

Report to: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30 September 2020
Public Document: Yes
Exemption: None
Review date for release None



Subject: COVID-19 Recovery planning

Purpose of report: This report outlines the work that has and is being progressed to produce a cohesive approach to East Devon DC's recovery planning as the district emerges from the Response stage of Covid-19. The report aims to give Cabinet reassurance that the Recovery planning work has followed best practice guidance from the Devon Emergency Planning Partnership (DEPP) in terms of process and documentation. Also the Council has been fully engaged with Team Devon's strategic recovery planning work through participation in various sub groups such as the Devon Recovery Co-ordination Group and the Economy and Business Recovery group.

Recommendation: **The Cabinet:**

- 1. Approves the Service recovery planning process and supports the work of council officers providing leadership and support to the Council's recovery work.**
- 2. Note that officers of East Devon District Council are leading the work on the Service Recovery Action Plan and will continue to provide support to progress the individual work streams.**
- 3. Continues to support and participate in the engagement of Devon CC's strategic recovery co-ordination work through Officers membership of its thematic sub groups.**

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that East Devon DC can continue to co-ordinate its recovery planning work with its internal services and to participate fully with Team Devon's strategic recovery planning work. This will enable a continuation of current recovery planning work and so retain a cohesive approach to its Service Recovery Action Plan going forward whilst uncertainty still remains over the likelihood and impacts of further spikes of the pandemic. Other recovery plans have been produced at a strategic level such as Team Devon's Economy & Business Recovery Plan but these are not place-based and sufficiently fine-grained as to be effective at district level. There are and will continue to be issues and themes that are best progressed at this strategic level and so the Council's alignment with these recovery plans will be important. The focus for this Council has been working on its own internal recovery arrangements.

Officer: Charlie Plowden Service Lead – Countryside & Leisure

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder Corporate Services and COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Financial implications: Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the Council's financial position and effected services, residents and business as outlined in the report. There are however no direct financial implications resulting from the recommendations in the report which is summarising the Council's response to the Pandemic.

Legal implications: There are no specific legal implications requiring comment

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Climate change: Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information: [EDDC Service Recovery Action Plan](#)
[EDDC response to Covid-19](#)
[SMT+ recovery Issues Log](#)
[Team Devon Economy & Business Recovery Plan](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Outstanding Place and Environment
Outstanding Homes and Communities
Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
Outstanding Council and Council Services

1. Background

1.1 The country is currently going through a deep and far reaching economic shock, perhaps the most significant in a century. The short-term impacts of the Covid-19 crisis are severe and will be felt in different ways across geographies, sectors, settings and demographic groups. Numerous reports have already been prepared to try and understand the likely impact on the country, region and county. The main headlines being that, aside from the impact on public health, this could be the worst recession to have faced the country for over three hundred years, to potentially over 120,000 jobs that could be lost in Devon.

1.2 Devon County Council is working on its recovery plan under the Team Devon collective working with all District Councils and other relevant partners. The characteristics of these recovery plans are that they are typically strategic, and because they cover a large geography it can be challenging to identify at what level the district precisely fits in with our needs. There has also been a stated intention towards a 'green' recovery. However, the advantage of this strategic recovery plan approach is that their geographical scale means that the prospect of national government paying attention to some of the messages they convey, and the scale of investment that is required for the South West and Devon has more leverage.

1.3 This Council's internal recovery plan is specifically service and operationally focused and is aligned with the Council Plan and Service Plan's that are in place. Some of the work that is being done at county and regional level is also reflected within the recovery actions as the role of some of our teams are helping to deliver priorities emerging from the Team Devon recovery work. Strategic Management agreed to follow best practice in recovery action planning by adopting Devon Emergency Planning Partnership's (DEPPs) Recovery Planning framework to help ensure there is one single recovery plan for all the Council's services.

1.4 The work being undertaken on recovery planning is still running alongside some response work that is being managed by Revenue and Benefits, Environmental Health and Housing teams working with some of our most vulnerable residents and tenants. It is expected that if there is a second wave of the virus that the focus of the Council will immediately switch to how we co-ordinate our response work as a priority. This doesn't necessarily mean that recovery planning work doesn't continue, but that both elements of our emergency planning process will be working alongside each other. The internal systems we now have in place for both response and recovery planning and co-ordination are robust and also shown to be resilient if this scenario becomes a reality.

