



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2021

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

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

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 Council on 18 February 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- i) notes the update on key developments at a national level;**
- ii) considers the broad update on local activity and developments across the 4 harms;**
- iii) considers the update on progress with the Recovery and Renewal Action Plan (RRAP) at Appendix 1 and lessons learned; and**
- iv) notes broad progress in terms of the Recovery and Renewal Programme at Appendix 2 and agrees the reprofiling now proposed.**

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) and during engagement met with broad support. Since that date regular updates have been provided to Group Leaders sitting as the Recovery and Renewal Working Group (RRWG) and to Council on 18 February 2021 (para 8 of the minute refers).

3.2 At the meeting in February it was noted that the course of the pandemic had not been as anticipated when the RRSF programme was prepared, with focus moving constantly between response, maintaining normal services as far as possible and recovery activity, and this had had an impact on the depth and pace of recovery activity possible and so on progress along the timeline

initially identified in 2020 which anticipated the re-engineering of existing strategies starting in January 2021.

- 3.3 Since the last report there have been many noteworthy milestones: the Test and Protect programme has been significantly expanded with 87% of those 18 and over now double vaccinated and progress being made vaccinating those under 18; the phased return of schools was completed; the furlough scheme was extended and Scotland has gradually seen restrictions eased to the point where, after a brief period in May during which the area was held at level 3, Moray has now progressed with the rest of country beyond level zero. While limited restrictions such as social distancing remain for some activities, the hard won freedoms we now enjoy are welcomed by all and should enable greater focus on recovery and renewal in the coming months. Given the unpredictability of the pandemic however, with significant ongoing increases in case numbers and resulting impacts across the four harms, we must remain vigilant as to what the winter months may hold.
- 3.4 Whilst previous reports have focussed on work around the 4 harms in the context of the RRSF and RRAP, supporting work not referenced in the RRAP but directly related to recovery continues including:
- The Short to Medium Term Financial Strategy has been reviewed and forms a separate item on this agenda
 - Governance arrangements have been reviewed and also form a separate item on this agenda
 - Other aspects such as workforce planning and development, service re-design and digital transformation are encapsulated within the Improvement and Modernisation Programme an update for which was provided to council on 12 May 2021.
- 3.5 This report will draw together at high level information on:
- Developments at national level
 - Local progress viewed in terms of the 4 harms, noting that detailed information has been submitted through the relevant service committees
 - Progress/Reporting relative to the Recovery and Renewal Action Plan (RRAP) and lessons learned
 - Progress with the Recovery Programme and a proposal to extend the timeline for recovery activity in light of the extended nature of the pandemic

4. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1 The Accounts Commission Local Government Overview report 2021 was published in May and set out 8 key messages identified including: relationships with communities and the versatility of our workforce have been vital; the financial impact of covid has been unprecedented; the need to learn from the covid response and not simply revert to business as usual.
- 4.2 Housing to 2040 was launched in March 2021 setting out the Scottish Government's vision for 100,000 more affordable homes over the next decade with a particular focus on rent controls, decarbonisation and introduction of a

new housing standard across all tenures. A new tenant support grant was also launched to avoid evictions as a result of COVID-19 related arrears.

- 4.3 Employability has also been a critical area with a new COSLA Leadership Group established in May 2021 across the public and private sectors seeking to drive this agenda forward.
- 4.4 In terms of economic funding, various additional supports have been rolled out including City and Regional Recovery funding announced in March; funding for staycation pressures has been provided along with various supports for tourism; a community wealth building officer has been recruited to drive this agenda forward in Moray ahead of the Community Wealth Building Act.
- 4.5 Education: Education Scotland and the SQA are to be reformed as part of the implementation of the OECD's recommendations for structural change in Scotland, including delivery of the national curriculum, assessment, qualification and inspection functions. Confirmation is awaited of the SQA assessment processes for academic year 2021/22 and whether there will be a return to an examination based system.
- 4.6 Health: additional funding has been provided for health and social care workforce wellbeing and for health care improvements. Further commentary is beyond the scope of this report.
- 4.7 John Swinney was appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery, a new Covid-19 Recovery Committee was set up in Holyrood and a Covid Recovery Strategy for Scotland is now in development. This is proposed to progress through shared leadership between the Scottish Government and Local Government in Scotland, working collaboratively across sectors and communities. The evolving vision, priorities and principles of this strategy closely resemble those in the Council's RRSF. As actions are developed in terms of this national strategy, progress with recovery and renewal locally will be kept under review to minimise gaps and overlaps.
- 4.8 The new Programme of Government and First 100 Days Commitments also include pledges intended to directly support recovery including funding for the No One Left Behind employability agenda; additional teaching, classroom and Developing the Young Workforce support for schools; support for digitisation and device provision in schools; extension of free schools meals and food funding for families with young children; play park improvements and free bus travel for under 22s; development of a new 10 year National Strategy for Economic Transformation including a green recovery.
- 4.9 At a UK level, looking beyond grant settlements and Barnett consequentials, the UK Government opened the Community Renewal Fund for 2021/22 to support covid recovery and as a precursor to the Shared Prosperity Fund opening in 2022, and also began the process for roll out of funding in terms of the Levelling Up Programme.

