

Executive

Covid-19 – Recovery/Transition

Item no: 5

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Summary: This report discusses emerging strands of work in relation to the Recovery and Transition from Covid-19. It seeks members’ comments on London Councils proposed programme of work with members and senior officers and the way that it engages with the pan London Recovery strand being convened with the Mayor of London, London Councils and other partners.

Recommendations: Members of the Executive are asked to comment on and help steer London Councils’ work on Covid-19 Recovery/Transition.

Background

Recovery is an acknowledged phase in civil contingency processes. Clearly, however, in respect of Covid-19, the term 'Recovery' is not an entirely accurate one as the process ahead is not simply about restoring things to how they were. Councils and others are looking at some restoration, but they are also very keen to retain aspects of ways of working that have emerged in recent weeks and also see the clear need to consider reinventing services, ways of working and interventions in order to serve communities most effectively in a new world.

It is proposed that London Councils' contribution to Recovery/Transition work be underpinned by the following core principles:

- London Councils work needs to reflect the key priorities of local political leaders around Recovery/Transition and be steered by Executive portfolio holders working with shadow leads;
- London Councils work on Recovery/Transition needs to be closely informed by, and aligned with, collective officer work across boroughs, in particular via Chief Executives (CELC) and other professional groupings;
- London Councils work must primarily seek to support and add value to the work of individual boroughs and groups of boroughs as they seek to address Recovery/Transition in local places;
- London Councils must help convene London local government's contribution to wider pan London Recovery/Transition work with partners, including the Recovery Board and Task Forces convened by the Mayor of London. It must also seek to support London Councils engagement on behalf of boroughs with Government and influence national work on Recovery;
- London Councils should continue to collaborate with, support and help facilitate the work of London local government co-ordination in

the phased withdrawal from Lockdown and of wider London resilience partners in managing a transition from Response to Recovery and being prepared to move back into Response mode again should that become necessary.

- London Councils work should have a particular focus on helping boroughs to play a strong place leadership role in helping local recovery from the pandemic, reforming public services to take account of the profound changes that will result from Covid-19 and on seeking to secure a stable financial and resource base for councils going forward.

Context

Recovery/Transition work is likely to have some distinct strands, including:

- A more immediate phase as the Lockdown is eased over time and we transition to an interim stage of living with the virus, albeit with ongoing restrictions, particularly around social distancing. Throughout this period we will need to be ready to stand up full Response activity at any time should that become necessary again. This transition period will need management by boroughs at local and sub-regional level. There may well be issues that will need some pan London co-ordination. Also, pan London resilience arrangements, involving other agencies, will still look to local government in London collectively to be part of some overall co-ordination activity within this phase. To the degree that some of that co-ordination is required in addition to local action, there will need to be some adaptation to the collective work of chief executives to cover this with ongoing briefing of members locally and collectively.
- A wider set of activity that will be looking at the impact on London over the medium term and, in many cases, helping to shape London and its individual communities for a period after, hopefully, a vaccine has changed the nature of the threat. This will be work on, for example, the future of the economy in different parts of London

and in the city overall, the financial picture for London boroughs, new business models for development and regeneration, new approaches to integrating health and social care, issues around environment, behavioural change, dependency, welfare, civic and community bonds.

These two strands are, of course connected and cannot be seen as entirely separate. It is certainly not the case that one strand will be completed before the other starts. There is, however, some distinction between them and the proposition in this paper is mainly concerned with the latter strand around medium term Recovery and Transition.

Proposition

London Councils will continue to support co-ordination work in the more immediate, transition phase of moving away from Lockdown in a range of ways that it has been doing during the Response phase and covered in an earlier paper on this agenda. It will continue to facilitate briefing to leading members on that co-ordination work.

The main focus of this paper, however, is on the wider set of activity contributing to the medium term Recovery/Transition for London and its communities. Reflecting the suggested guiding principles set out above, it is proposed that this work should seek to support boroughs in their own work on Recovery/Transition – locally and sub-regionally. It should develop evidence and understanding of changes across London including the expectations that Londoners have of their councils. This can inform the London borough view on how to work together to restore and improve London public services. It is a programme of collaborative joint work to gain a shared understanding of the evidence for how London has been changed and to help set policy options and to enable individual councils and groups of councils to reach broad agreement on their way forward. In addition, it is envisaged that members and officer representatives can also use this evidence to feed into pan London Recovery work being convened by the Mayor and London Councils, working with other partners.

The succeeding sections of this report set out a summary of how this work could be taken forward over three phases and involving political and professional leads, as well as partners, in various combinations. This is a draft proposition that will be developed following further feedback and discussion with members and officers. It sets out how political leaders working at borough, sub regional and London levels can be supported in their collaborative work to shape the Recovery/Transition work. Important to this process will be ensuring that Executive portfolio holders are supported not only by London Councils officers, but also with advice from the wider experiences from the Covid-19 crisis of Lead Chief Executives and professional groups. Comments on this draft approach are also being sought from chief executives. Feedback from members of the Executive and chief executives will help in developing this further.

