

Cannock Chase District Council

**COVID-19 Recovery Road Map and
Strategy**

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our community, the local economy and the Council. In May, having dealt with the immediate response to COVID-19 and the Government led lockdown, the Council outlined its approach to recovery from the pandemic.

Since May, work has been ongoing to plan in more detail our approach to recovery and the actions that the Council intends to take to support the District in the months and years ahead. Work streams have been put in place and action plans implemented to ensure the Council was able to respond to COVID-19 and to commence the restoration of services. The actual ongoing impact on our community and economy continue to be assessed on a month by month basis and will become more evident as the government's short term interventions such as furlough terminate. This strategy builds on the initial proposal and will form the basis of the Council's work on recovery and reshaping the Council going forward (and responding as necessary to a further outbreak)

One of the key actions set out in this strategy is to review the Council's current priorities and priority delivery plans to ensure that they take account of the impact that the pandemic has had on the District. Rather than simply refreshing the current Corporate Plan which is due to run to 2023, a full review is now underway with a new Corporate Plan to be produced for 2021-24. This will allow the Council to take a strategic look at how the pandemic situation may change life on an ongoing basis for our residents, businesses and the Council as an organisation.

This strategy will cover the Council's approach to recovery and actions until March 2021 and will sit alongside the existing Corporate Plan until that time. Thereafter, the Council's new Corporate Plan will come into effect and reflect all of the Council's priorities and actions, having assessed the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

2. Objectives

The Council's Strategy for Recovery aims to:

- (i) Support the District's residents, especially those who are vulnerable.
- (ii) Support the District's economy and support businesses in line with Government guidance/funding, reflecting local circumstances and working with key partners i.e. LEPs, WMCA
- (iii) Protect the safety of our employees in delivering critical services
- (iv) Maintain the Council's corporate infrastructure which underpins the delivery of critical services.
- (v) Support the Council's key contractors
- (vi) Ensure the Council is financially sustainable
- (vii) Consider the environment, climate change and opportunities for supporting a greener recovery in all our plans

3. Approach To Recovery

In supporting recovery across the District the Council has adopted the following principles:

- (i) Working in partnership across Staffordshire and West Midlands via the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), and the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and WMCA.
- (ii) Working with voluntary sector to support the community
- (iii) Following Government Guidance as it evolves, and in particular the Social Distancing policy, as well as national plans for Recovery
- (iv) Keeping essential Council services operational and resilient over the coming months
- (v) To review our approach/strategy at intervals/key stages, learn lessons from our own approach and that of others and adapt accordingly.
- (vi) To gather information and determine the impact of COVID-19 to inform restoration and reshaping work
- (vii) To embrace change and adapt and embed the benefits of initiatives that work well
- (viii) To build and maintain confidence and trust in the Council with residents, businesses and our employees
- (ix) To communicate and engage with our communities, businesses and employees in response and recovery
- (x) To be realistic and proportionate in responding to the impact of the Pandemic reflecting the medium term objectives/ priorities of the Council

In addition the Council works with the District Council Network and the Local Government Association on recovery issues that are common across the Local Government sector.

4. Planning for Response and Recovery

The Recovery Roadmap involves 3 stages with Recovery being split into 2 elements i.e. restore and reshape:

- (i) Response
- (ii) Restore
- (iii) Reshape

The movement through each Phase will be dependant upon gathering and evaluating information to determine the impact of Covid 19 and interventions required. This will be particularly important for the Reshaping phase. The Council is now effectively in the Restoration Stage nevertheless the Council must be in a position to move back into Response as the need arises.

A diagram illustrating the Response and Recovery stages can be found at Appendix 1.

(i) Response

This stage covers the immediate response to the pandemic and any subsequent waves either nationally or locally. The driver being to maintain the delivery of essential services, whilst protecting the community and our employees.

Timeline – short term - ongoing.

(ii) Restore

This focusses on restoration of the Council's services that had to be suspended or reduced at the outset of the lockdown. It also includes supporting the local economy / businesses to re-open. This phase is particularly time sensitive and often necessitates a prompt response to Government announcements.

