

COVID-19 Recovery Plan

Test Valley Borough Council

June 2020



Introduction

Within the framework of emergency planning there are two key phases: response and recovery. As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it is important that the recovery phase is both planned for and implemented at the earliest opportunity. The aim of the recovery process is to facilitate a return to a 'new normal' following the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a member of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum (LRF), Test Valley Borough Council will play its part in contributing to the wider LRF recovery programme. This is to ensure a consistent and collaborative approach which reflects not only the needs of our most local communities within Test Valley, but also reflects the wider sub-region within which our economy and communities exist. As such the council's approach to recovery will seek to align with the LRF where appropriate, as we deliver a local recovery plan for the council and our communities in Test Valley.

The council has a longstanding and deep commitment to place-based working, which ensures that the many needs of our different communities and economies within Test Valley are reflected within our strategic planning. This enables us as an organisation to be able to put in place the right things at the right time to deliver the best impact for our residents and businesses. It is therefore no surprise that our approach to recovery will be shaped by working in a place-based and evidence-led way.

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic means that is very difficult to predict all of the implications that will arise from the emergency. While our recovery plan will have a clear focus on restoring services and key infrastructure, it will also be about learning and evaluating what has worked well and what we could do differently in the future. It will seek to take opportunities for change that the transition to a new normal presents, and most importantly it places the recovery of the health and wellbeing of our population and workforce at the forefront of our plans.

Background:

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally, resulting in the ongoing 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic.

In March 2020 the Government implemented a lockdown of UK society to delay the spread of infection, including school closures and cessation of non-critical services.

As a result the council has put in place robust and effective measures as part of the response phase of managing the impacts of COVID-19. Each service has implemented its arrangements for maintaining delivery of services which have been underpinned by council staff and councillors adapting and working differently during this period.

A significant part of our response has been down to the collective and successful approach taken to supporting residents who have been affected as a result of becoming ill or having to self-isolate or shield. Bringing together a large network of partners and community groups, the council has been able to support a community-led approach to supporting those in need.

In May 2020, the Government launched its recovery strategy for reopening society ([UK Govt Recovery Strategy](#)) broken down into stages and aligned with a new COVID-19 alert scale. In addition, they are implementing a comprehensive track and trace programme to manage and reduce the impact of the virus. Directors of public health at an upper tier level are producing local outbreak plans as the future mechanism through which to reduce the spread of infection. These will sit alongside the work to develop treatments and vaccines.

Recovery is a complex and long running process that will involve many agencies and participants. Recovery is defined as “***the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency. It is a complex social and developmental process rather than just a remedial process.***” The broad, interlinked categories of impact that individuals and communities will need to recover from include:

- humanitarian (including. Health)
- economic
- environment and infrastructure.

The way we undertake recovery processes is critical to their success. Recovery is best achieved when the affected community can exercise a high degree of self-determination and a community development led approach is taken. However, the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic presents a number of specific challenges that are different to many of the emergencies dealt with on

a more regular basis, and as a result will require the council to be adaptive and flexible when developing and implementing its recovery plans.

Specific Challenges associated with COVID-19 Recovery (Shaw, 2020)

- The scale is different.
- The effects are different.
- The length of time is different.
- The knock-on effects are vast.
- The impacts are not yet clear.
- It will overlap with response.
- It will require agility and flexibility.

Understanding the recovery issues – impact assessments

In developing the recovery plan we have undertaken a number of impact assessments at both a service level and from a thematic perspective. The purpose of this was to understand the common risks, opportunities and scenarios that will guide the council's recovery plan.

We have identified the following common strategic recovery themes that cut across services:

- financial impact for the council
- supporting our workforce
- managing new work and requirements from government
- future strategy and policy implications
- organisational transformation: Business and cultural change opportunities that have emerged as a result of working differently.
- maintaining democratic processes to enable effective decision making
- community impacts and the risks to community cohesion
- recession and Economic Recovery
- town centre recovery
- impacts and opportunities linked to the councils climate change commitments
- strategic communications.

Purpose of the recovery plan:

To provide a specific structure for the COVID-19 recovery process in Test Valley.

The objectives of the plan are:

- to deliver a clear vision of what we expect the 'new normal' to look like
- to ensure a coordinated and integrated recovery process across the council and with our communities
- to play our part as a member of the LRF in meeting the statutory requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

- to implement and manage an effective multi-agency recovery process in Test Valley
- to identify and engage partners effectively in the recovery process.
- to address the short, medium and long-term requirements of those affected.

Principles that guide our approach to recovery in Test Valley

- The safety of our population and workforce are front and centre of our recovery work.
- The council's longstanding place-based and community focused approach provides a sustainable mechanism to recover.
- Building on what is now the new normal can present opportunities to do things differently and taking an asset-based approach will enable us to do this effectively.
- Consistent, timely communication is critical
- Adapt to an ever-changing situation and recognise that recovery will come in multiple phases.

