

COVID Recovery and Renewal Strategy: Year 1 progress report

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Purpose of the Report

1. To provide District Executive with the Year 1 progress report regarding delivery of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy and agree an authorisation process of spend within the approved recovery budget.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 12th May 2022.

Public Interest

3. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) produced a Recovery and Renewal Strategy that was approved by District Executive on 1st April 2021, which set the next steps in rebuilding from the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID19). It contained the recovery and renewal vision and ambition objectives based on eleven steps, covering the environment, economy, community, places and protecting core services. It is important that we provide information on the extent to which we are delivering the priorities identified to provide assurance that we are on track and can receive any recommendations about possible improvements.

Recommendations

4. That District Executive recommends that the Chief Executive:
 - a) Notes the good progress made within the first year of delivery (Appendix 1).
 - b) Delegates authority to the Director/Acting Director of Place and Recovery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to approve spend within the approved recovery budget.

Background

5. The SSDC Recovery and Renewal Strategy contains eleven key objectives. Each of these has been adopted by one of SSDC's Communities of Practice (CoPs), as set out in the Recovery and Renewal Strategy for:



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- Economy
- Healthy, self-reliant communities
- Environment
- Places where we live
- Protecting core services

6. As agreed at District Executive in December 2021, a new Recovery Board has not been established however officers continue to have interactions and involvement within the groups identified within Appendix 3. Officers continue to ensure that these groups align with the objectives outlined within SSDC's Recovery and Renewal Strategy

Report Detail

7. The attached summary table (included within Appendix 1) demonstrates that good progress is being made with ten of the eleven step objectives on target (green RAG rating) with planned activity to stay on target in the next six months.
8. 'Improving our customer journey' is the only area that is rated amber rather than green within the RAG status. This is due largely to the issues faced when recruiting new members of staff and the ongoing impacts of Covid 19. Interventions have been put in place to mitigate the associated risks. These include recruiting a Business Analyst to support the streamlining of the customer journey, accelerating the use of technology to allow for remote appointments and additional training to existing staff members to allow them to support with more complex tasks such as the recovery of Council Tax.

Covid 19 Response Update:

9. The Omicron Covid wave that peaked during November-February brought fresh challenges and SSDC responded accordingly. The figures listed below, include the impacts of the Omicron variant.
10. **Test & Trace isolation payments** – We have paid £989,000.00 in isolation payments (= 3075 awards). The scheme is set to close on 6th April 2022 however, isolation ceased 23rd February 2022 so only late applications can be accepted now.

Household Support Grants - £406,413 distributed.

Private Sector Tenant Support - 3 Payments made to tenants in arrears totalling £8,939.92. A further 8 tenants with arrears totalling £8,266 have sought assistance and is work in progress.

Food Banks - £24,000 grant awarded to 11 South Somerset Food Banks.

Accommodating Rough Sleepers –As of 11th March 2022, 16 Rough Sleepers in Covid Accommodation. Total spend equating to £43,239.

Covid 19 Business Grants – All Government led Covid 19 business grant schemes are now closed and final payments made before the deadline of 31 March 2022. This financial year, SSDC have administered over £12m in grant support to businesses. This has been through the Restart Scheme, Restart Discretionary Grant (ARG) Revitalisation Grant



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(ARG), Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant and the Omicron Discretionary Grant (ARG). Support has been given to over 1200 businesses, with many benefiting from more than one grant.

The Covid 19 Additional Relief Fund provides eligible businesses with a business rates relief. The relief is available to reduce chargeable amounts in respect of 2021/22. This is a discretionary scheme and it is for the Local Authority to decide how much relief is provided and to what sector(s). SSDC have been allocated just over £3m. Work is ongoing to determine which businesses will be eligible and to implement the scheme.

