Shaping the Future

Our Approach to Recovery from COVID-19



WeareHuntingdonshire

Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest challenges of our times. We have seen the impact of COVID-19 in Huntingdonshire, on our services, our people, and our businesses. We have collectively achieved the unimaginable by stepping out of our normal lives in the face of the crisis, and individually taking responsibility to ensure ourselves, our families and our communities are safe and protected from this virus. This new and energised community focus has been overwhelming and humbling to witness and has helped to offset the damaging impact of restrictions on our lives, our health, our High Streets, and local economy.

In June 2020 we recognised the impact of COVID was going to be significant and we undertook a Community Impact Assessment to identify what the early impacts of the pandemic would be. This assessment enabled us to plan activities to support our residents and businesses over the proceeding months. We have been able to support communities with Food Banks and Community Fridges, provide subsidised exercise classes, proactively contact, and support the most vulnerable in our community, help people into work through job clubs and the Government's Kickstart scheme and provide essential support for our local businesses via grants and online digital platforms (Click It Local) whilst re-energising the High Streets in our four market towns. These are just a few examples of the work we have undertaken with our partners and community to help during this challenging time, whilst maintaining our core services to residents and businesses. This will need to continue against a backdrop of other challenges such as climate change, relationship with the EU and national debt.

Two years on from the first lockdown the world, and our local environment, is a different place. We see headlines emerging every day about the new legacy the pandemic continues to create and statistics that suggest we will have a long recovery journey back from COVID. A refreshed Impact Assessment for 2021 addressed those headlines and used evidence to validate the results and assess the effects within Huntingdonshire. This allows us to better understand the challenges in our district since the pandemic started, and to highlight those impacts that were most significant and therefore needed to be addressed immediately.

As a local resident I am incredibly proud of how we, as a community, have stepped up to the unprecedented demands made of us during this pandemic. It is no small feat that we have been able respond quickly and directly, working with our voluntary and community groups, statutory services, and health providers to ensure the welfare of our residents is at the core of everything we do. We have delivered the unimaginable and our district, businesses and residents are the better for it. But our journey does not stop there. As the Executive Councillor for the district's response to recovery from COVID, I want to ensure we continue to benefit and grow from the new ways we are working. This document 'Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery from COVID-19' sets out how we will continue to prioritise our work with our communities and partners to ensure residents and businesses can get the right support, at the right time, in the right way as the COVID pandemic endures.

This approach uses the knowledge we gathered from our detailed analysis of the district and sets out what that means for us and our partners and what we intend to do about it. We recognise that we are all greater than the sum of our parts and by continuing to work together, we can improve the lives of our residents and businesses into the future, irrespective of the many challenges ahead.

Cllr Steve Criswell

Executive Councillor for Recovery



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This is Huntingdonshire - overview of the district

Data of the district taken from the Impact Assessment 2021, based on data up to September 2021

POPULATION

178,985 residents

LAND AREA AND GEOGRAPHY

- 900 square km (350 square miles)
- predominately rural, but settlement patterns is 50/50 urban/rural split
- Market towns of Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots
- One other town, Godmanchester
- Villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings across 71 Town/Parish Councils

DEMOGRAPHY

- Slightly older population with 15% of the district's residents aged 70 or over
- Health and life expectancy better than average, 84.5% describing their health as 'Very Good' / 'Good'
- Above average proportion are overweight (64.8%)
- Residents are predominantly "White British"
- Over 8,000 BAME residents

TOWNS AND KEY SERVICE CENTRES

Larger settlements and towns offer a range of services e.g.:

- primary schools
- a range of shops
- public transport services
- community meeting places
- general practitioner's surgeries
- a range of employment opportunities

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 71 Town and Parish Councils
- A well-established community and voluntary sector, well supported by Hunts Forum