Strategic aim and priorities for recovery in Test Valley:

Strategic aim: **To restore the economic and social wellbeing of our communities in Test Valley.**

To achieve this, the council has identified the following recovery priorities:

- **Economic recovery:** To support, adapt and grow the economy of Test Valley as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Town centre recovery:** To put in place plans for the re-opening and ongoing recovery of town centres within Test Valley
- **Community recovery:** Building on the strong community-led response model, support local communities in their transition to recovery
- **COVID-19 secure working:** Providing a safe environment within our premises for our staff and customers which meets the COVID secure guidelines.
- **Wellbeing and mental health:** To protect our employees' wellbeing and provide appropriate support.
- **Reopening public spaces:** Managing the reopening of all TVBC owned and managed green spaces during and after the COVID -19 pandemic.

- **New ways of working:** Exploring how the organisation has had to work differently as a result of the pandemic and evaluating the opportunities for how the council can embed new ways of working as part of the recovery.
- **Financial recovery:** To secure the council's finances ensuring that financial resilience is maintained over the medium term.
- **Democratic recovery:** Maintaining effective democratic processes and decision making is a key theme that sits under the council's overall recovery programme and underpins the work taking forward across a range of recovery work streams.
- **Green recovery:** To build on positive changes in working practices and wider opportunities to reduce carbon emissions as part of our recovery.
- **Service recovery:** Ensuring that all of the council's services are able to transition and adapt to the new normal resulting from the pandemic.

The table below sets out in detail the scope and key objectives of each of the recovery priorities.

| Recovery Priority | Scope | Key objectives |
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| Economic Recovery | <p>To support, adapt and grow the economy of Test Valley as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic with key areas of focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People • Place • Business • Infrastructure • Planning, forecasting and delivery • TVBC processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the current structure of the local economy and its vulnerability to Coronavirus impacts • Develop local initiatives to mitigate the immediate impacts and promote recovery • Explore the competitive advantages of the local economy in the ‘new normal’ and work with key strategic partners such as the LEPs in taking this forward. • Play our part in seeking to influence government policy and initiatives with key partners such as the LEP and Hants County Council. |
| Town Centre Recovery | <p>To put in place plans for the re-opening and ongoing recovery of town centres within Test Valley which is developed locally with key partners and tailored to the needs of local circumstances. Key areas of focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with the design principles for safer urban centres and green spaces as set out in the Government guidance “Safer Public Places – Urban Centres and Green Spaces” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To place the health of our population at the centre of our recovery strategies for re-opening Andover and Romsey town centres so that people can be confident in returning to use the town centres. • To make appropriate preparations for the re-opening of the Town Centres from 15 June and the onward programme of re-opening aligned to the government guidance and COVID alert level. • Create a package of clear |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement appropriate interventions to keep people safe as and when the restrictions are relaxed and urban spaces become busier. • Work closely with key partners such as Hampshire County Council, the BID (Andover), Town Centre Manager (Romsey) and the Local Enterprise Partnership and gain feedback directly from local businesses. | <p>communications for the re-opening of Andover and Romsey town centres (in conjunction with partners), with delivery steps and timelines outlined, including use of all media channels and detailing the key safety measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a consistent approach to signage for all areas including car parks, High Street and Chantry Centres with partner branding • To establish interventions to maintain appropriate social distancing within Andover and Romsey town centres • To promote good hygiene practice in accordance with the government guidance. |
| <p>Community Recovery</p> | <p>Building on the strong community-led response model, support local communities in their transition to recovery. Key areas of focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and addressing key risks to sustainability of community groups • Maintaining and supporting volunteers in the long term • Responding locally to evolving government guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the resilience, capability and adaptability of local volunteer / community response to C19 • To support existing community networks and bodies to continue during the C19 pandemic • Mitigating impact of C19 on inequality and community cohesion • Respond to impact of C19 measures on physical and mental well-being of communities. |

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| <p>COVID-19 secure working</p> | <p>Providing a safe environment within our premises for our staff and customers which meets the COVID secure guidelines. Enabling the council to meet the five key areas of Covid-19 secure working identified by government in its guidance for employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a COVID-19 risk assessment and publish it • Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures • Help people to work from home • Maintain 2m social distancing, where possible • Where social distancing isn't achievable, manage transmission risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Health and safety in the context of infectious disease pandemic • Implementing changes with regard to national guidance based on the needs of TVBC staff and to ensure essential services are delivered • Ensure customers are able to access our services in a safe and effective way. |
| <p>Wellbeing & mental health of TVBC workforce</p> | <p>To ensure the well-being and support for staff during the lockdown and emerging recovery phase with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging staff and managers to be more attentive to looking after their own physical and mental well-being particularly at this time and being observant and mindful of others' well-being. • Providing opportunities for staff and manager training in how to work and manage during and post COVID-19 lockdown and recovery. • Promoting well-being best practice and access to a wide range of information on different areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, promote and deliver staff and manager on-line workshops to ensure maximum participation. • Update the COVID-19 how to, top tips and staff guidance guides available on the staff intranet. • Update and re-draft working from home policy • Update well-being pages and site on the staff intranet. • Produce effective signposting materials for staff • Develop and deliver bespoke training for |