Timeline – short to medium term – this will largely be determined by the Government's Roadmap / announcements to lift restrictions.

(iii) Reshape

The pandemic provides an opportunity to look differently at our local community, to build on the volunteering and community spirit that has been evident over the last few months. The impact of lockdown on the local economy will present a challenge and the need to re-think the Economic Prosperity Strategy and the plans for our town centres.

There will also be a need to re-think the services that the Council provide and the way that they are provided; this will be driven by both the Council's finances and the increasing use of technology and the move to homeworking that has been adopted over the last few months. This will take some time to plan and develop and will require a greater understanding of the impact that the pandemic has had.

Timeline – medium to longer term. Much of this work will be included in the new Corporate Plan but planning for this will take place over the next few months.

These three stages will overlap. The ability to "Respond" will continue for some time yet, alongside the restoration of services. Planning for the future and the reshaping of the community, the local economy and our services is in its infancy. It is important to note that we may need to move backwards between the stages if the Country enters a national lockdown again or if a lockdown comes into effect due to a local outbreak.

The gathering of data, engaging with our community and local businesses to understand the impact that the pandemic has had will be essential. It will inform both the restoration and reshaping phases of recovery. We will need to reflect on our plans at regular intervals, to check our direction of travel and adapt where necessary. This will be particularly important in the event of a second wave of the pandemic. An important element of this work, will be the development of a dashboard of indicators to monitor changes over the coming months in key areas. The Dashboard will attempt to provide local and national evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerable, Businesses, Town Centres , Services and the wider economy and to unemployment levels.

Funding and the Council's finances will be central throughout the Council's response and recovery. Whilst the Council has received some funding from the Government to offset the loss of income during lockdown, it is still anticipated that there will be significant shortfall in the current year and uncertainty lies ahead. There will be opportunities to bid for funding to support specific projects but there will also be a need to look at the Council's costs and ongoing revenue commitments.

5. The Council's 4 Work Streams for Recovery

The Council has identified 4 work streams that will form the basis of our recovery strategy for the District:

1. Financial
2. The Economy;
3. The Community; and
4. The Council (Organisational)

As with the three stages of response and recovery, these four work streams will interlink and overlap.

(i) Financial Recovery

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy will need to be reviewed. Aside from additional funding received to support the local response to the pandemic, It is unknown at this time what the Government's plans are regarding local government funding in the short to medium term. Funding for 2020/21 effectively only deals with the loss of income however the Council is expected to meet the first 5% of income loss and 25% of the loss thereafter. In relation to 2021/22 and future years greater uncertainty exists. Whereas the review of Fair Funding and implementation of 75% Business Rates will not now take place in 2021/22, other details of the 2021/22 settlement are not known. In particular the Government are considering the treatment of Business Rates growth to date and no news is available about the replacement of the New Homes Bonus (Housing Growth) incentive scheme.

The financial impact of COVID-19 is likely to be ongoing and 2021/22 is likely to bear the brunt of this with the loss of income, including our leisure partner, from sales fees and charges expected to be material. An interim financial strategy is likely to be required for 2020-21 to 2021-22 pending a medium term strategy that reflects the ongoing impact of COVID 19 and the new funding regime being developed for local Government.

(ii) Economic Recovery

It is anticipated that the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be significant. Figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed that the UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated to have fallen by a record 20.4% in Quarter 2 (April to June) 2020, marking the second consecutive quarterly decline after it fell by 2.2% in Quarter 1 (January to March) 2020. This means the UK economy is now in recession and there is considerable uncertainty as to how quickly the economy will recover following the easing of lockdown restrictions over the summer. The District's economy has been adversely impacted by the recession, with unemployment increasing significantly. Unemployment is expected to increase further once the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention scheme (furlough) closes at the end of October.