Executive portfolio holders will also be contributing to the pan London Recovery work being convened by the Mayor. The London Councils Executive would, of course, retain overall political sponsorship for the programme of work.

Phases of proposed work

Phase 1 – Gathering Evidence

Political perspectives from leading London councillors should be embedded as the foundation for this work. This phase could include:

- A systematic assessment of Leaders/Mayors experiences and learning from the Covid-19 crisis and early aspirations for reshaping activity after the pandemic. This could be built around the sort of political priorities that party groups are beginning to identify;
- Engagement with senior councillors on types of new public demand emerging;
- Capture learning from CELC and other key professional groupings. Think about previous activity that needs to be restored, new activity that people would want to retain and activities that need to be entirely reinvented;

- Identify impact on national policy relevant to London authorities such as the future of the Fair Funding Review, the future finance regime and the future of Business Rate Retention, as well as changes to national policy and related funding. Work to argue for stable finances for London local government going forward would, in any case, be a core element of London Councils' work in any scenario and connections to appropriate CELC and Society of London Treasurers networks, as well as key partners such as City Hall, are well established.

To the extent that planned work emerging from the Pan London Recovery Taskforce being convened by the Mayor and London Councils with other partners does not cover such things, consideration could be given to specific pieces of research and analysis that could be valuable for boroughs, including, for example:

- Changes to the structure of London's economy and prospects for sectors and sub-regions with impacts for employment and welfare, population behaviour and cultural shifts with impacts for council services and activity, or demographic movement in London with impacts on relative demand;
- Mapping potential shifts in travel patterns and identifying potential impacts;
- Some opinion polling and focus group analysis.

Some components of Recovery/Transition already have a momentum of their own and where it will be of benefit we should seek to adapt existing work programmes to fit with this. Areas that might be considered in this sphere include:

- Work on Environment and carbon neutrality that TEC, CELC and Environment Directors have been working together on. Aspects of Lockdown have created opportunities to accelerate this thinking;

- Care and Health, where existing work involving Leaders and officers at sub-regional level with health partners could be used as a basis for a higher level of ambition about local integration;
- Housing Delivery, where London Councils had previously brokered a more detailed work programme with officials at MHCLG on accelerating delivery and which could have particular relevance in the circumstances of post pandemic recovery.

Phase 2 – Developing Options

The evidence from Phase 1 could inform political and managerial choices for boroughs – individually and in groups – going forward.

London Councils could commission facilitated support for two parallel strands of sub-regional workshop:

- Strand 1 would focus on service policy and community development/engagement options for boroughs and groups of boroughs;
- Strand 2 would focus on organisational issues thrown up by the changes brought about by Covid -19, including workforce, styles of working, implications for assets, processes, systems etc.

In addition, there could be a second group of conversations, collectively, with partner organisations on some of the specific service or policy implications of the changes that are occurring. There may be a linkage here to the work that the Mayor and London Councils would jointly convene along with other partners in respect of pan London Recovery issues. If that were the case, those discussions may instead be dealt with via that shared route.

Similarly, pan London Recovery work with Health partners and the GLA on Care and Health integration may well have their own forums for these types of discussion and consideration of action. London Councils would work with members, CELC and ADASS to facilitate full participation in this design and implementation.

All of these partners have made broad and open invitations to London boroughs to participate in this joint work and they will be responded to positively. In these cases, however, it will also inevitably be the case that not all of the needs of boroughs can be addressed via those routes and London Councils would need to support boroughs in some of those areas.

Phase 3 – Reaching Decisions

The processes described above are intended to:

- Deliver some common understanding of how London has been changed by the virus;
- Develop options for the renewal of London public services and government that would be meaningful for political and managerial leaders in boroughs and groups of boroughs;
- Develop a deeper understanding of working jointly across authorities;
- Help influence the national debate on Recovery and Renewal with national government on behalf of boroughs collectively.

Conclusion

The views of Executive members on London Councils' work on Recovery/Transition are sought.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LONDON COUNCILS

Financial Implications for London Councils

This programme of work, alongside contributing to the pan London Recovery work being convened by the Mayor with London Councils and other partners, will represent a very significant commitment of officer time across the organisation. In order to be sustainable, it is likely that this will need to become the core, overall work programme for elements of London Councils and will, in effect, subsume some existing work aspects and, in other cases, replace them. In addition, some use of commissioning budget resource will

be required to buy in external support and research to add value to this work.
This will be contained within existing budgetary provision.

Legal Implications for London Councils

There are no direct Legal implications for London Councils as a result of this report.

Equalities Implications for London Councils

There are no direct Equalities implications for London Councils as a result of this report.