

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORE SERVICES TO CABINET ON 16 DECEMBER 2020

LGA Recovery & Renewal Panel Findings

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform cabinet of the findings from the Local Government Association (LGA) Recovery and Renewal panel that took place on 20th August 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That cabinet note the areas of good practice identified and are informed and assured on the progress against areas for further consideration.**

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 On 20 August 2020, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council took part in an LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel. Within the overarching theme of recovery and renewal. The council and the panel:

1. Reflected on the Council's response to the COVID-19 crisis
2. Discussed the immediate priorities for Barnsley in the Borough's recovery and renewal and
3. Considered the impact of the crisis on the longer term aims and ambitions of the Council.

- 3.2 Background to the review

- Due to the COVID 19 pandemic the LGA suspended the physical delivery of all peer challenge work. To continue to support councils the LGA refocused its support and adopted a new remote peer support approach. The panel review was primarily there to support improvement.

- 3.3 The panel discussion involved the following participants:

- From the authority:-
 - Sir Stephen Houghton; Sarah Norman; Shokat Lal; Paul Castle;
- Representing the LGA:-
 - Cllr Graham Chapman (Nottingham City Council and LGA Lead Peer for Yorkshire and the Humber),
 - Kath O'Dwyer (Chief Executive, St. Helens Council)
 - Ernest Opuni (Improvement Manager, LGA).
 - Judith Hurcombe (Programme Manager, LGA)

3.4 Findings from the panel;

- The review recognised the hard work the officers and members had undertaken to support the communities of the borough; often going 'above & beyond' what might be expect of us.
- The council's response is thoughtful, strategic and long term – this is consistent with the council being people focused. The first 12-18 months is on focusing on standing up, then recovery.
- The council is seeing the opportunity and need to do things differently (e.g. diverting £43m planned investment and clear consideration of what is still relevant)
- There is sound financial planning which has enabled the council's own resources to support businesses & the economy ahead of central government allocations; balanced budget for this year and next.

3.5 The review acknowledged the joint work undertaken across the Local Resilience Forum in South Yorkshire. Recognising:

- The authorities' role leading the strategic response & recovery coordination group
- The development of the strategic approach to recovery, notably to restart services that had been paused through the pandemic; the approach to recover services throughout the borough; and the longer term recovery activity to new levels of normality.

3.6 Some specific examples of good practice recognised by the peer team were;

- **Our demonstration of clear and determined leadership of place**
 - Early payment of business grants and pro-active advice provided through Enterprising Barnsley
 - Responding to local need through early and comprehensive support to care homes
- **Effective partnership working arrangements**
 - Focus on identifying and supporting vulnerable communities was underpinned by pre-existing neighbourhood working structure and the effective involvement Area Teams and as well as work with Barnsley CVS.
 - The strong partnership with schools ensured these were opened on time in line with central government timeframes whilst focusing on managing vulnerability risks and addressing educational disadvantage.
- **One Council Organisational response**
 - Smart working plans were accelerated at pace allowing for a speedy shift to homeworking.
 - There was rapid movement to virtual full council, cabinet and other meetings such as regulatory, audit, scrutiny and area councils.
 - Staff were redeployed to support vulnerable members of the community and maintain key services.
 - This has been underpinned by a clear focus on wider staff health and wellbeing being monitored through surveys and regular Microsoft Teams events.

3.7 Some areas to consider going forward;

As part of the review the panel undertook a desktop study to consider key recovery documentation that the authority had produced, notably governance documentation; the response & recovery strategy; impact assessments; thematic recovery strategies and plans;

- *It is clear through the discussion what Barnsley’s strategic priorities and objectives are and how they connect. It is less clear from the range of documents in existence. There would be value in bringing this all together as part of a simplified clear and coherent narrative supporting the post-Covid reset of the 2030 vision for Barnsley.*
- *Think about how we can use volunteers more widely and maintain positive engagement beyond the crisis is something the council is keen to explore.*
- *Jobs-led recovery ambitions need to be further developed to ensure that both the response and the recovery aspects are managed in tandem*
- *Are we sufficiently applying the modernisation opportunities afforded by the crisis comprehensively across all areas of the council?*
- *To use the strong partnership with schools to develop a clear plan to tackle increased educational disadvantage as a result of the pandemic.*
- *To further use the Area Council structures and the route for community engagement and mobilisation of volunteers to support a jobs-led recovery as well as in mental health and community support?*
- *We need to be sufficiently prepared for the magnitude of the changes in the retail and office markets.*

3.8 Reflection on the panel’s identified areas to consider going forward

- The authority accepts the areas to consider going forward and is incorporating these points in a simplified strategic narrative of Barnsley 2030. The council recognises and can evidence the impacts that Covid-19 is having on the wellbeing, economic and health of the communities and is incorporating this into the recovery work across the borough and South Yorkshire
- The authority recognises that new normalities created by the pandemic has will have impacted upon people’s values and that it needs to reflect this in the Barnsley 2030 ambitions and council plans.

