NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

8 September 2020

Cabinet

Title:	**Recovery & Renewal Strategy**
Purpose:	To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed North Ayrshire Council Recovery & Renewal Strategy.
Recommendation:	That Cabinet: (i) Notes the work done alongside our communities to respond to Covid 19. (ii) Notes that plans are in place to Recover services, where safe to do so, and in line with Government guidelines. (iii) Approves the Recovery & Renewal Strategy to build back a better North Ayrshire.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Covid 19 pandemic has created a set of circumstances unlike anything seen in this country in recent times. The impact across all aspects of life has been significant, changing the way services can be delivered, testing health systems and putting the global economy on hold.

1.2 The response to the pandemic was quickly mobilised to ensure the most vulnerable in society received the support required to get them through the pandemic. This was done through partnership working - the Council and Community working collaboratively and collectively to deal with issues arising from the virus.

1.3 The Recovery & Renewal Strategy sets out a series of key principles and themes to enable North Ayrshire Council to recover and renew its services in a prioritised way ensuring they meet resident needs. This includes building upon the outcomes of the North Ayrshire Council Plan – A Council that is Fair for All – and the commitment to build a better North Ayrshire through Community Wealth Building and a new Green Deal. This Strategy forms part of a suite of documents relating to Recovery & Renewal and should be read in conjunction with the Financial Recovery Plan and the Economic Recovery & Renewal Approach.

1.4 Key lessons learned during the pandemic, alongside the key principles and the good foundations already in place, will form a basis for future working arrangements ensuring community priorities are at the heart of the Recovery and Renewal of services.

2. Background

2.1 Covid 19 is a global pandemic that reached the UK in late January 2020. As of 26 August 2020 there have been 328,846 confirmed cases across the UK and 41,465 deaths of confirmed cases. More than 90% of those who died had underlying health issues or were over the age of 60. In the most recent National Records of Scotland (NRS) data published on 12 August 2020, it was confirmed that 107 deaths of North Ayrshire residents were recorded where Covid was mentioned on the death certificate.

2.2 To deal with the emerging threat of Covid 19, schools and nurseries in Scotland closed on Friday 20 March 2020 and support was provided to pupils and their parents/guardians through regular communication and on-line learning.

2.3 On Monday 23 March 2020 it was announced that the UK would enter into a period of lockdown and with immediate effect, a normal way of life would change for many people. Citizens were not allowed to leave their house except to shop for necessities once per day; to take exercise once per day; for medical reasons or to care for a vulnerable person; and to travel for essential work if that cannot be done at home.

2.4 The Scottish Government legislated for this through The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 which was laid before the Scottish Parliament on 27 March 2020.

2.5 To deal with the pandemic and legislation the Council rapidly adapted its operating models in accordance with Government legislation with some staff redeployed to essential services to help support those most in need. Business Continuity Plans were invoked and an Emergency Management Team was formed and met on a daily basis.

2.6 A network of new Community Hubs was quickly established with North Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Health & Social Care partnership, local people and local community groups working together to support their neighbours and the wider population during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The community hubs operated in each of the six localities – North Coast & Cumbrae, Garnock Valley, Irvine, Kilwinning, Three Towns and Arran.

2.7 The purpose and objective of the hubs was to be a local point of contact for community need arising from COVID-19, responding with advice, signposting, referral and the co-ordination of local volunteers. This approach worked alongside other community initiatives specific to certain localities. The Hubs co-ordinated the delivery of prescriptions, hot food and food parcels to those in need, and provided support in relation to mental health and social isolation.

2.8 The speed and level of response in addressing the urgent food needs of vulnerable individuals and families in North Ayrshire was substantial. A range of support models were put in place including food packs delivered weekly to over 4,600 families, including children eligible for Free School Meals and their families, as well as vulnerable citizens including those shielding, self-isolating, lacking support or mobility and over 1.25m meals were provided. This model has been supplemented by locality-based community hubs offering emergency provision and food larder items, as well as hot food provision via a network of 3rd sector and community organisations. Through the summer a food voucher scheme of £20 per eligible child per week was put in place to support families in need and the Community hubs continue to support

vulnerable groups. Scottish Government funding to support the North Ayrshire food response totals £1.915m.

2.9 Childcare Hubs were also set up for families who needed additional support and to help essential workers with childcare arrangements. This ensured essential workers were free to attend work to help deal with the pandemic knowing their children were safe and being looked after. During this period over 13,000 hot meals were served to children attending the hubs.

2.10 The Community Hubs and Childcare Hubs was very successful and are a good example of how different groups can work together in an emergency situation to collectively put the needs of individuals first.

2.11 To help local businesses, government grants were paid efficiently to help business' cash flow and their survival during the pandemic and an estimated £25m in business grants has been disbursed.

2.12 Key services were prioritised and continued to operate during lockdown, helped in some cases by staff redeployments and services have been in dialogue with the Trade Unions on working arrangements. A high number of the office-based workforce are working from home and there has been regular communication with them including an offer to provide office furniture, if required. Remote and online learning was utilised to help children and young people whilst the schools were closed during lockdown.

2.13 The Council was in regular communication with island groups in relation to ferry travel and local resilience and we will continue to work with island groups in economic recovery and renewal.

2.14 As the pandemic started to peak and subsequently reduce, the Scottish Government published a 'Covid 19 Framework for Decision Making' which was supplemented by a route map with four phases indicating for each phase when certain activities could recommence. Council services have begun to recover in a phased approach but only when it is deemed safe to do so. It is important to note that services currently recovered could be potentially reduced in future in the event of a resurgence of the virus or if resources were affected through a local outbreak or through test and protect. Details of individual service functions and their recovery status is held on a database and this is regularly updated and reviewed.

2.15 As we move forward to the renewal of services many challenges lie ahead. The financial impact of Covid 19 remains uncertain in terms of the amount of funding the Council will receive from the Scottish Government as well as the challenging economic impact on local businesses and jobs. The Recovery & Renewal Strategy should therefore be read in conjunction with the Financial Recovery paper and North Ayrshire Economic Recovery & Renewal Approach documents. As of 31 July 2020, there are 17,600 North Ayrshire workers participating in the job retention (furlough) scheme, which equates to 21.5% of the working age population of North Ayrshire.