It is highly likely that the pandemic will have a significant impact on key sectors within Cannock Chase, but at present it is not fully known if these impacts will be short term or lead to longer term structural change. These sectors include retail/wholesale, tourism/hospitality, transportation and storage, construction and manufacturing. Furthermore, the District has a large percentage (98%) of small businesses (with less than 50 employees) and these businesses are particularly vulnerable at this time.

One of the key actions will be to review and refresh the Council's Economic Prosperity Strategy, which was only approved by in January 2020, to ensure that 'economic recovery' is included as a key objective/priority. Resources that have been allocated to the Strategy may need to be reviewed/re-allocated to ensure that they are directed to recovery.

The Council will work closely with the LEPs, West Midlands Combined Authority and other key partners to ensure that its recovery framework is strategically aligned and to lobby for Government investment to support the region to rebuild its economy.

(iii) Community Recovery

Building and restoring confidence of the community as a result of the impact of the pandemic on their day to day lives will be essential over the coming months. This work stream will include the practicalities of dealing with the impact that COVID-19 has had on the community e.g. loss of life, increases in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), domestic violence. There is also an opportunity to build on the positive elements that have emerged in terms of volunteering and community spirit.

(iv) Organisational Recovery

The pandemic has also had a significant impact on the Council as an organisation, both in terms of its delivery of services to the community and with regards to employees and Members.

The Council has and continues to face a number of changes and challenges in the return to “normal” operations. The main focus has been on planning for the restoration of services and dealing with backlogs of work that have accumulated for those services that had to be partially or fully suspended. This is still ongoing as lockdown has been gradually released and this is particularly relevant to the recovery arrangements of our key contractors such as IHL who deliver services to the wider community.

The move to homeworking as lockdown came into effect is being reviewed and arrangements are being put into place to allow employees to be able to work from Council sites, as necessary and in accordance with social distancing requirements. Suitable arrangements are also being put in place to allow customers to have face to face access to services in a safe environment.

Consideration will need to be given to what a return to “normal” will be moving forward; it is likely that a “new normal” will emerge. We will need to identify the changes we have made over recent months that have worked well for the Council and our Customers and we would like to keep. Further work will need to be done to embed and improve these. There is also an opportunity alongside this to consider what other changes we might want to make. .

6. Action Plans

A high level action plan has been prepared for each of the four work streams split over the 3 stages of response and recovery.

The action plans contain a “Priority RAG Rating” for each action; this gives an indication as to the strategic importance of the actions and their contribution to the delivery of the roadmap and the future of the Council/District. The criteria is:

- Red – High priority, very time sensitive (needs to be completed for a specific deadline or affects deadline for other activities)
- Amber – Medium priority, timetable in place to meet deadline but no immediate urgency
- Green – Low priority.

Financial Recovery Plan – Appendix 2

Economic Recovery Plan – Appendix 3

Community Recovery Plan – Appendix 4

Organisation Recovery Plan – Appendix 5

Each work stream will develop its own detailed action plans as recovery work develops but the high level action plans will be the ones that will be used to report on progress.

7. Dashboard of Indicators

Each work stream has a suite of indicators that will aim to measure our performance and the impact that COVID-19 is having on the District. The indicators have been consolidated to form a dashboard that will be monitored, reported on and monitored regularly. The dashboard is given at Appendix 6.

8. Key Projects

In addition to the specific work on response and recovery, the Council has a number of key projects which were planned for before the pandemic and these are set out in the Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) for 2020/21. The key ones which are critical to the future recovery of the Council and the District are:

- Opening of McArthurGlen Designer Outlet West Midlands
- Rugeley Power Station
- Cannock Town Centre regeneration
- Waste Management Strategy/Contracts
- IHL Contract
- Hawks Green Rationalisation Works
- Hawks Green Housing Development
- Aelfgar Housing Development - Rugeley
- Chadsmoor Housing Development
- Development of a new cemetery

Performance in delivering these projects will continue to be monitored via the performance management arrangements for the PDPs but will also be factored in to aspects of the Recovery Strategy where appropriate, in particular the Financial Recovery work planning.

