

RESET

Plymouth's COVID-19 recovery and renewal framework

April 2020



1 Introduction

- 1.1 The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are global, across all sectors and communities, and are ongoing. The initial response phase in Plymouth and the UK has focussed since early March 2020 on taking action to deal with the immediate impacts of the pandemic on our communities, infrastructure and economy, and much of this action is ongoing.
- 1.2 The next, and equally challenging phase will aim to put in place a co-ordinated process of supporting affected communities in the revitalisation of physical infrastructure, economic resilience, and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical well-being. In emergency planning terms, this phase is referred to as 'recovery', but it also offers strategic opportunities to go beyond the rehabilitation of those affected and to avoid planning to return to what was considered to be 'normal' prior to the pandemic. Renewal, and resetting the city's objectives and priorities are therefore better ways to describe the approach.
- 1.3 With the right leadership, collaboration, and sense of purpose Plymouth can move from responding to the epidemic to a focus on its vision in difficult and changed times to become one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone.

2 Purpose of report

- To set out for consideration the challenges and opportunities that should inform the main elements of Plymouth's recovery and renewal framework
- To set out key assumptions and principles to inform further planning
- To identify early recovery and renewal priorities and objectives
- To consider governance and resources for delivery

3 Challenges and opportunities

3.1 Within seven weeks, the Council has achieved some extra-ordinary outcomes:

- We rapidly stood up and have consistently maintained the appropriate decision-making, collaboration and delivery structures to deal with a major crisis
- Political leadership has remained strong, informed and fully engaged with the response to the pandemic
- Our workforce and politicians have transitioned from office-based to home-based working, equipped with hardware and digital solutions to enable key processes and services to be re-provided in digital formats
- Major new services have been developed and implemented from scratch, ranging from Caring Plymouth and the Good Neighbour scheme to becoming 'first responder' to over 4000 businesses and directly administering the small business grants scheme

- Major infrastructure projects such as provision of temporary mortuary facilities and the provision of a Covid-19 testing site have been delivered
- We have prioritised essential services for our residents and communities, designed safe systems of work and continued to deliver throughout the crisis
- We have designed and implemented a 'workforce bureau' that has reassigned staff from lower to higher priority roles to support our response to the pandemic
- Our communication with our residents, communities and stakeholders has been comprehensive, clear, relevant and timely
- We have established data capture and performance metrics covering key Covid-19 related services and activities
- We have collaborated effectively with partners and agencies at a city, regional and national level in coordinating and communicating our response to the pandemic.

3.2 There are broader opportunities that should be taken into account in planning for recovery and renewal:

- The strength of pre-existing partnerships with statutory agencies, the community and voluntary sector and businesses means that the city has a strong base for collaborative planning and shared objectives and goals
- Previous focus on 'non-statutory' activity such as economic development and intervention, infrastructure investment and arts and culture catalysts provide a positive basis for recovery and renewal
- Behaviour change in response to the pandemic has positively impacted the environment, and has provided a strong basis for further positive action to support the climate emergency action plan
- The Council has some transformation capacity and programmes underway, particularly in the digital space that can be realigned to support recovery and renewal.

3.3 At the same time, the Council and city is facing unprecedented challenges:

- Despite central government grants, the Council faces fundamental financial challenges from loss of income from Business rates, Council Tax, commercial income and fees and charges. Plans for efficiency savings to balance the budget are now at risk
- The impacts of the 'stay at home' policy and the closure of schools for normal educational provision are affecting the life chances of key vulnerable groups, ranging from children in receipt of social care and vulnerable adults to victims of domestic abuse. Rising unmitigated risks of 'hidden harm' to both children and vulnerable adults will require concerted and focussed action
- The health and care focus on Covid-19 is starting to impact broader health outcomes across communities
- The economic impacts of the pandemic are deep and ongoing, with leisure, hospitality, non-food retail and tourism at a standstill and all other sectors seriously affected
- Despite rapid implementation of working at home policies and safe systems of working, the welfare of and support for our workforce remains a concern
- The impact of social distancing, the 'stay at home' policy and the continuing toll of new cases and deaths in the city on the psychological welfare of all our citizens should not be underestimated.

