

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

8th July 2020



**Report of: Tim Borrett, Director: Policy, Strategy and Partnerships
(Covid-19 Recovery Overview and Coordination Cell Director)**

Title: From Response to Recovery - Covid-19 update report

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Tim Borrett

Recommendation:

That Members note the council's ongoing activity in response to the coronavirus / Covid-19 pandemic and its role in the development of wider partnership response and recovery systems.

That Members consider the role of Scrutiny in contributing to the longer term approach to 'recovery'.



The significant issues in the report are:

1. The council is transitioning from a predominantly ‘response-led’ phase to a ‘recovery’ phase of work, moving management back in to ‘business as usual’ structures for the majority of work.
2. There is continuing engagement with HM Government around the challenge of council finances and the need for government to meet the true costs of the pandemic on the sector.
3. Plans for managing the risk of local outbreaks and continuing public health threats posed by the pandemic have been published, as has an initial Statement of Intent for the city’s economic renewal post-Covid-19.

Background/overview

This report focuses on the recent activity the council is leading on and delivering to support the council’s and city’s transition out of lockdown towards a safe, well-managed recovery. It follows an initial Covid-19 response report, shared on 24th April ([link](#)) and the update to it on specific services, provided to OSMB on June 1st ([link](#)).

Key milestones:

- Monday 15th June - first meeting of the new Covid-19 Recovery Overview and Coordination Board, part of a new structure in place to support our transition
- Thursday 25th June - Corporate Leadership Board held its last ‘Gold’ (Covid-19 dedicated strategic meeting), another important step in moving slowly back to a more normal way of working
- Friday 26th June - the One City Economy Board’s ‘Statement of Intent’ published (more detail below, appended as Appendix Ai)
- Tuesday 30th June - the council’s Local Outbreak Management Plan, a critical document setting out our ways of preventing and responding to local outbreaks of Covid-19, was published (see appendix Aii)

From ‘Response’ to ‘Recovery’

In April, we outlined the **formal local response structure**. This comprised a Gold Strategic Command through the council’s Corporate Leadership Board (CLB) chaired by Chief Executive (Mike Jackson). It also comprised a Silver (Tactical) Group, chaired by the Bristol Resilience Director (Patsy Mellor).

Both Gold and Silver Groups have now been stood down. The central Incident Management Team staffed primarily from the council’s Civil Protection Unit (chaired by Patsy Mellor) is also due to wind down by the end of July. It will remain on standby to be stepped up again if required.

The **informal local structure** comprising the City Office and its One City partners, along with a range of other partnership groups which meet to informally share intelligence and consider longer-term issues outside of the immediate formal response structures will continue as we move to the recovery phase, both as an organisation and a city.

The majority of work on our recovery is led through ‘business as usual’ structures. Overall responsibility at the officer level is via Corporate Leadership Board, with specific tactical themes and projects managed within Executive Director Meetings (EDMs). The People EDM looks after a ‘Community Cell’, the Resources EDM looks after an ‘Organisational Change Cell’ and Growth and Regeneration EDM looks after an ‘Economy and Business Cell’ – each of these has dedicated work-streams and themes relating to recovery which they are charged with delivering.



Political oversight and decision making is via standard channels. There are however a number of dedicated groups with specific remits which are pertinent to recovery. This includes a supporting cell and Board which is designed to capture an overview of all recovery work and coordinate support service activities. This is very much focused on ‘joining the dots’ and keeping an overview, rather than being a ‘command and control’ approach whereby this group and Board is the sole lead for recovery work.

A vital first step when establishing our approach was to agree a definition of ‘recovery’, as it is used in many different ways.

The following definition has been agreed by CLB and the Mayor:

Recovery: the process of renewing our organisation, public services, communities and economy to function as strongly as possible; whilst taking the opportunity for reform, making positive changes which build resilience, improve sustainability and ensure equality and inclusion.

