

Llr Cherwell District Council

Executive

7 March 2022

COVID 19: Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

This report asks the Executive to support the joint COVID Recovery and Renewal Framework, as set out in Appendix1.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 Adopt the Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework, as set out in Appendix1, as the key partnership document guiding joint programme planning beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic period.
- 1.2 Delegate final revisions to the Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, as partnership organisations complete their engagement and decision-making processes.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 System partners have worked closely together since early in 2020 to deliver a joined-up response across the board spectrum of COVID-19 impact. Partners have developed joint structures to support those required to stay at home, to encourage and enforce adherence to COVID restrictions, to monitor and contain the spread of the virus and to maintain the continuity of essential services. Joint responses have managed the impact on health and social care services and worked closely with education providers. From later in 2020 and into 2021, joint activity delivered community testing and latterly the successful role out of the vaccination programme. Partnership interventions have also sought to address the secondary impacts of the pandemic for individuals, communities and businesses through joint work on community engagement, business support, financial hardship and economic recovery.
- 2.2 Throughout 2021, Oxfordshire's system-wide COVID-19 response has continued to focus on the immediate health impacts of the pandemic, containing outbreaks and

minimising the transmission of the virus in the community. In line with the easing of most legal restrictions during the summer of 2021, system-partners revisited the long-term impact of COVID-19 and reviewed the shared focus of planning for recovery and renewal.

- 2.3 The pandemic has led to economic, community and service impact that has yet to be fully understood at the system level. However, it can clearly be seen that existing inequalities and service and community pressures have been amplified, with likely long-term impacts. As with many pre-existing challenges, the impact and effective responses will often lie across several agencies and sectors.
- 2.4 To coordinate and prioritise COVID and post-COVID activity, and prioritise resource allocation, partners agreed to develop a set of joint themes for the next phase in the pandemic period and to bring together shared system priorities and joint ambitions for recovery and renewal in an overarching framework.
- 2.5 This framework was initially drafted during late 2021 through engagement with system partners, drawing on priorities, impact analysis and community insight held within individual organisations and thematic partnerships. Progress was paused during December to allow partners to focus on the enhanced response to the Omicron variant and the framework is now being brought forward for formal adoption and incorporation into partnership planning for the new business year.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The intention of agreeing a joint framework is to provide a mechanism for driving systems working on renewal and an ongoing structure for collaboration. It will enable us to better coordinate how we recover from the impacts of COVID and implement changes in the light of what we have learnt for our communities, organisations and partnerships.
- 3.2 At the time of writing, the significant increase in infection rates related to the Omicron variant is waning. While service pressure in health and social care remains significant and the impact on educational settings remains high, system partners are stepping back from the period of most concern. Nevertheless, the potential for changes in the nature of the pandemic and for service disruption generated by the cumulative risks associated with COVID's direct and indirect impact remains. Therefore, while planning for the future, a level of COVID readiness will need to be maintained. Reflecting this position, the framework for recovery and renewal is arranged around three key aims:
 - **Consolidating recovery and building resilience:** Protecting key services and keeping social life and the economy open by sustaining our system response to COVID-19 and working together on addressing new pressures. This includes changes to service delivery as well as ways of working e.g. engagement with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), businesses and key partners.
 - **Addressing the unequal impact of COVID-19:** Proactively using qualitative and quantitative data and insight to identify the groups most impacted across a range of cross-cutting issues, beyond the immediate impact on health, and

tackling impact with a focus on the total strengths and needs of individuals and families

- **Supporting renewal:** Identifying new approaches and activities underpinned by the lessons we have learnt to date, building Oxfordshire's resilience, not only against future waves of the pandemic but also in terms of economic and community resilience to wider societal challenges including climate change and ecological impacts.

3.3 Across the three themes, two cross cutting priorities are recognised as needing to inform recovery and renewal thinking across the county:

- **Climate change action**
Championing climate action across the County as we work together to address climate change, build climate resilience and support nature recovery.
- **Tackling inequality**
Driving equal access and delivery of support across all local communities, narrowing health, social and educational inequalities and tackling poverty.

