



**Dacorum Borough Council
COVID RECOVERY PLAN
Sept.2021**



Executive Summary

There is much to reflect on and learn from events since the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have responded effectively and proactively to the challenges faced by Covid-19 and have provided amazing support to the community and businesses, from the response to the Dame Louise Casey ask to bring 'Everyone in', protecting those at risk of homelessness, minimising vaccine inequality and vital economic support to our small businesses. This response has been replicated across the borough with communities coming together to support each other and Team Dacorum will continue this collaborative approach to recovery, the pandemic has emphasised the difference we can make and the influence we have, when we work together.

The impact of the pandemic and lockdowns will be far reaching, as the virus continues to mutate it is important that we continue to ensure our measures are sufficient to contain and with caution we must now move into recovery. We know that our communities, voluntary sector and businesses will have been impacted in many ways as a result of the pandemic and in some instances with devastating consequences. It is therefore crucial that whilst we continue to undertake work to contain outbreaks, we provide help and support to those who will most benefit from it and those most impacted in our borough along with helping our economy to recover.

Covid-19 has also presented us with opportunities, we will continue to embrace these opportunities throughout our recovery phase. Dacorum will aid recovery and innovation in ways specifically designed to support our district, reflecting what we have learned and what we could do differently in the future to ensure that as many of our residents as possible are able to gain from the opportunities created. Our plan is focused on activity that takes a holistic, whole society, approach to the current pandemic.

This plan should be read in conjunction with the council's Corporate Plan, Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and service plans, as the intention is still to deliver the priorities committed to in these plans. The recovery plan will focus on how we can build on this and respond specifically to the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic. We have been listening to the voices of our staff, communities, voluntary sector and local businesses to ensure that our response is shaped to provide the best support to Dacorum through the recovery phase and after.

Despite the difficulties faced, our commitment is to do all we can to ensure that Dacorum continues to be a place where our communities and businesses can thrive and prosper.

Where are we now?

The pandemic has highlighted some of the most important challenges our society faces, including:

1. **Communities** in our borough have come together to offer support to individuals in need, providing support to reduce loneliness and isolation.
2. Our **Businesses** have been severely impacted. The council have managed a significant number of requests for help and Government grant funding. Local businesses will need continued support to re-establish their income streams, stabilise their businesses and then begin to grow again. Our Economic Recovery Strategy
3. The pandemic has hit those **most in need in our society** the hardest, widening gaps and acutely highlighting issues of inclusion, equity and opportunity. We know that there has been a disproportionate impact on young people, women, minority groups and those living in areas of deprivation. Domestic Violence, risk of homelessness, mental health issues and health issues more generally, and debt have all increased. People who were experiencing poverty will continue to be at risk of further economic hardship throughout 2021, as Government grant schemes, such as furlough and changes to tenancy agreements, come to an end.
4. The pandemic has reinforced the need for, and the benefits of collaborative **partnership working**. Throughout 2020 across the county and locally, our public sector services have responded quickly, working with our local communities.

There are signs of hope emerging which relate to the roll-out of the national vaccination programme.

Our Post Pandemic Commitments

We will:

- 1) Place our Communities at the heart of our recovery
- 2) Work with our businesses to help them stabilise and rebuild during economic uncertainty
- 3) Ensure those most impacted by the pandemic are supported
- 4) Continue to strengthen our relationships with key partners, to deliver joint, practical solutions to local challenges

1. Place our Communities at the heart of our recovery

The role of strong, inclusive, caring and resilient communities has been an enormous factor in helping many people through the pandemic. We have all been reminded that 'bottom up', locally driven approaches usually work best.

We want to engage and build meaningful relationships with our communities. We want to hear all voices and we want to involve local people in decision-making processes – whether that be hearing views on areas of growth; or understanding what local parishes and groups feel their communities need.

The roll of volunteering and locally based groups cannot be underestimated throughout the pandemic. It has been inspiring. We want to continue to work with local groups and create more opportunities for volunteering (recognising that currently people are very tired) and more focus on projects that residents feel will benefit their communities.

We will place Community-led and locally developed plans at the heart of our approach to recovery. We want to work with our parishes to identify, and find solutions for, local challenges. We also have worked closely with the County Council as a strategic partner to better plan, influence and work alongside those services that directly impact upon our residents and intend to build on this partnership.

