

COVID-19 Recovery Strategy

2020 – 2021

Introduction

This Recovery Strategy outlines the strategic framework for the recovery of the functions and services of Leicestershire County Council's in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Specifically, it will set out the key principles, governance structures and outline programme plan upon which recovery will be based. This will allow for a joined-up, consistent and well-informed approach throughout the recovery process, with key principles and approaches reflected, culminating in a transition to Departmental Service and Business Planning, utilising the pre-existing governance and decision-making protocols of the Council.

This Recovery Strategy is aligned to recovery coordination undertaken through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland, and will both seek to inform and be informed by the work of that partnership. The scope of this Recovery Strategy, however, is limited to the functions and services of Leicestershire County Council (LCC). The document has been developed with support and advice from across the Council and its partner services as well as reflecting local and national guidance.

For the purposes of this strategy the terms 'Response' and 'Recovery' in relation to major incidents have been used. The Covid-19 pandemic meets the criteria for such a definition but the pathways from Response to Recovery are unlike that for a traditional major incident and are being defined as we move forward.

Phasing

It is recognised that throughout the recovery process there will be periods of transition, with phased steps towards the Council adopting 'new normals' for functions and services. This will include responding to Government guidance, particularly those relating to the easing or re-tightening of business and social restrictions. During the span of this Strategy it will be necessary to regularly take stock, considering available evidence and lessons learned, and review the longer-term approach for LCC in supporting the achievement, or the reconsideration, of intended strategic outcomes and delivery models.

Given the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, the 'Response' and 'Recovery' phases will overlap and it is expected to be some time before full recovery is achieved and new service normals embedded. The breadth and range of services across LCC, and the varied impacts on those services through the Response phase, will mean that a single recovery pathway is not possible to define in each case. Each service will likely begin the work of Recovery from a different starting point and across different timescales. This strategy therefore aims to provide a high-level, organisational approach to be adopted, applied and implemented through Departmental Management Teams with corporate support and guidance provided. As an organisation, distinct from the status of individual functions and services, LCC will move through two key recovery phases; Interim Recovery and Full Recovery. Further details related to these phases is included within the Departmental Service Planning section of this strategy.

Recovery Themes

The diagram, included as Appendix A, sets out the LCC governance structure for recovery. Three key Recovery Themes have been established, linked to the LRF's recovery structures, which are managed and coordinated through the Council's Crisis Management Group (CMG), chaired by the Chief Executive, with regular progress managed through the Resilience Planning Group (RPG), chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive. The Recovery Themes for LCC are:

a) Infrastructure Recovery

The Infrastructure theme aims to provide coordination and corporate support to Heads of Service and DMTs to ensure the safe and sustainable recovery of LCC's functions and services. The recovery of LCC's infrastructure could take place relatively quickly but will be managed carefully to avoid a complete return to the 'business of before' – some of which may now be undesirable, unnecessary or unaffordable. Support to the infrastructure recovery work will centre around four recovery programmes, aligned to the Council's existing Strategic Change Portfolio (SCP) and covered in more detail in the next section;

- Ways of Working (Workplace & Wellbeing)
- Financial Sustainability
- Digital Value
- Environment & Net Carbon Neutrality

b) Community Recovery

The Community theme, managed with the support and advice of the Great Communities Advisory Board, aims to support and coordinate long-term community recovery and resilience response. The process of rebuilding community capacity and resilience will likely take place over a longer period than the recovery of the Council's infrastructure, with some communities and VCS organisations requiring more support than others (in areas such as skills and retraining as well as volunteering capacity).

The key objectives of the Community Recovery theme are included in [Appendix B](#).

c) Economic Recovery

In the main, economic recovery will take place over a much longer period of time than the recovery of LCC services, however there are a number of immediate interventions by the County Council to support specific sectors which may need identification in service recovery plans. Given the severity of the crisis, it is prudent to plan for a recovery period of at least three to five years and to identify opportunities for the council to either provide direct support or to influence the wider economic recovery. Close working with businesses, skills and place agendas is key as is direct engagement with the LLEPs Economic Recovery Cell.

The key objectives of the Economic Recovery theme are included in [Appendix C](#).

