

Foreword

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact globally, nationally and locally for society, the economy and the environment and in many areas, compounded existing challenges and inequalities.

Many families have suffered from the wider impacts of the pandemic, particularly those already most disadvantaged. People are facing hardship due to the reduction in wages or the loss of employment as many of our key sectors in the county have been hardest hit, such as tourism and leisure, food production and distribution. Young people have also been adversely impacted through the disruption in education and the lack of apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

2020 was a year that saw a way of life we could never have expected and whilst most of the sacrifices we have had to make have been hard to deal with, we have also seen the best of human nature and a community spirit that we want to celebrate and preserve. We thank our communities, key partners, businesses and the voluntary and community sectors for their amazing response and overwhelming support to contain the virus, especially the thousands of volunteers who have made the difference to individuals across Herefordshire.

We would also like take this opportunity to thank our staff for their dedication, hard work and resilience over the past 18 months; they can be very proud of what we have achieved to help manage outbreaks of the virus and will play a pivotal role in support of the county's recovery.

As we move forward and learn to live with Covid-19 we know that, more than ever, the importance to connect people with their communities and to the wider world. We will use our unique role as leaders of place to help people feel safe, supported and proud of our unique and beautiful environment and we'll tackle the climate challenge through new approaches to sustainability.

The plan is centred on three key areas; Economic, Community Wellbeing and Organisational recovery.

We'll base our work on the lessons we've learned, what our residents and businesses tell us is important and our understanding of what our county needs for a successful and sustainable future; we must make our recovery from Covid-19 a green recovery.

As part the council's commitment to supporting the county's recovery, we will explore the viability of a Herefordshire Recovery and Investment fund which could be established to provide time limited finance to businesses where other options may not be available. A separate decision on this will be progressed alongside this recovery plan.

We do not yet know the full financial impact of the pandemic and what this means for future council funding, but we will ensure that the money provided by central government is used effectively to deliver our ambition and provide a catalyst for positive change for Herefordshire residents and the county.

Signed

Leader and CEO

Introduction

The global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus have had an unprecedented impact on the national and local economy and on people's wellbeing and mental (as well as physical) health. Nationally the magnitude of the recession caused by the pandemic is unprecedented, GDP declined by 9.8% in 2020 the steepest drop since records began in 1948. The Office of National Statistics Opinions and Lifestyle survey indicates that nationally around one in five (21%) adults experienced depressive symptoms in early 2021 (27 January to 7 March), more than double the rate before the pandemic (10%). Across the country alcohol related deaths have increased by 20% in 2020 compared to 2019.

Within Herefordshire, large parts of our economy have been instructed to close for the majority of the last 12 months such as hospitality, tourism, culture, leisure and non-essential retail. There has been a significant onward impact on the supply chain to these sectors. Agriculture, manufacturing and construction sectors have also faced significant challenges in adjusting to different working environments, supply chain disruption and changing customer needs. We have experienced significant increases in those claiming unemployment benefits (123% compared to March 2020), and thousands of local people furloughed (9,900 as of end of March 2021) through the Job Retention Scheme.

The pandemic has also had a severe impact on people's mental health and wellbeing, due to long periods of anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty. The Herefordshire Community Wellbeing Survey 2021 found 28% of people reported high levels of anxiety, 32% experienced drop in household income, 33% doing less exercise, and 30% sleeping less well. Wellbeing is lowest in those living in the most deprived areas.

The council has already urgently established a wide range of activity to support local businesses and help save local jobs. For example, so far we have delivered almost 20,000 grants totalling over £100m of support to local businesses, and secured over £6.5m of external funding for a wide range of activities such as establishing safe environments for people to return to the high street/ town centres, promoting our tourism offer, and offering work experience placements to 16 to 24 year olds in receipt of universal credit.

Since March 2020 Talk Community has received 3,500 requests for support, and has coordinated over 300 volunteers in ensuring those isolating received food, medication and access to financial aid where required. Twenty Talk Community hubs have launched over the first four months of 2021 which provide information, advice and signposting to residents within communities and a network of volunteers to connect residents into their communities.

We have worked hard since the start of the pandemic to prevent and reduce spread of infection and protect those most vulnerable in our society. This has included focused prevention work with high risk settings, establishing a COVID-19 health protection function (Outbreak Control Hub) as well as the BRAVE work to protect some of the most vulnerable in our society. This work, together with our role in supporting and ensuring vaccination of our population, will remain vital and ongoing during the coming year.

