

Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
09/02/2021

**Title: Step Back Review Task & Finish Group on the Council's response to Covid 19**

**Lead Officer: Bill Hunt**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Andrew Day**

**Public report / ~~Confidential report~~**

**Wards of the District directly affected: N/A**

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: No

Included within the Forward Plan: No

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No

Consultation & Community Engagement: No -

Final Decision: No, the scrutiny Committee will need to consider if they wish to recommend any further action to the Executive.

Accessibility Checked: Yes

**Officer/Councillor Approval**

<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive		Bill Hunt - author
Heads of Service		Tracy Dolphin, Rose Winship, Mike Snow, Steve Partner, Marianne Rolfe, Julie Lewis, Philip Clarke, Lisa Barker, David Elkington
CMT	18 01 21	Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt, Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	18 01 21	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	18 01 21	Andrew Jones
Finance	18 01 21	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	25 01 21	Andrew Day

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The report brings forward the work of the Step Back Review Task & Finish Group of the Council's response to Covid 19 pandemic undertaken by Councillors Ashford, Alix Dearing, Jacques, Kohler, Milton and Nicholls.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee:
  - 2.1.1 note the findings of the Step Back Review Group;
  - 2.1.2 endorse the recommendations set out at Appendix 1;
  - 2.1.3 note the comments of the Corporate Management Team set out at Appendix 10;
  - 2.1.4 agree to present the recommendations to Executive for their consideration and response.

## **3. Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1. At the August meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee it appointed 6 Councillors to undertake a Step Back Review to consider the Council's response to Covid19 based on the following five principals:
  - (i) Initial response to move council from HQ based to working from home
  - (ii) liaising and working with other authorities
  - (iii) Change in service delivery (for example green bins)
  - (iv) communications to the wider community
  - (v) how the business of the Council (as opposed to day to day services) was managed, specifically on how decisions made during the hiatus were open to scrutiny.
- 3.2. The intention was to complete this review as swiftly as possible to identify any potential learning for this Council in the way it responded in case either a local or national lockdown occurred. This was an ambitious timescale based on the demands upon officers both still responding to the pandemic and tentatively returning services back to normal recognising the significant change in cultural/working practices of the Council with most officers now working from home.
- 3.3. Officers collated feedback from across the Council on the work that had been undertaken during the first national lockdown, based upon the five themes. These are set out in appendices 2 to 9 of this report. The information was then shared with the review Group of Councillors, less Councillor Ashford who did not participate due to personal circumstances at the time.
- 3.4. The Group met on Monday 2 November 2020 to review the information and from this came to the conclusions and recommendations as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

## **4. Policy Framework**

### **4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)**

- 4.1.1. The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on](#)

[the Council's website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

#### 4.2. **FFF Strands**

##### 4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)

**People - Health, Homes, Communities** – The proposed action in respect of communications effectiveness will help the Council to identify any areas for improvement in ensuring that communities are engaged not just if an event like this is repeated but all work from the Council.

**Services - Green, Clean, Safe** – The action in respect of reviewing emergency planning and the connections with this council and external partners will help the service to become more resilient in the face of a future event and therefore helping to make communities safer.

**Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment** – No impact.

##### 5.2.1 Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

**People - Effective Staff** – The review provides key recommendations regarding training & support, internal communications and the IT estate. Combined the outcomes of these will enable staff to be more effective within their roles.

**Services - Maintain or Improve Services** – The overall aim of the proposed strategic reviews are to help improve services for the wider community.

**Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term** – Through the proposed strategic reviews it is possible that savings may be identified, for example through the use of shared assets or infrastructure, to assist the financial position of the Council.

#### 4.3. **Supporting Strategies**

4.3.1. This report does not directly impact on any of the supporting strategies of Fit for the Future.

#### 4.4. **Changes to Existing Policies**

4.4.1. This report does not bring forward any changes to any existing Council Policies.

#### 4.5. **Impact Assessments**

4.5.1. There are no impacts identified as a result of this report.

### 5. **Budgetary Framework**

5.1. The report and recommendations do not directly impact on the budget framework or the Council.

## **6. Risks**

- 6.1. The overriding risk associated with the report is not acting on the proposed recommendations. These present an opportunity for the Council to be more resilient and further improve. The failure to take these forward in essence could result in a backward step for the Council as it would fail to recognise both the opportunity presented and the resultant impact of not reviewing the areas identified.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1. No alternative proposal have been considered to the recommendations as these were developed through discussion based on the evidence provided to the Working Party. The Committee could amend or dismiss these recommendations but this then moves the risks identified above to issues which would need to be addressed.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Detailed below are a list of the appendices to the report:

Appendix One - Summary of findings & recommended actions

Appendix Two - A timetable of actions on the People and Communications theme

Appendix Three - The results of Manager, Staff and member surveys on the Council's response

Appendix Four- The Vision document that was provided to the leadership Coordination Group

Appendix Five- A report on the work of the Shielding Hub

Appendix Six - The Organisational Recovery template we used to assess which staff would return to Riverside House and how we would support those that continue to work at home

Appendix Seven - The economic recovery plan was something that SMT started working on from April

Appendix Eight - The shielding hub stand up plan is indicative of the planning that was being envisaged in Sept/Oct and will now, no doubt, be revisited following confirmation of the lockdown plans by Parliament this week

Appendix Nine – Summary of SMT responses to Task and Finish Group's remit

Appendix Ten – CMT feedback on the proposed recommendations