The definition is underpinned by two ‘Mission statements’ which set out our aims for recovery – one for the city, and one for the council as an organisation. These do not replace existing visions in the council’s Corporate Strategy or One City Plan, but do provide a summary of our short to medium term recovery priorities.

| Our recovery mission statements | |
|---|---|
|  | Create a fairer, healthier and sustainable city, one which is people-centred and has a resilient economy that supports inclusive, equitable communities |
|  | Create a more agile and streamlined local authority that has focused priorities, financial sustainability and greater resilience. Develop and empower others to get things done for the city. |

Recovery Groups

Within the council, we have set up six recovery groups that will each play a contributing part to the transition:

| Recovery Groups | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| Exiting Lockdown Coordination Group (External) | Exiting Lockdown Coordination Group (Internal)* | Covid Health Protection Committee | Local Engagement Board | Economic Recovery Task and Finish Group | Recovery Overview and Coordination Board |
| Remit: facilitating Bristol’s exit from lockdown | Remit: make all BCC buildings Covid-secure and operational (*Not a group in its own right, managed as part of the IMT response) | Remit: Oversight and assurance of Local Outbreak Management Plan | Remit: Oversee City-wide communication and engagement about local outbreak management | Remit: Enable a joined up approach to internal and One City economic recovery planning | Remit: To provide tactical oversight of divisional plans and strategies enabling a ‘one council’ joined-up approach |

Exiting Lockdown Group (and exiting internal lockdown group)

Chaired by Patsy Mellor, Director' Bristol Resilience, the 'Exiting Lockdown group' supports the logistics of the transition out of lockdown. It was initially focused on the council's internal response and how to support teams across the organisation.

It has since moved onto the following key priorities:

- Retail (exiting lockdown) – working with high streets and Business Improvement Districts (BID) across the city to support retail sites with safe reopening
- Supporting the hospitality sector – includes an internal, cross-directorate team to work with the bar and restaurant sector across the city to enable them to open up safely. This work involves colleagues in Transport, Economic Development, Communications, Highways & Parking, Environmental Health, Licencing, Markets, Public Health and City Design, working together with city businesses to help get restaurants, cafes and pubs opened in a safe way
- Exiting lockdown internally – continuing to work with Facilities Management, Workplace Support and Health and Safety colleagues to ensure the council's core and external buildings are Covid-secure. The exiting internal lockdown group is managed as part of the IMT response.

Covid Health Protection Committee

Chaired by Christina Gray, Director of Public Health, this group maintains oversight and assurance of Bristol's local outbreak management plan including:

- Plans for people, places and communities
- Support for vulnerable people / self-isolating
- Effective Testing and Contact Tracing
- Local response informed by integrated data and local intelligence
- Systems for risk

Local Engagement Board

Chaired by the Mayor, this board oversees city-wide communication and engagement to support local management and response to Covid-19, and will work to develop public and community confidence and engagement with the local response.

Economic Recovery Task and Finish Group

An Economic Recovery Task and Finish Group of council officers has been established. Nuala Gallagher, Director: Economy of Place, chairs this group with the Economic Development team taking the lead from the service area. This has been set up so that the work undertaken by the officers, and the proposed strategy, reflect the principles that the One City Economy Board has set out in its Economic Renewal Statement of Intent to ensure a city-wide approach to recovery. The group reports into Stephen Peacock who as Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration is the council officer with overall responsibility for Economic Recovery.

Recovery Overview and Coordination Board

Chaired by Tim Borrett, Director: Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, the first meeting of the new Covid-19 Recovery Overview and Coordination Board took place on Monday 15th June.

- This board provides a forum for Director Recovery Leads to meet to ensure cooperation, coordination and effective oversight of divisional plans and strategies which contribute to the council and the city's recovery from the impacts of the pandemic
- It will create a single, temporary Recovery Business Plan, addressing key actions required to transition from response to business as usual

- It will collect information and provide insights to support recovery planning, including but not limited to financial, economic, public health, equalities and public affairs analysis

Local Outbreak Management Plan

On Tuesday 30th June, the first draft of the council's Local Outbreak Management Plan, a critical document setting out our ways of preventing and responding to local outbreaks of Covid-19 was published.