3.4 Key Assumptions to inform further planning:

- The risk of infection with Covid-19 and the requirement for social distancing will remain for months rather than weeks. Managing these risks will have to be a feature of renewal and recovery activities rather than waiting for a 'return to normal' before plans are put in place and implemented
- Significant financial uncertainty for the Council and the local economy will remain a constraint for the foreseeable future. This means that prioritisation of activities that require investment against an agreed set of criteria will be essential, and a revised financial framework to match emerging priorities will be needed
- Central government policy and decisions have been and will continue to be made at a national level, and will not necessarily favour individual regions or cities, depending on the stage of the pandemic that they have reached. The city will need to bear this in mind in planning its 'asks' of government and its interpretation of policy drivers
- There are still a number of unknown factors relating to the future impacts of Covid-19. A phased approach will be necessary, with early actions and priorities based on what is currently known. Time should be taken to analyse data, consider options and collaborate over decisions that do not have to be taken immediately.

3.5 Key principles to guide decision making

- As the anchor organisation for the city, we must take account of the needs of our residents, communities and stakeholders affected by the pandemic and work together as appropriate
- A priority order will be necessary for activity; we have learned the benefits of directing capacity and focus at our most important priorities
- Be clear which decisions need to be made at pace, and which should follow a pause for consideration of evidence
- Work through existing (or adapted) structures where possible
- Our existing vision, values, priorities and plans remain fit for purpose.

4 Reset objectives

- Priority must be given to residents most affected by the impacts of the pandemic
- Develop reset action plans based on impact and risk assessments across all services and agree delivery through existing financial and business planning processes
- Service change, regeneration and economic development opportunities will be integral to the reset process
- Services and infrastructure are restored in such a way as to meet agreed future purposes as well as current needs and statutory responsibilities
- Reset action plans must be resilient to future peaks in the Covid-19 virus infection rate and to future pandemics
- Reset activity is fully aligned with and complementary to the climate emergency action plan and the carbon reduction plan
- Full systems and processes of democratic accountability and decision making will be restored

4.1 Early Reset priorities

The Council's adopted areas of focus during our response to the pandemic provide a solid basis for developing early renewal and recovery:

Priority Area	Scope to include:
Restating the Council's vision and values	Early implementation of revised digital democratic structures for open decision making and accountability
Supporting the economy	Maintaining and enhancing business support Sector-based recovery priorities 'Too good to fail' bespoke programme for key businesses Reimagined flagships – key cultural and infrastructure projects anchor renewal Plans for jobs and homes Major capital schemes, transport infrastructure and Transforming Cities Fund
Minimising inequalities and supporting individuals and communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for Plymouth • Supporting children • Building community resilience 	Support for the most vulnerable Safeguarding children Schools and learning outcomes Skills and post 16 outcomes Good neighbour scheme VCS resilience Digital inclusion Cash and food security
The way we work: delivery of council services	Restoration and adaptation of the operations of the Council: safe working environments and delivery of services Accommodation Workforce Digital and data Front doors and customer access Behaviour change (link to resilient communities)
Responding to the climate emergency	Engagement and behaviour change Waste minimisation and recycling Mobility and transport Buildings: reducing emissions Renewable energy
Managing the Council's finances	Resetting the Council's budget, borrowing and grant arrangements in the light of the changed economy

