

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title: Covid Recovery – Shaping the Future

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 17th March 2022

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Recovery

Report by: Assistant Director Recovery and
Recovery Programme Manager

Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

Huntingdonshire District Council established an 18 month programme in 2021 to support and enable resilience amongst our communities and businesses to recover from the impacts arising from the Covid -19 pandemic. An evidence led approach through impact assessment, identified the main effects of the pandemic within Huntingdonshire – allowing better understanding of the challenges, highlighting those most significant and focusing action to address them.

The document '**Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery from COVID-19**' sets out how we will continue to prioritise work with communities and partners to ensure residents and businesses can get the right support, at the right time, in the right way. This approach uses knowledge from detailed analysis, setting out what this means for us and our partners and what Huntingdonshire District Council intends to do about it.

We cannot address many of the issues identified on our own, some are the responsibility of our partners. **Shaping the Future** sets out how we will take a lead in achieving an environment within which Huntingdonshire and its people can thrive through growth and opportunities, protecting and enhancing the natural beauty of the area and ensuring the creation of sustainable places where people want to live.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet adopt '**Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery from COVID-19**' as the foundation of the Council's approach and way of working to ensure it takes the lead with its partners, communities and its services to ensure residents and businesses can get the right support, at the right time, in the right way to recover and deliver the **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

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to present '**Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery from COVID-19**' (**Appendix A**) which sets out how we will continue to prioritise work with communities and partners to ensure residents and businesses can get the right support, at the right time, in the right way.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The COVID Recovery Programme (see Appendix B – Scope) was initiated from through a Community Impact Assessment that Members considered at Overview and Scrutiny panel on 8 July 2020 looking at the things that were forecast to happen, the potential risks for Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2. A dashboard was set up to monitor the potential risks as the pandemic continued.
- 2.3. The Recovery Programme was set up in response to mitigate these issues with 18 projects/initiatives focusing on:
 - Publicising actions and support – **reputation and impact**
 - Stimulating services to pull in the **right direction** to respond to the impacts of COVID-19
 - Stimulating and supporting activity in the **right places**, not just Council delivery
 - Starting a legacy of **new ways of preventing** and addressing needs
- 2.4. As the Recovery Programme progressed, the number of projects were refined in 2021 to those addressing longer term needs, there are now 8 remaining in delivery under the programme.
- 2.5. To accurately assess the impacts of COVID over the duration of the pandemic (March 2020 to September 2021) a further Impact Assessment was conducted. Unlike the initial Community Impact Assessment 2020, where the objective was to identify the likely impacts of COVID over the forthcoming months (a forward view), the 2021 Impact Assessment uses data to establish where the impacts of COVID have been most significant (retrospective view). Concluded at the end of October 2021, this was presented and endorsed by Members at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) 2nd December 2021.
- 2.6. The COVID Recovery Programme continues to ensure the successful delivery of projects delivered by the Council whilst retaining a monitoring function on activities and projects delivered by partners. The COVID Recovery Programme also remains aligned to the regeneration driven by the Market Towns Programme.
- 2.7. The current scope of projects within the Recovery Programme are:
 - Food Network; to establish Food Banks and develop a Huntingdonshire Food Poverty Action Plan.
 - Early Intervention; to develop a diagnostic signposting tool (app).
 - Business Digitisation; to register 100 stores registered with Click It Local (local online shopping platform) and improve digitalisation for local businesses.

- Kickstart; to provide and fill 50 HDC placements and 50 Gateway (non-HDC) placements.
- Job Clubs; to establish 6 job clubs.
- Healthy Living; to increase physical activity for inactive residents.
- Welcome Back; to support local businesses and increase footfall in the High Streets of our four market towns.

2.5 The Council has recently adopted a Community Strategy which sets out how Huntingdonshire District Council will work with residents and community groups to support the best possible outcomes for Huntingdonshire, its residents and businesses. This approach is critical to recovery and embedding the capability and capacity for prevention as well as response in relation to the key impacts on our communities that have arisen from COVID-19.

2.6 Given the cross-cutting nature of the Recovery work, linking a wide range of services, a dedicated Executive Councillor, Councillor Steve Criswell, was appointed to the Cabinet in October to oversee the Council's approach to Recovery.

