

Recovery and Renewal Actions

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Leisure and Regeneration Committee
Lead Head of Service	Chief Executive
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance John Foster Head of Regeneration and Economic Development Stephen McGinnes Director of Mid Kent Services Anna Collier, Policy and Information Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report details proposed actions for recovery and renewal from the COVID-19 public health emergency that relate to the Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee's terms of reference. The actions at **Appendix A** have been developed following Councillor and Officer input, including briefings, workshops and formal debate at Policy and Resources Committee.

Purpose of Report

Discussion and Recommendation: For the Committee to provide feedback to the Policy and Resources Committee.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Consider the actions at Appendix A and agree feedback to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration on 20 October 2021.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	14 September 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	15 September 2021
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	21 September 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	20 October 2021 and 6-monthly until October 2023

Recovery and Renewal Actions

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The actions recommended align with the Council's ambitions set out in our strategic plan including the areas of focus agreed by Full Council in February 2021 for 2021-26.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The action plan is cross-cutting and will have a positive impact on the Council's cross cutting objectives and in particular that deprivation and social mobility are improved.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	<p>The action plan has been put in place to mitigate the risks to our economy and communities and the council.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	<p>In addition to the un-ringfenced grant, the Government has announced the £56 million 'Welcome Back Fund', Maidstone's allocation from this fund is £153,551.</p> <p>Several ringfenced and other grants will</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

	<p>continue support specific activities related to the Council's COVID-19 response. These include the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), from which Maidstone has been allocated £222,043 for 2021-22, in addition to £371,103 devolved from Kent County Council during 2020/21, Test and Trace Grants and New Burdens funding.</p> <p>The Council also has access to other funding streams which may be used to support certain activities linked to recovery planning. These include s106 funding for town centre planning, and income retained through the Kent Business Rates Pool which can be used for activities which support economic development more widely.</p>	
Staffing	Staffing implications have been set out in the action plan where additional staffing resources are needed to deliver the projects.	Head of Policy Communications and Governance
Legal	<p>The Council has a general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation.</p> <p>The Local Government Act 1972, section 111(1) also empowers a local authority to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. The recommendation and the proposals in this report regarding recovery and renewal from the COVID-19 pandemic are arrangements that can be undertaken under the above legislation.</p> <p>The Council will also be obliged to comply with relevant legislation, such as the Coronavirus Act 2020, related regulations,</p>	Legal Team

	the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and such other updated legislation required to address the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the recovery proposals being considered by the Council as part of the "Build Back Better" agenda.	
Privacy and Data Protection	Some of the projects may require data protection impact assessments if they involve new activities and/or personal data. These will be completed prior to activities commencing.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	Some projects may need an EqIA, these will be completed prior to activities commencing.	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The report includes actions that may have a positive impact in terms of crime and disorder with actions on community responsibility, resilience and levelling up.	Head of Policy Communications and Governance
Procurement	On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Policy Communications and Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The Committee has identified that the green agenda is important in its approval of the build back better principles, the actions will support the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy, particularly those set out within the way we work theme.	Head of Policy Communications and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's consideration of its approach to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic commenced in June 2020. A framework of objectives and themes was agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24 June 2020 following consultation with a politically balanced member group. It was agreed that this group would, amongst other things, provide feedback and suggestions for proposed actions for recovery ahead of these being sent to the relevant committees for decision making where this was required.
- 2.2 The Council's initial consideration of recovery was undertaken in the context of significant budgetary constraints and uncertainties. However, as part of the local government financial settlement for 2021/22 councils across the country received additional resources for addressing COVID-19 and its effects. This was reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on 10 February 2021 where it was noted that Maidstone's share of the un-ringfenced grant was £860,000. In line with government guidance, the first call on this grant was identified as for the immediate COVID-19 response in 2021/22. It was later recognised that it would be appropriate to deploy this funding to support the recovery from COVID-19 and that a further report would be brought to Policy and Resources Committee setting out the recovery strategy and likely funding requirements. As this is a one-off grant, it would not be prudent to use it to offset underlying budget pressures and it is was not therefore included within the Strategic Revenue Projection. The revenue outturn for 2020/21 was better than had been feared at times during the year for the reasons set out in the 4th Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk report presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd June 2021. Given this context consideration could be given to applying the £860,000 grant to projects which would help deliver the recovery objectives, KPIs and updated areas of focus already in place.
- 2.3 Further Councillor engagement took place through a briefing held on 9 June 2021. The briefing covered:
- Updated position on the impact and effect of the pandemic
 - Themes previously agreed by Policy and Resources Committee
 - Project ideas reflecting the objectives and KPIs previously agreed

Following this, a discussion paper was presented to and debated at Policy and Resources Committee on 23 June and a follow up meeting was then held with Service Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs to continue to work on the Council's approach to recovery and renewal including a distilled list of projects.

- 2.4 From the discussions with Councillors, Build Back Better principles for Maidstone have been agreed and an Action Plan developed which meets the cross-cutting principles.
- 2.5 It was identified by Councillors at the workshops and at committee that whilst funding was from a one-off source, it should be put to use in ways to ensure legacy and longevity where possible. Actions have been identified that will ensure we maximise the one-off spend to leave a legacy.

2.6 An Action Plan has been developed for Recovery and Renewal with the following themes:

- Vibrant Economy
- Community Resilience
- The Way we Work
- Responding to Increased Demands

The plan has been considered by Policy and Resources Committee and this Committee is now asked to consider those actions that fall within its terms of reference and provide comment to Policy and Resources Committee.

2.7 Policy and Resources Committee have strategic oversight for recovery and renewal and progress on the final plan will be reported to the Committee on a six-monthly basis.