2. Work with our businesses to help them stabilise and rebuild during economic uncertainty

Over the past 12 months, the financial resilience of many businesses has been eroded. Employers including micro, small and medium sized companies will need support to re-build their business base. We want to stop businesses that were thriving pre-COVID, from now failing. We will need to be quick and agile in our response, tailoring our support to local demands – so business and employment intelligence will be vital. We must ensure that our partnerships with related organisations are strong and we agree priorities quickly. We need to plan for a short and long term recovery with these partners, utilising national schemes and resources as they exist and building confidence in private sector investment.

Many people have lost their jobs or are at risk of unemployment when furlough ends. Helping people find new jobs, re-train and further develop their skills or qualifications will be key. Many individuals will not have been unemployed in their adult lives or sought further education opportunities. We will need to help people navigate through what will be a very uncertain time, and support education providers to provide courses that enable people to re-enter the job market as soon as possible.

We will work with our partners to provide employment opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships and utilising the Kick-start programme to support young people. We will ensure that as an employer ourselves, we do all we can to ensure our recruitment processes are accessible and inclusive. We will expect our development partners to create employment for local people, both directly and through their supply chains. Our areas of growth should benefit local people.

Dacorum is committed to a Green Recovery. Balancing our commitment to our environment and climate change, with the demands for growth, housing and transport is one of our greatest challenges.

3. Ensure those most impacted by the pandemic are supported

Throughout the pandemic, working with local communities and partners, we have seen the challenges many households face with regards to basic requirements that are often the cause of health inequalities – good food, a warm home and stable employment.

Housing supply and accessibility will remain a key issue for the borough, exacerbating a challenge that Dacorum was dealing with pre-pandemic. Ensuring that housing of different tenures and affordability are brought forward for development will play a key role in supporting our communities and the local economy. We will continue to push for affordable housing on development sites, and to expect high quality energy efficiency in our homes.

We want people to feel safe in our communities. Domestic Abuse has sadly been the experience of many people nationally during the pandemic and we want to ensure that the council is well equipped to identify and support individuals at risk of or experiencing abuse in their homes. Through our Domestic Abuse project review, we will ensure that the council develops robust strategy, policy and procedures in response to the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Young people have been particularly affected by the impacts of multiple lockdowns, missed hours of learning and schooling from home. We will work with education colleagues at the County Council to support children and young people whose education has been disrupted. We will particularly focus on those in receipt of Free School Meals, those who are Not in Employment, Education and Training, Children who are looked after and Children Leaving Care. Ensuring we are helping with any identified needs, such as mental health, Careers Advice & Education, and pathways into employment, education and training.

We will support mental health initiatives and work closely with mental health services, to assist those suffering from anxiety and low-level depression. We have seen throughout the pandemic what happens when acute needs are not addressed immediately.

4. Continue to strengthen our relationships with key partners, to deliver joint, practical solutions to local challenges

Partnership working will continue to be key across a broad range of issues. It will be important to work with the County Council on any changes/pressures on their services and with our health colleagues. Working with other Councils in Hertfordshire, to understand how we can support our collective recovery ambitions and interdependent economic challenges and avoid duplicating efforts.

Further work is needed to assess the inequalities that have been exposed more acutely in our society through the pandemic. We need to approach the planning, delivery and evaluation of our work on recovery differently.

Previously the challenge for the council has been balancing the demands for growth, particularly in housing and transport (connectivity) alongside a focus on sustainability. As we face a pandemic-related recession, the Council will need to consider the local impact on business, employment and skills/education in order to help the local economy recover, and once again grow.

We will work closely with our health partners (including the new Integrated Care System), community groups and parishes and other local authorities, to ensure our communities enjoy good access to healthcare and social care and have support to take positive actions to stay healthy.

We will work very closely with our neighbouring Local Authorities, the LEP and the County Council, building on the relationships we have established and enhanced during the pandemic. We will work jointly on key local issues and shared priorities; identifying who is best placed to deliver services and support. We will share resources, skill sets and agreed outcomes, working together as strategic partners.

Action Plan

Ensure our communities, voluntary organisations and businesses recover from impacts of COVID19			
What we will do	Timeline	Responsible	How will we know when this has been achieved
Ensure Covid- 19 related grant payments to local residents and business are made promptly and accurately.	Within grant scheme guidelines	Chris Taylor/ Chris Baker (as appropriate) and Fiona Jump.	Volumes of complaints around delayed/ inaccurate payments is low.
Ensure appropriate financial monitoring and reporting on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances is undertaken. This covers financial reporting to officers and Members also the completion of relevant government returns.	Quarterly, in line with the corporate financial monitoring timetable. As per return deadlines for government returns.	Fiona Jump	Reports are submitted to relevant committees in line with the corporate timetable.
Provide support to services within the Council to access Covid-19 related funding, including grant funding.	As required.	Fiona Jump	The Council is in a position to bid the maximum amount of funding it is eligible for.
Ensure the Council is supporting its sundry debtors and suppliers, by monitoring its recovery and payment processes and adjusting as needed. This would take into account the desire for the Council to maximise income collection and manage its own cash-flow position.	Ongoing	Richard Rice / Fiona Jump	Payment of suppliers is reflected in relevant KPIs. We regularly monitor the sundry debt that is being repaid via payments plans and will report on trends on a regular basis.