3. SHAPING THE FUTURE

3.1. **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** (Appendix A) is not an additional strategy, it is an approach that sets out the key priorities identified for Huntingdonshire based on a review of evidence through the two Impact Assessments undertaken and follows the framework of the already adopted Grand Challenges, implemented by the County's public sector service providers (and detailed within Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan.) These are set out 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.

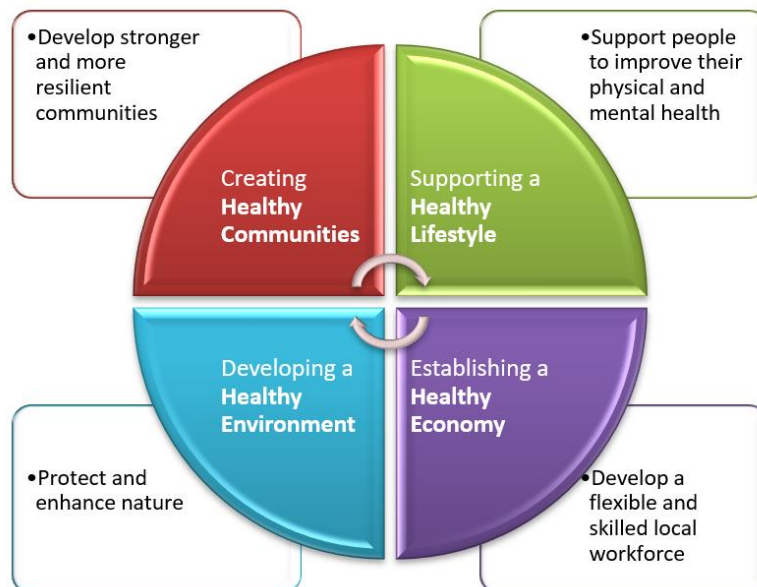
3.2. **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** is not about more money and new projects, but describes how the Council will work smarter by direct its own resources and influence those of others, to best address the fifteen priority areas identified through Impact Assessment:

<p>Good start PROVIDE life opportunities for residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ SUPPORT our residents in Huntingdonshire to successfully adjust to all life-changing events they experience from birth to grave <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve education and support for children 0-16 yrs • Improve further education and apprenticeships for 16+ yrs • Improve personal safety (in the home) • Prevent and reduce low income and poverty • Prevent and reduce emergency access to food 	<p>Good health PROVIDE active opportunities for residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ENCOURAGE our residents in Huntingdonshire to make and take the right choices to improve or support their health and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent and reduce obesity • Increase physical activity • Improve mental health • Prevent and reduce adult social care
<p>Good place STRENGTHEN the local community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ SUPPORT our residents in Huntingdonshire to remain living in the area with affordable housing and a manageable cost of living <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create affordable housing for local residents • Improve personal safety (outside the home) <p>ENHANCE the local environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ TAKE positive action to preserve and protect the natural environment when making improvements and developments to Huntingdonshire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase use of parks and open spaces • Increase use of active travel (walking and cycling) • Increase public transport usage (bus and rail) 	<p>Good work STRENGTHEN the local economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ SUPPORT our Huntingdonshire businesses if impacts such as COVID vs Brexit and/or lack of skills and employment emerge over the coming year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve skills and employment

The main identified concerns are the impact and resilience of people in terms of:

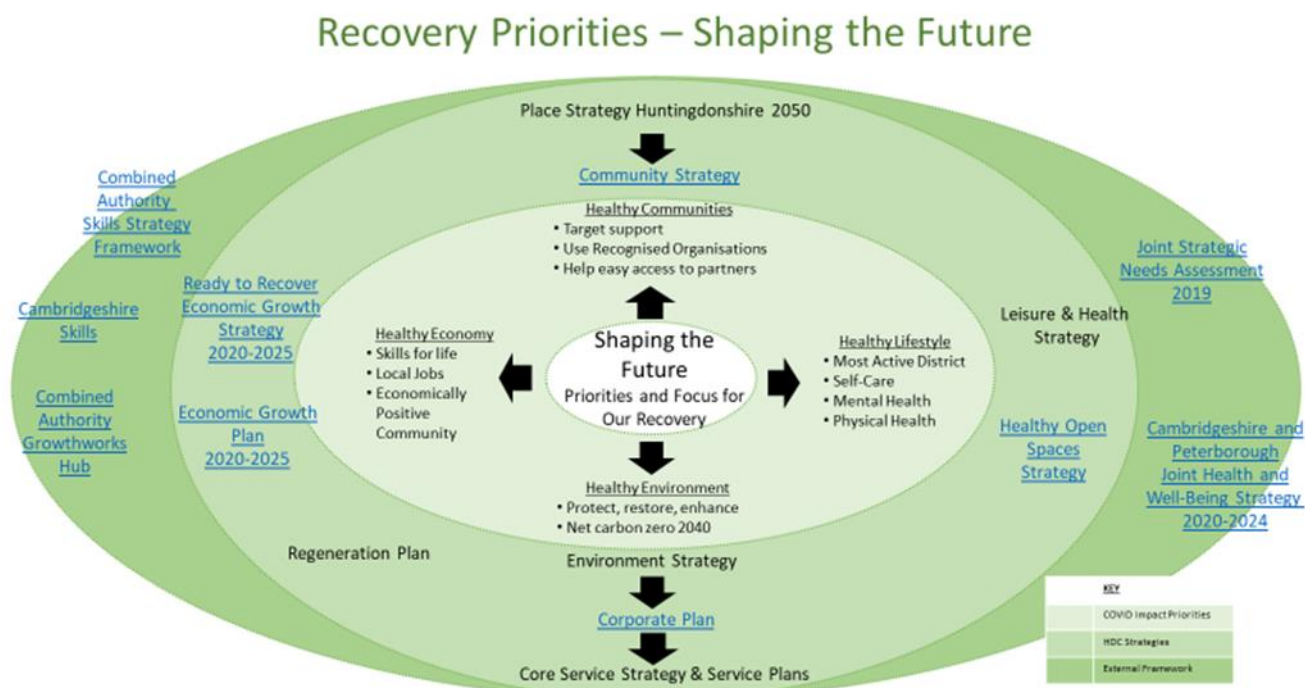
- **Healthy Economy** – skills/opportunities
- **Living Well** – at all stages of life including prevention through activities that benefit mental and physical health

3.3. **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** is also about attracting funding and activity to meet our identified needs working with partners and leveraging our existing strategies to meet the key priorities for recovery:



- 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.

- 3.4. **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** is about adapting our existing strategies to support recovery and a more resilient Huntingdonshire. Recovering from COVID-19 is a priority for the whole Council and the priorities are therefore informing and refocussing the key strategies that deliver the Council’s Corporate Plan, Shaping the Future sets this out:



- 3.5 **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** includes an action plan outlining the key actions that will conclude the Recovery Programme, so that the approach, principles and evidence has successfully been integrated into the way in which the Council continues to deliver its own activities and those delivered in conjunction with our community and partners. This will also see the projects/initiatives that have been set up to address specific needs be incorporated into the normal activity of the Council or be ceased as the need has been addressed.

4. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 4.1 The impact assessments underpin an evidence based approach for **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery**. This informs the focus of the Council, its communities and partners in achieving an environment within which Huntingdonshire and its people can thrive, protecting and enhancing the natural beauty of the area and ensuring the creation of sustainable places where people want to live.
- 4.2 We cannot address many of the issues identified on our own, some are the responsibility of our partners. **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** allows the Council to take a lead with partners and our communities with an evidence base to support the delivery of the Council’s vision: **a safe and healthy environment, deliver economic growth and create opportunities for the people of Huntingdonshire.**
- 4.2 The second impact assessment in 2021 set out the key issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic against the four key goals of the Corporate Strategic Plan: Good Start, Good Health, Good Work and Good Place.

- 4.3 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.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The development of the Impact Assessments underpinning **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** have been a collaborative process across the Council with the information and initial analysis undertaken by the Transformation team and consultation with assigned theme leads to inform the assessment of magnitude of impact and degree of certainty regarding the information.
- 5.2 This report is the start of collaboration with Scrutiny Panel members to discuss the findings and key impacts identified that will inform the planning of service provision but also our wider engagement with the community and our partners to maximise the resources and activities in Huntingdonshire targeted at addressing the impacts identified as resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.3 The evidence base and subsequent **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** will be shared with our partners to ensure their work and priorities recognise and contribute to the key challenges identified by the Council that should be addressed to ensure our partners, community and ourselves improve the lives of our residents and businesses into the future, irrespective of the many challenges ahead.

6. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 6.1 The Panel discussed the Covid Recovery – Shaping the Future report at its meeting on 3rd March 2022.
- 6.2 Following a question from Councillor D’Souza regarding the diagram on page 68 of the report on the lack of significant impacts under the good work area, the Panel heard that this was due to the interventions rolled out to businesses. Whilst residents had been adversely affected by the pandemic, businesses had not fared as badly due to Government assistance e.g.: Furlough, Business grants etc. so the impacts for businesses had been much less. The Panel were reassured that partnership working with the Combined Authority and their Growth Hub was being undertaken to ensure the best outcome for residents in terms of improvements to skills and employability and Cambridgeshire County Council through Cambridgeshire Skills, adult and community learning service.
- 6.3 Following a further question from Councillor D’Souza on the scope of projects in Appendix B, the Panel were advised some projects were directly delivered by the Recovery programme and others were delivered by our partners. The committee were also advised of the practical interventions that the Council continues to be involved with through jobs clubs provision and work with the DWP including the successful Kick Start project.
- 6.4 Councillor Gardener commented on the increase in active travel within the district, in particular the local bus services being run in conjunction with the Combined Authority. The Panel heard that the model presented was of close working with key partners which allowed access to baseline data highlighting the impact and trajectory of trends even if there was no statutory duty on the district.
- 6.5 Councillor Alban provided anecdotal evidence of local businesses who had positive feedback on business grants that they had benefitted from. The Panel heard that the team were acutely aware of qualitative analysis and ensured that data collected was fed into the evidence base and the next Impact Assessment.
- 6.6 Councillors West and Councillor Wilson praised the report and stated that it gave confidence for future working. The Panel heard that the impact assessment was being undertaken for a third time to ensure early indicators were flagged and to better allow for future forecasting.
- 6.7 The Panel welcomed the report and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications from this report

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no additional resource implications arising from this report

9. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in respect of health have been highlighted as a key impact and priority in Huntingdonshire. Work continues in respect of the specific recovery project: Healthy Living; to increase physical

activity for inactive residents and the key priority of Living Well within **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery** will be delivered through the Council's Health and Well-being Strategy.

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The recognition of the key priorities impacting Huntingdonshire arising from the COVID-19 pandemic supports:

- Future service planning informed by the evidenced priorities
- Effective deployment of recovery intervention projects on the main issues
- Enables officers and Councillors to make the case with our community and partners for resources and efforts to tackle the main issues impacting Huntingdonshire to deliver our Corporate objectives.

10.2 **Shaping the Future – our approach to recovery from COVID-19** is the foundation of the Council's approach and way of working to ensure it takes the lead with its partners, communities and its services to ensure residents and businesses can get the right support, at the right time, in the right way to recover and deliver the **Vision for Huntingdonshire** that:

- Supports a safe and healthy environment
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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A (SHAPING THE FUTURE – OUR APPROACH TO RECOVERY FROM COVID-19)

APPENDIX B (SCOPE OF RECOVERY PROGRAMME JAN 2021)

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Recovery Report - Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) 8 July 2020

<http://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=10235&MId=7756>

Recovery Programme – Special Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) 25 January 2021

<http://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=10235&MId=7897>

Community (Transition) Strategy 2021-23

<https://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s117477/5.%20Community%20Transition%20Strategy%202021%202023%20Covering%20Report.pdf>

IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2021

[HTTP://APPLICATIONS.HUNTINGDONSHIRE.GOV.UK/MODERNGOV/DOCUMENTS/S118334/5.%20COVID%2019%20DISTRICT%20IMPACT%20ASSESSMENT.PDF](http://APPLICATIONS.HUNTINGDONSHIRE.GOV.UK/MODERNGOV/DOCUMENTS/S118334/5.%20COVID%2019%20DISTRICT%20IMPACT%20ASSESSMENT.PDF)

IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2020

<http://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s109777/Appendix%201%20-%20Community%20Impact%20Assessment%20Economy%20Environment%20Social%20and%20Community%20Recovery.pdf> Impact Assessment October 2021

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Name/Job Title: Neil Sloper – Assistant Director Recovery
Tel No: 01480 787635
Email: neil.sloper@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Name/Job Title: Liz Smith – Recovery Programme Manager
Email: liz.smith@huntingdonshire.gov.uk