Our focus now moves towards recovery. Over the coming months the true impact of the pandemic will become better known, trade will start to recover but publically funded grants, business rate holidays, and the job retention scheme will also come to an end.

The following recovery plan now focuses on the immediate impactful actions we need to take in the short term. Our priorities are to:

- ***Establish Safe and Welcoming Places***
- ***Support Business Viability and Resilience,***
- ***Support Employment***
- ***Support Wellbeing.***

Objectives

The following are the council's objectives for economic, wellbeing and organisational recovery;

- To rapidly implement a Covid-19 Recovery Plan in 2021/22 delivering the immediate action required to support recovery.
- To accelerate delivery of actions in the council's Delivery Plan in 2021/22 that will support the soonest possible recovery.
- To launch in 2021/22 a Herefordshire Recovery & Investment Fund which will support key sectors through specialist land, buildings and facilities, enabling adjustments within sectors to respond to new opportunities such as green technology and transport, and adaptations in working patterns.
- By the end of 2021/22 establish a long term economic vision (2050) and strategy, building on our local strengths and opportunities to create a greener, fairer economy for all revitalising our market towns, city and wider rural county.
- To build and accelerate projects that seek to improve the overall physical and mental wellbeing across all ages of the Herefordshire population, and improve the lives of those most affected fastest.
- To develop a complete working experience for council staff that delivers a new 'Hybrid Working Model' and creates a modern, vibrant workplace where creativity and collaboration is actively encouraged
- To build on what has worked well for customers over the past 18 months by exploring new service delivery models and developing and increased digital offer

Herefordshire Delivery Plan

In November 2020, we published our [Delivery Plan](#) for the period up to April 2022.

The projects and deliverables set out in the Delivery Plan 2020/22 will continue however this plan aims to accelerate activity to support recovery, such as;

- EC0.3: Provide support to businesses to enable the soonest possible recovery of the local economy from the impacts of COVID-19.
- EC2.4: Continue to support development of the Hereford Enterprise Zone, including completion & successful operation of the Shell Store business incubation centre and the Midlands Centre for Cyber Security, to deliver new high-skill job opportunities.
- EC5.1: Work with private sector partners to support the growth of the tourism industry across Herefordshire building on our strengths of outdoor activities, heritage & culture; and support the development of a destination business improvement district.

- CO4.3: Develop Right Support, Right Time for Families through our Talk Community approach and building on strengths within local communities.
- CO4 - Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.
- CO6 - Support communities to help each other through a network of community hubs.

Priorities

The focus of this recovery plan is on the following four priority areas;

Safe and Welcoming Places – encouraging people to safely return to a more normal way of life, through creating safe, attractive and vibrant places for events, leisure and hospitality, visiting, studying, culture, re-engaging with friends and family generating spend in our towns, city and wider rural county.

What do we need to do?

- Safe and managed environments –ensure that people can safely travel to and spend time in the market towns and city centres.
- Attractive and welcoming places for all – Improved footpaths/ public rights of way, public seating areas, revitalised ‘dressing’/ presentation of towns centres (such as grants for shop front improvements), infrastructure for events, greening etc to create vibrant attractive places to return to or visit.

Business viability and resilience – enabling businesses to restart and recover trade as quickly and effectively as possible whilst meeting national Covid 19 guidelines. Providing opportunities to kickstart trade, adding value to existing products and services, or to diversify into new market opportunities. As well as providing support for people to start a new business revitalising the local economy.

What do we need to do?

- Access to business support and facilities to aid business recovery and resilience
- Promotion of Herefordshire as a fantastic place to visit supporting the recovery of the worst affected sectors, as well as an attractive investment location, place to study, work and live.

Support Employment – stem the rise in unemployment, support people who have been made or are at risk of redundancy to return to work including through opportunities to re-skill/ change career path, and find new job opportunities. Consider the impact of the pandemic on people’s wellbeing, and the support required to enable recovery.

What do we need to do?

- Support those that are currently unemployed or at risk of redundancy to seek alternative job opportunities, including support to re-train to enable them to seek alternative careers where required or desired.
- Provide people with access to wellbeing support and advice to help recover from the significant impacts experienced over circa the last 12 months.