5 Governance

- 5.1 The Council's current response arrangements (set out at [Appendix Two](#)) are likely to be required for several more weeks, and the proposal is that Reset arrangements are aligned with them so as to avoid unnecessary additional burdens on politicians or officers. Democratic decision making and overview and scrutiny processes will be re-established to preside over the Council's overall approach to the pandemic. Proposals for changes to scrutiny management arrangements to better facilitate the process during the remainder of the response phase and into reset are being considered at the Scrutiny Management Board on 6 May.
- 5.2 Bearing in mind the planning assumptions made above, it is very important that the strong and focussed political and managerial leadership arrangements in place to support the Council's response to the pandemic are developed and maintained into the recovery and renewal phase. Best practice suggests that a strategic recovery and renewal capability is established, and that senior leaders, both political and managerial, stand up decision-making bodies to deal specifically with recovery and renewal priorities. A separate Reset Board acting as a working group of Cabinet Members should therefore be considered – a proposed Terms of Reference is at [Appendix One](#) and a proposed structure at [Appendix Three](#).
- 5.3 Renewal and recovery are likely to run alongside the response phase for a period, until specific criteria are met for 'handover' of response to the organisation. Prior to this, it will be important to retain and develop the necessary intelligence, data collection and action tracking capability to support the Council during the next phase.
- 5.4 Most, if not all renewal and recovery priorities will benefit from cross-sector collaboration and buy-in to some extent. There are many existing partnership structures that can be used or adapted for use to ensure that the vision and objectives for each area of work are shared with key delivery and stakeholder partners. This joint approach should be more strongly reflected in the renewal and recovery phase than during the Council's response.
- 5.5 A revised 'cell structure' of working groups should each develop criteria for moving from response to renewal which will need to be met as they develop and start to implement new priorities. Those groups of a 'task and finish' nature will be able to stand down, and those with ongoing responsibilities for the next stage will develop new plans.

6 Resources for Delivery

- 6.1 A resetting of the Council's budget will be necessary to address the changed financial circumstances directly as a result of the pandemic, and also the priorities for investment to support recovery and renewal. Financial appraisal of renewal and recovery plans will form an essential part of this, and appraisal criteria need to be developed and should include:
- alignment with the Reset vision
 - partner and government buy-in
 - improved resilience
 - economic and fiscal return
 - support for vulnerable groups
 - deliverability
 - affordability.

7 To agree timelines for the delivery of recovery and renewal plans

- 7.1 There are existing plans for the response phase against many of the priority areas summarised above. The challenge will be to establish longer-term plans taking into account the priorities for renewal once they are agreed within an appropriate timescale. The Covid-19 situation is dynamic and subject to change in government advice and policy on a weekly, if not daily basis. If plans are not developed sufficiently to take the Council and other stakeholders forward from the current restrictions, there will be an inevitable move backwards, reverting to the way business was done prior to the pandemic. This is unlikely to be appropriate for recovery and renewal, and will be very hard to address once it has happened.
- 7.2 There are two phases of the reset process. The first will continue until services, infrastructure and workforce resources have been reconfigured into a 'steady state'. It is likely that the Local Resilience Forum and Strategic Co-ordinating Group will hand over control of ongoing recovery to Local Authority control at this point. The second phase commences when Reset action plans are signed off by the Reset Board and implementation starts. It is likely that there will be some overlap in these phases, as 'steady state' is likely to come earlier in relation to some services than others.
- 7.3 It will be important to identify the data required to provide evidence for longer term decision making relating to health, employment, skills and economic indicators and take time to analyse and consider the intelligence derived from it before committing to strategic courses of action.

Appendix One

Draft Reset Board Terms of Reference

Chair of the Board

Leader of the Council

Purpose of the Board

- The strategic political decision-making body for the recovery and renewal (Reset) phase of the Covid-19 Pandemic representing the Council as the place-making and anchor organisation for Plymouth
- Provides strong and visible political and community leadership during the Reset phase
- Takes advice from sub-groups and the Corporate Management team, decides and ensures the implementation of the strategy and the rebuilding of public confidence.

