

Report



Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 24th June 2020

Subject Newport City Council's Strategic Recovery Aims in response to the Covid 19 Health Emergency

Purpose To endorse the Strategic Recovery Aims that will enable the Council's services to recover and operate whilst continuing to support the Council's Strategic aims set in the Corporate Plan 2017-22.

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Ward All

Summary The Covid 19 health emergency has posed significant and unprecedented challenge to the way we deliver our services and our way of life. Since March 2020, the Council's focus has been to preserve life, minimise the spread of the virus and support our communities and the vulnerable.

In moving towards the recovery of Council services, enable operation under a 'new normal' and to maintain focus on the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22, new Strategic Aims have drafted for Cabinet's approval.

Proposal For Cabinet to approve and endorse the Strategic Recovery Aims that will enable Newport's communities, Council Members and staff and partners understand the Council's Strategic priorities in 2020/21.

Action by Cabinet

Timetable

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Corporate Management Team
- Leader of the Council

Signed

Background

The Covid 19 health emergency has posed a significant and unprecedented challenge to the way in which we deliver our services and our way of life. Since March 2020, the Council's focus has been to preserve life, minimise the spread of the virus, and support our communities and the vulnerable.

The Council's immediate response to the emergency was to establish a Gold Command to oversee decision making and suspending normal governance processes, delegating decision making to Heads of Service. Throughout the health emergency the Council's services and staff have demonstrated their willingness and altruistic dedication in delivering front line services to the city's most vulnerable people and communities, volunteering to support priority areas while also adapting to the new ways of working from home using technology.

Following the implementation of these arrangements, Newport City Council now needs to start looking forward, moving the Council's focus to a recovery and renew phase. The pace and nature of recovering the Council's services operating in a 'new normal' will be influenced by the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales legislation and guidance. This will ensure resilience and flexibility across our services should further outbreaks occur in the city or region.

Development of the Strategic Recovery Aims

The Strategic Recovery Aims have been drafted in reflection of the work undertaken by the Council in response to the crisis while also considering the Council's long-term aim to *'build a better Newport'* and supporting the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015. The Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22 has four **Wellbeing Objectives**:

1. *To improve skills, education and employment opportunities*
2. *To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment*
3. *To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient*
4. *To build cohesive and sustainable communities.*

The Strategic Aims and supporting actions in the table below sets out the Council's focus and prioritisation of its work as Newport and Wales eases out of the lockdown and back into a 'new normal'. In moving forward, the Council will be focusing on retaining and building on the positive work that has been undertaken by the Council, its strategic partners, charities, not for profit organisations, community groups and individuals. The Strategic Aims also acknowledge the further work and action required by the Council and its partners to address areas of sustainability in the social care sector as well as the inequality and poverty that the Covid 19 crisis has affected across the communities in Newport. Alongside the delivery of the Strategic Aims, the Council will also be undertaking a Community Impact Assessment that will assess and address the impacts of the Covid 19 crisis across Newport's communities and supporting the future direction of the Council's priorities and actions.

Strategic Recovery Aims

Strategic Recovery Aim 1: Understand, and respond to, the additional challenges, which Covid19 has presented, including loss of employment, impact on business and on the progress, achievement and wellbeing of both mainstream and vulnerable learners.	
Wellbeing Objective 1 – To improve skills, education and employment opportunities	
To achieve this aim we will:	
1	Support schools and other education establishments to safely reopen for both school staff and pupils.
2	Work to prevent and reduce inequality of progress and outcomes in education for mainstream and vulnerable learners through the implementation of the National Continuity of Learning Plan.

Strategic Recovery Aim 1:

Understand, and respond to, the additional challenges, which Covid19 has presented, including loss of employment, impact on business and on the progress, achievement and wellbeing of both mainstream and vulnerable learners.

Wellbeing Objective 1 – To improve skills, education and employment opportunities

To achieve this aim we will:

3	Support schools to enhance and develop digital skills, digital teaching and learning platforms and enhanced support for digitally excluded learners.
4	Support and enable people that are digitally excluded to access community IT programmes, Council services and other public services.
5	Support people who have been affected by unemployment to access new opportunities through training and re-employment required for post Covid 19 businesses.
6	Ensure our diverse communities are appropriately supported through tailored interventions specific to their needs, including consideration of language, culture and points of access.

