



REPORT TO: SPECIAL MEETING OF MORAY COUNCIL 18 FEBRUARY 2021

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RECOVERY AND RENEWAL IN MORAY – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

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1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on progress with recovery, noting that the last overarching update report was provided to the Recovery and Renewal Working Group on 17 November 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:-

- i) considers feedback from the public engagement on the Strategic Framework (RRSF) summarised in Appendices 1 and 2;**
- ii) considers the main issues raised in this engagement and the relevant service responses set out in Appendix 3;**
- iii) considers the first draft Recovery and Renewal Action Plan in Appendix 4 and its relationship with developing policy at national and local level, as well as the proposed next steps;**
- iv) notes broad progress in terms of the Recovery and Renewal Programme; and**
- v) notes work ongoing to ensure that lessons learned in the response phase are considered as services are recovered.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Recovery and Renewal Strategic Framework (RRSF) was approved for consultation and engagement by the Council at its meeting on 24 June 2020 (para 3 of the minute refers). At that meeting, it was agreed to form a Recovery and Renewal Group (RRWG) based on the membership of the Emergency Cabinet to inform and influence progress and to receive regular updates. Since that date, a revised Group Leaders group has been formed and it has been agreed that this group will now act as the RRWG.

3.2 Regular service level and issue based updates have been provided to the RRWG since June 2020, including overarching updates in September and November 2020. However, the course of the pandemic has not been as anticipated when the RRSF programme was prepared, and this has meant that the focus of the Council has been moving constantly between response (the nature of which changes as the pandemic progresses, recent examples including the vaccination programme, community testing, the return to online learning and the swathe of new grants and financial supports introduced), maintaining normal services as far as possible and recovery activity, with the balance shifting between the three spheres depending on the public health issues and demands prevailing at the time. In addition, officers are endeavouring to progress a significant improvement agenda in terms of the Best Value Action Plan. This has impacted on the progress which has been possible with recovery in terms of the RRSF. This report draws together at very high level progress with the RRSF since June 2020, but it should be noted that due to the dynamic environment in which this work has progressed, this report cannot accurately capture activity across all spheres of recovery. Service based actions have however been reported through the two composite committees currently in operation and RRWG.

4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

4.1 Stage 1 Engagement

The initial stage of the public engagement on the Recovery and Renewal Strategic Framework (RRSF) itself, the vision, aims and outcomes, was undertaken in July 2020, with engagement promoted via social media and contacts with community organisations across Moray. The six outcomes were as follows:

- Priority is given to groups and areas most affected by the pandemic
- Those who are vulnerable, experiencing financial hardship or are otherwise adversely impacted feel supported
- The benefits of initiatives and developments created in the response phase are embedded in resilient service delivery in the “new normal”
- Long term resilience, sustainability and capacity in communities is improved by building on community responses to the pandemic
- The economy, businesses, partners and infrastructure of Moray achieve stability and support to recover and grow
- The long-term impacts upon the people of Moray are mitigated and managed allowing wellbeing to be advanced

4.2 Responses were limited but almost 80% either agreed or strongly agreed with the content of the RRSF.

4.3 Stage 2 Engagement

Members of CMT participated in virtual meetings with community organisations across Moray over the summer as part of Phase 2 of the engagement process, learning about experiences at community level, what did and didn't work and what each community saw as the main issues and challenges for their area. Information from these meetings is produced as **Appendix 1**.

- 4.4 In addition an online survey was conducted over August and September 2020. 1480 responses were received to this which were then analysed as set out in **Appendix 2**. Whilst this is a small percentage of the Moray population, this represents a strong response to a council survey, particularly given that responses were received from every data zone in Moray. The key messages are contained in the executive summary of the analysis report, but it was apparent from the responses that relatively few households had at that point direct experience of COVID-19 infection, although sadly six respondents had suffered a bereavement due to the virus. Again at that stage employment impacts were limited, but most indicated they would want to stay in Moray if they were made redundant and 40% were willing to look at retraining. Overall service changes due to the pandemic were not problematic but changes to recycle collections and introduction of the booking system for waste recycling centres had a major impact for some. Relatively few respondents requested support during the lockdown and most received the support they needed, but it was recognised that respondents were not fully representative of the demographics in Moray with males, the older and younger generations under represented. No major concerns were indicated with guidance, information or volunteering support and some of the excellent work done by volunteers was commended, with 22% of respondents having volunteered themselves. At the time of the survey, most felt optimistic for the future. Concerns were however expressed about the ability of services to reach some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, particularly those who did not have family or friends to support them.
- 4.5 The issues surfaced in both stages of the public engagement have been summarised in **Appendix 3** along with service responses.