3.4 The full framework document is available at Appendix1.

3.5 This document is necessarily a start point for longer term planning. Its aim is to act as a bridge between current partnership COVID response, delivery and planning, and future longer-term planning across the partnership agenda. It seeks to bring together, rather than replace, existing county-wide plans and strategies and ensure that recovery and renewal activities are incorporated into the wider partnership context.

3.6 Cherwell's approach to engaging business, the VCS and residents during the COVID period fits well with the ambitions set out in the joint framework. Our consultation for the 2022/23 budget told us that local people hold healthy and resilient communities as their top priority. Our new business plan for 2022-23, agreed at Council in February, shows how we will deliver on these priorities by using our influence on the built environment, within leisure and wellbeing, on economic development and business support and with the voluntary and community sector. The business plan also restates our commitment to taking action on climate change. Finally, it prioritises inclusion and our commitment to working with partners across all sectors to deliver and improve services for our residents and communities. The Recovery and Renewal Framework will help us connect the priorities agreed by Council with the actions, approach and resource allocations of our partners organisations.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 Effective partnership working across Oxfordshire has been at the heart of the local system response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the national and local picture improves, agreeing a joint approach for Recovery and Renewal will set overarching common ambitions for the issues and themes to be worked on together as organisations and the community learn from the pandemic. The framework aims to ensure that Cherwell and Oxfordshire are best placed to recover from the

immediate impacts of the pandemic, to support the long-term renewal of communities and places, and enhance our joint impact on national and international challenges.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 The Oxfordshire COVID response system comprises health, local authority, education and community safety participants alongside representatives of strategic partnerships, including OxLEP. These partners connect to a broader network of key deliverers including schools, business, town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sector. Core system partners have agreed to adopt the joint Recovery and Renewal framework starting with local authorities, where recommendations to adopt the framework will be made to the relevant decision makers during March 2022. Significant engagement with system partners has already taken place. However, where additions and revisions are requested through the decision-making process, this report recommends that agreement to a final published version is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Do not adopt the joint framework. Rejected: working in partnership will support Cherwell District Council to deliver on its priorities, as set out in the Council's plan.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 Development of the Recovery and Renewal Framework was met within existing resource designated for COVID-19 programme management and funded from a dedicated government grant.
- 7.2 The Recovery and Renewal Framework does not in itself direct resources and so while organisations are asked to adopt the framework as a strategic document within their policy making frameworks, there is no direct financial impact.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance, 01295 221845,
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Legal Implications

- 7.3 There are no legal implications in this report.

Comments checked by:

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Risk Implications

- 7.4 There are no risk implications identified in this report however, if the Executive does not wish to adopt the joint framework, recovery and renewal in Cherwell could be significantly slower than the rest of the county and with less resource to deliver for Cherwell residents, therefore considerations and mitigations would need to be considered.

Comments checked by:

Emily Schofield, Acting Head of Strategy, 07881 311707,
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Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.5 The Recovery and Renewal framework outlines the unequal impact of COVID and notes the need for detailed analysis to fully understand the direct and indirect impacts in the short, medium and long term.
- 7.6 Activity already underway under system structures, for example on health inequality, vaccine outreach and support to homeless individuals, is directly addressing equality and inclusion as it relates to COVID-19.
- 7.7 In the development and delivery of the ambitions set out within the framework and the progression of new partnership planning and activity, detailed equality impact will be required building on the new learning and impact from the COVID-19 period supported through re-analysis of data and information, for example within the updated Joint Strategy Needs Assessment and in the annual report of the Director of Public Health.

Comments checked by:

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Sustainability Implications

- 7.8 Climate action is identified within the framework as a cross-cutting theme re-stating partners' shared commitment to meeting climate change objectives.

Comments checked by:

Sarah Gilbert, Climate Action Team Leader, sarah.gilbert@oxfordshire.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: Yes

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Links to the Council Business Plan, 2022/23, are set out in paragraph 3.6 above.

Lead Councillor

Cllr Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

Document Information**Appendix number and title**

- Appendix1: Oxfordshire Recovery and Renewal Framework, March 2022

Background papers

None

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