Area of consideration identified by the panel:

Area identified	Progress and Further Actions
<p><i>It is clear through the discussion what Barnsley’s strategic priorities and objectives are and how they connect. It is less clear from the range of documents in existence. There would be value in bringing this all together as part of a simplified clear and coherent narrative supporting the post-Covid reset of the 2030 vision for Barnsley.</i></p>	<p>The Barnsley 2030 vision is at an advanced stage. The vision will set out the overall strategic direction for Barnsley and will be the golden thread for all other plans and initiatives – ensuring there is clear connectivity and alignment and the Barnsley story is owned and understood not only by the Council but the place as a whole.</p>

Area identified	Progress and Further Actions
<i>Think about how we can use volunteers more widely and maintain positive engagement beyond the crisis is something the council is keen to explore.</i>	The Council has a strong track record in this area but are keen to further develop the Leadership of the CVS. To that end a CVS strategy group is now established to further develop their role within volunteering which alongside further efforts within the council to develop a more co-ordinated approach to volunteering we will be in an even stronger position.
<i>Jobs-led recovery ambitions need to be further developed to ensure that both the response and the recovery aspects are managed in tandem</i>	<p>Our work during this response phase has centred on balancing response and recovery activity to minimise the impact of any redundancies with intensive employment support to move people into vacancies and/or areas of employment growth with support to business growth/inward investments and future skills. Supporting businesses through our Enterprise Barnsley helpdesk has been essential to provide frontline support and guidance to businesses signposting them to national and regional support.</p> <p>Additionally, our local COVID Business support response provides a triage services to local businesses. Recovery work is running in parallel in respect of activity such as the High Street Recovery Plan, shaping the Sheffield City Region business recovery plan and more recently kickstarting a local Barnsley Economic Recovery plan to bridge the gaps in national and local support.</p>
<i>Are we sufficiently applying the modernisation opportunities afforded by the crisis comprehensively across all areas of the council</i>	<p>A considerable amount of work has already been done identifying the opportunities; looking at the workforce, accommodation and technology. We have developed our <i>be even better strategy</i> which will inform the new Council plan and is aligned to the council's MTFS.</p> <p>Our emerging corporate strategy to support the Barnsley 2030 work sets out key design principles centred around empowering and connecting communities & providing greater consistent end-to-end services to our customers. These points are fundamental to modernising services consistently.</p> <p>It is also recognised that modernisation across systems has to be done in partnership with other organisations particularly around care services.</p>

Area identified	Progress and Further Actions
<i>To use the strong partnership with schools to develop a clear plan to tackle increased educational disadvantage as a result of the pandemic.</i>	This is already part of our education improvement strategy. Covid has undoubtedly changed the context of this work, and the Alliance is committed to reducing educational disadvantage whilst developing inclusive provision alongside our SEND strategy. With a very present focus in this response phase on supporting children's lost learning and the cohort of children and young people who will be sitting examinations. Collaborative working improvements brought through the joint focus of the pandemic will support us to accelerate some of this work within our strategies.
<i>To further use the Area Council structures and the route for community engagement and mobilisation of volunteers to support a jobs-led recovery as well as in mental health and community support?</i>	<p>Area councils continue to fulfil a strong leadership role across our neighbourhoods and we recognised the pivotal role area councils have to play in response, recovery and beyond.</p> <p>Work is underway to ensure a focus on local economies and skills alongside health and wellbeing. Relationships between teams across Place and Communities continue to be strengthened to ensure a co-ordinated and value-added approach is delivered.</p>
<i>We need to be sufficiently prepared for the magnitude of the changes in the retail and office markets.</i>	<p>It is recognised, both locally and nationally, that the pandemic will change the requirements of office accommodation. Many organisations, including our own, have found the benefits of smart working initiatives and practices. How, and to what extent this will reduce demand for office accommodation is not known at this stage. Furthermore, we are currently undertaking a strategic review of our commercial property portfolio.</p> <p>What is known is that with less people in our town centres the demand for retail will change. More online shopping may see an increase in demand for distribution centres and the like and we continue to monitor footfall through this period. Albeit, our strategies and masterplans to support Glassworks, principal towns and the like will need to be reviewed in line with changing market conditions.</p>

4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

4.1 N/A

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

5.1 N/A

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS

6.1 Any improvements that we make will ultimately have an impact on local people and service users. This is particularly true of improvements to delivery of outcomes through our Area Council Arrangements and the intensive support currently being provided to care homes, and ultimately service users.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct implications following from this report. The financial implications arising from the findings of the Recovery and Renewal panel in supporting the post-Covid reset of the 2030 vision for Barnsley, will be considered as part of the councils overall improvement and transformation programme. This will complement the councils new 2021-24 corporate plan and 2030 place based outcomes, and will be subject to further reports.

8. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The future of smart working and asking ourselves whether we are able to “go back” will undoubtedly have an impact on employees. We need to ensure that employee wellbeing is a key part of any strategy going forward.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None Identified

10. CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None Identified

11. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Communications continues to be our channel for communicating with residents. There will be communications implications arising, but as yet they are undefined.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 NA

13. THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

13.1 The new council plan 2021 will be the vehicle for consolidating the council's priorities and outcomes in to a single narrative.

14. LIST OF APPENDICES


Appendix 1: BMBC Recovery and Renewal Panel Final Report

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Financial Implications/Consultation



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*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer
where no financial implications)*