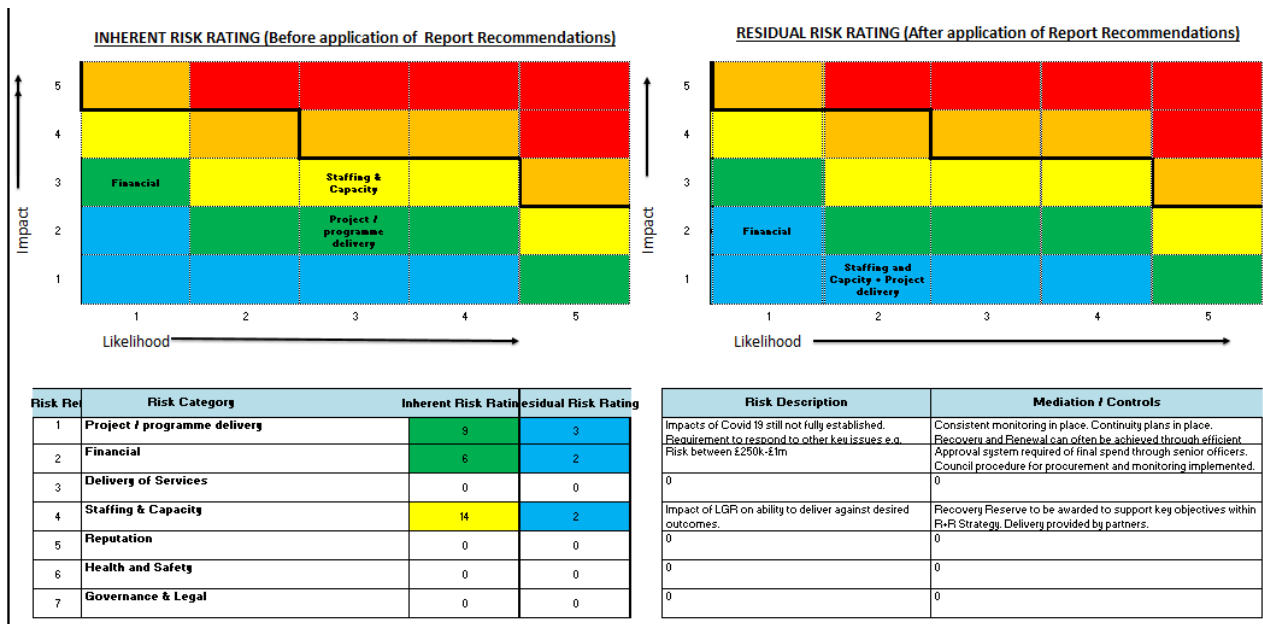
Financial Implications

- A recovery budget of £464,140 from reserves was approved by District Executive on 1st April 2021. In order to accelerate delivery, whilst maintaining a robust governance, it is recommended within this report that the spend of this budget is delegated to the Director of Place and Recovery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development.
- A list of proposed projects and associated spend is available in Appendix 2.

Legal implications and details of Statutory Powers

- There are no legal implications that relate directly to this report.

Risk Matrix



14. The Recovery and Renewal Plan aligns with the Council Plan, Annual Action Plan 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

15. Step 1 of the Recovery and Renewal Plan objectives is to Promote Decarbonisation and Nature Recovery and this is being delivered.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. As this report is for noting only and does not require a member decision, neither an Equality Impact Relevance Check or full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Privacy Impact Assessment

17. There are no material implications on personal privacy.

Background Papers

18. The District Executive Report for the Recovery and Renewal Strategy, including the Strategy itself plus Equality Impact and minutes are available at <https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2856>
19. The District Executive Report for COVID Recovery and Renewal Strategy: six months' progress report
<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/documents/s38286/8%20Covid%20Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Strategy%20Progress%20Dec%202021.pdf>

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Recovery and Renewal Strategy: Year 1 progress summary
- Appendix 2: Recovery reserve budget proposed projects and associated spend
- Appendix 3: Summary of key recovery related groups with objectives