

Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

A Vibrant Economy				
Action	Resources	Target start and end	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
<p>Establish an Anchor Institution Partnership, the Council acting as a facilitator to lead projects, such as the- Youth Hub focussed on skills and employability for young people with Mid Kent College and increasing spend in the local economy to support businesses in the borough.</p> <p>Anchor Institutions are large, usually non-profit organisations “tethered” to their communities, like local government, education establishments and medical facilities e.g. hospitals. A partnership working on linking job opportunities with local people through a collaborative approach to skills, training, education and employment would respond well to our Build Back Local aspiration and Strategic Plan actions and recognise the council’s vital role in place based leadership. Preliminary soundings have been positive</p> <p>The pandemic has seen unemployment levels rise in all age groups but particularly the 18-24 years old. Unemployment is also higher in our deprived wards. The College is proposing a town centre venue to provide</p>	£30,000	September 2021 - (project planning with MKC to identify end)	ERL/AB/ JF	Maidstone Open for Business

<p>accessible training, careers advice, and employability support for all residents, but particularly young people in an informal environment in partnership with others such as DWP, and the Youth Steering Group. MBC's funding would support the staff costs involved in operating the centre. This is an action in the draft Economic Development Strategy under Inclusive Growth.</p>				
<p>Having business ready premises – move in ready kick start/pump prime linked to the Economic Development Strategy</p> <p>This is set out in Priority 1 Open for Business in the draft Economic Development Strategy. "Consider investing in industrial and warehouse premises to help de risk new employment sites coming forward" and the Strategic Plan areas of focus for 2021/26 "Intervening where necessary in the market, to deliver key employment sites"</p> <p>In addition, any such future activity would be required to meet the minimum targets and parameters set out in the Council's Capital Programme Medium Term Financial Strategy Report to Policy and Committee (January 2021). This could extend to further investment opportunities on Kent Medical Campus or at Loc8 Maidstone at Junction 8 M20 or the rural employment sites.</p>	<p>Capital programme</p>	<p>September 2021 and going</p>	<p>P&R/JF</p>	<p>Maidstone's Open for business</p>
<p>Transform the Town Centre through the Development of Maidstone Town Centre Strategy.</p>	<p>£90,000 programme</p>	<p>September 2021 and going</p>	<p>P&R/PC</p>	<p>Cross Cutting</p>

<p>This is a key piece of work given the pivotal role of the town centre for the borough's economy, the significant change occurring, expectations in the Local Plan for significant increases in homes and jobs in the town centre; it is important that there is a clear long term vision, through engagement with the public and stakeholders and a comprehensive approach to planning and delivery. Engagement with members suggests widespread support to creating a town centre strategy in principle, investing in its development and a proactive approach from the council to delivery too.</p> <p>Success will be partly dependent on dedicated programme management resources.</p> <p>A further detailed report would be brought to the Policy and Resources Committee</p>	<p>management plus S106</p>			
<p>Vibrant Visitor Economy – diversify and respond to health and well-being needs through e.g. enhancing arts and culture offer; promotion of destination Maidstone borough to encourage visitors to return and spend.</p> <p>A new area of focus was agreed for 2021/26 by Council in February 2021 to “deliver a sustainable and vibrant leisure and cultural offer for the Borough”</p> <p>The Visitor Economy is worth over £300m to the local economy and directly employs over 5000 people. Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sectors have been hardest hit by COVID-19, lockdowns and social restrictions. Current staff are managing the Welcome Back Fund and</p>	<p>Business Rates Pool</p>	<p>July 2021 to July 2023</p>	<p>ERL/JF</p>	<p>Maidstone's Open for Business/ Levelling Up/ Community resilience</p>