Continue the managed re-introduction of formal recovery processes for council tax and business rates arrears, ensuring that we have the capacity to deal with enquiries and support residents and businesses, while increasing collection.	Ongoing	Chris Baker	Collection rates are monitored by KPIs
Support the Voluntary and Community Sector to address health inequality, poverty, poor mental health and other risk areas	End of March 2022	Layna Warden	Better community cohesion, more grants and financial support available, local groups are sustainable
Use a place-based evidence approach to identify neighbourhoods and demographic groups that have been more widely affected by Covid	October 2021	Layna Warden	We will know which areas and communities in Dacorum to provide targeted support
Deliver a programme with partners to reduce isolation and loneliness with focus on Supported Housing and older residents	Ongoing	Oliver Jackson/ Layna Warden	Reduced isolation and loneliness
Work proactively with Housing tenants to maximize income and continue to adopt a support based approach to income collection for those whose finances have been impacted by the Pandemic.	Ongoing	Oliver Jackson	Rent arrears will remain stable with minimal council tenant evictions
Provide dedicated communications support to services within the Council to deliver a programme of COVID-19 support and recovery.	Ongoing	Kelvin Soley	Increased awareness and access to support and recovery information, programmes and initiatives.
A large amount of recovery activities have already taken place with more to come as businesses and Council Services re-opened as part of the road map. This is set to continue with the new ways of working for Forum Services	Ongoing	Emma Walker	All Council Services are up and running with a suitable and sufficient Covid Risk Assessment in place and in line with the approved Corporate Covid Risk Assessment.

<p>and more activities re-opening and the existing legal requirements to have a Covid Risk Assessment in line with government Guidance</p>			<p>All business sectors are safely re-opened, non-compliant businesses are dealt with in line with our enforcement policy. To ensure that business employees and customers visit safe premises, with safe ways of working and to ensure that all businesses are dealt with fairly and equitably</p>
<p>Continue to support local outbreaks of Covid-19, particularly those that are more at risk in the community.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Emma Walker</p>	<p>Work with the LRF Partners, Businesses and Individuals to continue to manage outbreaks of Covid-19 in line with the relevant legislation and guidelines. Risk – Contain funding comes to an end in March 22. Both the test and Trace and Covid Advisor services are funded through this income stream, as is the addition wider capacity in the team.</p>

Co-ordinate and collaborate with partners to deliver joint outcomes			
What we will do	Timeline	Responsible	How will we know when this has been achieved
Work with Hertfordshire County Council to coordinate recovery actions where appropriate to ensure maximum value is achieved from activities across the county	September 2021	Claire Hamilton Natasha Beresford Chris Taylor	All districts across Hertfordshire are sharing information and outcomes to enable a more joined up approach where beneficial
In collaboration with partner agencies provide individual support to vulnerable tenants and residents who could be at greater risk due to the impact of the Pandemic.	Ongoing	Oliver Jackson Layna Warden	Increased health and wellbeing outcomes and more awareness of which locations and residents have been more effected
Expand delivery of the Healthy Hub to provide residents support through community partners	End March 2022	Layna Warden	Delivery of additional pop up days, increased referrals and health outcomes
In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and district colleagues, ensure implementation of the Rough Sleeper Delivery, which must be aligned with the Complex Needs Strategy.	Ongoing	Natasha Beresford	Reduction in rough sleeping in line with government agenda to eradicate rough sleeping by 2027.
In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and district colleagues, ensure implementation of targeted communications campaigns supporting COVID-19 recovery.	Ongoing	Kelvin Soley	Increased awareness, access and delivery of joint outcomes.
Through continued engagement via the Hertfordshire Accommodation Cell, VPAC and County Vaccine Lead group ensure joined up approach to recovery activity across Hertfordshire to support households most impacted.	Ongoing	Natasha Beresford Layna Warden	Identification of collaborative projects, increased funding and initiatives delivered in Hertfordshire.