5. RECOVERY AND RENEWAL DRAFT ACTION PLAN

- 5.1 In order to preserve a coherent and systematic approach to strategic planning and service delivery, actions to deliver the RRSF outcomes were incorporated in the 2020-2022 Service Plans recently approved. This allowed actions to deliver the Corporate Plan priorities, service level priorities and RRSF outcomes to be viewed holistically. For present purposes however, the RRSF activities have been consolidated in Version 1 of the Draft Recovery and Renewal Action Plan (RRAP) and this is produced as **Appendix 4**.
- 5.2 From this a number of observations can be made:
- As mentioned in section 3, the context for the RRSF has changed significantly since June and as a result, a period will be required to recalibrate recovery activity which has not been as fully developed as had been hoped by this point. In terms of the programme originally set out, January 2021 was to mark the point at which the Council moved to a medium term approach, adjusting to a settled “new normal” and reviewing the alignment between short term recovery action plans and pre COVID-19 medium to long term strategies. Instead, it is not yet clear what the medium term will hold and significant further

development of recovery action plans is still required in many areas. The RRAP represents only the early stages of this process.

- In reviewing Version 1 of the RRAP, consideration will be given to whether the service responses in Appendix 3 are fully comprehended within existing service plans and if they are not, what further work and resources may be required to address the issues
- The RRSF outcomes as framed in June 2020 cannot readily be reconciled with the four Harms categorisation which has evolved nationally since that time which references direct health harms, non COVID-19 health harms, social impacts, now referred to as “social renewal”, and economic impacts. However, the outcomes viewed broadly do address social renewal and economic recovery across the piece, with health related harms encompassed in strategic planning ongoing by NHS Grampian and the Moray Integration Joint Board.

6 THE SPHERES OF RECOVERY

6.1 Health and Social Care Recovery

The Moray Health and Social Care Partnership continues to support the NHS Grampian Operation Snowdrop, with a focus on:

- Staff Health & Wellbeing
- Critical & Protected Services
- Test & Protect
- Vaccination
- Surge & Flow

The outcomes of the covid pandemic are likely to be the build-up of health debt, where people have not presented but will do at a later date, and where the level of demand could be cumulatively high, for both physical and mental health needs. This will need to be managed alongside the level of demand that would normally occur. Initiatives such as Home First look to move upstream, and manage demand earlier in order to deliver better outcomes for individuals. The Integration Joint Board continues to drive forward its Strategic Plan which has as its basis the prevention and early intervention principles. There are specific funding streams coming through centrally that will pump prime local initiatives to move intervention upstream.

6.2 Economic Recovery

In terms of economic recovery, a plan for economic recovery was approved by the Council on 28 October 2020 (para 14 of the minute refers) and is underway. An update of activity in terms of that plan is set out in **Appendix 5**.

6.3 Education Recovery

Having returned in August 2020 with the focus on return to school being on well-being, numeracy and literacy, schools closed on 18 December at the end of winter term, returning for keyworker and vulnerable children childcare on 6 January and remote learning for all pupils on 11 January. This represents a further period of disruption for pupils giving ongoing challenge for attainment and particular concerns about SQA awards. Given the concerns about the

impact of lockdown on children and young people there has been a focus nationally on returning to in person learning as early as it is safe to do so. Following the Scottish Government announcement on 2 February, planning is underway to prepare for a phased return to school from 22 February. This will begin with early years and primary 1 to 3 returning full-time and a part-time, very limited return for senior phase (S4-6) pupils to allow in-school practical work necessary for the completion of national qualification courses (intended to be no more than 5-8% of pupils present at one time). Secondary staff are focussing on assessment and moderation for senior pupils in order to meet the emerging requirements for evidence to support SQA awards. Balancing this with continued remote learning for S1-3 is particularly difficult.

Arrangements are also being put in place to commence twice weekly at-home covid testing of staff in schools and ELC settings attached to schools and senior pupils in secondary schools. Delivery of in school learning for children of keyworkers and vulnerable families, remote learning for all pupils not returning to school full-time and undertaking test and trace requirements when cases of covid occur will all also continue.