<p>Reopening High Street Fund and updating Visit Maidstone and engaging with the visitor attractions, accommodation providers and event organisers. Competition to capture the staycation market this year will be intense. Critically important to our hotel industry in Maidstone is the return to business travel, conferences, and exhibitions. Funding to support a resource for 1 to 2 years to increase our digital marketing/social media capacity is requested until business as usual can be resumed.</p>				
<p>Capacity to develop projects and bids for bidding e.g. Levelling Up Fund, Future Towns Fund</p> <p>Large capital and revenue bids often require specialised knowledge to support the business case within the application. This fund would enable us to buy in this technical support at the appropriate time and at the speed needed to respond to short deadlines.</p>	<p>Business Rates Pool</p>	<p>September 2021 to September 2025</p>	<p>P&R/JF</p>	<p>Cross Cutting</p>
<p>Total</p>	<p>£120,000</p>			

Resilient Communities

Action	Resources	Target start and end	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
Establish Community Compact and working arrangements with VCS – the Voluntary and Community Sector – as agreed by the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee in November 2021.	Funded from Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)	May 2021 – ongoing	CHE/AW	Strengthening Community Resilience
Support and Encourage Volunteering in the Borough. A joint project with the voluntary and community sector to develop a system/approach/support to enable and encourage volunteering. This will then be supported through changes to the Service Level Agreement with Involve.	£25,000	June 2021-June 2022	CHE/AW	Strengthening Community Resilience
Create community participation and involvement space online for real time/dynamic interaction with the public. Online system supply and license to use.	£15,000	September 2021	P&R/AC	Strengthening Community Resilience
Equip Trinity Foyer to be a Community Hub Supply and fit of IT and office equipment to create a hub which will allow training and meetings and other services to be provided.	£30,000	June 2021 – October 2021	CHE/JL	Strengthening Community Resilience

<p>Love Where You Live and Get Involved.</p> <p>Community environmental projects to encourage a sense of civic pride across communities; meeting a desire not only to live in a clean and attractive place but also to actively contribute to transforming, enhancing and maintaining those spaces. Funding at this scale would enable work with up to 8 local groups, providing support to enable them to set up and get going.</p>	<p>£35,000</p>	<p>September 2021-2023</p>	<p>CHE/JE</p>	<p>Strengthening Community Resilience</p>
<p>Financial Hardship projects</p> <p>In February 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee considered a report on Debt recovery and support for low income households. It was agreed that a pilot piece of work be conducted as part of the council's commitment to an inclusive economy and financial inclusion. The pilot was to take a data led approach to identifying low income households in financial difficulty and proactively intervening to provide support e.g. maximising income, and through this to both reduce risks around indebtedness and through this potentially reduce demand for council services or incurring debt with the council.</p> <p>This work has been done within the existing resources of the revenues and benefits team and resulted in significant additional income for our most financially vulnerable families both through our own efforts and working with others including Southern Water. A more detailed report on the outputs of this work will be</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>		<p>CHE/SMcG</p>	<p>Levelling Up</p>

<p>brought to the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2021 and the learning applied to future strategy for supporting families in financial hardship.</p>				
<p>Community Resilience Fund</p> <p>This proposed scheme responds to the new area of focus for 2021/26 agreed by Full Council in February 2021 – “Working with community groups and parish councils, to develop more sustainable community resilience and to encourage pride in our Borough”; this reflected experience of the impacts of the pandemic expressed by our residents, parishes and the VCS.</p> <p>Before implementation of a grant scheme there would need to be a report to CHE to agree fund criteria and structure of the grant scheme; for context this would be a similar approach to KCC Helping Hands. The purpose of the fund is to provide one-off money to support projects that benefit the residents of Maidstone centred on the impact of the pandemic. This has been developed following the success of the Winter Funding Grant whereby small and large VCS groups bid for money to run initiatives to keep vulnerable people warm and fed. The council set an objective and then assessed bids as to how they met this objective.</p> <p>We conducted a survey of the Voluntary and Community Sector in 2021 which identified that the two areas they had identified a change in demand for services with more demand in relation to Mental Health and Isolation</p>	<p>£150,000</p>	<p>October 2021</p>	<p>CHE/AW</p>	<p>Community Resilience</p>