1.5 The Council's Business Continuity Plan, which was in place before the virus and its impacts took hold, has provided a crucial role in helping the Services to better understand how to respond to the emergency planning required and to put in place the necessary structures to keep essential services running. The response and recovery planning work has flowed from this document and its guidance drawn from DEPPs.

2. Covid-19 Recovery planning & process

2.1 The following terms of reference, following DEPPs best practice, were set out at the initial stage of our recovery planning:

- What does the Council want to cover in terms of its recovery work scope? What's in & what's out?
- Considerations of what the "new normal" will be for Service delivery and the likely financial position of the Council
- Service delivery prioritisation – essential v discretionary on mobilisation?
- SMT+ to review Service Plans to adapt to new financial constraints and continuing restrictions e.g. ongoing lockdown for large social gatherings for public events, protecting the most vulnerable etc.
- Following the "golden thread" of Council Plan, Service Plans and PERs looking forward SMT+ to consider what services will need to temporarily stop doing and cascade corporate messaging from these decisions
- Finance and Legal implications to be prepared from the "new normal" for Cabinet and all Councillors as well as staff to provide a clear understanding of our situation
- How will the impacts of these decisions be disseminated out to our communities? What does it mean for their locality?
- Transition is to be made from Business Continuity to Recovery planning...the "new normal"
- What is the leadership/influence role for East Devon as part of recovery-RCG? Where will we take a lead?
- Common template use at EDDC /DCC/ Agencies for Impact assessments/ reporting for sub group?

These questions were followed by a better understanding of where our recovery matters most to our local communities and residents.

2.2 At the start of the recovery process, following DEPPs guidance, it was vital that there was a clear recovery action plan, developed and agreed. The recovery action plan could cover some, or all, of the following key objectives and we undertook to act upon them (as shown against each bullet point):

- An Impact Assessment (considering impacts on residents, businesses, infrastructure, environment, etc.) is carried out as soon as possible and is regularly reviewed and updated.- all Services carried out a high level Impact Assessment on their service areas

- Develop a clear communication strategy including local, national and social media – through the established weekly comms updates given to residents, Councilors and staff recovery messages were/are put out in the similar way to response messaging;
- Establish clear information reporting and communications route with Government and Lead Government Departments – the Chief Executive sits on strategic level groups for all CEOs and Leaders of Devon and the South West that reports to Government.
- Determine at an early stage if there is an opportunity for longer term regeneration and economic development as part of the recovery process – the Team Devon economy & business recovery theme developed its Recovery Plan which had significant input from our Economic Development team.
- A concise, balanced, affordable recovery action plan is developed that can be quickly implemented and fits the needs of the emergency - following DEPPs best practice the Service Recovery Action Plan was developed and is used as the single point for operational recovery matters.
- The community is fully involved in the recovery process – this has been reflected in the work of the Economy & Business recovery theme group with the distribution of funding to support local businesses and the Government’s High Street revitalization fund. The engagement with all our local communities is an ongoing and “live” process ensuring appropriate funding and support is delivered into supporting them recover and providing essential services.
- Closed down Services are brought back into use as soon as practicable – these issues have been and are being delivered and monitored through the Service Recovery Action Plan.
- A pro-active and integrated framework of support to businesses is established – this has been successfully delivered through the work of the Economic Development team and the Revenue & Benefit team.
- All affected areas are restored to an agreed standard so that they are ‘suitable for use’ for their defined future purposes – this is part of the Service Recovery Action Plan work where issues are identified to help restore services or assets such as public open spaces back for local use.
- Information and media management of the recovery process is coordinated – this has been overseen by the Comms team throughout the process with weekly newsletters (Stay Informed, Stay Connected), use of social media platforms to help provide important information, give guidance and links to other organisations who can assist.