5. LOCAL PROGRESS ACROSS THE FOUR HARMS

5.1 Health Harms: Direct and Indirect

The outcomes of the RRSF concerning prioritising those most affected by the pandemic, supporting the vulnerable and advancing wellbeing are most relevant to this harm.

- 5.1.1 Throughout the pandemic those who needed to Shield have been well supported by a variety of agencies working collaboratively to protect those most at risk from covid. As society has opened up the best defence alongside the existing social distancing measures in place is the covid vaccination programme. Nearly 93% of Moray residents have received a first vaccine, and 87% have to date received a second dose. The vaccination programme will remain in place to protect those most at risk through a flu vaccination campaign, and any further extension of the covid vaccination.
- 5.1.2 Our third sector have continued to work alongside statutory services supporting a range of vulnerable groups throughout the pandemic, and in particular maintaining services for those seeking help for drug and alcohol addiction. The Moray Alcohol and Drug Partnership continued to meet and plan ahead, and the plan for 21/22 delivers further opportunity for rehabilitation programmes that support individuals and their families. Mental health services have developed their support mechanisms and will maintain choice whereby clients can access services remotely.
- 5.1.3 It is recognised that there may be many more individuals who are experiencing poor mental health as a result of the pandemic. The NHS will be rolling out programmes to develop a Trauma Informed Workforce. Led by NHS Education for Scotland, the National Trauma Training Programme (NTTP) have produced a knowledge and skills framework for the Scottish workforce, alongside training resources appropriate for all levels across the workforce. Being trauma informed means being able to recognise when someone may be affected by trauma, collaboratively adjusting how we work to take this into account and responding in a way that supports recovery, does no harm and recognises and supports people's resilience. This programme also supports the work of The Promise supporting children and families.
- 5.1.4 The legacy of the pandemic is that some residents will be waiting longer for a health intervention, and while waiting for the procedure may be experiencing lower levels of functioning, impacting on their quality of life. The Scottish Government has just published a recovery plan to address the backlog in care and meet ongoing healthcare needs for people across Scotland. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/nhs-recovery-plan/>. The Moray Health and Social Care Partnership within the context of the Moray Portfolio will continue to evolve plans that support recovery and address the longer term well-being of the population as we transition through recovery.

5.2 Economic Harm

- 5.2.1 *The outcome of the RRSF relative to the economy, businesses, partners and infrastructure of Moray achieving stability and support to recover and grow is*

most relevant to this harm, but supporting those most affected by the pandemic including those in financial hardship and advancing wellbeing are also relevant.

- 5.2.2 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. The latest formal update on activity was provided to Moray Economic Partnership (MEP) in May with a further verbal update provided on 25 August. At the May meeting of MEP a range of Performance Indicators for Economic Recovery were agreed, and progress with these will be made available through MEP and RRSF update reports, with a comprehensive update expected before the end of the calendar year. Meantime a small number of indicators are tracked nationally and by local authority area as shown on the Improvement service website as part of an Economic Impact Dashboard: <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/is-covid-economic-impact/>. Data gathered by HIE is also available at www.hie.co.uk/businesspanel with confidence in the Highlands and Islands economy having risen to 67%, up from 37% in October 2020.
- 5.2.3 In excess of £42m of grants have been distributed to September 2021 by the council, with a further tranche distributed when Moray was held at level 3, and a new start up grant agreed at the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee on 24 August. Work has also begun on a review of Moray Economic Strategy in light of covid changes, with a Steering Group formed to bring recommendations back to MEP by the end of the calendar year. This will include a review and updating of the Skills Investment Plan, with the subgroups sitting under MEP amended to match the revised Moray Economic Strategy themes and outcomes with a delivery plan and key performance measures clarified.

5.3 **Education Recovery**

- 5.3.1 Schools returned in August and continue to follow Scottish Government guidance on the operation of schools and early years' childcare (ELC), including taking account of updated requirements on ventilation and CO2 monitoring in buildings. The immediate focus on return to school has been on well-being, numeracy and literacy while also following the subject curriculum in primary and secondary. Schools are looking forward to a more normal year of learning ahead and secondary schools will be building on covid experiences by continuing to develop their approach to assessment and moderation throughout the year in order to be as prepared as possible for any certification model that emerges for SQA qualifications in the coming year. Surveys of learners, staff and parents have provided useful feedback to help understand the impact of covid and learn from the experience gained. Additional staff, both support and teaching, have been deployed to meet emerging needs and gaps and this continues to be monitored to ensure the ongoing impact is addressed. The attainment strategy was approved by Economy, Communities and Organisational Development (ECOD) committee in November and will support ongoing work in this area.

5.4 Social Harm

The RRSF 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.

Updates were provided to the Education Communities and Organisational Development Committee in a report on Social Recovery through Locality Planning on 31 March 2021 and on Sport and Leisure recovery on 11 August 2021.