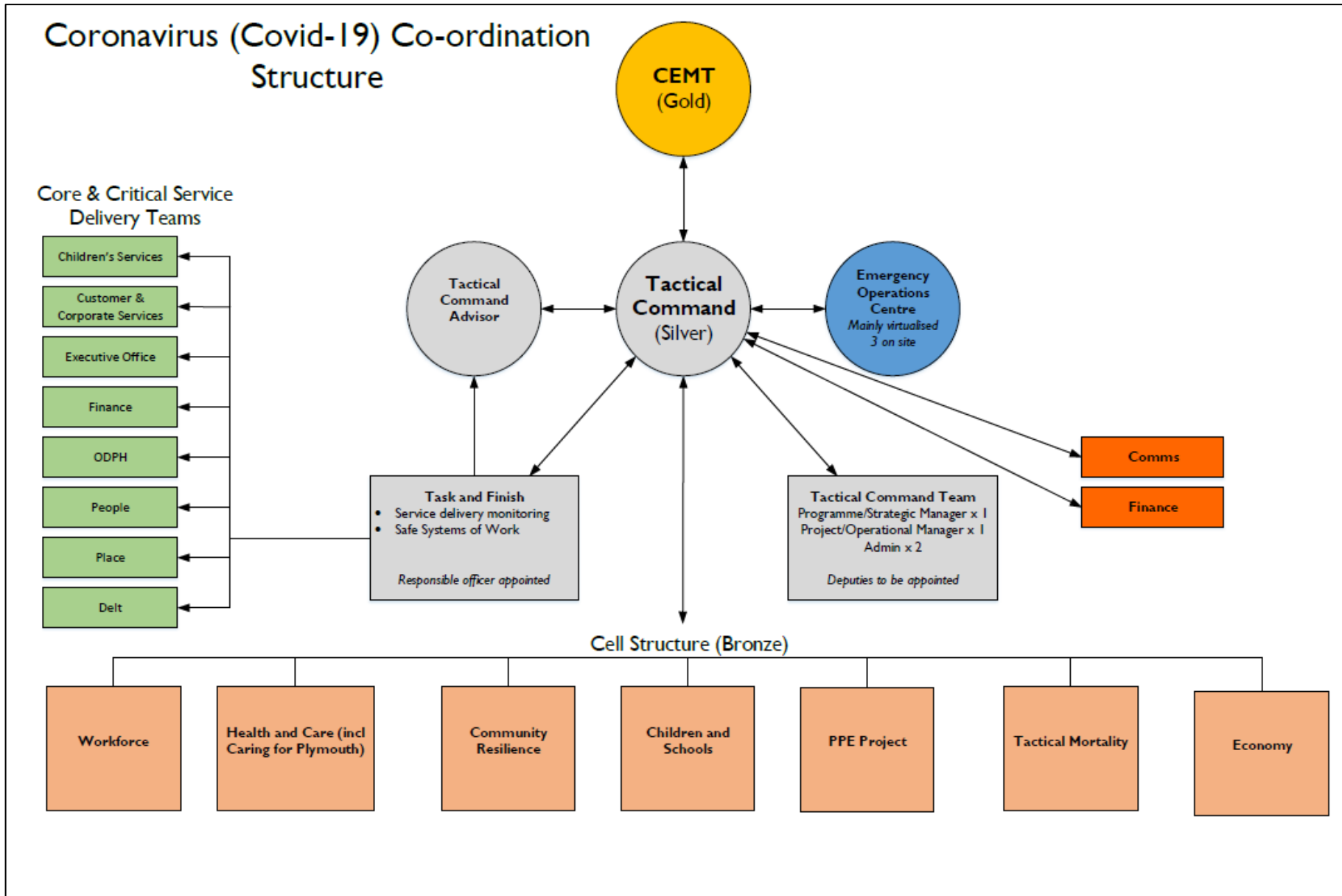
Functions

- To receive recommendations from sub-groups and the Corporate Management Team and make decisions on the priorities for resetting and restoring Council services and the Council's overall approach in supporting the city through renewal and recovery during the Covid-19 pandemic
- To make the appropriate decisions to ensure a sustainable financial framework is in place to deliver the Reset programme
- To agree the Reset plans for each of the elements of the programme
- To ensure transparency of decision making and allow for appropriate scrutiny to take place
- To agree exit strategy criteria and timescales
- To ensure that the Council's reset programme has the appropriate political leadership at a regional and national level.