ECONOMY

- Residents are more likely to be economically active and in employment than the national average
- Average wages in the district (regardless of where they work) is above average
- Over a third of employed residents travelled outside the district to work (pre-pandemic)
- A higher than the national average proportion of local employment is linked to manufacturing (approx.
 15%) compared to the national average for manufacturing is 8%
- 90% of Huntingdonshire businesses are identified as Micro i.e.: 0-9 employees

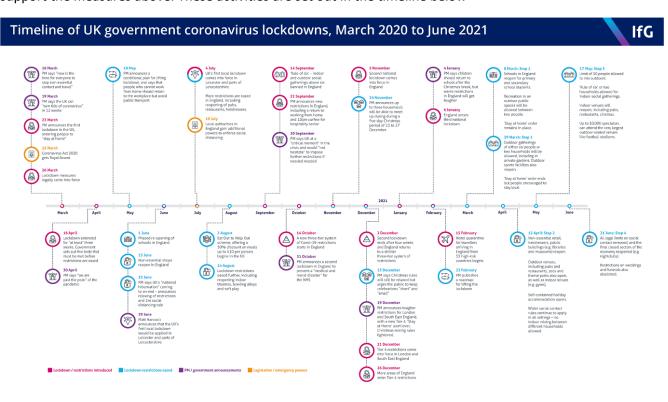
Huntingdonshire is part of the OxCam Arc – made up of five ceremonial counties: Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.

COVID-19 Impacts on Huntingdonshire

As a response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic the UK Government introduced unprecedented measures to reduce the population's risk of contracting the virus. These were:

- 1. Restriction of movement
- 2. Restriction of social interaction
- 3. Increase in hygiene control measures
- 4. Introduction of a vaccination programme
- 5. Closure of industry sectors e.g., Leisure and Hospitality

Since March 2020 several enforcement activities have been introduced, and subsequently removed, to support the measures above. These activities are set out in the timeline below



Source: Institute for Government analysis.

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The direct impact of contracting the virus along with the control measures introduced by the Government were felt across the district. As a result, a comprehensive assessment of Huntingdonshire was conducted in June 2020, to better understand the emerging risks and impacts of the pandemic.

COVID-19 Response in Huntingdonshire

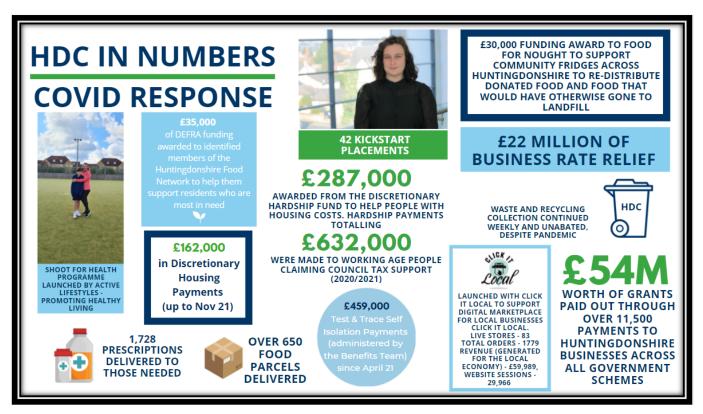
The Community Impact Assessment (June 2020) was instrumental in helping us to prioritise the work needed within our services and wider partners to respond, with a number of projects being delivered:

- 1. Food Network; to establish Food Banks and develop a Huntingdonshire Food Poverty Action Plan.
- 2. Early Intervention; to develop a diagnostic signposting tool (app).
- 3. Business Digitisation; to register 100 stores registered with Click It Local (local online shopping platform) and improve digitalisation for local businesses.
- 4. Kickstart; to provide and fill 50 HDC placements and 50 Gateway (non-HDC) placements.
- 5. Job Clubs; to establish 6 job clubs.
- 6. Healthy Living; to increase physical activity for inactive residents.
- 7. Area Connectivity; to map walking & cycling routes and develop an HDC walking & cycling strategy.

8. Welcome Back; to support local businesses and increase footfall in the High Streets of our four market towns.

How did we make a difference?