5.4.1 Work ongoing around this theme locally is as follows:

- **Community Resilience**

A priority for recovery and renewal is the development of Community Resilience Plans. Work is ongoing with local communities and two communities (Lossiemouth and Forres) are currently engaging to identify themes for Community Plans, prioritising community recovery from the pandemic. The Community Learning and Development (CLD) Strategic Partnership Group have produced a draft three year Partnership CLD Plan which has a focus on Covid Recovery and includes reference to all of the activities contained in this section of the report and this plan will be a key focus for supporting social recovery and working to build on experiences in communities.

In terms of support for those experiencing covid in our communities, the Grampian Assistance Hub has now closed and the data on the Moray Groups and volunteers has now moved to Moray Council to manage locally.

Work is currently underway on a Participatory Budgeting process around parks and play areas in four communities and has seen additional revenue being brought into the process directly by community groups. Consideration is also being given to additional areas of budget that may be suitable for participatory budgeting in 2022/23.

- **Poverty, Inequality and Restricted Life Chances**

As noted in the last report, further work is required to develop the poverty response in Moray. The Council approved the establishment of a temporary poverty team at its meeting on 12 May 2021 and recruitment is underway. Once appointed this post will undertake an assessment of the current work and any gaps and draw these into an action plan, also taking account of the known and emerging issues from the pandemic and lessons learned.

The Fairer Moray Forum (FMF) has collated a range of case studies from individuals and partners which gives wider insights into the impact on those living in poverty (further details available [here](#)) Moray also features as one of the case study authorities in a UK wide report '[Comparing local responses to household food insecurity during Covid-19 across the UK \(March – August 2020\)](#)'. The report recognises: *The key role played by Moray Food Plus as the anchor community food*

organisation in Moray and the support of the local authority through the Money Advice Team, Community Support Unit and other services. The FMF will be considering this information further to identify actions to respond to the issues identified, in particular there are concerns about domestic violence, ensuring access to services and financial security as changes to current benefits come into effect.

A review of the child poverty action plan is also planned and the new resources will help to support this work across the partnership.

6. PROGRESS WITH THE RECOVERY AND RENEWAL ACTION PLAN (RRAP) AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.1 An update on progress with the RRAP has been prepared and produced at **Appendix 1**. The content of the RRAP was drawn from Service Plans reviewed in late 2020 and will be fully reviewed when these are updated in 2022 along with the next Corporate Plan. Meantime the update shows the RRAP actions as overall 61% complete and thus with a RAG rating of green as at 31 March 2021.
- 6.2 In terms of lessons learned, helpful observations are contained in the joint report by COSLA and the Improvement Service on “Lessons Learned During Covid-19” which identified a number of areas of success and challenge for local government. This forms part of a range of covid resources hosted by the Improvement Service. Reflecting on more local experiences, feedback was also gathered from managers during a recent Leadership Forum exercise which focussed on experiences in the pandemic and learning to take forward from this for consideration as services adapt is being collated. Detailed consideration of lessons learned will form part of preparation for the review of the current Corporate Plan which will be held when the new Council is constituted in May 2022. This will also enable due regard to be paid to the emerging national Covid Recovery Strategy and actions.

7. PROGRESS WITH THE RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1 When the programme for the RRSF was framed this was split into four phases moving from the initial emergency response through to the period past the first peak and on into re-engineering existing strategies and policies. However, after the first peak two subsequent peaks or waves were experienced and so progress has been delayed as more time has been spent in response. The programme is produced as **Appendix 2** and it is recommended that members now recognise and agree that, whilst the elements of the strategic framework including the aims and outcomes appear to be well aligned with thinking at national and UK level, progress from stage 2 to stage 3 will be gradual and differentiated across services. So for example, while re-engineering of Moray Economic Strategy is underway, core strategies in other areas cannot be reviewed effectively until further detail emerges on the Programme of Government commitments and other national directives including the Covid Recovery Strategy. It is therefore recommended that the council agrees that significant progress with stage 3 is unlikely to begin until January 2022, with major progress at a corporate level being evidenced when Service Plans are

reviewed after the Local Government elections in May 2022 – in effect the re-engineering described in the programme.

8. 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, with the financial implications being part of the review of the Short to Medium Term Financial Strategy.

(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 have been 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 continuing to be given in some areas such as Environmental Health to response and service maintenance, with limited capacity for recovery.

(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 and this forms part of the Office Review.

(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. Equality impacts are being assessed in services undergoing material redesign.

(h) Consultations

CMT has been consulted on the content of this report.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 As the country moves beyond level zero, the focus should move from response to recovery and renewal. Actions in terms of the RRAP and national directives are ongoing, with a more strategic approach to local social renewal, poverty and further Community Plans in particular under development.

9.2 Pressures arising from a return to response have delayed progress with the RRSF Programme and adjustments to this timeline are required.

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Background Papers:

[20200624 RRSF Report to Emergency Cabinet](#)

[20200624 RRSF Appendix 1](#)

[20200624 RRSF Appendix 2](#)

[20200624 RRSF Appendix 3](#)

[20210218 RRSF Update Report to Special Moray Council](#)

[20210218 RRSF Update Appendix 1](#)

[20210218 RRSF Update Appendix 2](#)

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