2.16 There are many important lessons learned from the pandemic which will help form the basis of the renewal of services. Good practice and behaviour evident during the emergency situation such as the rapid prioritisation of service delivery, the use of technology for working and learning, the benefits of working together to deliver solutions

to problems and community resilience/empowerment. These practices and behaviours should be harnessed and form the cornerstone of the renewal process.

2.17 In order to plan a renewal phase, it is important that the context is fully understood, the intended outcomes are identified, actions are clear and that the impacts are understood. To support this, we have identified a set of clear principles to guide our prioritisation. The principles are;

- Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents by protecting the most vulnerable in our society against the immediate threat of coronavirus and the consequences of changes to the way we live. Public Health guidance will be paramount in all the decisions we make.

- Work with our communities in the renewal of services to ensure they meet their needs and priorities.

- Build community capacity and resilience.

- Support the economic recovery of North Ayrshire, helping to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy for the future that supports local resilience using the Ayrshire Growth Deal and Community Wealth Building as a means of creating an inclusive economy.

- Learn lessons from the challenges of Covid 19, promoting a system that utilises the strengths of North Ayrshire to the benefit of all North Ayrshire's residents and businesses.

- Ensure our children and young people get the best start in life by creating opportunities for education and employment, including through Community Wealth Building and Renewal.

- Prioritise and help tackle poverty, including child poverty.

- Protect and prioritise the North Ayrshire environment and reinforce our work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- Pursue improvements in service delivery where they have been identified as part of the response and recovery phase, creating a more efficient and resilient system.

- Prioritise investment towards services that make a greater contribution to key outcomes. This will consider dis-investment from some areas to enable re-investment to support delivery.

2.18 These principles interrelate in many ways and it is likely that there may be conflicting priorities. In that case, the public health of residents takes priority.

2.19 Despite the uncertainties of Covid 19, one thing that is clear is that we cannot go back to how things were before Covid 19, we need to think differently and act differently. The strong relationships already in place with our communities need to be enhanced to meet the community needs to enable community capacity and resilience.

2.20 North Ayrshire has a strong track record of community engagement through locality partnerships, community councils, participatory budgeting, Joint Cabinet with young people, Council Plan engagement and bespoke Facebook live Q&As with the Leader and Chief Executive. The level and type of engagement need to be continually

reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of the communities and a range of engagement initiatives should be explored/trialled.

2.21 Throughout the Recovery & Renewal Strategy a key theme is that communities need to be at the heart of what we do. This is an opportunity to build on the strong partnership working already in place with our communities and to continue to actively involve them in the design of new service delivery models.

2.22 This can be achieved through an increase in the use of participatory approaches including Participatory Budgeting and through Design Experiments. Design Experiments provide an opportunity for Council services and communities to work together on new ideas. By joining up our thinking and ideas we can provide better services more in tune with the needs of community and, by testing them prior to implementation, stand a better chance of getting it right first time.

2.23 A further key theme is adopting a Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to help the local economy. By embedding CWB in all that we do we increase the opportunities for local businesses to grow and for local job creation.

2.24 The Recovery and Renewal process will also include a re-evaluation of the Transformation programme, known at T3, to create a new Renewal Programme. The current programme will be evaluated taking account of the impact of Covid 19 and will be refreshed to include new opportunities identified during the pandemic. Opportunities identified will be prioritised and progressed at pace.

2.25 In summary, uncertain times lie ahead and no-one can forecast with any degree of certainty the medium to long term effect of Covid in terms of its impact of our health, our finances and the economy. However, North Ayrshire starts from a strong position in terms of its track record for performance and engagement. Having a clear strategy in place, including key principles, themes and priorities gives us the best opportunity available to build back a better North Ayrshire for our communities.

3. Proposals

3.1 Cabinet notes the progress made to respond to, recover and renew Council services in light of Covid 19 and approves the Recovery and Renewal Strategy attached to build back an even better North Ayrshire.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 The recovery and renewal of services will be considered in line with the Budget process and supported by the Change and Service Re-Design Fund. As part of the 2019/20 year end closure this fund was supplemented by a total of £0.970m.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 Legislation is in force in respect of The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the strategy.

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 Environmental benefits were achieved during the pandemic such as less use of vehicles and less use of buildings which helped reduce our carbon footprint.

Key Priorities

4.6 The Recovery & Renewal Strategy meets the commitment of the Council Plan to create a North Ayrshire that is 'Fair for All'.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 Renewal activities and projects will be implemented through a Community Wealth Building approach.

5. Consultation

5.1 Engagement is one of the key principles of the Recovery & Renewal Strategy and will be vitally important in moving the strategy forward.

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For further information please contact **Thomas Reaney, Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal),** on **01294 310000**.

Background Papers
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NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COVID 19 - RECOVERY & RENEWAL STRATEGY

August 2020

Introduction

The Covid 19 pandemic has created a set of circumstances unlike anything seen in this country in recent times. The impact across all aspects of life has been significant, changing the way services can be delivered, testing health systems and putting the global economy on hold. As we begin thinking about the future, we do so with respect and sympathy for the victims, their families and friends, of a disease that does not discriminate.

Amongst the challenges, however, there have been many examples of North Ayrshire doing what it does best - our people rising to the challenge, pulling together and supporting each other. As we talk about recovery to a strong future for North Ayrshire, we do not forget the direct and deadly impact of coronavirus continues and our primary focus remains protecting the health of our residents as far as is possible. It is, however, only fitting as a legacy that we capture what has been positive in response and work together to shape a future North Ayrshire that even better supports the wellbeing of all our residents.

The recovery phase is different to that normally seen in response to an emergency, such as a severe weather incident. The timescales are not clear, with potential for changing restrictions on life reflecting fluctuating future peaks and outbreaks, the potential for services to be restarted then

stopped again over a prolonged period, with particular members of the communities (e.g. those with long term health conditions) having different restrictions to others.