Strategic Change and Transformation

The pandemic Response phase has forced LCC to quickly adopt major changes in the way in which services are managed, provided and supported and the Council is focussing significant effort to maintain progress towards the key outcomes outlined in its [Strategic Plan](#). These changes will not be wholly sustainable for the long term and the opportunity exists to use the lessons learned and experience gained from the Response phase to rethink our approach to service design, delivery and support in the future.

This opportunity will be essential given that the impact of Covid-19 has further exacerbated the underlying drivers for change that LCC has established within its existing Strategic Change Portfolio, specifically;

- The need for Financial Sustainability. The financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's finances is predicted to be severe. In light of this our Recovery planning must consider future service delivery options, mindful of the need to minimise costs and/or income reductions, even if it means that some service outcomes are reduced. Furthermore, it is inevitable that LCC will also be required to expand upon its existing savings efforts to ensure financial sustainability in the short and medium term.
- LCC's commitment to Environmental sustainability and targets for Net Carbon Neutrality. Our Recovery efforts must not come at a cost to the environment and where possible should be based around reducing energy consumption into the future;
- A Digital Value approach. To support more modern and efficient ways of working we will embed digital technology in service design, access and delivery wherever feasible.
- Changing our Ways of Working. The Wellbeing of our staff is a high priority throughout the recovery work. To ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of LCC staff, and of our visitors and service users, significant changes to our ways of working have been adopted during the Response phase and early Recovery work. As we look towards full recovery, the longer-term offer for Wellbeing support, particularly given the need to revisit our existing Workplace ambitions, will be defined.

There will be a renewed emphasis on the Strategic Change Portfolio to ensure that we make the most of the resources available to us and that we 'build back stronger'; progressing as a modern, effective and efficient organisation, ensuring that corporate support resource is deployed where needed most.

Departmental Service Planning

Given the range of factors outlined within this strategy, and the need to ensure a timely, safe and sustainable recovery for LCC, there will be two key organisational stages to our recovery planning, recognising that the timing for each will be influenced by Government guidance and any need to revert to a 'Response' phase;

- 1) **Interim Recovery.** The need to ensure safe service recovery in the short-term - protecting the vulnerable and helping to ensure the Council delivers against its commitments - will require Heads of Service to develop and implement practical interim arrangements for service users, partners, suppliers and staff. Such arrangements will be necessary and applicable to the short-term but may not be appropriate or sustainable for the longer term. Corporate guidance for this short-term planning will be provided, also helping to ensure the longer-term position for the Council is considered.
- 2) **Full Recovery.** In considering the most appropriate service models for the longer-term, an evidence-based approach will be taken to ensure Full Recovery is aligned to our strategic ambitions and the change drivers through the SCP. The definition of longer-term recovery principles will develop as the full impact and implications of the pandemic are clearer and will be followed by new guidance for an anticipated fundamental review of service and business plans.

As highlighted earlier, the organisational phases may differ at times from the status of individual functions and services given the varied nature of starting points for recovery and the differing levels of recovery urgency and need. It is expected that any function or service will need to go through a validated service planning process within Phase2 before being considered 'Fully Recovered'.

Governance & Assurance

The Council will utilise existing structures and processes, some of which were adopted through 'Response', to support the design, planning and delivery of the recovery during the interim and full recovery phases.

The need for member involvement in the recovery process will be crucial. Agreement has been reached to establish a cross party working group to provide high-level advice and political perspective to the County Council's Recovery work.