The work across the District Council services, joining forces with our voluntary and community groups, wider partners and health providers made a positive difference in many ways.



What is left to do?

Plenty! As the variants of COVID-19 continue to adapt and change over time, so our response to the pandemic for our district needs to as well. A year on from the initial Impact Assessment we have carried out a similar assessment to determine how successful our projects had been but also to identify the most significant impacts that still affect our district.

The Impact Assessment 2021 used data to understand the changes to behaviour and environment that COVID continues to influence and impact, along with identifying any specific groups that have been disproportionally affected by the pandemic. As a framework the Impact Assessment 2021 followed the structure of the Huntingdonshire District Councils Corporate Plan by splitting out impacts as follows:

People (Good Start/Good Health):

We want to make our district a better place to live, to improve health and well-being and support people to be the best they can be

Place (Good Place/Good Work):

We want to make Huntingdonshire a better place to work and invest and we want to deliver new and appropriate housing.

Key Impacts of COVID-19

- 40,215 <u>positive Covid-19 cases</u> have been recorded in Huntingdonshire from 13th March 2020 to 31st January 2022
- 2. Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance monthly claimants at August 2021 were 3,245; well above pre-pandemic levels (1,640 at March 2020)
- 3. During the first national lockdown (February May 2020) there were more than 5,000 additional claimants over the period (a 43% rise). The majority (over 89%) of the increase was due to claims for Universal Credit (UC) only
- 4. The number of households in receipt of UC payments was twice as high (+100%) at May 2021 than February 2020, with large increases for all family types with the largest increase among the "single, no children" family type.
- 5. The number of Local Council Tax Support claimants increased significantly between April to June 2020 (up 5.6%) and also saw larger increases until the end of 2021 (9.5% increase compared to 2020)
- 6. 30,700 employment aged residents were furloughed across the district (31% of employment aged residents)
- 7. At August 2021 the unemployment claimant count total (3,245) was higher than any point of the previous economic downturn and remains well above pre-pandemic levels (1,640 at March 2020).
- 8. There were 11,200 registered self-employed people within Huntingdonshire in 2021 (people aged 16-64 who were employed), a decrease of 9% compared to the previous year
- 9. Huntingdonshire District Council's active housing register case load for Bands A (urgent need) and B (high need) combined at 20/9/21 was 22% higher than at 29/4/20.
- 10. Figures from Cambridgeshire County Council's Safe Accommodation Strategy show that from April 2020 to March 2021 police Incidents with a domestic abuse flag were up 5.7% on 2019/20 to 9,299
- 11. Cambridgeshire County Council's Service Director's Report: Children and Safeguarding, advise that it has become clear "there has been an increase in the complexity of need among those children and young people who are open to children's social care services"
- 12. Figures for Cambridgeshire show the overall number of pupils eligible for free school meals in January 2021 was 15,803, up from 12,235 in January 2020 (a rise of 29%)
- 13. There were 780 apprenticeships commenced in the academic year 2020/21, a drop of 16% compared to the previous year and the number of students under 19 starting apprenticeships fell to 19% from 22% in the previous year.

The table below represents the areas that have experienced the most significant changes as a direct result of COVID-19 and therefore where, across the whole public sector, we need to prioritise our efforts and resources to ensure we improve outcomes for every resident and business in the district. At the Council we pledge to play our part.

Good start Good health **PROVIDE life opportunities for residents** PROVIDE active opportunities for residents SUPPORT our residents in Huntingdonshire to successfully adjust to all * ENCOURAGE our residents in Huntingdonshire to make and take the life-changing events they experience from birth to grave right choices to improve or support their health and wellbeing Improve education and support for children 0-16 yrs Prevent and reduce obesity Improve further education and apprenticeships for 16+ yrs Increase physical activity Improve personal safety (in the home) · Improve mental health Prevent and reduce low income and poverty Prevent and reduce adult social care Prevent and reduce emergency access to food Good place Good work STRENGTHEN the local community STRENGTHEN the local economy SUPPPORT our residents in Huntingdonshire to remain living in the SUPPORT our Huntingdonshire businesses if impacts such as COVID vs area with affordable housing and a manageable cost of living Brexit and/or lack of skills and employment emerge over the coming Create affordable housing for local residents Improve personal safety (outside the home) · Improve skills and employment **ENHANCE** the local environment * TAKE positive action to preserve and protect the natural environment when making improvements and developments to Huntingdonshire Increase use of parks and open spaces Increase use of active travel (walking and cycling) Increase public transport usage (bus and rail)