Support Wellbeing– to encourage, facilitate and develop opportunities for the whole population to improve physical and mental wellbeing, including those most affected fastest.

What do we need to do?

- Access to health and wellbeing support and advice.
- Financial advice and support.
- Additional capacity to the voluntary sector to provide community engagement and support.

Proposed Schemes

Action	What?	Why?	Value	Impact	How?	When?	Lead/ Directorate
<i>Business viability and resilience</i>							
Revive and Thrive	Grants to support first few months' rent (ranging from £2.5K to £10K) in vacant retail units and business space, as well as access to business advice through the Marches Growth Hub. Encourage business start-ups, pop up shops, cultural and creative use of space. To include utilising the Shell Store and Midlands Centre for Cyber Security. Focus on encouraging young entrepreneurs, providing access to premises and support services.	Revives through bringing back in to use vacant retail units and business space. Supports innovative, creative new ideas, new, new businesses to be created.	£0.4m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revives towns, villages and city through bringing empty shops and workspaces back in to use. Encourages entrepreneurship 	An online application form, specifying the criteria and guidance utilising best practice processes established by councils with similar schemes available.	August 21 to March 22	Head of Economic Development , Economy and Place
Visit Herefordshire	Promote Herefordshire as a fantastic staycation destination, building on the current very successful marketing and PR campaign into the autumn, Christmas and spring 2022. Particular focus on festivals and events.	The visitor economy has been one the most impacted sectors. Realising current opportunity demand for staycation breaks.	£0.244m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in visitor numbers and visitor spend, supporting recovery of most impacted sectors 	Procure marketing, PR and media agencies to deliver the related campaigns, building on the successful programme delivered to date.	July 21 to March 22	Head of Economic Development ,Economy and Place
Love Going Out Locally	Incentivise residents to spend locally on a wide range of activities, such as visiting local	Encourages people to spend in local businesses, catalysing	£1.5m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise people to return to or try local 	Options for delivery are being fully investigated	July 21 to March 22	Head of Economic Development

	attractions, independent retailers, trying a new activity, fitness or craft/ creative courses, local food and drink (non alcoholic). Track and analyse take up/ use to understand people interests and trends.	recovery of the economy in some of the most impacted businesses, and supports improved health and wellbeing.		hospitality, generating spend	including procurement of a pre-paid card provider through a framework. A number of potential providers have been identified.		, Economy and Place
Shop Local/ Love Local promotional campaign (<i>linked to visitor economy marketing above</i>)	Marketing and PR campaign to encourage people to support local businesses, making people aware of products and services and any offers. To include developing content for the Herefordshire Loyal Free app.	After a significant increase in on-line retail during lockdown, encourages people to buy locally.	£0.2m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased spend in local businesses 	Procure marketing, PR and media agencies to deliver the related campaigns.	July to December 2021	Head of Economic Development , Economy and Place
Safe and Welcoming Places							
Great Places to Visit	Revitalised places offering high quality experiences such as 'dressing'/ presentation/ greening of market town centres, grants for shop front enhancements, infrastructure for events, and improvements to public rights of way/ cycling routes.	To encourage local people to return or visitors to choose our towns, city or the wider rural areas to spend time, re-connect and support the local economy.	£0.5m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased local resident and visitor spend Increased visitor numbers 	Work with the market town councils to develop and implement a local programme of enhancements.	July 21 to March 22	Assistant Director Transport and Highways, Economy and Place
Return to Towns and City	Incentivising people to get back to leisure/ social activities, working out of home, exploring new places, and helping people to access new jobs through	Incentivising people to return to work, study, visit across Herefordshire, kick-starting the economy.	£1m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased footfall through people returning to town and city centres, 	Work with current bus and bike operators to establish discounted	Time limited periods between July21	Assistant Director Transport and Highways,