This creates an extremely complex and challenging set of circumstances that require flexible and agile responses. The recovery is the process of rebuilding following this pandemic, to get back to "normal" functioning across our communities. However, in doing so, we must recognise that what was "normal" before may not be possible or desirable in the future and our area may be forever changed by what we have faced. There are many opportunities to use the learning of the response phase to improve the ways services are delivered and build upon the new arrangements put in place. Therefore, a sense of renewal within communities and services, representing opportunities to return to something better and make the most of future opportunities to create a positive future is critical.

As we respond our Council Plan - a Council that is 'Fair for All' - as well as other key priorities around Community Wealth Building, a Sustainable Environment and Participatory Democracy will influence our actions for recovery. By maintaining a focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for people, North Ayrshire will ensure that from the crisis comes a better future.

This will only be achieved through the collective working of North Ayrshire's communities, businesses, partner organisations and public bodies. The Government's recovery strategy and the process by which restrictions are implemented or eased will help shape both the approaches and timescales of the actions we can take locally. This is likely to change over time and we must recognise that there are trade-offs in all these decisions in the protection of public health, the future health and wellbeing of people, the economic and financial impacts, and the effects on our environment.

Most importantly, at the heart of all decisions, must be the health and wellbeing of our residents.

National picture

The Scottish Government's 'Covid-19 – Framework for Decision-Making' document sets out a way forward for Scotland in many important areas of national life, whilst recognising the ongoing challenges and uncertainties arising from this pandemic.

The Framework is clear that the threat of the virus will require an ongoing collective response from almost every corner of our society if we are to keep the country safe. Looking towards the future, whilst there is great uncertainty, the report notes that public services will have to change to help people recover from this shock and also to harness the kindness and compassion that has poured out from people across Scotland. Businesses will be supported to deal with the transition out of this crisis by changing their business models and practices, with a focus on the markets that will grow in the future.

The framework is intended to be a 'living' document and has already been supplemented by the Scottish Government's Route Map, which as the rate of infection decreases, sets out how current restrictions will be 'carefully and gradually' lifted. Set out in four phases which will only be introduced as enough progress is made on keeping the virus under control, each phase and its associated measures will continue to be subject to physical distancing and hygiene measures.

It should always be noted that a resurgence of cases and the impact of 'test and protect' may mean that restrictions will have to be tightened again, potentially resulting in a return to lockdown. As was

the case when lockdown commenced on 23 March 2020 we will respond quickly to this situation taking account of the learning from lockdown. Our recovery and renewal will also take cognisance of emerging sector specific guidance from the Scottish Government.

There are also unknown factors to consider such as the financial impact on delivering services, particularly relating to funding received from the Scottish Government.

The long-term impact of the lockdown on our communities concerns us all. We know that things cannot simply go back to the way they were and we will have to take a careful and staged approach as we return to a 'better normal' and adapt to live with COVID-19 for some time to come.

A further issue to note is that recent studies on the impact of Covid 19 highlighted there is a higher risk of having Covid 19 if you live in poverty or are overweight/obese. There is also a higher risk of catching Covid 19 if you live in an urban area rather than a rural area.

It was recently estimated that around 730,000 jobs have been lost in the UK since the start of Covid 19. In North Ayrshire, as at 31 July 2020, there are 17,600 workers participating in the job retention (furlough) scheme.

Role of the strategy

This strategy provides an overarching guide to the approach we will take to shape recovery and renewal in North Ayrshire over the next few years. It is intended to help us address the immediate challenges, capitalise on new approaches and opportunities based on learning from the pandemic, and to put in place the activities which are needed to support us returning to a better North Ayrshire.
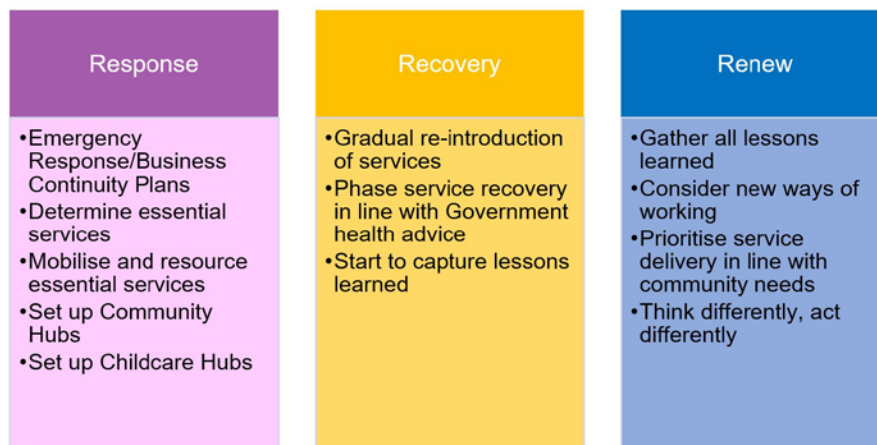
This will be a changing environment for the foreseeable future and there remain many interdependencies which cannot be accurately predicted at present. Clearly, the impacts of coronavirus may be felt for far longer than the next few years.

The strategy sets out how we will map our recovery and re-instatement of services against the route map phases and explains how service redesign and wider transformation objectives will be blended in to support our recovery and renewal plan.

Over the coming months, actions contained within the Council Plan 2019 – 2023 will be reviewed. The over- arching principles and aims of the Council Plan remain valid but individual actions require to be re-assessed in light of Covid 19.

Phasing of the pandemic

A pandemic is generally dealt with in three distinct phases – Response, Recovery and Renewal. The approach taken for each of the phases is detailed below.

Response	Recovery	Renew
•Emergency Response/Business Continuity Plans •Determine essential services •Mobilise and resource essential services •Set up Community Hubs •Set up Childcare Hubs	•Gradual re-introduction of services •Phase service recovery in line with Government health advice •Start to capture lessons learned	•Gather all lessons learned •Consider new ways of working •Prioritise service delivery in line with community needs •Think differently, act differently

Response to the pandemic

North Ayrshire Council along with its key partners and communities dealt with the response rapidly, efficiently, effectively and innovatively.

Prior to lockdown being announced on 23 March 2020, the Council was already developing ideas and initiatives to help those most in need such as assisting local foodbanks and planning for the opening of Local Community Hubs.

