

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
David Whittle, Chair of Kent Resilience Forum's Recovery Co-ordinating Group

To: Cabinet, 20th July 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Multi-Agency Recovery

Classification: Unrestricted

SUMMARY: The unique, complex and significant impacts from the COVID-19 (coronavirus) global pandemic affect every aspect of life in Kent. Kent County Council has played a leading role in both the emergency response to the crisis and now as we look forward into recovery.

KCC is the lead statutory agency for multi-agency recovery, chairing the Kent Resilience Forum's Recovery Co-ordinating Group to develop recovery strategy and planning across Kent and Medway with our partners. This report provides an update on multi-agency recovery arrangements and will be supported by a presentation to Cabinet on the latest developments.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

- (1) **Note** the update on multi-agency recovery arrangements.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 COVID-19 recovery aims to restore, rebuild, and reopen public services and community support across Kent and Medway following the global COVID-19 pandemic emergency. As a statutory lead agency for recovery, Kent County Council (KCC) is responsible for chairing the multi-agency recovery arrangements within the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF).
- 1.2 The global significance and unique, wide-ranging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates a very different type of recovery. Ordinarily, recovery is geared around a short-term and geographically bounded emergency event, to recover public services back to business-as-usual. Usually, an emergency response is followed by a formal handover to recovery arrangements.
- 1.3 However, COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of economic, civic and community life. It has international, national, and local impacts, affecting the lives of every resident, business and organisation in Kent and Medway. The impacts have been multi-faceted and are likely to be long lasting.
- 1.4 COVID-19 has initiated a tremendous collective response within KCC and between partners across Kent and Medway, to deal with the immediate impacts and provide emergency support arrangements for our residents. Response arrangements continue across Public Health, health and social care who are very much at the forefront of the crisis.

- 1.5 A pandemic of this significance requires a more involved and longer-term recovery process than is ordinarily the case. COVID-19 recovery will run in parallel with response arrangements, which is unusual and has only occurred very infrequently, for example recurring flooding. COVID recovery needs to consider planning and preparations for potential further waves of response and localised lockdowns, depending on national and local events. Multi-agency recovery and individual organisational recovery needs to run alongside and complement each other.
- 1.6 COVID impacts will continue to unfold and emerge over time, particularly as we face a challenging period for recovery in the autumn/winter, as health and social care services prepare for the winter flu season, Government emergency support schemes transition and begin to end and services and businesses begin a 'new normal', with ongoing social distancing measures.
- 1.7 The unique challenge is to deliver a recovery which is flexible and responsive to changing events and impacts. This recovery needs to build on the significant strengths and positive contributions of partners. It seeks to tackle the most substantial shared challenges we all face, as well as maximising opportunities to improve the way we work, tackle pre-existing issues, and build individual, community, organisational and sector resilience.
- 1.8 Recovery has been a fast-moving process, which has needed to respond quickly to changing resident, community and business needs and emerging Government guidance and financial support. This report summarises the latest progress of recovery and will be supported by a presentation providing the most up-to-date position for Cabinet Members.

2. MULTI-AGENCY RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 Recovery is an integral part of the emergency response process led by the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF), the multi-agency partnership of member agencies which leads emergency response and recovery co-ordination. The KRF includes all of Kent's local authorities, emergency services, NHS primary care providers and other responders. Multi-agency recovery covers the Kent and Medway area.
- 2.2 Multi-agency recovery arrangements and planning requirements are part of a regulatory framework which includes the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), its associated Regulations (2005 and 2013), the National Resilience Capabilities Programme and national Government emergency response and recovery guidance. This sets out key processes and products which all national and local partners work to, including the new Government guidelines relating to the Coronavirus Act (2020).
- 2.3 The KRF recovery process was initiated in April by Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG, also known as 'Gold'), as per national requirements. Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, is KCC's Lead Chief Officer for SCG, which provides updates and escalations through the well-established KRF governance arrangements.
- 2.4 Government guidance determines that the upper-tier authority should act as the statutory lead agency for recovery. As such, KCC is chairing the KRF's multi-agency Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). This group is chaired by David Whittle, Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance.
- 2.5 The RCG reports into the SCG and engages with other Regional and National Recovery Co-ordinating arrangements and key stakeholders, including

Kent Joint Chiefs and Kent Leaders. All Kent and Medway councils play an active role in recovery, representing the needs of all our residents and communities.

- 2.6 The RCG's key role is co-ordinate recovery planning and strategy - it is not responsible for recovery delivery. This is a time-limited role, with an appropriate exit strategy currently being developed, with an intensive 12-week period of recovery activity being undertaken until early August.
- 2.7 Each individual partner agency maintains their responsibility for reporting to their own governance and decision-making arrangements. For KCC this includes the Leader, Cabinet, Head of Paid Service and Corporate Management Team. Recovery has been a core agenda item at KCC Cabinet Committee briefings, which provides opportunities for Member engagement and questions around operational and multi-agency recovery within the area of responsibility of the committee.
- 2.8 The KRF engagement with Elected Members has been through regular briefings to the Kent Leaders, with those Leaders responsible for engagement with their own councillors and residents.
- 2.9 The RCG is supported by seven multi-agency recovery 'cells' which reflect the wide-ranging demands of the recovery work. The recovery cells include: Economy; Infrastructure, Children and Young People, Health and Social Care, Voluntary Sector, District and Community, and Finance. The work is also supported by a Media and Communications Cell, which supports both response and recovery communications.
- 2.10 The recovery cells have engaged with a broad network of stakeholders and working groups to inform the development of recovery products, which has involved contributions from partners across Kent and Medway. There are approximately 160 individuals from over 50 organisations supporting the development of the recovery strategy. The enormously positive engagement from our partners has helped to ensure their work reflects strategic, operational and local aspects of recovery.

3. MULTI-AGENCY RECOVERY STRATEGY AND PLANNING

- 3.1 Multi-agency recovery products are part of the national regulatory framework and include developing impact assessments, action plans and a recovery strategy. This has been the focus of the work of the RCG and the seven recovery cells over the last few months, working towards a Kent and Medway COVID Recovery Strategy for approval by August 2020.
- 3.2 From May to June 2020, partners created Impact Assessments providing a strategic overview of impacts, strengths, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities linked to COVID-19 that will inform recovery work across the county. Each recovery cell developed an impact assessment comprised of three main parts: identification, prioritisation and equalities considerations.
- 3.3 An overarching Impact Assessment was collated by the RCG to summarise the cumulative impacts for Kent and Medway and shared with partners for feedback. This is attached as Appendix A. The cumulative impacts identified in the Impact Assessments included:

Positive cumulative impacts	Challenging cumulative impacts
Strong partnership working	Significant and prolonged economic impacts
Flexibility and adaptation	Financial sustainability and resilience
Collaborative commissioning	Latent demand
Strong and committed workforce	Increased and new vulnerabilities
Tackling pre-existing challenges	Widening of inequalities
Opportunities for transformation	Data and insight

- 3.4 The Impact Assessments helped to determine where partners needed to take action. From June to July 2020, partners developed 7 Draft Action Plans, which mirror the seven recovery cells. These identify timely, specific actions which will address the issues raised in the impact assessments and contribute to successful recovery. Actions span over the short (less than 6 months), medium (6-12 months) and long term (12+ months) and have been rated by priority (essential, important and desirable). Each action included has passed five 'tests' to ensure that actions are specific, realistic, require collaboration, respect organisational boundaries and add value to recovery.
- 3.5 The draft action plans identified 152 actions which are currently being tested and refined with partners and will be finalised shortly. Further information on action plans will be included in a presentation to Cabinet summarising the latest information on COVID-19 recovery.
- 3.6 The action plans are being used to develop a draft Recovery Strategy. The strategy aims to:
- Set out critical success factors for a successful recovery
 - Summarise the main recovery impacts.
 - Provide an overview of the recovery actions which have been identified to support residents, communities, businesses and partners across Kent and Medway, which are included in seven detailed action plans which underpin the strategy.
 - Summarise the equality considerations and equality actions for recovery.
 - Highlight key action themes and essential, short term actions which need to be progressed by partners in the next 6 months.
 - Summarise our media and communications approach for recovery
- 3.7 The draft strategy will be shared with partners for comment during late July, with the intention to share a final strategy with Kent Leaders and approval by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group in early August.
- 3.8 At this point, recovery transitions into individual organisations and partnerships, to ensure normal governance and decision-making arrangements oversee delivery of agreed recovery actions, with the RCG providing a light-touch monitoring and engagement role.

4. EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 It is important that recovery planning actively considers equality impacts, issues and opportunities and identifies appropriate actions. This is part of statutory duties in the Equalities Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). We recognise and appreciate the importance of equality and are committed to taking collective action and providing community leadership to tackle equality issues and make a positive contribution.

- 4.2 COVID-19 has impacted different communities and individuals in different ways. Some groups were already experiencing inequalities, and these may have changed or become greater as a result of COVID-19. We have also seen positive examples of communities coming together to support each other through the crisis and opportunities to redesign and improve services for protected groups (for example, through digital access where this is the preferred or more accessible option for some people).
- 4.3 Some of these impacts are national and longstanding, deep-rooted societal issues, which are not unique to Kent and Medway. Other potential issues and impacts are only just emerging, and we will need to develop a greater understanding and evidence base based on meaningful data over time. There is likely to be a time lag before the data can demonstrate the wider impacts and there may be gaps in countywide and local data, where we need to undertake further research, insight and analysis. There may also be equality impacts which are currently unknown.
- 4.4 The focus for recovery has been to identify emerging cumulative equality impacts and issues in the Impact Assessment process, and use this initial evidence base, in addition to national research and local data, to inform the development of equality actions, which will feature in the Recovery Strategy and supporting Action Plans.
- 4.5 Looking across all the equality impacts identified by the recovery cells, the groups that appear to have the greatest cumulative impacts on them are young people, children, older people, BAME people, disabled people and women. In the draft recovery action plans 43 actions have been identified to mitigate these impacts and explore positive opportunities to improve service delivery for protected groups.
- 4.6 Draft actions include improving digital access to services and opportunities which will help widen access for people who struggle to use more traditional channels, both in the shorter term due to shielding and social distancing and in the longer term due to disabilities, work and caring responsibilities and other needs. Some actions aim to maximise opportunities that have emerged during the crisis to more effectively join up support between organisations for people with a range of vulnerabilities and needs. There are actions that aim to address a potential widening of an inequalities gap by providing targeted support to people who need it, for example specific actions to support young people into employment and training. There are also partnership actions to gather and analyse data and intelligence to deepen understanding of equalities impacts.
- 4.7 An equality analysis of the Kent and Medway COVID-19 Recovery Strategy is also being developed, to take a strategic view on impacts and actions.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Further updates on multi-agency recovery will be part of the core remit for KCC Committees, including Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and Scrutiny Committee, as required. This provides an appropriate mechanism to engage Elected Members on aspects of recovery which relate to the KCC services which are within the responsibility for each committee.
- 5.2 The multi-agency Impact Assessments and Recovery Strategy, including detailed action plans, are currently out for feedback from partners. These will be finalised in the next couple of weeks to be shared with Kent Leaders on 6th August, ahead approval by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group w/c 10th August.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The recommendations are as follows:

Cabinet is asked to:

(1) **Note** the update on multi-agency recovery arrangements.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

7.1 None

8. APPENDICIES

- Appendix A: KRF RGC Covid-19 Overarching Impact Assessment

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