2.3 Each Service undertook an initial impact assessment prior to developing the Service Recovery Action Plan to help understand the recovery issues likely to be faced and all followed this format:

| COUNTRYSIDE & LEISURE | |
|--|--|
| ISSUES | ACTIONS |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural sector been significantly impacted upon with the lockdown and may not recover fully or if it does it'll have to operate very differently. • Impacts felt by tourism sector also impact on elements of the Wild East Devon workstreams around attracting footfall, securing income form donations, events etc...ability for tourism sector to bounce back important to this team. • Ability to bring back THG and Manor Pavilion theatre into operation with likelihood of social distancing and public gathering restrictions continuing until end of 2020 • Impact of continuing restrictions on social distancing and public gathering for Wild East Devon and THG’s outdoor events programme – income streams impacts. • Our Nature Reserves have proved invaluable to the local community in their ability to provide a green | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level assessment on impacts upon the cultural sector from the pandemic – impacts on the district’s cultural venues and assess health of the cultural offer in east devon (to be lead through EDDC’s Arts & Culture Forum). • All Team Managers to undertake a review of their Service Plan targets and consider in the new normal what needs to change in service delivery, how to adapt and create new workstreams to ensure they stay relevant and valued to the communities they serve/support and the protection of East Devon’s outstanding environment. • Join up a THG and Wild East Devon team project that helps with post lockdown recovery...and submit to Arts Council post COVID19 grant fund identified which will open up a new approach to joint collaboration between these teams. • Wild East Devon team to audit impacts of lockdown o nature recovery and build into a nature recovery network bid working |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>space to help with people's physical and mental wellbeing – the funding challenges will make it increasingly challenging to manage (despite their proven value)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on delayed school openings for Wild East Devon's Outdoor Learning programme to be delivered – social distancing issues also apply. • Remobilising our volunteer workforce in both Wild East Devon team and THG who provide essential support to the management of LNRs and running of the THG • Significant impact on planned income streams – events, educational visits, exhibitions, THG shop, theatre bookings etc....will mean reviewing and remodelling in view of the new normal situation. • How will the arts and leisure sectors respond to the new normal and how will they be able to change their business model to survive? | <p>in partnership with East Devon & Blackdown Hills AONB partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THG to consider its opening hours and expansion of its outreach/peripatetic work in light of continuing restrictions and look to reduce its overheads. • Manor Pavilion theatre to reschedule its 2020 programme and consider how to reintroduce live performances within the venue with social distancing still in place, discuss with performers/theatre companies the opportunity to livestream. • Wild East Devon team to reprioritise focus of its work programme onto climate change delivery, nature recovery network delivery, assisting Streetscene with their rewilding programme, Wild Honiton development and delivering Wild Exmouth's HLF project. |
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2.4 The decision making for internal service recovery work was through a revised Strategic Management process:

Strategic Management Team meetings - Internal Recovery

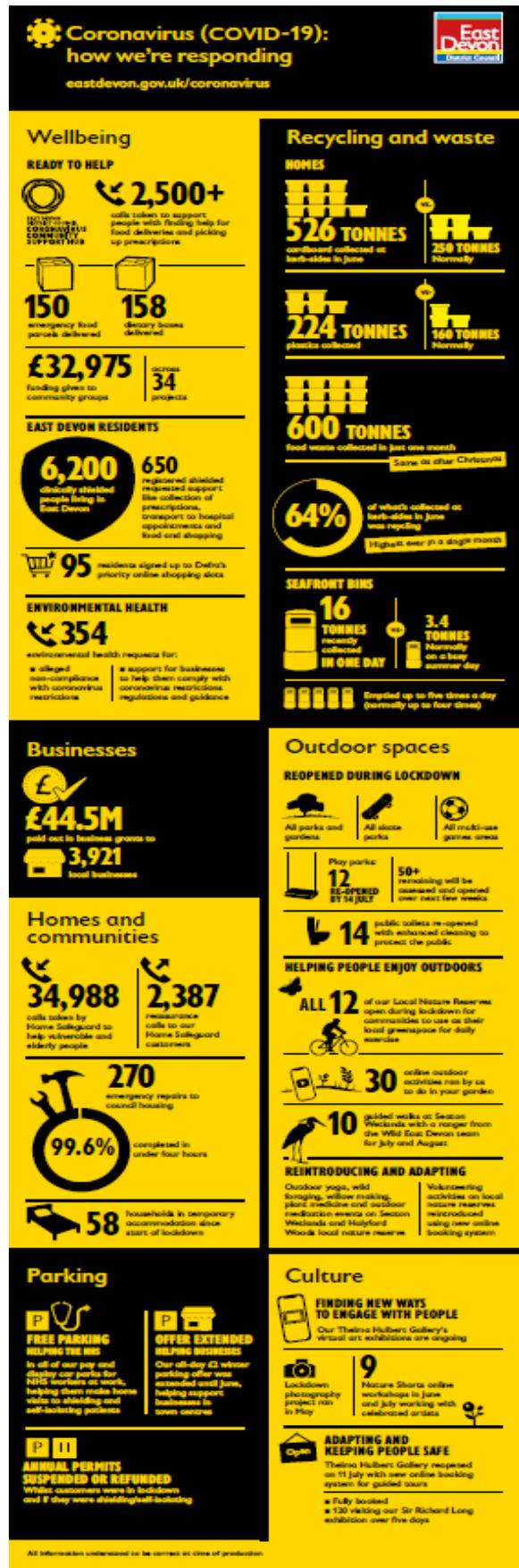
- SMT+ weekly meetings have provided the forum for information dissemination and decision making on response & recovery meetings following guidance from Team Devon's Recovery Coordination Group meetings.
- Strategic Management team agenda has followed a 2 part structure when dealing with response and recovery:
Response standing items – Issues Log, comms, CSC, Community Hub which has been an important contact centre for local residents to get advice and help during the lockdown period, this has been stood down for now but can be reactivated at short notice if required, PPE, enforcement matters during lockdown, Team Devon actions, Government funding updates, public health matters
Recovery standing items – Response Action Plan, recovery issues log, internal finances, comms & people issues, Service Leads operational matters, Business Continuity Plan review/refresh, Government grant stimulus packages, Cllrs & Cabinet meeting agenda items
- Emergency Planning Officer providing daily updates to SMT+ members on the latest government advice and guidance