<p>and Loneliness. Two things that were identified through our community hub work and our own contact with Parish Councils and Community and Voluntary Groups.</p> <p>The amount identified reflects running up to 3 such schemes on the basis that bids could range from £500 to £5000 so looking at 10-15 initiatives per scheme as we experienced with the Winter Funding Grant. The scheme would be open to any voluntary or community organisation operating in the Borough including Parishes. If the amount of funding is reduced we should look at reducing the number of schemes so as not to weaken the impact of the funding through trying to spread funding to thinly.</p>				
<p>Total</p>	<p>£255,000</p>			

The Way We Work

Action	Resources	Target start and end	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
Technology to enable new ways of working	Capital Programme	October 2021	P&R/SMcG	New Ways of Working
Desk top equipment (office and home) to enable new ways of working	Capital programme	October 2021	P&R/SMcG	New Ways of Working
Introducing new technology with associated training for staff to support new ways of working and reforming, designing, and implementing accommodation to support new ways of working and reduce future running costs	£150,000	Oct-23	P&R/GH	New Ways of Working
<p>Increase HR capacity to facilitate agile working and new ways of working</p> <p>The objective of the culture change programme will be to review the work undertaken in this area and to gain feedback from our employees on organisational culture, to change and develop the council to meet future workforce requirements.</p>	£50,000	September 21-22	D&GP/BS	New Ways of Working
Total	£200,000			

Responding to Increased Demands Arising from COVID-19

Action	Resources	Target start and end	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
Business Grant Distribution	From COMF	Ongoing	ERL/SMcG	MBC service resilience
Revenues and Benefits	From COMF	Ongoing	ERL/SMcG	MBC service resilience
<p style="text-align: center;">Planning – Development Control</p> <p>During the pandemic development control workload has increased especially for householder applications; it is difficult to say with confidence that this is a temporary effect but anecdotally this is a response to home improvement and in some cases creating a better home working environment. Fee income doesn't cover the additional costs. The resource identified here would enable a short-term response to the pressure, if this proves to be a longer term trend in demand it can be identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy</p>	£35,000		SPI/WEC	MBC service resilience
Planning Enforcement	£35,000		SPI/WEC	MBC service resilience

<p>Request for an additional short-term post until March 2022 as enforcement activity has risen during the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live enforcement cases in April 2020 standing at 219 and the end of April figures for 2021 standing at 379, an increase of 73% over the April 2020 figures. • Difficulties in carrying out enforcement site inspections over the COVID-19 period due to the need to carry out safe inspections and allowing for shielding has resulted in a backlog of cases which requires investigation and action. <p>The resource identified here would enable a short-term response to the pressure, if this proves to be a longer term trend in demand it can be identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy</p>				
<p>Planning – Heritage and Landscape</p> <p>Proposals are for a Heritage Officer and an Arboriculture Officer for a short fixed term period. This will help address the increase in the volume of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree applications have increased by 10% on the previous year (from 236 to 260). Alongside this, due to the recently 	<p>£70,000</p>		<p>SPI/WEC</p>	<p>MBC service resilience</p>

<p>identified need for all MBC Tree Preservation Orders to be reported to Planning Committee, case workload has increased significantly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of 5-day notices have risen from less than 4 per month to 20 per month. • Large volume of TPO requests- current backlog is more than 30 (most arising in 2020/21). • Large number of customer inquiries. <p>It is unknown whether this is temporary if it continues this will need to be taken account of in the medium term financial strategy.</p>				
<p>Data Analytics Support for recovery and renewal projects</p> <p>Fixed term post to provide data analytics and insight to support a number of the actions in the recovery and renewal action plan</p>	<p>£40,000</p>	<p>July 2022-23</p>	<p>P&R/AC</p>	<p>MBC service resilience</p>
<p>Total</p>	<p>£180,000</p>			