The Community Hubs went live on 24 March 2020 with North Ayrshire Council, local people and local community groups working together to support their neighbours and the wider population during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The community hubs operated in each of the six localities – North Coast & Cumbrae, Garnock Valley, Irvine, Kilwinning, Three Towns and Arran.

The purpose and objective of the hubs was to be a local point of contact for community need arising from COVID-19, responding with advice, signposting, referral and the co-ordination of local volunteers. This approach worked alongside other community initiatives specific to certain localities. The Hubs co-ordinated the delivery of prescriptions, hot food and food parcels to those in need.

The speed and level of response in addressing the urgent food needs of vulnerable individuals and families in North Ayrshire was substantial. A range of support models were put in place including food packs delivered weekly to over 4,600 families, including children eligible for Free School Meals and their families, as well as vulnerable citizens including those shielding, self-isolating, lacking support or mobility and over 1.25m meals were provided. This model has been strengthened by locality-based community hubs offering emergency provision and food larder items, as well as hot food provision via a network of 3rd sector and community organisations. Through the summer a food voucher scheme of £20 per eligible child per week was put in place to support families in need and the Community hubs continue to support vulnerable groups. Scottish Government funding to support the North Ayrshire food response currently totals £1.915m.

The hubs received a large volume of calls and this information is valuable is helping develop the renewal strategy. Having the data specific to each locality helps ensure future service provision is developed on a targeted basis.

Childcare Hubs were also set up for families who needed additional support and to help essential workers with childcare arrangements. This ensured essential workers were free to attend work to help deal with the pandemic knowing their children were safe and being looked after. During this period over 13,000 hot meals were served to children attending the hubs.

The Council also ensured government grants were disbursed efficiently to help business' cash flow and survival during the pandemic.

From the period from 24 March 2020 to 31 July 2020:

Over 13K hot meals served at Childcare Hubs

£294K paid out in newly self-employed hardship grants

Over 1.25m free meals provided

24K calls recieved to the Community Hubs

£25m of business grants paid out

The Government's health advice to only provide essential services was also taken account of when determining service delivery during the lockdown period. Due to an increase in employee absence levels due long term health conditions, self-isolation due to Covid 19 symptoms, shielding or caring responsibilities some services either had to be stood down from the commencement of lockdown or had revised arrangements put in place such as day care centres.

Recovery from the pandemic

Key services were prioritised and continued to operate during lockdown, helped in some cases by staff redeployments. Remote and online learning was utilised for children and young people whilst the schools were closed during lockdown.

Other services were stood down during the height of the pandemic due to either their 'non-essential' service status (based on the Scottish Government's definition/advice on essential workers) , a lack of resources due to staff being redeployed to support essential services/key priorities or services were unable to operate safely, are gradually recovering.

The timing of re-introducing services will be aligned to the Scottish Government's advice about progressing to future phases however there may be circumstances where services are not recovered in line with the indicative dates provided by the Scottish Government. This is due to a number of factors including the reproduction rate of the virus (the "r" number), the potential impact of the Government's 'Test and Protect' arrangements on the availability of our workforce and our ability to support or operate safely in line with guidance.

The possibility of returning to lockdown or earlier phases should there be a resurgence of the virus also needs to be factored into individual service recovery and renewal plans. This will require careful consideration and some flexibility will be needed in our workforce planning to respond to these potential scenarios.

Renewal from the pandemic

The renewal phase is vitally important in moving forward to a 'better normal' to ensure we meets the needs of our communities and businesses.

Things simply cannot go back to the way they were. We need to reflect on where we have developed new and better ways of working and put in place a process which ensures that successful approaches can be continued. Where we have stopped services, we will also want to carefully consider if, when, and how, these should be introduced within the context of the Route Map and Scottish Government guidance and regulation, which is continuing to emerge on a regular basis.

In order to plan a renewal phase, it is important that the context is fully understood, the intended outcomes are identified, actions are clear and that the impacts are understood. To support this, we have identified a set of clear principles to guide our prioritisation.

Renewal activities will:

- Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents by protecting the most vulnerable in our society against the immediate threat of coronavirus and the consequences of changes to the way we live. Public Health guidance will be paramount in all the decisions we make.

- Work with our communities in the renewal of services to ensure they meet their needs and priorities.

- Build community capacity and resilience.

- Support the economic recovery of North Ayrshire, helping to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy for the future that supports local resilience using the Ayrshire Growth Deal and Community Wealth Building as a means of creating an inclusive economy.

- Learn lessons from the challenges of Covid 19, promoting a system that utilises the strengths of North Ayrshire to the benefit of all North Ayrshire's residents and businesses.

- Ensure our children and young people get the best start in life by creating opportunities for education and employment, including through Community Wealth Building and Renewal.

- Prioritise and help tackle poverty, including child poverty.

- Protect and prioritise the North Ayrshire environment and reinforce our work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- Pursue improvements in service delivery where they have been identified as part of the response and recovery phase, creating a more efficient and resilient system.

- Prioritise investment towards services that make a greater contribution to key outcomes. This will consider dis-investment from some areas to enable re-investment to support delivery.

These principles interrelate in many ways and it is likely that there may be conflict between them at times. In that case, the public health of residents takes priority.

In considering our approach to renewal, we inevitably focus on what we must do differently. However, our strength comes from what we already do well. Our overall approach should be to prioritise those things we already do well, seek to share the benefits of these strengths across all residents, to address any inequalities, and grow those aspects which have the potential to further enhance the quality of life for everyone.

There are also aspects within our communities where not everyone has shared in the positive experiences available to many. Inequalities in income, health outcomes, the poverty related attainment gap and opportunity are significant in some parts of North Ayrshire and for some communities. The impacts of coronavirus are likely to be felt most by those already in challenging situations so the reconsideration of how North Ayrshire can be more equal and inclusive is a necessary and intrinsic part of recovery. The council will continue to work with a variety of other organisations to ensure that those communities likely to experience inequality, including those in poverty, have access to targeted support. The Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) have an

important role to play in determining the issues each community has with regards to inequality and can assist in the co-ordination of targeted support to address this. A level of commitment and buy-in from CPP members is required to deliver renewal.