Our Approach to the impacts of COVID

The data-driven analytical view has highlighted some key areas of focus for both the Council and our partners. As we continue living through the pandemic it is apparent that the impact of COVID have exacerbated inequalities that already existed i.e.: people who were struggling before COVID are more likely to be in a worse position now. As a Council we are committed to take an active role in addressing these impacts and inequalities by capitalising on our existing strategies, services and partnerships. This will shape how we deliver our services to mitigate these impacts, prioritising our actions and influencing those of our partners.

How does our Approach fit within the Council?

Whilst the impacts of the pandemic have been significant, the Council's Vision and key objectives, established in our Corporate Plan, continue to underpin the work required to recover from COVID but now with greater importance.

The Council remains focused on delivering a Vision for Huntingdonshire that:

- Supports a safe and healthy environment
- Delivers economic growth
- Provides value for money services and
- Creates opportunities for the people of Huntingdonshire

Our Approach for Recovery therefore continues to support the Council's intent to:

- Continue to take a proactive role with the agencies, partnerships, and networks to drive social and economic recovery.
- Work with our communities and community facilities, enabling people to be more resilient to help themselves.
- Support people to improve their health and well-being.
- Continue to lead sustainable place making to deliver our Local Plan Objectives for 2036 through strong economic growth with strong environmental principles, good design of our homes and infrastructure.
- Focus on the continued regeneration of our towns through the Future High Streets Fund and Accelerated Market Towns Programme.
- Continue to create, protect, and enhance our safe and clean environment within which Huntingdonshire and its people can thrive with our clear commitment to net carbon zero by 2040.
- Invest in our parks and open spaces to support health and well-being including biodiversity net gain delivered through our commitment to doubling nature.
- Deliver reliable and efficient services at good value to our residents.

Key principles of our Approach to Recovery

Aligning to the Council's Vision and key objectives, the aim to our Approach to Recovery is specifically to support resilience and sustainability in Huntingdonshire from the enduring challenges that have arisen from or been impacted by COVID-19 (or other significant influencing factors in the future). To do this we have identified key principles that define our Approach. These are to:

- 1. Investigate new ways of understanding and addressing needs to stop people falling onto crisis by offering prevention and early intervention support.
- 2. Influence our partner organisations to prioritise how they deliver their services, where the Council does not deliver these services e.g.: education.
- 3. Use data and analytics (quantitative information) along with insight from customers, residents, businesses, community groups and visitors (qualitative information) to help us make the right decisions.
- 4. Focus our existing limited resources and services in the best place to make the biggest impact on the key challenges to support our residents and businesses build resilience.
- 5. Ensure our activities align and compliment core Council and partner strategies to minimise duplication of effort and reinforce consistent messaging about district priorities.
- 6. Actively work to ensure the ongoing overheads of the Council are not increased through the recovery activities by using Council funds efficiently and effectively whilst seeking external funding opportunities.