9. Governance Arrangements

A Recovery Overview Board has been established to oversee Recovery and comprises:

- The Leader of the Council;
- The Deputy Leader;
- The Group Leaders; and
- The Cabinet Members for Economic Development & Planning, Health & Wellbeing and Environment & Climate Change
- The Managing Director
- Heads of Service/Work Stream Leads

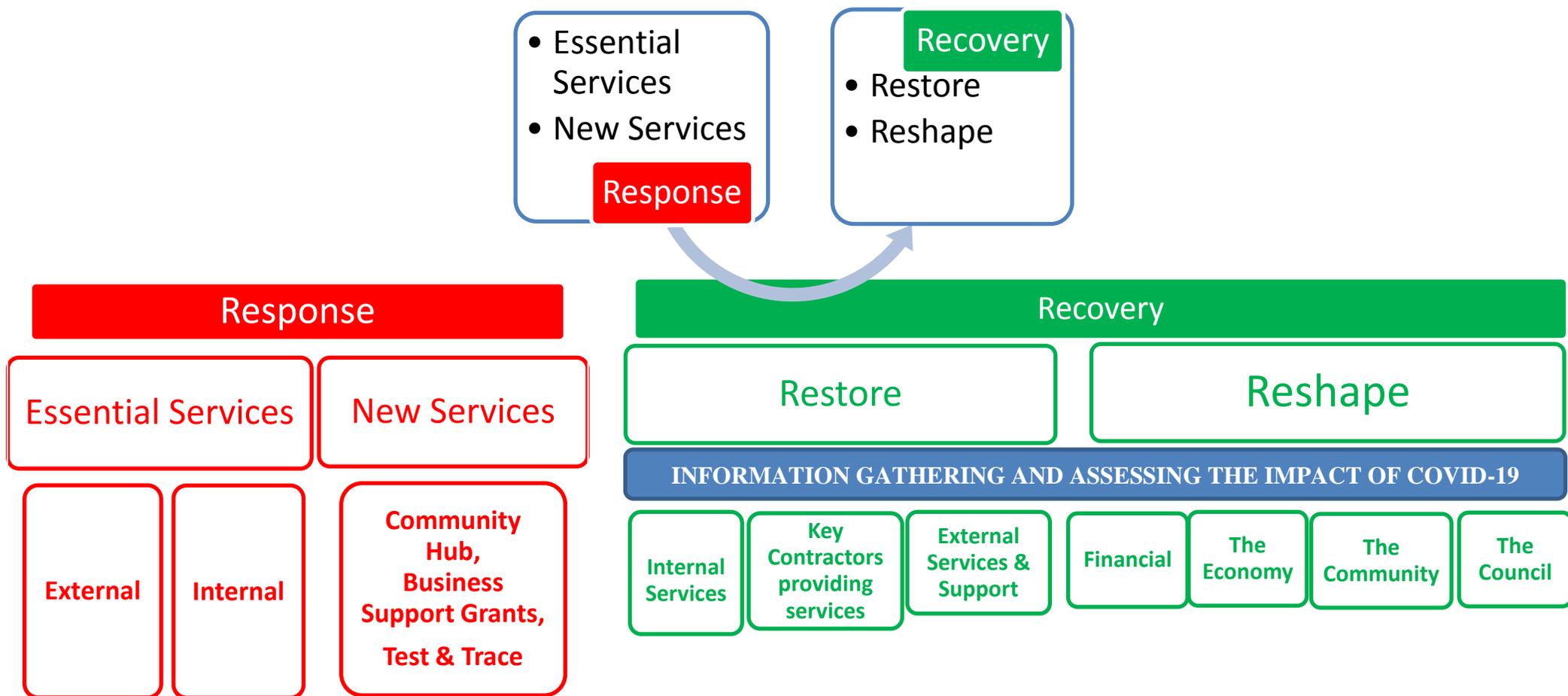
Key decisions are referred to Cabinet and/or Council for approval in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution.

The Corporate Scrutiny Committee will take the lead on scrutiny of the Council's response and recovery plans.