Bristol's plan is part of a network of plans in every local authority in England and it provides the framework for the next phase of living with Coronavirus. Bristol's Director of Public Health was responsible for defining these measures and producing the plan for the city, working through Covid-19 Health Protection Boards.

The local plan is centred around 7 core themes:

1. Planning for local outbreaks in care homes and schools
2. Identifying and planning how to manage other high-risk places, locations and communities of interest including sheltered housing, dormitories for migrant workers, transport access points
3. Identifying methods for local testing to ensure a swift response that is accessible to the entire population
4. Assessing local and regional contact tracing and infection control capability in complex settings
5. Integrating national and local data and scenario planning through the Joint Biosecurity Centre
6. Supporting vulnerable local people to get help to self-isolate
7. Establishing governance structures led by existing Covid-19 Health Protection Boards

One City – enabling the city's Economic Renewal planning

Over the last three months, the council and City Office have been engaging with thousands of stakeholders through emails, surveys, meetings, webinars and specific workshops involving approximately 200 individuals from the thematic one city boards and other relevant organisations.

The feedback from this activity demonstrated that all sectors share an ambition to build back better and recognise this moment in time as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to renew and reimagine our economy and society.

BCC colleagues have been working closely with the One City Economy Board on a One City Economic Renewal Statement of Intent, which was published on Friday 26th June and which can be found appended to this report.

The statement sets out a collective aim to renew and reimagine Bristol as a fairer, healthier, and even more inclusive and sustainable city; signalling what is to come from the fuller One City Economic Recovery Plan, which the Board intends to publish in September 2020. This process will be overseen by the One City Economy Board through a task and finish group formed of members of the board. This membership is to include representatives from private, VCSE, trade union and public sectors.

The Statement of Intent document was prepared in partnership across the city and with regional representation from the West of England Combined Authority to ensure its alignment with emerging regional recovery planning.

WECA Regional Recovery Taskforce

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, a new Regional Recovery Taskforce has been established, of which Bristol is a part, to drive and shape the West of England's economic recovery. The Mayor or Deputy Mayor Cllr Cheney attend these monthly meetings. WECA has now submitted a Full Business Case seeking c £2.7m for a package of interventions to boost productivity in the region and in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Finances

The council submitted its 3rd return to MHCLG on Friday 19th June – these are important returns for the sector as the information provided will aid HM Government’s understanding of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on the council, how the funding provided has been expended, residual losses and further financial support that is required.

The council’s residual funding shortfall of circa £76.5m represents the estimate for 2020/21; whilst recognising that the impact of the pandemic will extend over several years.

The losses will need to be viewed in the context of increased costs in social care and homelessness which will continue beyond the lockdown period, as well as higher numbers of people requiring long term care and support; new burdens linked to SEND; Home to School Transport and business sectors, such as leisure, presenting with material viability pressures; none of which were included in the figure above.

We have continued to urge HM Government to provide certainty of any further financial assistance to the local government sector, as well as roll-forward of one off grants for 2021/22 and protection of core resource base such as business rates and council tax to enable financial planning for 2020 /21 and beyond. A ‘comprehensive package’ of support for local authorities has been mooted by Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Robert Jenrick MP, and we anticipate further announcements from government on or around 8 July 2020.

We continue to plan against a number of scenarios including a reasonable worst-case scenario, and Cabinet will receive a report on the in-year budget in August 2020, ahead of a potential 2020/21 ‘Emergency Budget’ via Full Council if mitigations mean that re-setting the budget is required.

Service demands

Here are the latest updates from key services affected by the pandemic, please see the regular member briefing for updates on all services.