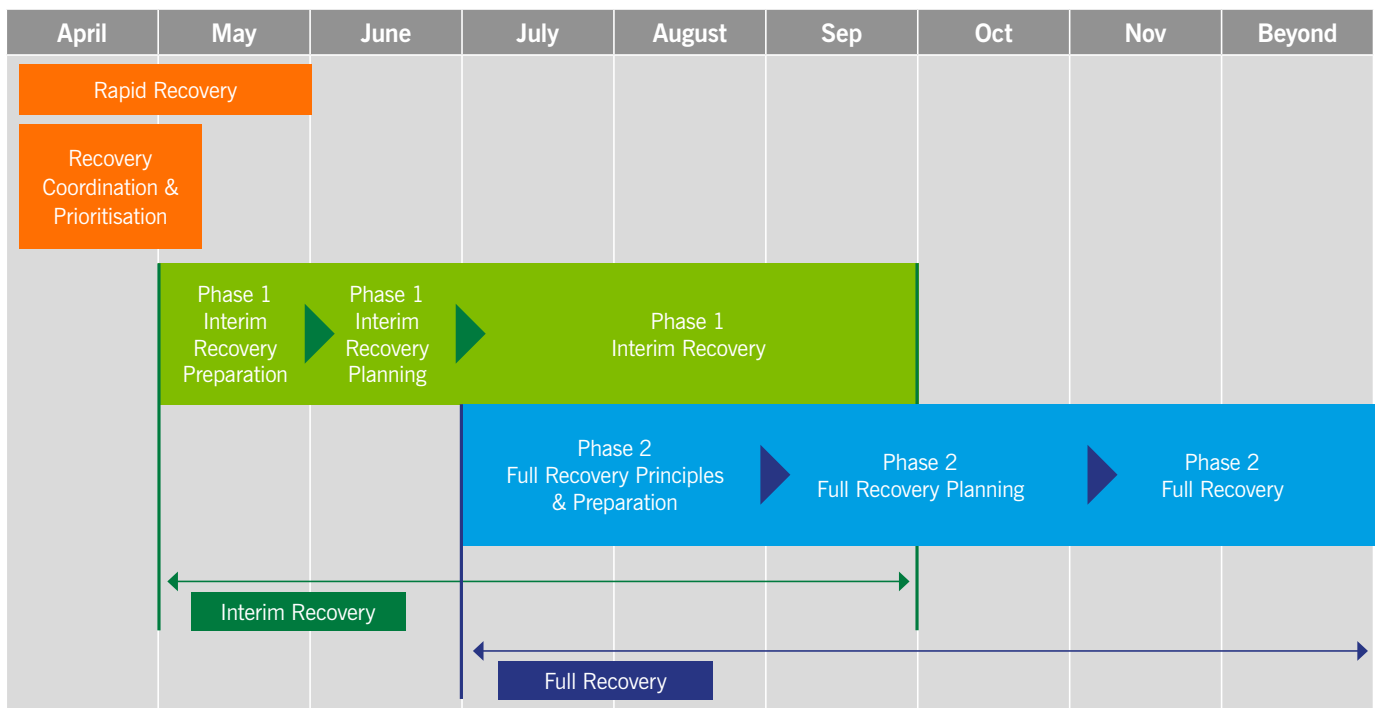
In moving forward with proposals for recovery it is recognised that whilst the working group will play a key role it is not a decision-making body. As such operational decisions which are not considered 'key decisions' will be taken by the relevant Chief Officer and/or Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Resources. Key decisions and those considered sensitive will be referred to the Cabinet for decisions and there will be engagement with scrutiny members.

