
Executive

18 March 2021

Report of the Chief Operating Officer
Portfolio of the Leader of the Council

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – March Update

Summary

1. This report provides an update on activities both directly in response to Covid-19 and the work to support recovery and renewal. This follows previous Executive decisions to approve the Recovery and Renewal Plan, which frames the Council's recovery activity.
2. In this month's report, the implications of the Government's Roadmap for the easing of restrictions are considered, in respect of the activities the council will undertake to support the safe reopening of city spaces and promote building back better and fairer as a city. It also highlights the ongoing work to support communities.
3. It is highly likely given the fast-changing nature of the pandemic that some of the information within this report will have changed between publication and the Executive meeting. Updates will, therefore, be given at the meeting.

Recommendations

4. Executive is asked to:
 - a. Note the contents of the report
 - b. Approve the recommendations in relation to the reopening of the city centre (outlined in Annex 1), namely to delegate to the Corporate Director of Economy and Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy the following interventions:
 - i. To provide temporary public toilets in the city centre during the initial stages of lockdown easing should they be required at a cost of £2k per week
 - ii. The expenditure of up to £200k ARG to fund the delivery of the principles for managing city and secondary centre spaces that are set out in this report
 - iii. The submission of any planning application required for temporary managed outdoor spaces

- iv. Extend the Covid Marshalls until the end of June at a cost of £28k to facilitate the Covid-safe management of the city through Covid Containment Grant funding
- c. Approve the recommendations for the use of the Additional Restrictions Grant outlined in Annex 2, including the closure of applications for the Additional Restrictions Grant on 31 March 2021
- d. Approve the participation in a Behavioural Insights trial to support Covid-safe behaviours, as outlined in Annex 3
- e. Approve the deferral of the implementation of the following fees until Step 4 of the Government's recovery roadmap and agree the related discount:
 - i. Cremation fees to be charged at £745 until Covid restrictions are relaxed (estimated to be June 21st at the earliest)
 - ii. Free recording of services to be maintained until the same date
- f. Approve the use of the Government Covid Recovery Grant to mitigate the financial implications of the discounts in 4.e above for 3 months (subject to further review should the date for Step 4 be moved).

Background

- 5. On 25th June, Executive received a report to outline the council's 1-year Recovery and Renewal Strategy. This highlighted the need for a revised set of strategies to address the very significant and immediate impacts of coronavirus across all aspects of life in our city.
- 6. The strategy set the following principles upon which we will build our response:
 - a. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents, against the immediate threat of coronavirus and the consequences of changes to the way we live. Public Health guidance will be paramount in all the decisions we make.
 - b. Support the economic recovery of the City, helping to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy for the future. Learning lessons from the challenges of coronavirus, promote a system that utilises the strengths of our city and region to the benefit of all York's residents and businesses.
 - c. Protect and prioritise the City's environment and reinforce our work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
 - d. Pursue improvements in service delivery where they have been identified as part of the Response phase, creating a more efficient and resilient system.
 - e. Reinforce and restore public confidence in the resilience of public agencies and resilience to future challenges and emergencies.

7. Included in June’s report was a One Year Transport and Place Strategy, as the first part of the economic recovery approach. A report in July supplemented this with a Business Support Plan, a Skills and Employment Plan and a Tourism Marketing Plan.

CYC Recovery and Renewal Plan (1 year)				
Economic Recovery Plan			Communities	Corporate
Business Support Plan	One Year Transport and Place Plan	Skills and Employment Plan	Recovery from coronavirus: A community-based approach	Organisational Development Plan
Tourism Marketing Plan				

Latest Outbreak Update

8. Given the continually changing context, an update on the latest situation will be given verbally to the Executive at the meeting.
9. The latest official 7 day rate of positive cases of Covid in York is, at 3 March, 45.6 per 100,000 population. This figure has dropped significantly since the peak of the third wave of infection and represents a reduction to amongst lowest levels in the region. Whilst this represents a positive direction of travel, this figure is still significantly higher than that seen during the lowest points of the summer. Caution and compliance with current restrictions are, therefore, critical to ensure cases continue to fall.
10. The rollout of the vaccine continues at pace. The latest figures show that 247,629 vaccine doses have been given to people across North Yorkshire and the Vale of York
11. On 22 February, the Government published its Spring 2021 Covid-19 Response, outlining the Roadmap to the easing of restrictions, as well as the wider strategy for health, economic and social support. The Roadmap contains 4 steps, which will be progressed through consecutively reducing restrictions on the basis that 4 tests are met. These test are:
- a. Test 1: The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.
 - b. Test 2: Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
 - c. Test 3: Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.

- d. Test 4: Government's assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

12. Full detail of the four steps can be found on the Government's webpages at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021#roadmap>

13. In summary, the steps are as follows:

a. Step 1: 8 March

- Schools and colleges are open for all students. Practical Higher Education Courses.
- Recreation or exercise outdoors with household or one other person. No household mixing indoors.
- Wraparound childcare.
- Stay at home.
- Funerals (30), wakes and weddings (6)
- 29 March
- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors. No household mixing indoors.
- Outdoor sport and leisure facilities.
- Organised outdoor sport allowed (children and adults).
- Minimise travel. No holidays.
- Outdoor parent & child groups (up to 15 parents).

b. Step 2: At least five weeks after Step 1, no earlier than 12 April.