Strategic Recovery Aim 2:

Understand and respond to the impact of Covid19 on the city's economic and environmental goals to enable Newport to thrive again.

Wellbeing Objective 2 – To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment.

To achieve this aim we will:

1	Maintain our focus on regenerating Newport to deliver existing and new investment projects.
2	Enable and support the construction industry to re-establish the supply of new and affordable housing.
3	Enable and support businesses to re-establish normal operations whilst maintaining the health and safety of their workers and customers.
4	Enable and support businesses to prepare for future trade arrangements resulting from Brexit negotiations.
5	Protect and improve the environment, including air quality and decarbonisation of the city for its residents, businesses and visitors.
6	Continuing support and safe delivery of the Council's City services including waste, cleansing and highways.

Strategic Recovery Aim 3:

Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, safeguarding the most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities

Wellbeing Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient

To achieve this aim we will:

1	Support people to remain living independently in their homes and communities.
2	Fully restore Children and Adult Services, supporting partners that have been impacted by Covid 19 and ensuring service users and staff are supported and protected.
3	Assess the impact and the long-term sustainability of the social care sector in Newport informing future service requirements.
4	Safeguard and support children and young people to remain safely with their families.
5	Improve opportunities for Active Travel and work towards improved air quality.
6	Regulate businesses and support consumers / residents to protect and improve their health.
7	Work with key partners to safely re-open cultural and leisure facilities including the promotion of the city's parks, open spaces and coastal paths.

Strategic Recovery Aim 3:

Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, safeguarding the most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities

Wellbeing Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient

To achieve this aim we will:

8	Sustain a safe, healthy and productive workforce.
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Strategic Recovery Aim 4:

Provide people with the resources and support that they need to move out of the crisis, considering in particular the impact that Covid 19 has had on our minority and marginalised communities.

Wellbeing Objective 4 – To build cohesive and sustainable communities

To achieve this aim we will:

1	Work together with our partners to reduce poverty, address homelessness and support our most vulnerable people as a priority.
2	Assess and address the inequalities that Covid 19 has highlighted or contributed to within our communities.
3	Identify, develop and seek to sustain any positive developments emerging during the crisis.
4	Developing opportunities for people to access suitable and affordable housing
5	Deliver a community cohesion programme that effectively responds to community tensions and creates a shared sense of identity across the city.
6	Prevent and address instances of antisocial behaviour impacting upon the residents and the business community of Newport
7	Re-establish Community Regeneration facilities and services where it is safe to do so for staff and its service users.
8	Develop opportunities for community involvement participation and engagement.

Delivering the Strategic Aims and Actions

To support the delivery of the Strategic Aims and actions, service areas will review their service plans for 2020/21, to re-prioritise their objectives, actions, performance measures and risks. The Planning, Performance and Risk Management Framework is in place to monitor the progress against the service plans during 2020/21. This will enable the Council's Cabinet and Corporate Management Team to assess the progress of delivery while also providing the flexibility to respond to future outbreaks, challenges and eventually returning back to the Wellbeing Objectives set in the Corporate Plan 2017-22.

To support the communication and publication of the Council's Strategic Aims, the Council's Strategic Communication team will also distribute communications across Newport's communities via its social media, Council website, printed texts and Community Hubs. See concept graphic attached in Appendix 1.

Newport City Council Operational Services and Governance Arrangements

To deliver the Strategic Aims and to ensure that the Council complies with the necessary legislation and regulation set by Welsh and UK Governments, operational services will need to be able to safely engage with its service users, work safely in Council buildings, offices and to work remotely both in the short term and long term. The Council alongside its strategic partners, Newport Norse and Shared Resource Service (SRS) is progressing a programme of work to examine and implement the necessary measures minimise the spread of Covid 19 and to maintain a safe working environment for all.

The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations") came into force on 22nd April 2020 and apply to all Council meetings until 1st May 2021.

The Regulations will enable the Council to hold remote meetings to overcome Covid 19 social distancing measures and limitations in the existing Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 regarding the requirements for convening, managing and recording meetings.

The Regulations enable the Council to postpone holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM) until December 2020, enable current office-holders to remain office until May 2021 and suspend the automatic disqualification if Councillors do not attend meetings for more than 6 months. Therefore, the Council does not have to hold any remote meetings at all and the current scheme of delegation is sufficient to enable urgent decisions to continue be taken without the need to convene any meetings.

However, the recommencement of Cabinet is the first step and the Council's commitment to reinstalling governance and democratic arrangements in Newport. The Regulations permit remote meetings to be held without public access, provided that a full record of the proceedings are published on the Council's web site within 5 days of the meeting. Therefore, the first Cabinet meeting will be held in closed session while the technology is being refined but, in the interests of transparency and openness, it is intended that future meetings will be broadcast live. The Council's Democratic Services, Digital Services and SRS will work with elected members to develop practices and procedures for conducting remote meetings, agreeing specific protocols for conduct of virtual meetings, training, should this be required, with electronic documents and publication through the Council's website.

Public Services Board and Partnership working

The One Newport Local Well-being sets out the Public Services Board (PSB) overarching well-being objectives, priorities and actions to improve the economic social, cultural and environmental well-being of Newport. Over the last two years, the PSB and the wider One Newport partnership have been working together on implementing this plan. Prior to the Covid 19 outbreak, the PSB proposed to review and amend the Plan to ensure the partnership is adapting to changing circumstances. The review has been delayed by the Covid outbreak, however there is now an opportunity to use the learning and experiences of exceptional partnership working over the last three months to shape the aspirations and priorities in the plan going forward.

The Community Well-being Profiles (Well-being Assessment) are currently being updated. The information collated will be used alongside the Community Impact Assessment and recent engagement information to inform the review of the Well-Being plan. The second Local Well-being Plan Annual Report is being prepared for publication. The PSB considered options for completion of the report at their June meeting which will mean an extension to the publishing date to ensure a meaningful report is produced.

Financial Summary

A separate Financial Report to Cabinet will be presented covering the impact of Covid 19 on the Council's revenue and capital position.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
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The Council is not able to deliver its strategic objectives set in the Corporate Plan.	High	Medium	Setting Strategic Aims will enable the Council to focus and respond to the Covid 19 health emergency. Council monitoring and reporting processes will support the delivery of the Strategic Aims and Corporate Plan.	Corporate Management Team / Heads of Service.
The Council is not able to respond and protect its residents as a result of future Covid 19 outbreaks	High	Medium	The Council's Gold Command arrangements will remain in place to respond and manage any future outbreaks. Collaborative and partnership working with the Local Resilience Forum will ensure coordination of resources and services to respond to future outbreaks.	Corporate Management Team / Gold Command.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The Strategic Recovery aims set out in this report will support the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22. This is also aligned to the Public Services Board, One Newport Wellbeing Plan 2018-23 and Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Options Available and considered

The options available to Cabinet:

1. To endorse the Strategic Recovery Aims that will enable the Council's services to recover and operate whilst continuing to support the Council's Strategic aims set in the Corporate Plan 2017-22.
2. Reject the Strategic Recovery Aims that are outlined in this report and reconsider the Council's priorities.

Preferred Option and Why

Option 1 is preferred, as this will enable the Council to provide strategic way forward for its Members, staff, service users and partners as the Council responds to the Covid 19 health emergency.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

The strategic recovery aims outlined in this report are likely to come at significant increased financial cost to the Council. In some areas, these will be covered by funding provided by the Welsh Government hardship fund, other grants, or mitigated by reduced provision of services in other areas of the Council. However, where the recovery phase continues further into the year and the funding of these costs becomes uncertain, there may be a significant direct impact on the Council's budget.

Costs of the recovery phase are currently being assessed and will be included in the monitoring update to Cabinet in July.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The proposed Strategic Recovery Aims do not change any of the existing Corporate Plan objectives or the Council's well-being objectives. Therefore, this does not require any amendment to these current Policy Framework documents, which would require approval by full Council. The Strategic Recovery Aims is intended to put the Covid-19 recovery measures into the context of the current Policy Framework and relate the individual measures to the specific objectives set out in the Corporate and Well-Being Plans. This is a high-level strategic document and it will be underpinned by a series of operational service delivery recovery plans at various levels of implementation.

The Cabinet proceedings will be conducted in accordance with the flexible arrangements for remote meetings under the Local Government (Coronavirus) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

Newport City Council has a responsibility to safeguard and protect its residents, businesses and visitors. The endorsement of the Strategic Recovery Aims will enable the Council to prioritise its work whilst having the flexibility to respond to future Covid 19 outbreaks in the City. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to have long term sustainable objectives and these Strategic Recovery Aims will support the Act and ensure the Corporate Plan objectives remain at the forefront of our services.

The Council has responsibility to safeguard and protect its staff, elected members, service users and anyone else that may contact or use Council services. Newport Council will ensure these requirements are complied with and take necessary actions to ensure safe working environments are provided to all.

Local issues

None

Scrutiny Committees

Under the Council's Constitution, powers have been delegated to Heads of Service and since the Covid 19 outbreak governance arrangements including the Council's Scrutiny Committees have been suspended. However, there is every intention as the Council re-instates its democratic and governance functions, the Council's Scrutiny Committees will be provided an opportunity to assess and review the contents of this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

The equality impact of Covid19 and its long-term implications for communities is significant. The regulatory body, Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has recently informed public services that their scrutiny activity during this period will focus on how public sector organisations are effectively considering the equality impact of decisions, planning and policymaking. The EHRC has also announced that they will be undertaking a formal inquiry into the disproportionate impact of Covid19 on minority ethnic communities, and the structural inequalities that have contributed to this.

In the development of the Council's Strategic Aims over this period, we have been examining data and information, as well as consulting with communities across the city to identify any disproportionate impact being experienced because of the Covid19 health emergency. This work is informing a Community Impact Assessment (CIA), which further impact on the actions set out in this report, as well as the future focus of individual service areas. The CIA will consider both people that share-protected characteristics under equality legislation, but also take into account wider factors including the impact on community cohesion and socioeconomic status, aligning with Welsh Government's work to implement the new Socioeconomic Duty, and building on the progress of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Key community and equality impacts that will need to be considered both at a strategic and operational level and are highlighted within the CIA include:

- The complex and disproportionate impact that Covid19 has had on our Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities
- The trust and confidence levels that communities have in local authority and wider public sector/government services as a result of the Covid19 response
- Mental health and wellbeing across communities, but particularly those who have experienced loss or increased isolation during the pandemic
- The impact of school closures on our most vulnerable learners
- Building future resilience for those communities who are most affected – focussing work to address issues like material poverty, institutional inequalities, digital exclusion and poor health which have been compounded and highlighted by the crisis
- The impact on our migrant populations and the increase in risk of homelessness, destitution and exploitation

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

At the heart of the Council's Strategic Recovery aims is the objective to *Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of people, safeguarding our most vulnerable, and building strong, resilient communities.* Safeguarding vulnerable children, young people and families remains an important part of Council's services. The findings and recommendations from the Community Impact Assessment and future studies into the impact of Covid 19 on communities and society in Wales will inform and direct the prioritisation of services.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Strategic Recovery Aims have been drafted to support the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-22, Public Services Board 'One Newport' Wellbeing Plan 2018-23 and the Wellbeing for Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The delivery of these strategic aims and actions will ensure that the Council is able to respond in the short term to the Covid 19 emergency but also ensure that we are able to prevent longer-term impacts on the city and the Council's services. Through the Council's Community Impact Assessment, we will look to revisit over time the impacts that Covid 19 has had on the city's communities and those that share protected characteristics under the equality legislation. The involvement of people and businesses and our strategic partners is key to ensure that we are able to sustainably deliver the Council's services and will inform the future direction of the Council.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Not applicable

Background Papers

Public Services Board, One Newport Wellbeing Plan 2018-23
Corporate Plan 2017-22