Key Priorities for Recovery

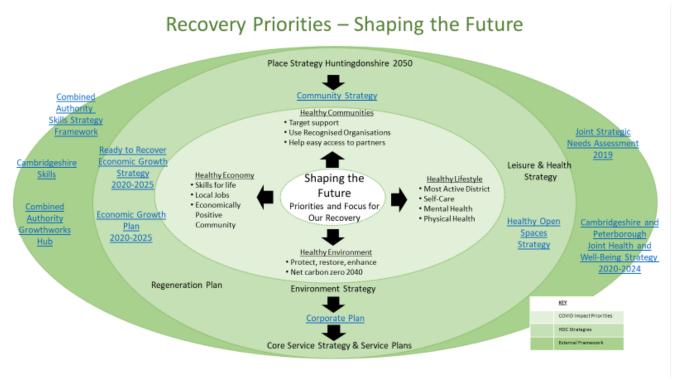
We have assessed the current effort and resource in place across the impacts identified in the Impact Assessment. As a result, the Council's agreed key priorities for Recovery are:

- WE ARE reviewing and enhancing the services and activities we deliver to ensure they meet the changing needs of our residents
- WE WILL work with our partners to influence and assist with their activities.
- WE WILL help provide opportunities for residents to improve their health and quality of life.
- WE WILL seek every opportunity to improve skills, attract businesses and provide jobs for our residents
- WE WILL support local communities to increase the help they offer to our residents.
- WE WILL continue to support and deliver Government grants and policy interventions to reduce the impact of COVID on our local economy.
- WE WILL ensure our local environment is clean and healthy for our residents.



Shaping the Future - how our Approach to Recovery will be delivered

Recovering from COVID is a priority for the whole Council and is therefore a central focus for the Council's key strategies, influencing those of our key partners. Together we are working to deliver activities for the benefit of Huntingdonshire's recovery as illustrated in the chart below:



An established Council strategy is already in place to support each key priority, their actions delivering the Council's Corporate Plan. An overview of each key strategy, and specifically how it will contribute to the Approach for Recovery is detailed on the following pages:

Huntingdonshire Community Strategy – Transition Plan 2021 - 2023

Executive Portfolio Lead	Cllr Simon Bywater (Executive Councillor for Community	
	Resilience and Wellbeing)	
Accountable Officer	Finlay Fleet (Operational Manager, Community – People)	
Link to document	TBC	

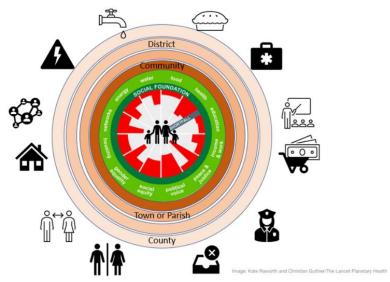
Strategy Outline:

The Council's approach for how we intend to work with, and for, our communities over 18 months as we develop a longer-term Community Strategy for Huntingdonshire.

The vision is for Huntingdonshire to support positive outcomes for residents creating an environment where solutions are found early, and communities are able to shape their own futures and meet their own needs.

The Community Strategy Transition Plan's approach is to engage with Huntingdonshire residents to:

- Provide a helping hand; to support residents to achieve good outcomes when they need us.
- Build a strong economy that our residents both drive and benefit from.
- Further the pride in Huntingdonshire and support our residents take care of their families and communities.



How the Strategy will deliver our Approach to Recovery:

To address the needs of individual residents:

- the approach will be evidence-based, responsive and proactive
- support will be targeted to those most in need and who need the most support
- continue to support our Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents
- identify and implement preventative and early intervention measures before residents fall into crisis
- seek to build an early positive relationship with residents at critical 'moments of truth' e.g.: moving house
- explore the potential for a local employment service to support residents back into employment

To continue the ongoing relationship, we have established with the local communities:

- build ongoing capacity through funding and grant bid activities
- develop a culture where residents feel confident and able to ask for help and support within their community
- integrate local voluntary and community groups to act as a front door for council services
- develop easy to use digital tools
- nurture the commercial community by encouraging people to work, shop and spend their time locally
- develop our community advocate role to represent our communities with other agencies
- establish clear community goals
- utilise, support, share and respect great examples of positive work within the community

Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Huntingdonshire 2022 - 2025

Executive Portfolio Lead	Cllr Simon Bywater (Executive Councillor for Community	
	Resilience and Wellbeing)	
Accountable Officer	Jayne Wisely (Head of Service for Leisure and Health)	
Link to document	TBC	

Strategy Outline:

The Council's approach for how we intend to improve the health of our residents, working alongside our communities and key health providers.