All council services have been impacted by coronavirus and an initial priority will continue to be the reinstatement of services that have had to close or reduce in scale at a point that it is safe to do so. This may be returning to the same ways of working as previously, but in most cases is likely to include some revisions to incorporate social distancing and build upon the lessons learned during the response to date, including a focus on the wellbeing of our children and young people as they return to school after a period of remote learning. This will constitute a significant programme of business change.

The council's staff are the biggest asset in making this change happen, so we will deliver an organisational development plan that supports our staff in delivering the services across the area through new or amended operating models, to embrace the more agile and flexible working arrangements and enhanced technology and support the staff to increase their skills and continual professional development.

Early lessons learned from the pandemic

Despite the intense pressure and the emergency nature of the pandemic, services were mobilised extremely quickly to deal with the situation and protect the most vulnerable. A number of positive lessons are to learned from this.

The main lessons learned are as follows:

- Positive attitude to change

- Prioritisation of service delivery

- Empowerment in decision making

- Attitude to risk

- Use of digital platforms to support remote and new ways of working, learning and communicating.

- Opportunities for remote and online learning for children, young people and adults.

- Valuable data gathered on community needs and priorities

- Partnership working between Council teams and with agencies and communities

Once lockdown was announced, individual service Business Continuity Plans were implemented. Very quickly services were adapted to meet the health advice of the pandemic in terms of working practices and to meets the needs of our children and communities.

Staff were redeployed to service functions delivering essential services, in terms of the Government definition of 'essential services', and to the protection of the most vulnerable in our society with the minimum of fuss. Staff were empowered to take decisions by taking a risk aware approach rather than risk averse and this should not be lost as we move forward through recovery and renewal.

Examples include our approach to remote teaching and learning, effective multi agency working to support vulnerable children, providing childcare for vulnerable families and key workers and a virtual contact centre was set up immediately with staff working at home providing the customer contact service. This was done at a very fast pace and the pace of adapting to change needs to be maintained.

Data gathered from calls to the Community Hubs provides lots of important information, on a locality basis, on the effects of Covid 19 and the individual priorities for each of our communities. The data, trends in data and volume of enquiries should be analysed to ensure Council services are prioritised to meet the needs of each of our localities and to identify underlying issues and help design sustainable solutions.

Inter-dependencies with existing polices, plans and strategies

North Ayrshire Council has a number of key strategies and plans linked to the Council Plan – 'A Council that is Fair for All' and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) which sets out each of the locality partnership's priorities.

This is illustrated in the diagram below:

Inter-dependencies for a Community centred Renewal
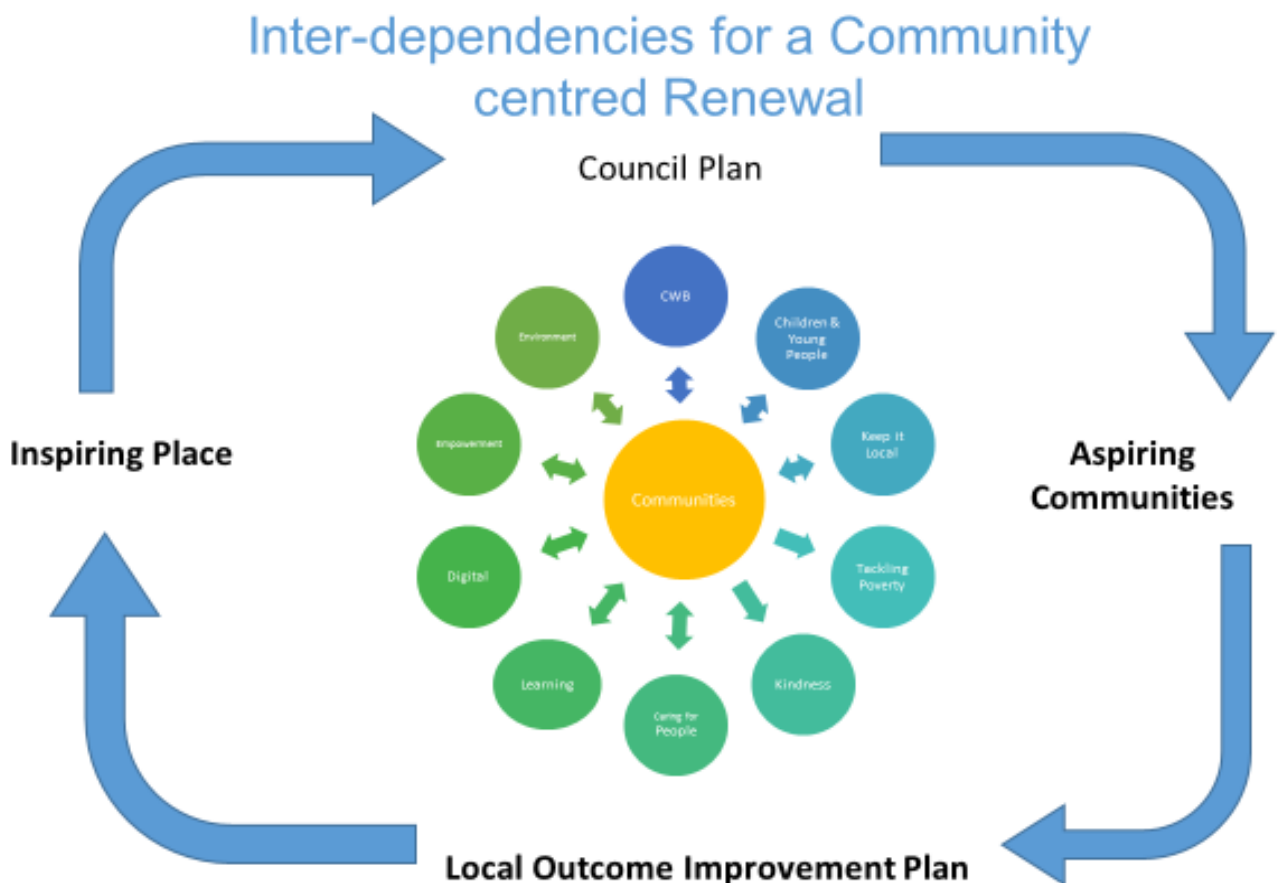
The heart of North Ayrshire - Our Communities

