

 Executive 24 August 2020		Agenda Item No. 9
Title	WDC Post Covid 19 Recovery Strategy - Back to the Future	
For further information about this report please contact	Chris Elliott Chief Executive 01926 456003 chris.elliott@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers	N/A	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken	To Follow

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	03.08.20	Chris Elliott
Heads of Service		All
CMT	03.08.20	Chris Elliott, Andy Jones, Bill Hunt, Dave Barber
Programme Director for Climate Change	03.08.20	Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	03.08.20	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	03.08.20	Andrew Jones
Finance	03.08.20	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	03.08.20	Councillor Andrew Day, Leader
Consultation & Community Engagement		
N/A		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out and seeks support for the high level **WDC Post Covid 19 Recovery Strategy for the Council – Back to the Future**, based on the 3 threads of – Organisational Recovery, Economic Recovery and Community Recovery.
- 1.2 The report then focuses on the implementation steps for the Organisational Recovery thread around the operations based at Riverside House and seeks approval for funding for those steps.
- 1.3 The report also suggests further reports on progress of the 3 threads at regular intervals.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive supports the Back to the Future Recovery Strategy attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 The Executive agrees to the broad implementation steps set out in Appendix 2 to this report, including the mothballing of Floor 4.
- 2.3 The Executive agrees to fund the total estimated cost of the implementation steps of £203,000 to be funded as detailed in Section 5.
- 2.4 That further reports be brought on the 3 threads of the Recovery Strategy.

3 Reasons for the Recommendations

Recommendation 2.1

- 3.1 In preparing for the recovery phase of the Covid 19 Emergency, a strategy has been prepared as set out in Appendix 1 to this report which is based on the 3 threads of Organisational Recovery, Economic Recovery and Community Recovery. The first of these threads is necessarily internally focussed while the other 2 relate to the support the Council can give economically and socially to the wider community in the District.
- 3.2 The Strategy reflects the experience as an organisation and as individuals we have all been and indeed, are still going through. The experience has changed the organisation and us as individuals and it means that there is not a situation we can return to as an organisation; we cannot unlearn or undo our experience, nor should we try to. Rather, as we restore our services we recognise the learning points including the many positive lessons and seek to incorporate them into our future pattern of service delivery and ways of working. This means that what we deliver going forward is and will be different in many ways compared to the Pre Covid 19 period.

Recommendation 2.2

- 3.3 Throughout the lockdown period Riverside House which represents the main work place for WDC staff, has had only 20 members of staff working there on a regular basis. On average another 20 per day have dropped in for specific items. Most RH staff have been able to work at home, albeit some under difficult circumstances.
- 3.4 Officers have worked up an implementation plan for Riverside House as part of the Organisational Recovery thread having been informed by dialogue with the

Executive and the Leaders Coordinating Group; it is also based on an assessment of all staff, of their needs, experiences, etc. This plan is attached at Appendix 2 to this report. The key elements of it are:

- i) that given the continued uncertainty over the pattern of infection that to ensure the health and safety of staff, the emphasis is to support staff being able to continue to work at home where and if they can;
- ii) that circa 40 existing staff overall have been identified who are unable to continue to work at home for a variety of reasons and need therefore to be able to work at Riverside House (RH);
- iii) that in order to be able to accommodate those members of staff working at RH safely, taking account of social distancing, a radical reorganisation of the layout of office furniture is required, as are measures to further control entry and exit. This will also enable the mothballing of Floor 4 of RH;
- iv) that further minor alterations will be required to enable safe but inevitably limited public access.
- v) that future provision for some occasional use, staff meetings and so on will be catered for.

3.5 There are of course other locations used by the Council as workplaces and these will need to be assessed in greater detail.

3.6 This process has had to be communicated in advance to members of staff and the message and a FAQ is attached at Appendix 3.

Recommendation 2.3

3.7 The cost of the proposals totals £203,000 made up of:

£154,000* for ICT provisions (mainly laptops) to support people working at home

£26,000* for desks and chairs for people working at home

£23,000* minor alterations to RH to help make it safe for those people working there

* subject to an update

3.8 To offset this cost Floor 4 can be mothballed for a year which will save the Council approximately £100,000. It is envisaged that the mothballing would commence from 1st October so saving £50,000 this current financial year which can be used to cover part of the abovementioned costs.