The vision is for Huntingdonshire to support positive health outcomes by encouraging residents in Huntingdonshire to make and take the right choices to improve and support their health and wellbeing.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to:

- support the improvement of population health and wellbeing through prevention and early intervention
- support the reduction in health inequalities across the district
- get people more active; physically, mentally and economically

HDC Population Health Framework



How the Strategy will deliver our Approach to Recovery:

Through an Integrated health and care system of providers:

- influence key decisions so they are positive for our residents
- update our local partner organisations on developments and decisions
- actively support the delivery of the priorities

Through the work on social determinants of health; support healthy initiatives for:

- the food we eat
- the money we have available
- the quality of our education (both children and adults)
- the quality of our employment

Through the work on our health, behaviours and lifestyle; deliver and promote activities to:

- reduce incidence and prevalence of diabetes
- reduce level of obesity
- improved mental health

Through the communities we live in and with; contribute to ensuring health outcomes are integral for:

- the homes we live in
- the family, friends, social networks, and community we have around us
- our surroundings & how we travel through them

Environmental and Climate Strategy; Huntingdonshire 2040

Executive Portfolio Lead	Cllr Ryan Fuller (Executive Leader, Chairman of the Cabinet and	
	Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development)	
Accountable Officer	Neil Sloper (Assistant Director Recovery)	
Link to document	TBC	

Strategy Outline:

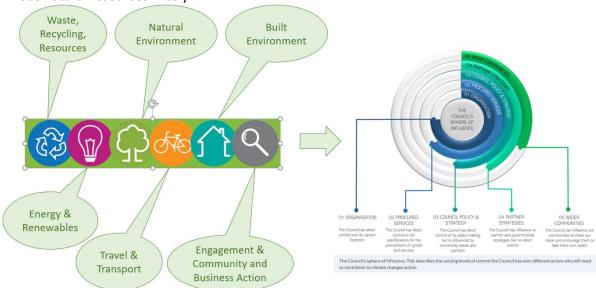
A refresh of the Council's strategic approach to environmental and climate issues based on the new environmental principles the Council adopted 15th December 2021.

The vision is for Huntingdonshire is to be net carbon zero by 2040, delivered through sustainable place-making to ensure we have:

- strong economic growth with strong environmental principles
- good design of our homes and infrastructure
- health and biodiversity net gain

The strategy's key priorities are to:

- Target net carbon zero at a district level by 2040
- Protect, restore, enhance and create new nature areas and natural capital assets
- Be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development, in line with the ambitions set out in the Government's 25-year plan, going beyond the minimum legislated requirements for development.
- Ensure that existing and new communities see real benefit from living in the Huntingdonshire.
- Use natural resources wisely.



How the Strategy will deliver our Approach to Recovery:

- 1. Provide a carbon and environmental evidence base to drive the delivery of the strategy through trackable measures and targets
- 2. Consult with our communities and businesses on their priorities and incorporate their needs into achievable actions to deliver a net carbon zero district by 2040
- 3. Lead by example by ensuring the District Council actively amends its services and activities to be net carbon zero by 2040 as an organisation
- 4. Support our communities and businesses to work with us towards the aspiration of a net carbon zero district by 2040
- Establish an appropriate communication programme to inform and influence our partner organisations, businesses, voluntary and community groups, town and parish councils and residents to positively contribute to the natural environment and reduce pollution

Economic Growth Strategy for Huntingdonshire District 2020-2025

Executive Portfolio Lead	Cllr Ryan Fuller (Executive Leader, Chairman of the Cabinet and	
	Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development)	
Accountable Officer	Nykki Rogers (Economic Development Manager)	
Link to document	Ready to Recover	

Strategy Outline:

The Council's strategic approach to meet the objectives of the Local Plan 2036 and create 14,400 new jobs within the district.