- Indoor leisure (including gyms) open for use individually or within household groups.
- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors. No household mixing indoors.
- Outdoor attractions such as zoos, theme parks and drive-in cinemas.
- Libraries and community centres.
- Personal care premises.
- All retail.
- Outdoor hospitality.
- All children's activities, indoor parent & child groups (up to 15 parents).
- Domestic overnight stays (household only).
- Self-contained accommodation (household only).
- Funerals (30), wakes, weddings and receptions (15).
- Minimise travel. No international holidays.
- Event pilots begin.

- c. Step 3:** At least five weeks after Step 2, no earlier than 17 May.
- Indoor entertainment and attractions.
 - 30 person limit outdoors. Rule of 6 or two households (subject to review).
 - Domestic overnight stays.
 - Organised indoor adult sport.
 - Most significant life events (30).
 - Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances).
 - Remaining accommodation.
 - Some large events (expect for pilots) - capacity limits apply.
 - Indoor events: 1,000 or 50%.
 - Outdoor other events: 4,000 or 50%.
 - Outdoor seated events: 10,000 or 25%.
 - International travel - subject to review.

- d. Step 4:** At least five weeks after Step 3, no earlier than 21 June. By Step 4, the Government hopes to be able to introduce the following (subject to review):
- No legal limits on social contact
 - Nightclubs.
 - Larger events.
 - No legal limit on life events.

14. It is worth reflecting that these easements of restriction will only be possible if the risk of health services being overrun continues to fall. It is highly likely that over the period of these steps, infection rates will see some increases. This is on the basis that there will be increased social contact permitted, within a population of which the majority, to start with, will not have been vaccinated.

15. This is a very different scenario to previous increases in infection rate, as over time more and more of those most vulnerable to serious illness, hospitalisation or death from the infection will have been vaccinated. However, the more prevalent the infection within communities, the more likely those who remain vulnerable to Covid-19 for any reason become infected. For this reason, there remains an individual and collective responsibility to ensure that everybody continues the basic measures to prevent infection (Hands, Face, Space), as well as getting a test and isolating if they have symptoms or have been in contact with someone who does.

Recovery Updates

Communities

16. Recovery at a city level means re-establishing the quality of life for all residents and ensuring the determinants of good health and wellbeing are supported. A wide range of research, including the Covid-19 Marmot Review, identifies the negative impact of Covid upon many pre-existing inequalities across society, often culminating in poorer health outcomes for particular groups. Not only is there a moral imperative to build back better and fairer, but also a practical need to address and minimise the negative impacts of inequality which would otherwise inhibit the recovery of our city.
17. For this reason, the council has been working with partners across the region to consider how best to support this recovery whilst living with Covid (in some shape or form) for the foreseeable future. There is a recognition that priorities at this point have to be the safe reopening of the economy whilst maintaining momentum in vaccinations, being vigilant against new variants and ensuring Covid-secure environments. Over time, emphasis must shift to ways of living with Covid as part of the overall health context, and longer term recovery and changes in service delivery. Key in this second phase is addressing inequalities which are likely to have been exacerbated by Covid and the response to it.
18. The considerations of how to build back better, including the importance of inclusive growth, will be at the heart of the 10 year city plan which is being discussed with city partners. It is envisaged that this will be consulted upon over the summer and, once adopted, can provide a vision and guiding principles for York's social, economic and environmental prosperity over the next decade.
19. Over the course of the pandemic, the council has continued to support communities, particularly those people requiring additional support as a result of the restrictions. Annex 4 sets out some of the approach that has been taken as well as the immediate plans for continuing this support.
20. In addition to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and those needing to self-isolate, anyone can continue to contact the council in an emergency or if they don't have any other support. Please email covid19help@york.gov.uk or call 01904 551550.
21. Anyone who would like to help the city through volunteering can now do so through York CVS Volunteer Centre at:
<http://www.communitycvcs.org.uk/covid-19/covid-19-volunteers/>

Economic

22. Based on the Government's Roadmap, the council is making preparations for the safe re-opening of the city centre, supporting the recovery of businesses and communities. Achieving the right balance to support

individual's safety whilst facilitating increased business and social activity will be challenging, given the changing parameters of the pandemic alongside the desire of many people to return to activities which have been restricted as quickly as possible.