- Adult social care - services continue to operate safely and meet all our statutory duties under the Care Act. Due to current restrictions, day services based in buildings remain closed but we are planning to re-open day services for a smaller number of service users, with appropriate infection control measures in place. Meanwhile we continue to ensure all day service users and their carers are safe and receiving alternative support.
- One City Homelessness / Move-on programme - Bristol has lead the way on responding to the national challenge of getting rough sleepers off the streets, and people out of dormitory style supported accommodation. The challenge we started with was 2,000 households needing move-on accommodation, 350 people placed urgently into emergency housing, and a reduced supply of housing available. Through a determined effort from a wide range of colleagues we have achieved 311 successful moves since 1st April, comprising of 151 new BCC lets, 105 private rented units, 35 Registered Provider lettings, and 20 people helped to return home. This work is contributing to our aim that no-one needs to sleep on the streets; has provided for an increase in settled homes for people in need; has reduced the impact on acute services, and supported people to improve their life outcomes. We continue to source more additional move-on accommodation from the private rented and social housing sectors.
- Schools - We are currently working with city partners to establish the capacity for summer holiday provision and how we might support clubs and providers in opening when schools close. Free School Meals vouchers will be available to cover the full six week summer holiday, which schools will be able to order before the end of term. Primary and secondary schools will split £650m in additional funding for the 2020-21 academic year to help their pupils catch up on missed time in the classroom.

Changes in City Hall and other council sites

Facilities Management, Workplace Support and Corporate H&S safety teams have been working hard to ensure council sites are ready for the return of selected staff and other users. This has involved putting in place all the Covid-secure measures such as: sanitising stations, one way systems, signage and social distancing arrangements at desks and resource areas. As colleagues have returned, they have each received a fresh induction to explain the new arrangements.

The Corporate Health & Safety team have overseen the necessary operational changes made to buildings, supporting teams in drafting 'Covid-19 Site Operating Procedures' for their sites in line with sector guidance and carried out full-site inspections. The Bottle Yard Studios were recently awarded 'Covid-secure' status by Corporate Health & Safety, enabling television productions to come back to site from mid-June.

To support staff who are unable to work at home (due to home circumstances or because their job doesn't enable them to) the Incident Management Team and Facilities Management have drawn up a priority list of staff to return to the core buildings (City Hall and Temple street). These staff have allocated desks which are cleaned after use.

Throughout the process, there has been a communications campaign to underpin the key messages and keep colleagues up to date with the plans via the staff and manager bulletins. The next steps are to consider how a booking system for spare desks could operate.

Employee support

Working in the current situation is challenging for everyone, and the senior management team have made it a priority to acknowledge this regularly in our communications, whilst also signposting to the many resources available to everyone in the council, if we need help with work or personal issues. A key service is the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which provides 24/7 psychological and wellbeing support for a wide range of issues.

Covid-19 and the recent Black Lives Matters protests across the world following the death of George Floyd in the USA have highlighted the importance of the council being a city leader in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. As such a further review of the Council's Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy will be undertaken in coming months. This is one of many strands of strategic work considering the Council's and the City's future as it recovers from the impact of the pandemic and the additional challenges it has brought people who were already deeply affected by systemic and structural inequality.

The council will continue to take all opportunities to support black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and communities within the city, building upon existing activities. These have included writing to all black, Asian and minority ethnic staff about Covid-19 and its disproportionate impact; conducting Covid-19 risk assessments for relevant staff in work settings; ensuring managers take necessary actions and organising all-staff webinars about race equality.

A bespoke, confidential counselling service for black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues has been made available from July 1st for an initial period of two months. This will be provided by local organisation Nilaari, a BAME-led community-based charity with over 20 years' experience.

Information and communications

The last update report set out in detail the measures taken to coordinate communications and ensure a timely flow of accurate, high quality information in, out and across the council in response to the crisis.

With the council now moving to the next stage and with the Information and Communications Cell having been formally stood down, we have adjusted the communications pulse. Member and Stakeholder briefings are now being issued on a weekly basis whilst the coronavirus inbox and managing of citizen enquiries has been passed on to the Citizens' Services team. This follows a period of 15 weeks that saw 33 council officers rotating on shifts to manage over 9000 emails and 2045 inbound Covid-19 citizen queries. Feedback received indicated city partners and the public welcomed the communication service and daily bulletins that were stood up during the crisis response period.