Recovery Timing

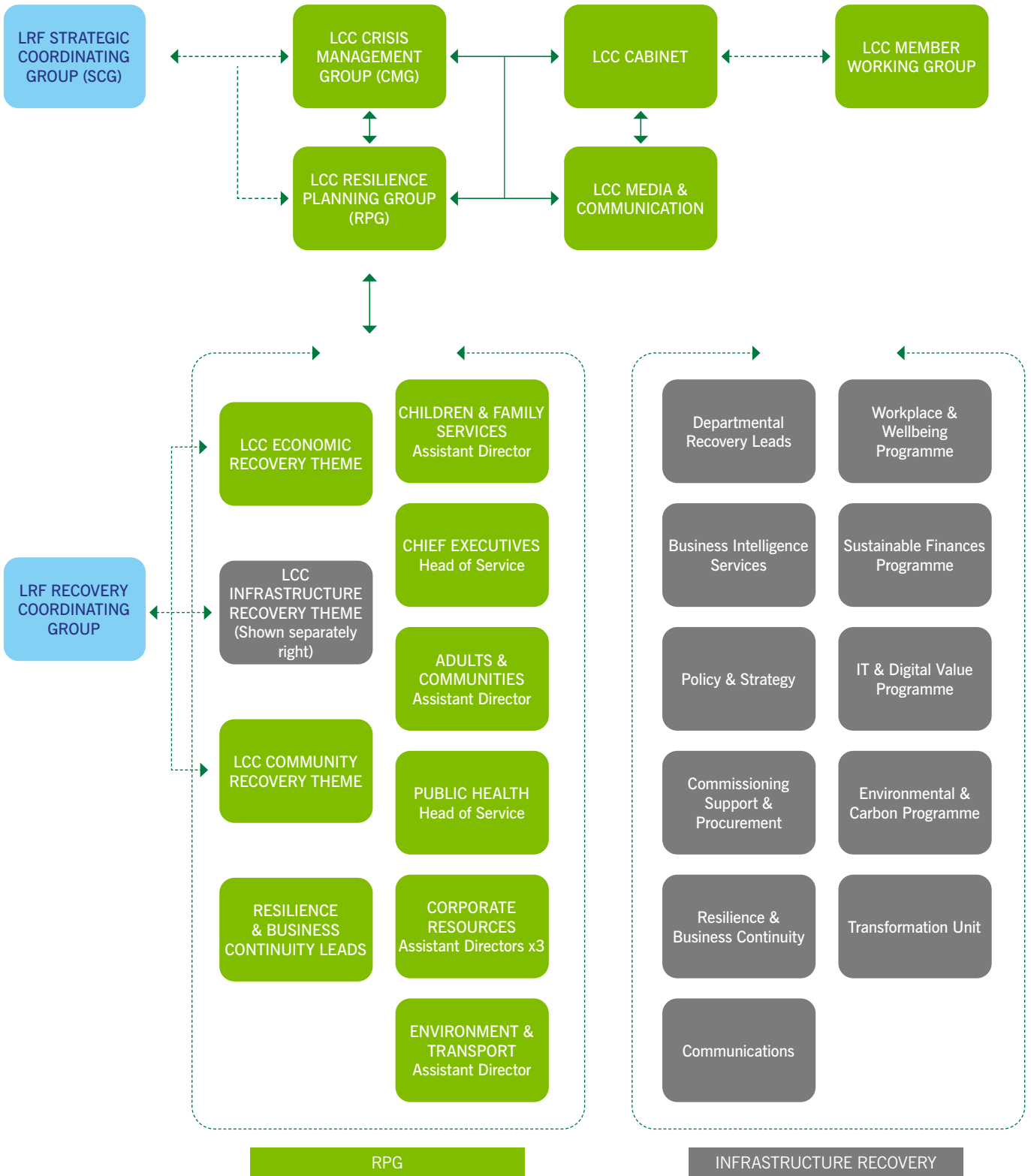
The timing of the recovery phases is set out below in a high-level plan for organisational recovery, recognising that the detailed timings may differ for individual functions and services.

The timings for Interim and Full Recovery are highly susceptible to further change and will be influenced by a number of factors including;

- Government guidance and future milestones related to easing of lockdown
- LCC strategy development activities (eg MTFS, Environment Strategy etc)
- LCC internal influences (eg Fit for the Future)