	providing periods discounted bus fares, access to the Hereford bike scheme and possible roll out of services elsewhere, developing car pools, utilising e-cargo (people carrier) bikes, and feasibility for future cycling connectivity routes. Monitor and analyse take up to understand trends, and inform incentivisation of modal shift.	Help people to start new jobs and/ or new training courses.		and exploring the wider county.	or free periods of use.	and March 22.	Economy and Place
Supporting Local People							
Joined Up For Jobs	One stop shop advice (contact point, local events, proactive engagement) to guide people to the right location to access the wide range of available support. Launch of the Herefordshire Youth Employment Hub, and additional support for complex Not in Education and Employment (NEET) cases.	Supports people back into work, and/ or to re-train to access new opportunities. Assists to access complexity of services to meet users need.	£0.3m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of people finding employment Reduced claimant count 	Recruit temporary advisors for one stop shop and Youth Employment Hub. Procure NEETs support based on previously successful scheme.	July 21 to March 22	Director Childrens and Families
Supporting whole population physical and mental wellbeing							
Community and personal Resilience	Supporting individuals, families and communities to connect through free events, activities and targeted support, including increased activities within libraries, children's centres and schools. Providing funding to the	To encourage people to access community infrastructure, rebuilding support systems and socialisation and to provide resources into the VCSE.	£0.6m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community and personal resilience Improved feeling of connection to communities 	Recruit temporary staff to provide a universal support offer to 0-2 year olds and utilise existing assets such as libraries, Talk Community hubs.	July21 - March 22	Assistant Director Talk Community, Adults and Communities

	VSCE that supports community and personal resilience.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce loneliness 	Commission a review of the VSCE market and commission and provide grant funding to the VCSE sector to support the wellbeing agenda.		
Get Active	<p>Increased opportunities to encourage individuals of all ages to become more active.</p> <p>Supporting physical activity through improved infrastructure and access to green space and scaled up preventative and behavioural support, including workplaces.</p>	<p>Supporting and incentivising the whole population to be active and experience new opportunities through culture and leisure facilities.</p> <p>To support early identification of conditions through increased preventative support.</p>	£0.85m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce number of inactive people • Increased local provision (including active travel) • Increased early identification of conditions • Improved mental health • Improved healthy lifestyle behaviours 	<p>Commission a range of free activities to be available for all ages across the county ensuring that the rural areas have outreach support into the communities.</p> <p>Improve physical activity infrastructure and work with partners to improve access to existing assets.</p> <p>Scale up behaviour change support, including through workplaces.</p> <p>Focus on activities and plans that get</p>	July21 – March 22	Director Adults and Communities/ Director Public Health

					inactive people active and get adults who rarely leave the house to participate.		
Mental health awareness and support	Online mental and wellbeing toolkits and campaigns at key times of the year.	Covid has impacted on everyone which has increased anxiety and stress levels. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make people manage this better and help those around them become more resilient.	£0.15m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved mental health Reduced levels of anxiety 	Recruit temporary staff to develop and accelerate the online toolkits and provide additional capacity into the community. Increase the Solihull Parenting scheme through facilitated sessions.	July 21 – March 22	Director Public Health /Director Adults and Communities
Early awareness and identification of excessive/harmful drinking and support	Programme of work for i) early detection of high risk alcohol consumption and ii) assertive outreach for complex drinkers	Across the country alcohol related deaths have increased by 20% in 2020 compared to 2019, this will support with early identification of high risk alcohol consumption.	£0.15m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced high level alcohol intake Reduced number of deaths related to alcohol 	Work with partners to increase use of Alcohol Audit C tool across people facing roles within the council and partner agencies. Increase referrals into specialist community provider for brief interventions online and in person – increased digital signposting.	August 21 - March 22	Director Public Health

					Commission x2 Assertive Outreach workers for complex alcohol users.		
Educational catch up	Catch-up/Mentor programmes for education Support for schools and teachers	There has been significant impact on children and young people with education and opportunities being severely disrupted over the past year. Children have missed out on half an academic year of face-to-face teaching, and opportunities for socialising and development, for example for younger children, have been severely impacted.	£0.15m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of people in financial hardship • Increased opportunities for children and young people 	Work with the education sector to undertake a needs assessment and provide funded access to additional training and support. For example training for teachers and teaching assistants to be able to provide additional support to pupils.	August 21 – March 22	Assistant Director Education, Children and Families
Digital poverty and exclusion	Fund the acceleration and scale up of existing support to improve access for digital inclusion across the county through existing community assets and infrastructure.	Many services and support has been delivered online over the past 12 months and 22% of population are concerned that this will continue, this will provide education and training on digital provisions.	£0.1m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced number of people feeling digitally excluded • Increased access to digital hubs across the county 	Provide educational digital training across the county in libraries and community settings with existing providers and identify apps/equipment that will support individuals with digital awareness	July 21 – March 22	Assistant Director Talk Community, Adults and Communities