Membership

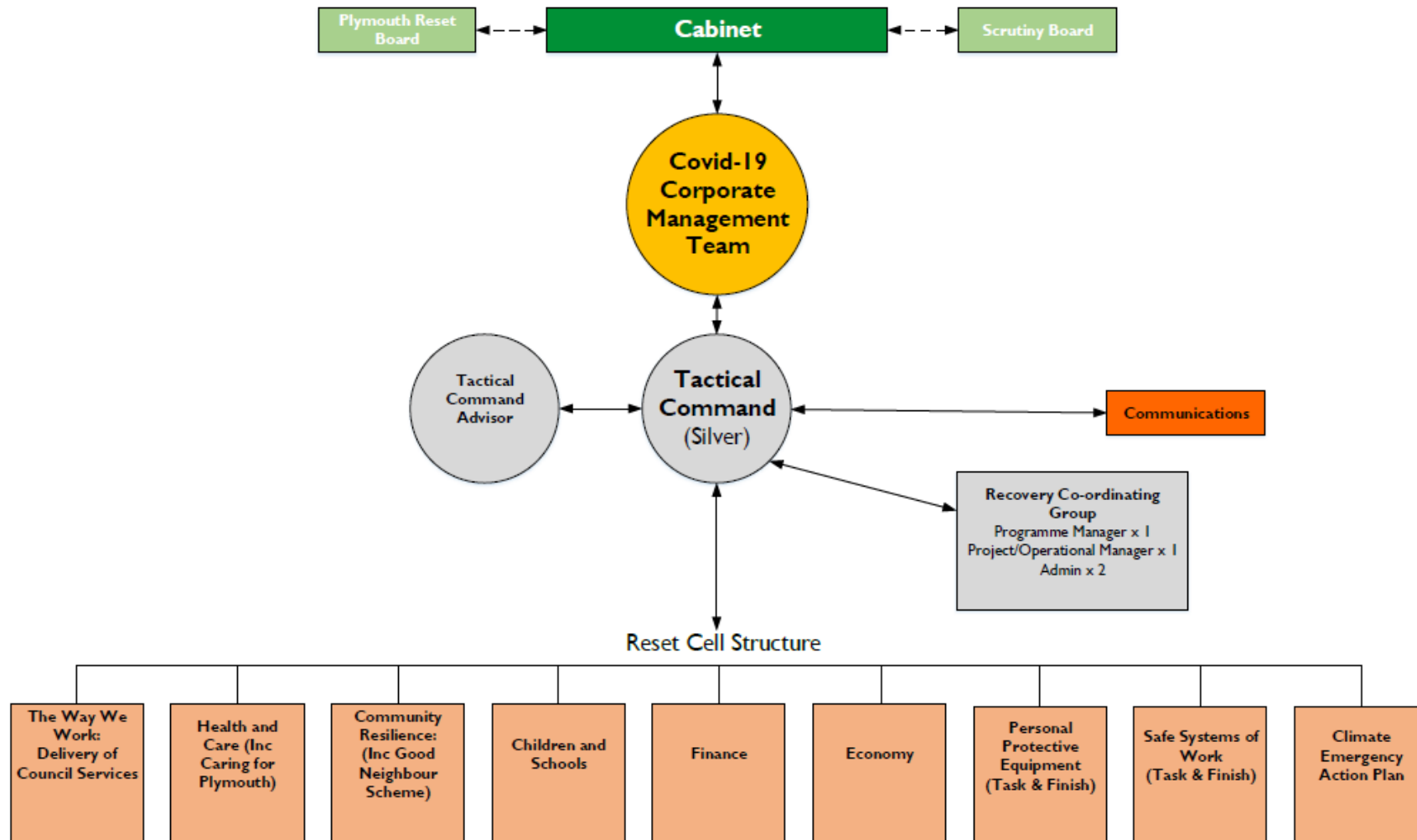
All Cabinet members.

Appendix Two



Appendix Three

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Recovery/Reset Co-ordination Structure



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Official