The extensive disruption to learning and lack of contact with peers over the extended period of lockdowns and remote learning will have a considerable impact on children and young people. At present, the demands are such that the focus is on current service provision and making the adjustments and plans required for phased return. Once a stable position is reached, there will be a need for assessment and review to plan for recovery effectively.

6.4 **Social Renewal**

The outcomes relating to priority being given to those most affected by the pandemic, supporting the vulnerable and building long term resilience in our communities are most relevant in this area, although this agenda is cross cutting and so is relevant to all outcomes.

6.5 In June 2020, a Social Renewal Advisory Board was created and tasked with making proposals to renew Scotland as it emerges from the pandemic, focussed on reducing poverty and disadvantage, advancing equality and embedding a human rights approach. The board considered work across nine thematic policy circles: low income, community led and place based renewal, cross cutting delivery, financial security, food, the housing system, the third sector, and volunteering. The board published their final report on 21 January and this is produced [here](#). The report, "If not now, when?" contains twenty calls to action and related recommendations set under three key principles:

- **Money and Work** – *'We believe that everyone should have a basic level of income from employment and social security'*.
- **People, Rights and Advancing Equality** – *'We believe that everyone should see their rights realised and have access to a range of basic rights, goods and services'*.
- **Communities and Collective Endeavour** – *'We believe that we need to work together to deliver a fairer society and we need to give more power to people and communities and empower frontline teams'*.

6.6 COSLA is considering the Local Government response to these recommendations. Many of the recommendations lie in the purview of the Scottish Government, for example committing to a minimum wage guarantee or incorporating international human rights instruments into Scots law. Many however will require local support and development, such as the promotion of fair work, adequate and accessible housing, access to nutritious, appropriate and affordable food and others. Many of these areas are already reflected in recovery plans. So for example fair work is part of the community wealth building approach in the Economic Recovery Plan. The area where linkages between the RRSF outcomes and themes are perhaps clearest however is as regards the Communities and Collective endeavour theme which has clear areas of cross over with all six RRSF outcomes. This theme is expressed as follows:

- Further shift the balance of power so individuals and communities have more control over decisions that affect their lives.
- Improve service delivery and design by empowering frontline teams and the people and communities they serve.
- Build on new ways of working, based on what has worked well during the pandemic, and develop new arrangements for local governance.
- Focus all and everyone's activities on building more resilient, fairer, healthier and stronger communities and places
- Co-design how we assess progress towards renewal, incorporating deeper engagement with those people and communities who have first-hand experience of poverty, inequality and restricted life chances.

6.7 Work ongoing around this theme locally is as follows:

- **Community Resilience**
A priority for recovery and renewal is the development of Community Resilience Plans. As part of supporting communities a working group has been formed to progress resilience plans in Moray. The group gave a presentation at the Joint Community Council on resilient communities and Community Councils have now agreed to co-ordinate the plans at a local level so that contact details and local information is kept up to date. Areas have been identified to start producing the first plans, with a focus on areas with existing challenges such as flooding. Support for Community Anchor organisations is also continuing, mainly through information sharing and online meetings. Two communities (Lossiemouth and Forres) are currently developing Community Plans, prioritising community recovery from the pandemic. This approach builds on the process used for the Loip locality plans which begins with evidence gathering and developing a shared understanding with communities before identifying, prioritising and planning actions. Proposals are also being brought forward as part of the Council's budget setting for 2021/22 for investment in participatory budgeting, empowering communities to participate in decisions about services and how council funding is spent in their area, all of which will add to community resilience and sustainability.
- **Poverty, Inequality and Restricted Life Chances**

Further work is required to develop the poverty response in Moray. General analysis of the impact of covid is that it has exacerbated existing issues associated with poverty, with some groups such as women and in work low income families experiencing heightened impacts. A survey undertaken by TSi on behalf of the Moray community planning partnership and reported to the Fairer Moray Forum in October 2020 identifies particular experiences in Moray during the COVID-19 pandemic that can be used to help develop understanding of the local issues. Existing community based work (for the LOIP and as referred to above) is targeted at the greatest inequalities of outcomes and so there will be some overlap with this work in addressing poverty. However, poverty is an area that within the council has not had strategic leadership and direction across its spectrum up to now, that is not resourced and that requires to be developed in order that the council can consider its priorities in tackling the poverty agenda, including the impact of and recovery from the pandemic. This is being brought forward as a possible option for investment in the Council's budget for 2021/22. Reference is also made to the [Draft Child Poverty Action Plan](#) and the latest [report on progress](#) considered by the Moray Community Planning Board meeting on 10 February 2021.