Response to pandemic

The manner in which our communities responded to the pandemic, with the primary aim of supporting and helping the most vulnerable in our society, was quite outstanding and humbling. The community volunteers demonstrated a determination and resilience to look after each other. A number of new volunteers also stepped up and helped out during the crisis and helped deliver services such as :-

- Delivery of food

- Delivery of hot meals

- Delivery of prescriptions

- Grounds maintenance and litter collection

Helping Vulnerable people, building community resilience

Our statutory services will be prioritised to supporting the most vulnerable who need our support to remain safe and well. Statutory public health provision, and social care for children and adults remains a fundamental responsibility of the council. As corporate parent, we will ensure that those young people in our care are protected and supported, providing what they need to restart their lives after lockdown and through the recovery and renewal process. However, unfortunately the economic impact of the pandemic is likely to result in more people in need of help and support.

Through the response phase of the pandemic, we saw the commitment and drive of communities to remain resilient and to support one another. We will work to harness and build that capacity, building upon the successful community hubs established to support those in need of assistance, ensuring provision in each locality of North Ayrshire supporting the community empowerment agenda.

Increasing the range of resilience support available including the use of the Community Investment Fund (CIF) will help develop more sustainable, self-supporting, self-sufficient communities. Given the significant pressures faced by the community, voluntary and charitable sectors in North Ayrshire as a result of increased demand and reduced income, it is important to support our key partners and community organisations in these new ways of working to help build resilience and capacity.

For those in financial hardship, we will work to ensure there is available support to reduce its impact on individuals and families in partnership with other agencies through the poverty strategy.

A review of Social Care models to consider their ongoing effectiveness, impact on individuals and lessons learned from Covid is required.

Engagement and Participation

It is imperative when developing a strategy for renewal to ensure it meets the needs of our communities.

One way this can be achieved is by involving our communities in the shaping of strategies and projects and by subsequently testing them with the communities.

One of North Ayrshire's strengths is the partnership between the Council and Communities, including our young people, and this is an opportunity to build upon and strengthen this.

There are, among others, Community Councils, Locality Partnerships and a Youth Cabinet which provide opportunities for the community to engage with the Council. As well as this there are participatory budgeting events and live Q&A events with the Leader and Chief Executive.

A wider range of options and measures can also be considered as to how we engage with our communities going forward. Evidence has shown that engagement in Parent Council Chair Forum meetings increased during Covid 19 through the use of on-line meetings and a Facebook live Q&A with the Leader and Chief Executive was viewed by over 13,000 people. Community Councils and groups have been meeting online, with real success. This should be explored further as we move into the renewal phase given the reach of digital technology platforms.

Design Experiments
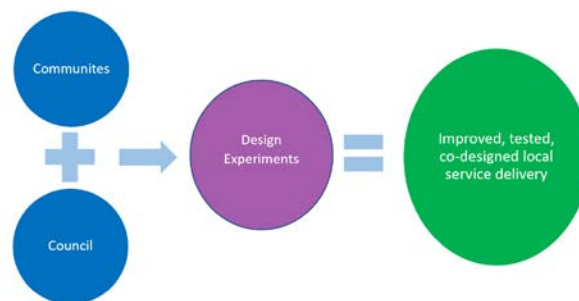
Our Communities have to be at the heart of all that we do and the future direction of the Council must be driven by community needs and priorities. North Ayrshire already has very strong relationships in place between the Council and its communities, such as the extensive consultation on the development of the Council Plan, and this provides a real opportunity to build upon this.

The Council worked with communities in a Participatory Budget approach for its ground maintenance service, the first Local Authority in Scotland to do so for a front-line service. This provided the local communities with the opportunity to help shape the grounds maintenance service delivered and has resulted in many benefits such as more relaxed grass cutting to aid the environment, more fruit tree planting and more volunteers working in open space areas. However, the main benefit arising from this is the better working relationship between the Council and the community. This exercise involved the community helping to design the process, participating, in person and/or on -line, and voting for their priorities in the design and delivery of the service.

It is proposed that going forward, participatory budgeting, as well as a wider range of participatory democracy models, is considered and expanded to a wider range of services, including the use of education funds such as the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) and that transformation/renewal projects are co-designed with the communities including design experiments as part of the process.

Design experiments provides an opportunity to test, review, refine and implement new ideas and ways of working. Participation could be through an open invitation and/or through the LPPs.

Partnership Working – Whole Systems Approach

During the pandemic the rapid response to the crisis, to protect those most in need, wouldn't have been possible without partnership working between internal services and external partners.

This includes, but is not limited to, the National Health Service (NHS) Scotland, Police Scotland, Caledonian MacBrayne, Third Sector Organisations, community groups, volunteers and private sector businesses.

This approach needs to be maintained and enhanced as we map a route from response to recovery to renewal.

One way to achieve this is by using a 'Whole Systems Approach'.

This is commonly used where the need to fundamentally change or transform is evident. The thinking is based on analysis and decision making on the inter-relationships of the constituent part of a system rather than focus on the parts themselves.

It creates a system where people and organisations thrive by streamlining processes, creating shared meaning around work and accelerating and substantially increasing results.

This approach was evident during the set up and delivery of the Community Hubs and Childcare Hubs with partners from Communities, Health & Social Care Partnership, Customer Services and community volunteers working together to help those most in need.

Financial Context

The financial context of the council will require a review of budgets to ensure available resource is directed towards priority services based on community need and ambition taking account of underlying drivers such as the economy.

This is balanced with the need to protect the financial stability of the local authority over the medium and long term. We will review and reprioritise spend appropriately to allow investment in the changes that need to be made to achieve the aims of recovery. This will take consideration of 'spend to save' initiatives to protect jobs and services and 'prevention rather than reaction' to deliver better outcomes for residents and communities.

The Council already has ambitious capital investment programmes for both the General Services and Housing Revenue Account as well as having an Investment Fund. Prioritising spend on projects using the Community Wealth Building and Green New Deal approach will help aid local economic recovery.