The vision is Huntingdonshire has a strong and stable economy to allow our businesses to grow locally, internationally and to attract new businesses into our district.

The strategy's key themes are:

- 1. Inward investment
- 2. Conditions for growth
- 3. Fuelling our economy
- 4. Maximising our skills
- 5. Vibrant town centres
- 6. Supporting our business sectors

How the Strategy will deliver our Approach to Recovery:

- 1. **Maximising our skills** by supporting the work of the Combined Authority of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, who lead on the activities to improve skills and employability, through:
 - District-level action plans
 - Adult education budget
 - Established Apprenticeship Hub at the University of Peterborough
 - Specific skills and employability opportunities across the health and care sector
 - Career education services

As a district Council we continue to engage with our local business to support through funding (business grants, start-up grants) and an active advice and knowledge exchange.

- 2. **Vibrant town centres** The Economic Growth Strategy was written before the pandemic and relates to supporting the workstreams in the wider Market Towns programme; to improve the four market towns in our district. There has been short-term Covid related funding through the European Regional Development Fund which aims to increase footfall to the high streets of Ramsey, Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives through a range of activities including:
 - Public promotion and communication about town centre activities
 - Support and awareness for businesses
 - Beautification and public realm improvements
 - Activities to support the visitor economy

Action Plan for the Recovery programme

As a Council we are already embedding our recovery priorities within our services to focus existing resources and work smarter. Along with the separate actions plan that will track the delivery of each of the 4 key strategy documents, the Recovery programme is committed to delivering the follow actions:

Action	When	Measure of success
Share the findings of the Impact Assessment with the voluntary sector, town and parish councils, community groups and residents.	January – April 2022	15 Registered Organisation All town and parish councils – via email All residents - via HDC website and Recovery communications
Continue to embed the data-driven approach at the core of the Council's strategy and planning.	January – March 2022	Creation of a data dictionary; internal and external datasets consolidated. Accessed and used by key HDC staff
Support services incorporate the key priorities of recovery into their service planning activities and delivery.	February – March 2022	All HDC services complete a service plan that includes activities to address the recovery key priorities
Conclude existing projects established to support recovery at the start of the pandemic or transition them into the delivery of services	March 2022	Projects successfully embedded into Business As Usual service delivery. Learning from concluded projects shared with other HDC projects.
Work with our partners to identify and deliver targeted pilot activities that test out an idea or opportunity to address the key priorities of Recovery	March – December 2022	Pilot initiatives concluded within 2-3 months with outputs owned corporately to assess the viability to scale the work (based on outcomes, funding and resource)
Revise our existing recovery dashboard reporting to monitor the key impacts of COVID ensuring they improve or continue to be prioritised in the future	February – June 2022	Dashboard version 2 to monitor existing activities to address the Recovery key priorities and track against expected progress and outcomes – new outcome targeted measures for Huntingdonshire to track progress against the identified priorities. To be reported via scrutiny supplementing the Council's existing performance measures.
Undertake a further data-driven Impact Assessment to monitor progress and inform the Council's future priorities and services	May – September 2022	Quantitative Impact Assessment created; 50 subject areas and findings shared with HDC staff, Members, and partners
Seek input from the voluntary sector, town and parish councils, community groups and residents for qualitative input into the next Impact Assessment	May – July 2022	Qualitative input gathered to inform Impact Assessment. 15 Registered Organisations and Hunts Forum, with online survey for residents
Support internal services to consider the findings of the Impact Assessment 2022 and review service deliver/ demand and make necessary changes	September 2022 – November 2022	All HDC services complete a service plan that includes activities to address the recovery key priorities
Decommission the Recovery programme of work to ensure all active work is transitioned into Business As Usual and all lessons learnt are shared corporately	October 2022 – December 2022	End Project Reports for each concluding projects, Transition plans for each continuing project. End Programme Report for Recovery programme and Lessons Learnt created and shared with Corporate SLT and Members