7 PROGRESS WITH THE RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1 For the reasons set out in the report, it has not been possible to make progress with the RRSF as hoped. The Council remains at stage 2 in terms of the programme agreed in June 2020 and will be unable to make cross cutting progress into stage 3 (scheduled to start in January 2021) until the pressures of response are reduced allowing attention to shift back to recovery. This does not mean that recovery activity will stop. So for example, economic recovery activity will continue to progress, but delivery may be slower than hoped for as resources are diverted to grant allocation and processing. Similarly, aspects of social recovery and renewal will be progressed as set out above. In other areas such as education however, recovery cannot resume until we reach a steady state and capacity dedicated to responding to changing guidance at national level is released. Updates will continue to be provided through Group Leaders, but significant progress into stage 3 is unlikely before the summer.

8 LESSONS LEARNED

- 8.1 Some lessons are already being acted upon in terms of the consultation and engagements feedback as reflected in **Appendix 3**. In addition, COSLA and the Improvement Service have prepared a report on Lessons Learned during COVID-19 which is in the process of being finalised. This recognises the agility of local government in its response, along with areas such as digital advancement, the role of Local Resilience Partnerships, importance of partnership working and community engagement, sustainability of the Third Sector and pressures on key services such as environmental health and local government budgets. Officers will consider the report in detail once it has been finalised when capacity allows attention to return to this aspect of recovery planning.

9 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report outlines how recovery planning for COVID-19 is being progressed while remaining true to the core values and most pressing objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and LOIP.

(b) Policy and Legal

National policy guidance is being reviewed regularly as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect services and planning for recovery has taken account of the recovery Route Map and latest guidance issued by the Scottish Government as it relates to local circumstances.

(c) Financial implications

Financial implications are being reported regularly. Every effort is being made to adapt and design services without incurring additional costs, but for new services this is unlikely to be possible and bids for additional funding in some areas will be part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

(d) Risk Implications

Risk identification and management is a key part of the role of the Recovery and Renewal Management Team, and issues will be identified in the project management processes set up for each work stream. Risks identified at a strategic level will be incorporated into the Council's Risk Register and internal audit will have a role to play in taking an overview of risk management in the recovery process.

There are numerous risks involved in the recovery process including:

- Health and safety of citizens and service users and employees
- Council premises, physical and cyber security
- Supply chain risk
- Technology and information
- Financial and economic risk
- Governance
- Serious organised crime, fraud
- Legal and commercial including the evolving national context

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications from this report. Specific workforce issues will be considered as part of the detailed work being undertaken in recovery. It should be recognised however that staff are under immense pressure and that capacity is being managed with priority given to response and service maintenance.

(f) Property

Property issues are part of the planning process in light of social distancing policy and will be kept under review. With a substantial increase in home working and more online contact with our customers,

there may be options to rationalise our estate beyond the levels previously considered possible when social distancing is eased.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Equity, fairness and inclusion are highlighted as key considerations in recovery nationally and are also highlighted in the proposed Recovery and Renewal Framework. Recovery planning across the council will require the preparation of Equality Impact Assessments to inform progress and these are already underway for services which are undergoing material redesign as they are recovered. Community engagement will be delivered in ways which recognise the need to include hard to reach groups, many of whom will have experienced the most severe impacts of the pandemic.

(h) Consultations

CMT has been consulted on the content of this report.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 Activity to inform and develop the Council's approach to recovery and renewal continues. Pressures arising from a return to response have however delayed progress with the RRSF Programme and preparation of an overarching RRAP which addresses all relevant areas is still at an early stage.

10.2 Until pressures arising from response and service maintenance while staff are diverted to response are reduced, limited further progress with development of the RRAP is likely. Recovery work is still progressing in discrete areas however where resources allow. Updates will continue to be provided to Group Leaders.

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Background Papers:
Ref: SPMAN-1108985784-580