

## Agenda item 10

### For decision – Towards a COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Frome

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#### Summary

This report sets out some principles to guide our work on a Recovery Plan, some early workstreams, next steps in developing a Plan for the town and some proposals for reviewing the town's emergency response that can help to inform that Plan

#### Background

As the discussion turns to how the country will recover from the current COVID-19 crisis, it seems timely to consider how FTC can work with others to support the recovery of the local community and ensure that we can make a difference to the quality of our environment and the social and economic lives of people in Frome.

To assist in the development of a Recovery Plan, a Steering Group has already been formed bringing together a group of councillors with advice provided by the Deputy Town Clerk

The Group currently includes:

Rich Ackroyd  
Maxine Crawley  
Nick Dove  
Ali Barclay  
Andy Palmer  
Lizzie Boyle  
Sara Butler  
Rob Collett  
Sheila Gore

The intention now is that a Panel will be formed with a mix of Council representation and others from outside the Council. The purpose will be to engage expertise from outside the Council and to build community ownership of the work on the Plan.

The formation of this Panel is enabled by Standing Orders. Those Standing Orders require Council to approve the Panel's establishment, agree its membership, remit and the timetable for its operation.

## Some principles to guide the work on the Recovery Plan

The proposal is that the following principles should guide our work on the Recovery Plan:

We should:

- Secure a better future for the town economically, socially and environmentally; this isn't about bouncing back to the way things were but leaping forward
- Ensure that the community is more resilient to future shocks
- Consider some of the positive changes that have occurred e.g. more volunteering, better community networks at street level, online support networks for business, less travelling by car, more walking and cycling etc. and how we can sustain these things into the future
- Strengthen our partnerships; the 'all hands-on deck' response to COVID-19 has been extraordinary and could be applied to other work that we do
- Reflect on the lessons learnt from the emergency response and apply those to the Plan (to be the subject of a separate commission)

## Our early work

These are the early workstreams:

- Engaging individuals in the community – we are rolling out some survey work to households to understand the challenges individuals are facing and to obtain a steer on the areas of work that they consider a priority
- Engaging other stakeholders including community organisations and the new street level networks – to understand the challenges they are facing, the ongoing support that they require and the best ways of supporting the most vulnerable in our community in the future
- Engaging business – we are preparing to facilitate discussions with the business community to:
- Share ideas on how they can prepare for a possible lifting of restrictions in June and in the case of retail and hospitality, build confidence to encourage customers back as shops and venues begin to re-open; this will include exploring how sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can be made available to businesses that need it and best practice in terms of store layout and arrangements for queuing
- Identify ways in which the town centre can be improved aesthetically through planting and shop front improvements to complement the second phase of Market Place improvements
- Explore what other help is needed to support economic recovery
- Engaging other town councils, Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council and other partners to share our approaches to recovery planning and explore how we can work together – amongst other things there is now a fortnightly meeting with other town clerks and MDC to discuss how we can cooperate
- Identifying the services available to support better mental and physical health that FTC can signpost to
- Trialling webinars that will help to build personal financial health
- Exploring how we can improve food security working with Field to Fork

- Considering how our Climate Emergency Action Plan may develop building on what we have learned from the crisis – three groups with a mix of representatives from inside and outside the Council have been focusing on Transport, Energy and Resources
- As part of this, proposals are already being worked on that will help to sustain the upsurge in walking and cycling; Somerset County Council as highway authority have been approached to secure their cooperation to reallocate road space for pop-up cycle lanes
- Exploring the possibility of a ‘Leap Forward’ week of community activities to encourage a clean-up and planting across the town

## Next steps

These are the proposed next steps:

- Establish a ‘Leap Forward Panel’ supported by the Deputy Town Clerk and bringing together a lead town councillor and representatives from outside the Council that can advise the Council on its recovery planning work
- Commission a separate Panel to consider the emergency response to date, examine what went well, what didn't and how we might develop a guidebook for the next time the town is affected by a major crisis, whether another outbreak of COVID-19 or some other threat. This would bring together not only councillors but also some representatives from partner/community organisations who can provide some expert knowledge and guidance.

## Recommendations

1. To agree the principles set out above that will guide the work on a Recovery Plan for Frome
2. To endorse the early work identified above
3. To approve the establishment of a ‘Leap Forward Panel’ to be supported by the Deputy Town Clerk that brings together a lead town councillor and representatives from outside the Council that can advise the Council on its Recovery Plan work; authority to be delegated to the Deputy Town Clerk in consultation with the Leader to agree membership
4. To delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk in consultation with councillors on the Steering Group to develop a costed Recovery Plan based on advice from the ‘Leap Forward Panel’ and make recommendations to Council – an update to be provided as soon as possible
5. To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to commission a Panel to consider the emergency response to date. A detailed report on the membership, remit of this Panel and the timetable it will work to is to be presented to the next meeting of Council in June.