The 4 work streams will each be led by a Head of Service:

- Financial Recovery – Head of Finance
- Economic Recovery – Head of Economic Prosperity
- Community Recovery – Head of Housing and Partnerships
- Organisational Recovery – Head of Governance and Corporate Services

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Roadmap



ITEM NO. 6.

COMMUNITY RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND THE COMMUNITY

<p>Outcomes Required: To support the Districts community & individual recovery in the short-medium term To maximise the benefit of any legacy from the increase in the voluntary activity</p>
<p>COVID-19 Impacts: Pop up of multi aid groups (900+ volunteers) which have helped and supported huge numbers of individuals across the District with shopping, prescription collections, befriending etc. The full impact on the community and individuals will not be known for some-time – situation will need to be monitored</p>

Recovery Work Stream	Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Comments	Priority RAG Rating High / Medium / Low
Supporting Vulnerability People and the Community				
Phase 1 – Response				
	Set up and operation of the Community Hub to support vulnerable residents	Head of Housing & Partnerships		Completed
	Identify the Vulnerable cohort within the District	Head of Technology / Head of Housing & Partnerships	7,500 residents identified – 4,700 letters mailed out	Completed
	Undertake Safe and Well being calls	Head of Housing & Partnerships	3,000 calls completed – 52% contact made	Completed
	Undertake home visits to vulnerable residents (living alone) who have not responded	Tenancy Services Manager	Council Tenants to be visited – project being set up	Ongoing
	Advice and support regarding payment of Council Tax, Housing Benefit applications	Local Taxation & Benefits Manager		Ongoing

Recovery Work Stream	Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Comments	Priority RAG Rating High / Medium / Low
Phase 2 – Restore				
	Develop a delivery plan to support the continuation of support to those on the NHS Shielding scheme for the duration of the programme	Policy & Performance Officer		Completed
	Continue to work with Support Staffordshire and Voluntary Sector to support and signpost the most vulnerable residents within the District	Policy & Performance Officer	On-going	
	Review ongoing support to food banks and local emergency food distribution	Head of Housing & Partnerships		Completed
Phase 3 – Reshape				
	Work with partners and internal services to establish the best means of identifying vulnerable residents and support providers	Head of Housing & Partnerships / Head of Technology	Determine Vulnerability Definition	
	Develop a strategy, working alongside the third sector, to build on community spirit and volunteering to establish ongoing support in local communities	Head of Housing & Partnerships / Consultation & Engagement Officer		
	Engage with partners regarding their recovery plans for their services and our communities	Head of Housing & Partnerships		

ORGANISATIONAL RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

SERVICES – EXTERNAL / KEY CONTRACTS

Services - External
Outcomes Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure continuity of critical services at all times; To restore services suspended or reduced during the lockdown and identify those that will not be delivered in future.
COVID-19 Impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Collection Service has experienced an increase in waste and contaminated loads Contact Centre and Waste Staff experienced an increase in calls and abuse Loss of IHL Memberships and Income

Recovery Work Stream	Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Comments	Priority RAG Rating High / Medium / Low
Phase 1 - Response				
LEADERSHIP TEAM	Management of issues arising from impact of COVID-19 on the Waste Contract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tonnage restrictions at MRF Site 	Waste & Engineering Services Manager	The Council, in partnership with other affected Staffordshire LA's, rejected tonnage restrictions and together following the re-opening of the HWRC's, the restriction proposals were withdrawn.	Completed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase in contaminated and rejected loads 		Awareness sticker campaign on all recycled bins to be undertaken Mid-August 2020	Completed

Recovery Work Stream	Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Comments	Priority RAG Rating High / Medium / Low
Phase 3 – Reshape				
Leadership Team	Determine interim strategy to realign waste contracts	Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles Waste & Engineering Services Manager	Impact on operation of services and financial	
Leadership Team	To determine a Waste Management Strategy following outcome of Government consultation and Waste Strategy	Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles Waste & Engineering Services Manager	Impact on operation of services and financial	
Leadership Team	To commence procurement process for waste collection	Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles Waste & Engineering Services Manager	Impact on operation of services and financial	