23. At this stage, it is not recommended that the council commits additional resource to promoting additional visitors to the city. Given the likelihood of varying rates of infection as a result of wider derestriction, the overarching principle has to be the safety of York's residents and visitors.
24. As a city with a vast array of cultural and historical assets, and a wide and well-earned reputation for being a good place to visit, it is likely that the return of visitors (local and from further afield) will be rapid as restrictions are eased. This is hugely positive for a significant sector in York's economy and will be a welcome return to the vibrancy of the city. However, it will also bring challenges in ensuring this return does not also adversely impact in other ways.
25. To ensure these challenges are addressed, the Council will continue to progress work on the Purple Flag with partners, in promoting a safe and vibrant city centre. The multi-agency Safety Advisory Group will continue to lead on the approval of any events or activities in the city. This will focus on the assessment of the public health impact, continually reviewing the processes, the evidence related to the pandemic and that of public behaviours.
26. In considering the impacts on the city of each stage of de-restriction, a number of considerations and required actions have already been identified. Annex 1 identifies the current assessment of risks, opportunities and necessary actions to support the safe re-opening of the city centre, with a set of recommendations (noted above in paragraph 4b.)
27. A further consideration of the impact of Government Roadmap on the Additional Restrictions Grant is included at Annex 2.
28. Annex 3 describes a proposal to trial a behavioural insights approach to support the safe use of the city centre. The proposal is to work with the Public Health England (PHE) Behavioural Science and Insights Unit to take an evidence based approach to mitigate the risk of increased community transmission as a result of increased visitors to the city centre (resident or non-resident). Recognising that we will be living with Covid-19 for some time, and to better support city centre businesses over what could be a prolonged period, the trial would take place over three months leading up to wider reopening which is currently proposed for 21 June 2021. This would involve taking a city wide approach and learning from the experiences of business owners observing behaviour and asking visitors

and residents about their behaviour to understand how Covid-safe behaviours can best be prompted amongst both visitors and local employees in open spaces in the city centre, district shopping areas and public spaces.

29. The work with Public Health England is free of charge and resource implications would be managed through redeployment. The Public Health Containment Grant would fund refinements to signage.
30. On 3 March, the Chancellor announced the 2021 Budget, with a wide variety of fiscal and economic policy measures. The full detail can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/budget-2021>
31. In terms of local government-administered support, the following was announced:
 - a. The extension of the 100% business rates holiday until the end of June for eligible businesses, namely retail, hospitality and leisure.
 - b. Business rates will then be discounted by two-thirds until the end of the year for the same businesses. This will be capped at £2 million per business for properties that were required to be closed on 5 January 2021, or £105,000 per business for other eligible properties. Local authorities will be compensated for the loss of income resulting from these measures.
 - c. All local authorities in England will receive an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding as part of the Government's Restart Grants scheme.
32. The council will continue to review the information and guidance round this as it is available to ensure applicable support can be provided to businesses as quickly as possible.

Corporate

33. Given the requirement to develop plans and approaches which include Covid for some time to come, the council has been considering its corporate planning and the internal governance to support this during the next phases of response and recovery. The internal groups currently focussed on recovery actions will be re-aligned to the new corporate structure, allowing these arrangements to unite development of policy and recommendations for both Covid and other service issues.
34. A further report will come to Executive on the Council Plan and the development of a 10 year plan for the city, taking into consideration the changed context within York and the need to focus on particular areas to support the best possible recovery.

35. In respect of fees and charges, in light of the Government's recovery roadmap and restrictions on funerals remaining until Step 4 (i.e. 21st June 2021 at the earliest) it is proposed to defer the 2021/22 full restoration of the £920 fee for cremations (with a service) and maintain the current reduced fees at a rate of £745 (to include the rate of inflation increase but maintain a discount of £175).

36. It is also proposed to maintain the free recording of funeral services, deferring the standard charge of £62 per funeral to the same date.

Council Plan

37. The Recovery and Renewal Strategy outlines activities for the next year to allow the continued achievement of Council Plan outcomes.

Implications

- **Financial** – The financial impacts are largely included within this report. In respect of recommendations e. and f., the worst case impact on revenue is estimated to be around £166k per quarter (£147k for funerals and £19k for recordings). The Government's Covid Recovery Grant would be used to mitigate the budget impacts.
- **Human Resources** – No specific impacts identified.
- **One Planet Council / Equalities** – A principle of recovery is to ensure climate change is considered in decisions taken. The economic recovery plans recognise and respond to the unequal impact of coronavirus and the risk of increasing levels of inequality as a result.
- **Legal** – No specific impacts identified.
- **Crime and Disorder** – No specific impacts identified.
- **Information Technology** – No specific impacts identified.

Risk Management

38. There remain significant areas of risk in responding to this crisis across all areas of recovery. The highest priority continues to be the health and wellbeing of residents and all planning and decisions will be taken with this in mind.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved



Date 10/03/2021

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex 1 – Reopening the city centre
Annex 2 – Roadmap and Additional Restriction Grant
Annex 3 – Behavioural Insights trial
Annex 4 – Communities Update

Background Reports

Update on Coronavirus Response – 7 May 2020

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s139955/Coronavirus%20Executive%20Report.pdf>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy - June

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=59688&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55501>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy Update – July

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=59899>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update - August

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=60167&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55914>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update – September

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s142400/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20Report.pdf>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update – October

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=60724&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI56530>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy - November Update
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s144127/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20-%20November%202020%20v0.3.pdf>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – December update
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=61412&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI57153>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –January Update
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=61755&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI57489>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –February Update
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s146708/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20-%20February%202021.pdf>