3.9 The overall funding is detailed in Section 5.

Recommendation 2.4

3.10 The work to date only takes the Council up to a certain point in time and only on certain fronts. Work is being done on the other elements which will need reporting and considering by Members perhaps involving the new PABs before being formally considered by the Scrutiny and Executive Committees. In particular, there is a stage 3 to the future for RH.

4 Policy Framework

4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several key projects.

The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

FFF Strands		
People	Services	Money
External		
Health, Homes, Communities	Green, Clean, Safe	Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all. Housing needs for all met. Impressive cultural and sports activities. Cohesive and active communities.	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Becoming a net-zero carbon organisation by 2025 Total carbon emissions within Warwick District are as close to zero as possible by 2030 Area has well looked after public spaces. All communities have access to decent open space. Improved air quality. Low levels of crime and ASB.	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy. Vibrant town centres. Improved performance/ productivity of local economy. Increased employment and income levels.
Impacts of Proposal		
This proposal will support the health and well-being of Council staff.	The proposal will help to reduce emissions by reducing the usable area of RH	Not applicable.
Internal		
Effective Staff	Maintain or Improve Services	Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained. All staff have the appropriate tools. All staff are engaged, empowered and supported. The right people are in the right job with the right skills and right	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs. Continuously improve our processes. Increase the digital provision of services.	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets. Full Cost accounting. Continued cost management. Maximise income earning opportunities. Seek best value for money.

behaviours.		
Impacts of Proposal		
The proposal will give staff the better tools and environment to working in a more agile and flexible way.	This proposal will enable the Council to continue to deliver services in a safe way.	The proposal will help the Council to deliver better use of its main asset – RH.

4.2 Supporting Strategies

Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies and of relevance here is the People, ICT and Asset Mgt Strategy. They are mutually supportive with this proposal.

4.3 Changes to Existing Policies

This report does seek the support for a Recovery Strategy and in that sense is new but it does not fundamentally affect the Council's overarching Business Strategy and if anything allows it to accelerate significantly.

The proposal within this report does though also suggest that the Council will need to address issues around the social glue for the organisation as part of its approach to both supporting health and safety and of maintaining a sense of belonging and of a common organisational culture.

4.4 Impact Assessments

To Follow.

5 Budgetary Framework

5.1 The total costs within Section 3 are £203k. These are proposed to be funded as follows: -

Funding of Proposals	Service Transformation Reserve	Contingency Budget	2020/21 Business Rates saving on Riverside House	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Desks /Chairs	26			26
Minor Alterations/equipment	23			23
ICT Provision	11	93	50	154
Total	60	93	50	203
Funding available	60	136	50	
Balance carried forward	0	43	0	

5.2 The balances on the Service Transformation Reserve and the Contingency Budget are considered within the Q1 Budget report on this Executive agenda.

As discussed within Section 3, by mothballing level 4 or Riverside House, the Council should be able to make savings in business rates for 12 months (estimated £100k for one year), along with energy savings. Assuming Level 4 is vacant by the end of September, the estimated saving for the current year should be able to fund some of the costs above.

6 Risks

- 6.1 The proposals amount to a significant transformation step for the Council. Such transformation is also accompanied by risks, most of which are about the steps being taken on board by staff. In addition, there are the more usual risks associated with meeting the tight timetable for implementation and remaining within budget. To mitigate these risks SMT will monitor progress at its now weekly meetings and reports will be made on progress to the LCG with any indications of deviation from the intended outcomes or timetable highlighted and acted upon.
- 6.2 In addition to this, must be added the risks now associated with the Covid 19 emergency and the possibility of further outbreaks and ensuing local, regional or national lockdowns and/or shielding of staff involved.
- 6.3 If there are delays to vacating level 4, there is the risk that the business rates saving will not be made. The £100k is an estimate of the rates that should be saved. These will be subject to the final assessment by the Valuation Office.
- 6.4 Whilst in the short term the council has taken measures enable staff to work at home. Such rapid deployment has highlighted health and safety risks which the Council as an employer is required to control/mitigate. This report seeks to provide the funding to allow the mitigations to be implemented. Failure implement any mitigation could be considered a criminal offence and there are recent examples of significant fines being applied to local authorities who have been deemed not to comply with legislation.

7 Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1 Not adopting this Strategy would require the Council to recommence work on a new Strategy and would require Councillor Guidance on what that should be if the one proposed is not acceptable.
- 7.2 Not adopting or funding the implementation plan would leave the Council unable to do much to help staff in the short term who are not able to continue to work at home and would therefore leave the Council exposed on health and safety matters.