-19 recovery strategy](#) ) and through various additional documents setting out guidance for travel to work, educational settings, shielding the vulnerable and reactive measures to control infection (as well as a range of other issues).

2.2 The guidance also contains a 'Covid alert level' system and a series of steps to lift the restrictions. Details are provided in a separate paper on the agenda. The Government has also issued additional guidance on areas including safe working procedures, public transport and schools. It set out three steps with planning dates along with associated steps to lift restrictions:

- 13 May 2020 - Step 1
- 1 June 2020 - Step 2
- 4 July 2020 - Step 3

- 2.3 On 28 May, the Prime Minister announced that the Government's five tests for easing restrictions had been met and that, as a result, primary schools would open for some classes, secondary schools would start to provide some face-to-face contact for years 10 and 12, that outdoor retail and car showrooms could reopen from 1 June and other non-essential retailers from 15 June and that some restrictions on meeting people would be lifted with up to six people being able to meet in parks and private outdoor spaces. Further restrictions have been lifted including, most recently, the ability for the 'Shielded' population to meet one other person.
- 2.4 It is clear that we will remain in a fluid, dynamic, fast-moving situation where announcements will frequently preempt detailed guidance and where there can be differences between 'guidance' and 'legislative regulations' that have the force of the law behind them. We need to be ready to respond to changes in direction at short notice and also, potentially, for restrictions to be re-imposed.

### **3.0 Businesses and Economy**

- 3.1 The Council set up an Economic Recovery Group (Terms of Reference are attached at Annex 1) to oversee support to businesses from a very early stage. As part of the Council's response to the Pandemic, we have taken steps such as financially contributing to an advice line through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub and we have distributed almost £30million of grants to local businesses to date.
- 3.2 The immediate focus of the Council is both on publicising and paying the new round of discretionary Business Rates grants and on the re-opening of non-essential shops in high streets across the District from 15 June. The government has permitted outdoor markets and car showrooms to open from 1 June and other non-essential retail premises that are Covid-19 safe to open from 15 June.
- 3.3 We know that many more town centre businesses are planning for 15 June re-opening in line with Government Guidance. We have been in detailed discussions for some while with parish and town councils, to discuss arrangements in other towns and villages. Our working assumption is that footfall may well be high as evidenced by those premises that have remained open for food and household essentials and other premises (such as garden centres) that have recently reopened. We also understand that many retailers will be holding sales. Experience has shown that it is vitally important that visitors feel safe and are given clear guidance on what to expect and how to observe social distancing rules. This has also been a clear message from businesses that have been open during lockdown.
- 3.4 The Council has drafted a Reopening High Streets Safely plan for towns which is attached as an Annex 2. It deals with a range of issues including:
- Signage and equipment to promote social distancing and aid queueing
  - Street cleansing
  - Parking
  - Traffic and pedestrian management (discussed in further detail below)
  - Public transport
  - Public toilets
  - Promotion, marketing and signposting

- Monitoring

## **4.0 Traffic and Pedestrian Management**

4.1 On 9 May, the Government announced the establishment of a £250m 'emergency active-travel fund' to design and implement 'pop-up' and temporary interventions to create an environment that is safe for walking and cycling to help maintain social distancing and avoid overcrowding on public transport systems. Details of the funding were subsequently announced on 27 May focused more towards areas with high levels of public transport use and with a clear view that the funding should be used to meaningfully alter the status quo with work starting within four weeks of receiving funding and being complete within eight weeks. Kent County Council has received £8m of which 20 per cent (£1.6m) is to be allocated in the first instance. The bidding deadline was Friday 5 June. KCC has emphasised that it will be shaped by the guidance and also by the ability of local authorities to deliver the scheme (and to support them with capacity to deliver it) and by whether or not the schemes are supported locally. Details of the potential schemes which we intend to submit are set out below:

- Expanding spaces for seating/queuing etc. (use of outside space/pavements/car parks etc.)
- Pier Yard car park closure (daytime only).
- 20 mile an hour zones in high footfall areas, particularly through the town centres and around coastal frontages.
- Temporary removal of parking bays across the district to allow for increasing footpaths around businesses premises (Marine Drive, Harbour Parade, Westage, Birchington, Northdown Road).
- Road closures, particularly in those areas where the pavements are narrow and the road provides the ability for safer access and queuing for the retail, and food and beverage outlets (Margate Old Town, Margate Lower High Street, Albion Street and Lower High Street Broadstairs, Station Approach Bridge Birchington) - requires Road Traffic Order, signage, cones/planters, costs for management of the opening and closing the access, maintenance proposal.

## **5.0 Communities**

5.1 The Focus of the Council's work on Community issues to date has been on the establishment of a 'Community Hub' to assist with the distribution of food and household essentials to shielded, vulnerable and isolated residents, the establishment of a 7-day-a-week helpline (also working with KCC's #KentTogether helpline), contacting and supporting 'Shielded residents', identifying and assisting other vulnerable and isolated individuals, working with Parish and Town Councils, the voluntary and community sector organisations and volunteers, combating social isolation and promoting wellbeing and supporting the voluntary and community sector.

5.2 As we move to Recovery, there will be a continued need to support many groups. This includes, Shielded, vulnerable and isolated residents, a potential requirement to support those isolating as a result of the test and trace programme, addressing and responding to the impact of the Pandemic and associated lockdown on issues such as domestic abuse, mental health, unemployment etc and managing the removal of

protections (such as evictions, debt, utilities, employment etc). There will clearly be a longer-term impact on inequality (education, health, financial, digital).

- 5.3 Other issues to be explored as part of the 'Community' dimension to the Recovery will include the impact on the voluntary and community sector (resource, demand, fatigue), the need to accommodate those in temporary accommodation as a result of the Pandemic and any consequential impact of the financial downturn on housing and homelessness, potential community tensions as society/town centres unlock and the sustainability of sports, leisure, culture and arts organisations given the lack of support from the DCMS to date.

## **6.0 Beach Management**

- 6.1 At any other time, we'd be delighted at the prospect of thousands travelling to our beaches, and so would the many businesses and traders who make their living from our visitors.
- 6.2 As soon as the government released the restrictions for people to travel it was inevitable that our beaches would become busy. The situation has created major logistical problems as businesses are not open and the normal preparations for the season have not been put in place, never mind extra ones to manage hygiene and social distancing in our public toilets.
- 6.3 The vast majority of people using our beaches in the last few weeks, wherever they happen to live, have been respectful of the public health guidance and of each other.
- 6.4 Inevitably, though, some have not. Some behaviour has been completely unacceptable, and the fact that we could not safely open all our coastal toilets has not helped. But the situation is unprecedented, as is the closure of the toilets in pubs, cafes and shops. To support this the Council has produced a Beach Management plan to address the key issues raised by residents. Annex 3 is a summary of this plan setting out the problems which were raised and the actions that the council will take.

## **7.0 Options**

- 7.1 This report is for information only.

Contact Officer:	Madeline Homer, Chief Executive
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## **Annex List**

Annex 1	Economic Recovery - Terms of Reference
Annex 2	Draft - High Street - reopening plan
Annex 3	Beach Management Plan
Annex 4	Communities Recovery - Terms of Reference
Annex 5	Financial Recovery - Terms of Reference
Annex 6	The Way We Work - Terms of Reference
Annex 7	Premises Recovery - Terms of Reference
Annex 8	Supporting our Communities - Thanet District Council's Plan for Recovery

## Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
Supporting our Communities - Thanet District Council's Plan for Recovery	<a href="https://www.thanet.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Thanets-Recovery-Doc-1.pdf">https://www.thanet.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Thanets-Recovery-Doc-1.pdf</a>

## Corporate Consultation

<b>Finance</b>	Tim Willis, Deputy Chief Executive & S 151 Officer
<b>Legal</b>	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance