

South Somerset District Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy

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Purpose of the Report

1. This report sets out the reviewed and updated Recovery strategy, its rationale and approach that South Somerset District Council (SSDC) will take in the Recovery and Renewal phases of the Coronavirus pandemic. Following updated expert advice and best practice, local data and lessons learnt from the Response phase of the pandemic, it outlines the proposed Roadmap to Recovery for the Council and the wider community of South Somerset.
2. This report and strategic document seeks the approval of this council to adopt the updated Recovery and Renewal Strategy and to proceed with implementation.
3. Attached to this report is the proposed Recovery & Renewal Strategy and the overview document of the key work streams involved in the recovery plan along with the Action Plans for each area in the appendices which are live documents and will evolve as priorities emerge and the situation changes into the future.

Forward Plan

4. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of April 2021

Public Interest

5. This report is of interest to the public as it seeks to approve the Council updated Recovery & Renewal Strategy, which impacts on how our council services will recover and continue to work going forwards; and the wider recovery of our economy, environment and communities.
6. This District Executive report is the council's strategic document outlining the rationale and approach in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic across South Somerset. It also explains the objectives we seek to achieve, work streams, focus areas and resources required.

Recommendations



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7. That the District Executive:

- a) approves the Recovery & Renewal Strategy with supporting documentation in the manner outlined in this report.
- b) approves the transfer of £464,140 from the COVID Recovery Reserve to the revenue budget for 2021/22 within the Place & Recovery Directorate.

Background

8. The Coronavirus pandemic has been a disruptor to normal life with some services stopping, demand for health and care services increasing, and additional Response services stood up. Our communities, lives and wellbeing has and is being severely tested and normal freedoms have been adversely impacted. The outlook for the UK economy has become increasingly uncertain.
9. Unlike a more conventional Recovery from a major incident, e.g. flooding, the time period and potential fluctuations that will occur over the coming months will be a new recovery challenge that we will need to deal with. For example;
 - Fluctuating movement and activity restrictions depending on future peaks and outbreaks of the virus that may be uneven across the region and unpredictable.
 - Services may be 'switched on and off' with flexibility between the recovery and any future response functions needed
 - The recovery period may be at least 12 months – 24 months (or even longer) depending on the actions taken, virus spread, or until widespread immunity achieved via vaccinations is completed (expected July 2021)
 - Different population segments will have different need for restrictions i.e. Shielded population may have greater restrictions for longer.
10. Against this backdrop, the Recovery Strategy to COVID 19 is complicated and multi-dimensional and requires an agile and adaptive mode of working to match it. Our **Recovery** can be defined as the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating following this emergency and our plan to get back to 'normal' community and economic functions. However, it is also an opportunity to rebuild a better, **Renewal** for communities, environment, internal council services and the wider economy making the most of the opportunities presented by the disruption, our learning and experiences from living through the pandemic and subsequent ways of working to create a 'new normal' that sets a path towards longer term strategic goals.
11. This 'new normal' will require dedicated, collective and focussed leadership, alongside and working in collaboration with our communities, our businesses and our public services for some time and it is likely that we are, to an extent, already moving to a new way of working for our places, services and through adapted new digital norms.

Report Detail (Recovery & Renewal Strategy)



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12. The recovery planning process will be influenced by the central government strategy that is emerging, but the South Somerset District Council recovery action plan is to be designed and specifically tailored to help the people of South Somerset bounce back quickly, once lockdown restrictions start to be lifted.
13. There will also be alignment to regional political structures including Avon & Somerset Local Resilience Forum (ASLRF) and the Heart of the South West LEP. This will work alongside both the District and County Councils (including Somerset County Council Multi Agency Recovery Co-ordination Group) to bring the recovery and renewals to our economy, environment, council services and communities. This will provide political leadership both at a regional and local level connecting the various places and communities right across South Somerset.
14. The Recovery Plan will cover the 5 key themes that are aligned with the District Council Corporate Plan, these are;
 - Economy
 - Healthy, self-reliant communities
 - Environment
 - Places where we live
 - Protecting core services
15. As part of the work for recovery planning, South Somerset District Council will consider data on the potential economic, environmental and social impacts of the pandemic; and what this impact will mean when taking action on issues such as investment, business support, community enabling and support, environmental planning, housing and regeneration to name just a few.
16. Although South Somerset District Council aims to start recovery immediately with identified priority actions, the Roadmap approach provides points along the process to engage in wider consultation and feedback workshops, meetings, summits and conferences with representation from political, community, business and resident groups and individuals. This will provide a sense check to measure impact, identify gaps in Recovery and highlight opportunities for the Renewal Action Plan covering the five council strategic priorities.
17. A Recovery and Renewal Board will be established with membership including Council Portfolio Holders whose portfolios are key to the strategy, council senior officers as appropriate, including the Director of Place and Recovery as a regular member. Additional board member's invitations from external stakeholders will include other local authorities, substantial businesses, health and care bodies, leading education providers, charities and other public expert agencies concerned for example with innovation and technology, but this list is not exhaustive.
18. The Board will oversee and review progress of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy as set out in this document on behalf of the District Executive. The Board will set priorities where necessary, and it will discuss the action plans; and receive reports on progress from the Director of Place and Recovery.



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19. At the end of the Recovery process, a report containing recommendations on the actions that will guide the recovery, renewal and lessons learned from this pandemic for the District will be published.

Financial Implications

20. Financial implications of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy and subsequent corporate themed action plans are not transparent at this present moment in time. Work will progress utilising current council resources and service operational budgets where possible, whilst detailed project identification and business cases are developed and financial implication identified.

21. The revenue budget for 2021/22 approved by Full Council in February 2021, set aside a revenue reserve of approximately £464K for Covid recovery. If the recommendation is agreed, this funding to be transferred from the reserve into the revenue budget for 2021/22 within the Place and Recovery Directorate. Each priority project will be costed against a business case and funding requested on a case by case basis.

22. As part of the Council wide recovery plan, a review of the financial health of the council is being undertaken which will result in an updated Financial Strategy. The overall financial assessment of the Council will include a review of reserves and the financial risk register. This is anticipated to come forward for approval by District Executive in the summer.

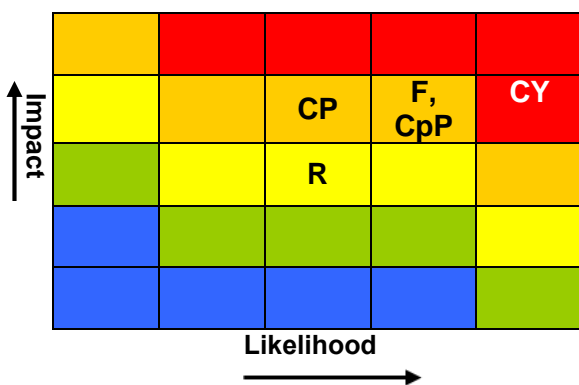
Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

23. There are no legal implications that relate directly to this report.

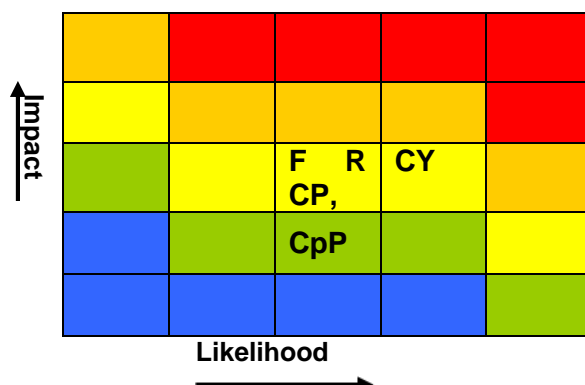
Risk Matrix

The risk matrix shows risk relating to the Council Plan headings.

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key



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Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

- 24. The reputational risk could and should be seen as a positive as the Council will be demonstrating its desire to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic to support and aid local council taxpayers, as well as the wider community, environment and economy.
- 25. As the Recovery and Renewal Strategy and action plan evolves, an impact assessment with details of the risks per corporate theme will be developed including identified risks and what mitigation action has been, or will be taken to minimise and address such impacts on our economy, council services, environment and communities.
- 26. An appropriate exit strategy will be developed from the Recovery phase, at the appropriate time, within the detailed Recovery action plans showing how the activities could cease or be included in new operating models, becoming our business as usual, and the impact that would have upon the future support function to aid our community and economy.
- 27. Overall it is considered that the risk associated with implementing the Recovery and Renewal Strategy is low. That the initial proposed recovery activities and resulting impact on the Council will be beneficial; and at this stage essential for supporting our communities, environment and economy.

Council Plan Implications

- 28. The Recovery & Renewal Strategy has been designed based on the Corporate Plan themes and objectives, it is the priorities and actions with these themes that will aid a swift Recovery, moving into Renewal. It follows the operating framework of establishing actions plans for the 5 corporate themes by working within the focussed Communities of Practice (CoPs), which are groups populated with relevant service employees that have appropriate skills and knowledge from across the Council and represented politically by the Portfolio holder for the individual CoPs.
- 29. Essentially the Recovery and Renewal Strategy meets the overarching outcomes of the 5 corporate priority areas but is aligned and forms the Strategy and Roadmap to achieve the renewed Council Plan 2020 - 2024 Priority 1: Lead the recovery and revitalisation of our economy and communities to be stronger, more resilient and more vibrant than before Covid-19.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications



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30. Right now, the coronavirus pandemic is the global priority. We all need to work together to save lives and keep our communities together. But the climate and nature emergencies will still be there when the spread of Covid-19 is brought under control. With the right Recovery, this could be a once in a life time behaviour change opportunity to build upon and improve matters highlighted in Climate Emergency recognised by South Somerset District Council in May 2019 addressing the climate crisis, at the same time as we recover from the pandemic.
31. The South Somerset District Council Recovery & Renewal Strategy will explore how the pandemic has unintentionally proven that we can dramatically decrease pollution levels in a short period of time and see significant improvements in spaces for nature. The report and strategy will use intelligence and data collected from COVID-19 (including SSDC's own annual carbon calculator) and build in new actions to address the wider environment implications across South Somerset. It will seek to retain and build on the positive environmental implications and also retain the momentum and desire for positive change in our communities.
32. These actions will be held within the Environment Community of Practice (CoP) and officers will ensure work is aligned with the Environment Strategy and progress is made against the Environment delivery plan and recovery plan.

Equality and Diversity Implications

33. An Equality Impact Relevance Check Form has been completed in respect of the updated Recovery and Renewal Strategy, and in discussion with the Equalities lead officer it has been agreed that in respect of this high level document a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, Equality Impact Assessments will be required for the specific actions/projects falling out of this Strategy which will be the responsibility of the relevant Community of Practise to complete. A copy of the Equality Impact Relevance Check Form is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Privacy Impact Assessment

34. At this time there are no material implications on personal privacy

Background Papers

- SSDC Council Plan 2020 – 2024
- Original SSDC Recovery and New Horizons Strategy
- Attached papers to this report

Appendices

Appendix 1: SSDC Recovery and Renewal Strategy document

Appendix 2: Equalities impact relevance check form