A North Ayrshire Council Financial Recovery Plan is in place for 2021/22 and its principles will help inform future budget setting exercises.

Economic context

Public health guidance will drive the decisions taken in respect of the restart of economic activity. It must also be recognised that a strong economic recovery is necessary for the ongoing health and wellbeing of all residents, reflecting the wider benefits of health.

Much of the initial economic response has focussed on business support, with finance as the key support mechanism. The Government has provided a range of grant schemes and the scale and speed of the distribution of grants across North Ayrshire was a significant challenge, but North Ayrshire rose to the challenge and over £25m has been paid to businesses through this. Alongside partners, the Council has also kept businesses informed about what is available to help them.

In terms of the economy a further factor to consider is the impact of the UK leaving the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit.

Further information and detail on economic factors is contained within the North Ayrshire Economic Recovery Approach which outlines key economic drivers such as Community Wealth Building and the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

Risk Management and Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management plans (BCM) are in place across Service teams to deal with emergency situations to ensure service delivery is maintained as seamlessly as possible.

This plans 'kicked in' when the emergency was declared to ensure essential services could continue to operate during the pandemic. Many service teams were able to operate despite the lockdown arrangement due to the forward planning contained within the BCM plans.

It is recommended all services review their BCMs and reflect on the lessons learned from the emergency situation.

One of the early lessons learned from the pandemic was the attitude to risk during key decision making. Rather than taking a risk averse approach, services were taking a risk aware approach due to time constraints, the need for quick decision making and the scale of the emergency. This was done in a pragmatic, effective manner with risks assessed against the likelihood and impact of the risk occurring alongside appropriate mitigation measures. In many cases it wouldn't have been appropriate to 'play safe' in decision making due to the emergency situation and, in not doing so, we achieved better outcomes. The Council's culture of collaboration and empowerment was also to the fore during the pandemic.

Going forward, more support, learning and development needs to be provided for Council staff and community partners in effective risk management, business continuity and resilience.

Transformation programme

The latest transformation project plan, known as T3, was approved as part of the Council Plan on 19 June 2019

The transformation plan is split into 5 themes:

Similar to the Council Plan, whilst the themes remain more relevant than ever, there is a need to review each individual project within the themes in light of Covid 19 to assess its status, relevance and prioritisation. The focus of transformation will be 'spend to save' initiatives to protect jobs and services and 'prevention rather than reaction' to deliver better outcomes for residents and communities.

New projects identified due to the impact of Covid 19 will be added to the plan to create a new transformation project plan knows as Renewal which will encapsulate how we will approach, change and plan the need to build back a better North Ayrshire.

There is significant financial pressure on the Council as a result of austerity, which has been further exacerbated by Covid 19, therefore the programme will have to move at a pace. As well as financial factors wellbeing indicators will also be considered in developing the Renewal programme.
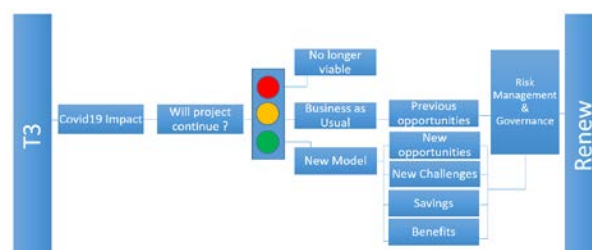
New Approaches

A number of new approaches have been identified during Covid 19 and require to be analysed/explored in more detail.

The opportunities are based around improved digital services, better use of property, economic recovery through Community Wealth Building, process improvements to improve efficiency, further use of Community Hubs and improvements to infrastructure to encourage active, healthy travel.

The new opportunities include, and are not limited to;

Digital

- Working at home/remotely
- Remote learning in education
- Remote and hybrid meetings
- Opportunities through 5G
- Affordability of broadband
- Digital skills and inclusion

Town Centres/Local Economy

- Further promotion and expansion of the 'Keep it Local' campaign
- Accelerate capital spend through a Community Wealth Building approach
- Regeneration Delivery Plan
- Ayrshire Growth Deal

Transport/Active Travel

- New paths/cycle paths/pedestrianised areas due to an increase in walking and cycling.
- Use and types of Council vehicles

Community Hubs

- Strengthening of the Community Hubs model
- Analysis of data gathered through the Community Hubs
- Empowerment and support for capacity building.

Property
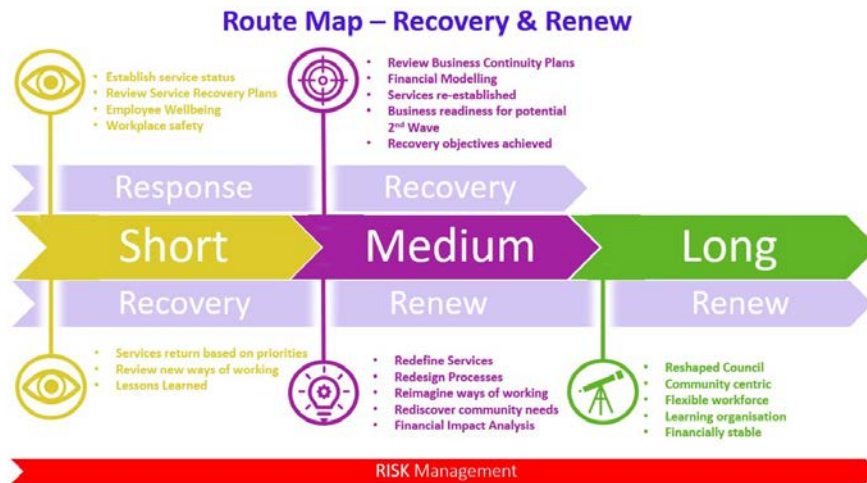
- Property utilisation
- Community Wealth Building Land and Assets pillar.
- Regeneration Delivery Plan

Process Improvements/Bureaucracy

- Process improvement principles.
- Improve collaboration
- Reduce bureaucracy
- Business Process Re-engineering

- Digital

- A focus on outcomes

The Route Map

Summary

The challenge faced by Covid 19 was unprecedented. Its impact in terms of health and wellbeing alongside the financial and economic impact was massive and we can't go back to how it used to be pre Covid 19.