2.5 The platform based on the above was then set to develop the Service Recovery Plan (see link) which is a "live" document that is updateable by all Strategic and Service leads on an ongoing basis as issues are raised on recovery and actions identified to help recover as much of the service as possible given restrictions. This document sits in the **O: drive** and is kept under constant review. This process will help inform the future development of Service Plans and feed into the financial modelling for the Medium Term Financial Plan led by the S151 Officer. Also where needed such as Housing there is a service specific Recovery Plan that has more fine grain detail and actions which can be found following this link:

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/documents/g1486/Public%20reports%20pack%2017th-Sep-2020%2014.30%20Housing%20Review%20Board.pdf?T=10>

2.6 Also within SMT+ the cross organisational strategic level recovery issues are reviewed and monitored through a recovery Issues Log (attached) which is reviewed every two weeks and updated. This again is another important document to keep operational matters linked to our recovery work under review and sits alongside the Service Recovery Action Plan. This process followed the same template for the response Issues Log which was used by SMT+

to keep our response work across the Council under close review dealing with a wide range of issues such as staff matters, office closure, PPE distribution, Community Hub performance etc. The recent infographic below illustrates the breadth of work undertaken during the lockdown period:



3. Lessons being learnt

3.1 There has been a huge amount of work undertaken to ensure that the Council's essential services were able to recover quickly once restrictions were lifted and respond to local community needs. The ability of teams such as Economic Development and Revenue & Benefits to quickly distribute Government funding to those businesses most impacted upon and help them recover has been crucial to keep the local economy viable. The reopening of our green spaces, public toilets, cultural venues etc. shows that we have been effective in our recovery planning processes and we have in place resilient systems that can react to the ever changing nature of this pandemic

3.2 During the six months of lockdown and the Council's response to the pandemic there has been a huge learning curve for all the organisation due to the nature and unique challenges faced by this emergency. Everyone involved has had to effectively "learn on the job" having never had to deal with such an emergency of this nature and scale before with most aspects of the Council's business "stress tested" and reassuringly proven to be up to the task. The robustness of our services and their rapid recovery should be seen as a success story and considerable credit to the Council for working with its local residents, communities as well as part of the collective Team Devon effort.

3.3 Like most of Devon's local authorities the focus of recovery has been very immediate and operational as we have emerged from the response stage to ensuring vital services are fully recovered. There is a recognition by all within the Team Devon set up that we will need to evaluate how we have performed, what were the vital lessons learnt, how resilient we have been in the face of such an emergency and if our own systems and processes proved "fit for purpose" and where we can make improvements and adjustments to all areas of our response and recovery work when faced with another outbreak or virus.

3.4 This process has already started with a recent refresh of our Emergency Plan and Business Continuity Plan giving more emphasis to infectious disease and infection control to reflect the impacts of Covid-19 but also the potential likelihood of future pandemics that we may have to deal with organisationally. The Council has already started to consider the eventuality of a second wave of infections and response planning is already advanced with the engagement with developing Local Outbreak Management Plans.