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| | <p>of wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring all staff including those who have been re-deployed, furloughed, or are shielding are supported in maintaining their well-being. | <p>call centre staff and those who are dealing with particularly vulnerable customers during this time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain feedback from staff around their experiences during this period. • Re-inforce expectations around good practice management and keeping in regular touch with staff about their well-being. |
| Reopening public spaces | <p>Managing the reopening of all TVBC owned and managed green spaces during and post COVID -19 pandemic.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare risk assessments for all facilities in response to the Government's "Managing Safer Spaces" guidance 2020. • Re-open public spaces in accordance with mitigations identified in the risk assessments. • Put in place clear communications and behaviour change messages to encourage safe use of spaces. |
| New ways of working- recovering to a new normal | <p>Exploring how the organisation has had to work differently as a result of the pandemic and evaluating the opportunities for how as part of recovery, the council can embed new ways of working. To achieve this, the following factors will be explored:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gather feedback from all levels within the organisation to gain insight on their experience of delivering services within the pandemic that will inform an evidence-led approach to developing new ways of working. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People • Organisational Culture and behaviour change • Service delivery • Impact on residents and how they experience and use our services • Technology opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the impact of any new ways of working on the underlying values and culture that make TVBC an organisation that people want to work for. • To assess the infrastructure and policy changes needed to support new ways of working as part of the council's recovery programme. |
| Financial Recovery | To secure the Council's finances ensuring that financial resilience is maintained over the medium term. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby the government with other HIOW partners to fully compensate the council for the financial impacts of Covid-19; • Continue to monitor and report monthly on Capital and Revenue impacts; • Work with businesses to agree repayment terms of withheld and deferred income (business rates and commercial rents); • Work with Council Taxpayers to unwind agreed rescheduling of Council Tax – Consider hardship requirements; • Review internal budgets to identify scope for in-year savings; • Reduce all non-essential spending; • Review the Capital Investment Programme and Asset Management Plan |

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| | | to ensure that the approved schemes still reflect the council's current priorities and that these are affordable, practical and sustainable; |
| Democratic Recovery | Maintaining effective democratic processes and decision making is a key theme that sits under the Council's overall recovery programme and underpins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh the Annual Plan and Recovery Strategy • Begin the process to set the council's budget for 2021/22; • Refresh the council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) 2021 to 2024. |
| Green Recovery | To build on positive changes in working practices and wider opportunities to reduce carbon emissions as part of our recovery, key areas of focus include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of climate emergency actions • Working practices including increased opportunities for home working and virtual meetings • Continue to promote active travel options and review the supporting infrastructure requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take the opportunity to build on positive lifestyle and work place changes as a result of Covid-19 into the long term • Co-ordinate recovery with wider climate emergency action delivery to look for added value • Review opportunities to build on progress made in recent months in facilitating more digital working |
| Service Recovery | Ensuring that all of the council's services are able to transition and adapt to the new normal resulting from the pandemic. | |

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| | the work being taken forward across a range of recover work streams. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure working for Councillors• New ways of working• Community recovery (parish and town councils) |
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Delivery and Monitoring

Delivering the recovery priorities:

The council has established nine workstreams with each one led by a head of service or senior manager. Each workstream brings together the relevant expertise from across the council and they have undertaken an impact assessment and produced a detailed action plan, which includes clear delivery milestones.

In addition, each service has undertaken an impact assessment and produced an action plan which focuses on the key recovery issues relating to service delivery. We will update both the workstream and the service recovery plans on an ongoing basis, with a formal review each quarter which will be integrated into the existing performance management arrangements that the council has in place.

The council's officer management team (OMT) meets specifically as a recovery programme group to review and guide the delivery of the action plans which are derived by the strategic recovery priorities set out within this document. This will enable the timely monitoring and review of the recovery work and will ensure that we are responsive to the issues that the COVID-19 pandemic will present throughout the multiple phases of recovery.

The council's cabinet will act as the recovery sponsors and we will formally report our progress to cabinet on a six monthly basis for the duration of the recovery period.

Evaluation

Each of the workstreams will seek to identify key indicators that will demonstrate the impact that the recovery work is having on both the organisation and the wider community.

An important part of the recovery work will be to learn lessons from the pandemic. As part of this the council will bring together strategic and community partners to undertake a series of evaluations to inform future planning and build upon the council's strong track record of developing community resilience. By regularly reviewing our progress through this unprecedented period the council will ensure it can remain flexible and agile, adapting its approach as necessary.