In collaboration with Everyone Active, seek to return contract to strong financial position	Ongoing	Ben Hosier	Reduction in financial loss to DBC
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Take a joint and strategic approach to co-ordinate actions to ensure delivery of our post pandemic commitments			
What we will do	Timeline	Responsible	How will we know when this has been achieved
Ensure appropriate financial monitoring and reporting on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances is undertaken. This covers financial reporting to officers and Members also the completion of relevant government returns.	Quarterly, in line with the corporate financial monitoring timetable. As per return deadlines for government returns.	Fiona Jump	Reports are submitted to relevant committees in line with the corporate timetable.
Provide support to services within the Council to access Covid-19 related funding, including grant funding.	As required.	Fiona Jump	The Council is in a position to bid the maximum amount of funding it is eligible for.
Create a Local Delivery Plan setting out Dacorum's approach to tackle vaccine inequality	September 2021	Layna Warden	Increased vaccine take up in areas of deprivation and within BAME communities. Successful roll out of booster and flu jab
Set up Economic Recovery Board with Key stakeholders and agree a TOR and a Recovery Strategy that is owned and delivered by all participants	May 2021	Chris Taylor	Group is well represented and committed to working together to develop and deliver the recovery strategy
Identify the priority areas and leads for each work area for delivery including identification of any resource implications	July – August 20	Chris Taylor/Gunilla	A draft strategy will be presented to the group on September 6 th for agreement with the Board

for the delivery of outcomes (6 areas below) and the issues, activities and outcomes are endorsed by the Board		Edwards plus partners	
The Economic Recovery Strategy is adopted by the Council	October 2021	Claire Hamilton Chris Taylor	Strategy is adopted at Cabinet and subgroups begin to scope out delivery plans based on the priority areas ADD LINK TO THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY
Monitor delivery and outcomes from the Economic recovery Strategy in the S,M & L term through the board by a series of sub groups and report to Hemel Place Board and Cabinet	Ongoing	Chris Taylor Dacorum Economic Recovery Board	Outcomes and outputs within the strategy will be planned, delivered and monitored and the impacts assessed and any adjustments made as necessary
Create a Communications Delivery Plan, setting out Dacorum's communications activities and actions to support the programme of works outlined in the COVID-19 Recovery Plan.	Ongoing	Kelvin Soley	Activities and actions within the Communications Delivery Plan will be planned, delivered and monitored.

Ensure the resources of the council help our teams and services to recover from Covid			
What we will do	Timeline	Responsible	How will we know when this has been achieved
Ensure appropriate financial monitoring and reporting on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances is undertaken. This covers financial reporting to officers and Members also the completion of relevant government returns.	Quarterly, in line with the corporate financial monitoring timetable. As per return deadlines for government returns.	Fiona Jump	Reports are submitted to relevant committees in line with the corporate timetable.
Ensure we have a fit and healthy workforce to drive the CV-19 recovery. Ensure we have staff that have the appropriate skills set and management support.	Ongoing	Matt Rawdon	Sickness level remain consistent and feedback from managers. Continue to deliver on performance KPIs. Corporate training budgets spent in line with training needs. Successful leadership development programme delivered which meets the skills required to lead the organisation through the recovery stage.
Provide support to services within the Council to access Covid-19 related funding, including grant funding.	As required.	Fiona Jump	The Council is in a position to bid the maximum amount of funding it is eligible for. Services are resourced appropriately across the council to deliver the Recovery Strategy
Address the ECP service backlogs and the additional demands to Business as Usual arising from Covid. There was approximately 150% increase on Business as usual requests in ECP in the year 19/20 compared to 20/21.	Ongoing	Emma Walker	All service back-logs will be cleared KPI's will return to green Team will be resourced in line with the new normal to be able to respond to business as usual, requests.

Address the Property and Place service backlogs and the additional demands to business as usual arising from Covid, with particular focus on Housing Repairs, Cleaning and staff resourcing.	Ongoing	Jason Grace	All service back logs to be cleared KPI's to return to green Improved service resourcing Sheltered scheme lounges able to re-open
Identify opportunities to address reduced income in relation to off-street parking, penalty charges impacted as a direct result of Covid.	As required	Ben Hosier	Improved financial position Trend analysis of car park usage
Consider appropriate action to enable effective management of increased domestic waste as a result of Covid and increased home working.	Ongoing	Craig Thorpe	Improved service to Dacorum residents Identify vehicle solutions due to access issues
Review management of Gadebridge Splash Park in advance of next season to ensure effective management in line with Covid requirements	Ongoing	Craig Thorpe	Service delivery plan ahead of new season Clear communication for booking arrangements and capacity to residents