2.8 It should be noted that the Council has existing responsibilities in relation to responding the Pandemic and if the current surge continues this may result in an increased demand in support for those affected by COVID-19. The Action Plan is such that not all work will commence at the same time, nor will it require the total resource to be allocated and spent immediately as such if further resources were required to respond to the pandemic, actions and spending could be paused and adjusted and reported to this Committee to ensure the Council remains in a state of readiness to respond.

2.9 The Council is currently undertaking a number of initiatives in response to the pandemic including:

- Maintaining a community hub and helpline,
- Identifying and supporting financially vulnerable people
- Initiatives to re-open the high street safely including digital campaigns and promotions to encourage visitors
- Delivery of an additional £1.3m discretionary business grant scheme
- Making the best use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant to enable households to remain in their homes.
- COVID-19 compliance checks
- Agile working

2.10 We have previously reported on our response to the pandemic and these reports are listed as background documents.

2.11 Details on each project or action proposed which falls within the Committee's remit has been provided in **Appendix A**.

2.12 Several actions are identified in the Action Plan under the Vibrant Economy are summarised below:

- i. Mid Kent College is proposing a town centre venue to provide accessible training, careers advice, and employability support for all residents, but particularly young people in an informal environment in partnership with others such as DWP, and the Youth Steering Group,

see Appendix B. It would be a pilot and its design and implementation would be monitored as part of a proposed new Anchor Institution Partnership linking job opportunities with local people through a collaborative approach to skills, training, education and employment.

- ii. The second project aims to support the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors return to a more sustainable business by boosting the Council's capacity through digital marketing/social media to attract consumers to attend events, visit our towns and villages and, attractions and stay in the Borough. Competition to capture the staycation market will be intense over the next 12 months
- iii. Having business ready premises. This is identified as an action under the priority "Open for Business" within the new Economic Development Strategy and also has synergy with the actions in the Strategic Plan. It's proposed that this is delivered through the capital programme. Overarching responsibility sits with Policy and Resources however, it crosses over with this Committee's terms of reference and has been included for completeness
- iv. Lastly it has been identified that the Council needs to increase the capacity to develop projects and bid for funding to ensure we maximise any opportunities for external funding and support.

2.13 The remaining actions cover support that we have already funded as part of our approach to recovery from the pandemic to ensure businesses can access grants and the revenues and benefits team are assisting the most vulnerable. The aim of this action is to increase capacity through additional technical expertise being brought in as and when needed.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider the actions for recovery and renewal that are outlined in Appendix A for comment. The Committee is asked to comment on the proposals and make recommendations as appropriate.

4. RISK

- 4.1 The Coronavirus Pandemic has had a severe and long-lasting impact on the lives of Maidstone communities and businesses, not responding and effectively planning for recovery and renewal will increase the risk to our communities and businesses as well as the Council. The Council's corporate risk register contains risks relating to the pandemic the actions proposed will mitigate the risks.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 As well as consultation with Councillors through the Member COVID-19 recovery consultative forum, reports were received on a regular basis by Policy and Resources in 2020 and 2021:

24 June 2020: Response to Covid19 Public Health Emergency Approach to recovery from the Covid19 Pandemic

16 September 2020: Strategic Plan Review – Update on Priority Milestones

20 January 2021: Strategic Plan – Proposed Areas for Focus 2021-2026 and Key Performance Indicators for Covid-19 Recovery

10 February 2021: Strategic Plan Refresh

5.2 On the 9 June 2021 a virtual member briefing was held for Members where information was provided on the impact to date of the pandemic, and stimulated discussion on what to 'Build Back Better' would mean for Maidstone, this was followed by a discussion paper on 23 June 2021 and a workshop with the Service Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs. All of this feedback has been taken into account in the development of the actions for recovery and renewal.

5.3 A report was taken to Policy and Resources on the 21 July where the projects and actions for recovery and renewal were agreed for the purpose of engagement with the service committees.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 Proposals will be considered by all four Service Committees before being considered by Policy and Resources in October. Work will then commence on the actions when approved, including communication.

7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Recovery and Renewal Actions for ERL
 - Appendix B: Community and Skills Hub Proposal – MidKent College
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

24 June 2020: Response to Covid19 Public Health Emergency

<http://app07:9080/documents/s71373/Maidstone%20Councils%20Response%20to%20Covid19%20Pandemic.pdf>

24 June 2020: Approach to recovery from the Covid19 Pandemic

<http://app07:9080/documents/s71374/Maidstone%20Councils%20approach%20to%20Recovery%20from%20the%20Covid19%20Pandemic.pdf>

16 September 2020: Strategic Plan Review – Update on Priority Milestones

<http://app07:9080/documents/s72419/Strategic%20Plan%20Review%20-%20Update%20on%20Priority%20Milestones.pdf>

20 January 2021: Strategic Plan – Proposed Areas for Focus 2021-2026 and Key Performance Indicators for Covid-19 Recovery

<http://app07:9080/documents/s74258/Strategic%20Plan%20-%20Proposed%20Areas%20for%20Focus%202021-2026%20and%20KPIs%20for%20Covid19%20Recovery.pdf>

10 February 2021: Strategic Plan Refresh

<http://app07:9080/documents/s75590/Strategic%20Plan%20Refresh.pdf>

23 June 2021: Recovery and Renewal Discussion Paper

<http://app07:9080/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=577&MIId=4624&Ver=4>

21 July 2021: Recovery and Renewal Actions Report to Policy and Resources

<http://10.201.64.164/documents/s77897/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Actions.pdf>