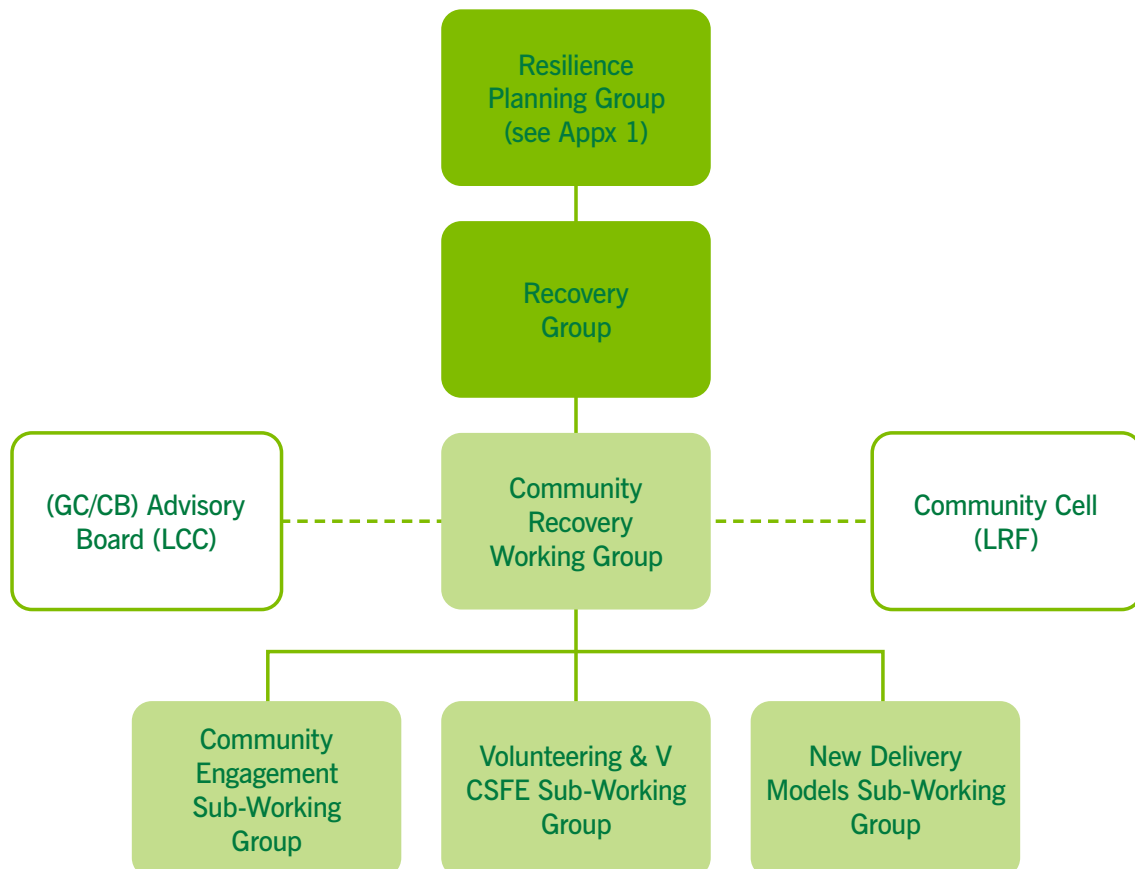
Appendix A: Leicestershire County Council Recovery Structure



Appendix B: Community Recovery Theme

Key Objectives

- Continue to support those who are shielded until they can safely re-integrate into the community
- Work with communities, anchor institutions, the wider VCSE and faith sector to plan to return to the “new normal”.
- Support vulnerable households whose employment, finances and safety may now be at risk
- Capitalise on the strength of volunteering and community spirit generated by the crisis
- Build a sustainable place that benefits all citizens in the context of the climate emergency
- Develop the priorities that will inform the revised Communities Strategy 2022-2026 (the Community Recovery Strategy) including endorsing the principles of the Communities Strategy, social action etc.
- Revise, if necessary, the focus of the Great Communities strategic outcomes, to inform future commissioning priorities
- Promote equality, diversity and address inequality of outcome through early intervention and prevention (Dahlgren/Whitehead Rainbow)



Appendix C: Economic Recovery Theme

Key Objectives

- Gather up to date data from businesses and sectors to ensure interventions and other actions are evidenced based
- Urgently restart the county's economy to protect the income and livelihoods of residents, whilst maintaining positive impacts of 'lockdown' on environment
- Identify opportunities for long-term economic development and regeneration
- Create the conditions for high quality investment and development and the development of a more inclusive and resilient economy
- Support business recovery through provision of grants and loans, where necessary
- Review existing strategies such as the LLEP's emerging Local Industrial Strategy, Midlands Engine strategies as well as sector specific regional and national strategies
- Enable delivery of National Programmes to support Business Recovery ensuring that investment is made quickly, avoiding the possibility of fraudulent payments where possible
- Address the significant impact of Covid-19 on the labour market, with a particular focus on vulnerable areas of the county
- Re-skill Leicestershire's residents to be able to compete in the changed local economy; including upscaling digital skills and tackling digital isolation, skills for a zero-carbon economy and supporting cohorts most impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown (e.g. NEET young people and over 50s).

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