We need to build on our strengths and work more in partnership to deliver the services our community need.

We need to change how we do things, change how we deliver public services, change how we think and change how we act to build back an even better North Ayrshire.

Action	Owner	Timescale
Strategic Theme - Corporate Recovery		
Review actions within the Council Plan.	Chief Executive	31 December 2020
Develop a Financial Recovery Plan on the impact of Covid 19 for 2020/21.	Head of Service (Finance)	8 September 2020
Develop the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021/22 to 2023/24.	Head of Service (Finance)	26 February 2021
Strategic Theme – Working with communities		
Further develop our collaborative relationship with community organisations to ensure they are full partners in our work, learning from the Covid response.	Head of Service (Connected Communities)	31 March 2021
Consider new opportunities for Participatory Budgeting in the delivery of services.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	31 March 2021
Embed and extend our work in relation to Kindness and develop further through the Locality Partnerships.	Head of Service (Connected Communities)	31 March 2021
Work in collaboration with Locality Partnerships to ensure objectives from Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIP) are reflected in Renewal projects and plans.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	31 March 2021
Consider a Community Planting model.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)/Head of Service (Commercial)	31 March 2021
To support mainland and island resilience groups and ensure there is regular communication with them.	Head of Service (Connected Communities)/ Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)/	31 March 2021
Strategic Theme – Supporting Children & Young People		
Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective child-centred multi-agency public and third and voluntary sector locality working.	Executive Director (Communities)	31 March 2021
Further develop digital approaches to learning and teaching across the curriculum.	Head of Service (Education)	30 June 2021
Create and identify leadership, volunteering and participation opportunities to help young people develop their skills and enhance their life skills and opportunities for finding employment.	Head of Service (Connected Communities)	31 March 2021

Improve employment opportunities and post-school destinations for young people by embracing and embedding a Community Wealth Building approach in North Ayrshire.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)/ Head of Service (Education)	30 June 2021
Strategic Theme - Caring for People		
To consider ways of streamlining the process for applications for benefits/support.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)/ Health and Social Care Partnership	30 June 2021
To re-assess community needs in terms of addictions, care at home and day care services in light of Covid 19.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)/ Health and Social Care Partnership	30 June 2021
To work with key partners to ensure there is access to targeted support for those in need.	Health and Social Care Partnership	30 June 2021
Strategic Theme – Supporting Residents		
Develop the whole-systems approach of the Community Hubs to improve community resilience.	Executive Director (Communities)/Health & Social Care Partnership	30 June 2021
Ensure that individuals and communities are involved in service design to ensure their needs are met.	Executive Director (Communities)/Health & Social Care Partnership	30 June 2021
Build on the work of Fair for All and the Child Poverty Action Plan to develop actions which address the causes and mitigate the effects of poverty.	Executive Directors (Communities)/ Health & Social Care Partnership	31 March 2021
Monitor and evaluate the community benefit from adopting a Community Wealth Building approach.	Head of Service (Connected Communities)	30 June 2021

Strategic Theme – Digital Services		
Review the Digital Strategy.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)/Head of Service (People & ICT)	31 March 2021
Review the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy.	Head of Service (Education)	31 March 2021
Review the Technology Strategy to ensure it meets our future needs.	Head of Service (People & ICT)	31 March 2021
To evaluate the impact of remote and hybrid meetings.	Head of Democratic Services	31 March 2021
To use the Ayrshire Growth Deal to help secure investment opportunities in digital/technology.	Executive Director (Growth & Investment)	31 March 2021
Strategic Theme – Learning and Skills		
Develop a process to embed a Whole Systems Approach in the organisation.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	31 March 2021
Develop a process for Design Experiments on new ideas, new ways of working.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	30 November 2020
Enhance and develop our approach to adult learning through digital and partnerships with Further Education and other providers.	Executive Director (Communities)/Head of Service (Connected Communities)	31 March 2021
Strategic Theme – Supporting the local economy		
Investigate opportunities for capital spend using a Community Wealth Building approach to help local businesses and local employment.	Head of Service (Finance)	31 March 2021
Conduct an Economic Impact Assessment of the effects of Covid 19 on North Ayrshire.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)	30 June 2021
To review the link, between volunteering, skills and employment and to develop an approach to assist with employment opportunities for volunteers.	Head of Service (Connected Communities)	30 June 2021

Develop a North Ayrshire Economic Recovery & Renewal Approach taking account of Community Wealth Building, Climate and New Green Deal.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)	30 September 2020
Investigate opportunities for capital spend through a Review of the 10-Year Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2030/31 to be assessed through the lens of Community Wealth Building and the Green Economy	Head of Service (Finance)	26 February 2021
Strategic Theme- Transformation		
Re-evaluate the T3 Transformation programme and add new projects to create a Renewal Transformation Programme.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	31 October 2020
Review working at home arrangements and consider the long-term impact of this.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	31 March 2021
Target external funding opportunities and take a whole systems approach on the affordability and coverage of broadband across North Ayrshire.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	30 June 2021
Strategic Theme - Land & Property		
Review property utilisation across the Council as part of the Renewal process.	Head of Service (Physical Environment)	31 March 2021
Review the demand and need for hostel accommodation across North Ayrshire.	Head of Service (Physical Environment)	30 June 2021
Deliver the Regeneration Delivery Plan.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)	Ongoing
Use the Community Wealth Building pillars to maximum effect.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)	Ongoing
To deliver the Construction programme and Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP).	Head of Service (Physical Environment)	Ongoing
Strategic Theme – Transport, Active Travel and Environment		
Review usage and the type of Transport used to deliver environmental outcomes.	Head of Service (Commercial)	31 March 2021

Review paths, cycle paths and consider pedestrianizing areas to improve health and wellbeing through cycling and walking.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)	31 March 2021
Target external funding opportunities for paths, cycle paths through Places for People funding.	Head of Service (Economic Development & Regeneration)	30 June 2021
Strategic Theme – Continuous Improvement		
Review the current arrangements for Risk Management and Business Continuity.	Head of Service (Recovery & Renewal)	31 December 2020
To review the Performance Management and Continuous Improvement Strategy.	Head of Democratic Services.	31 March 2021