

Leaders' Committee

Covid 19 Pandemic: Recovery and Renewal

Item no: 4

Report by: Doug Flight **Job title:** Strategic Lead

Date: 7 July 2020

Contact Officer: Doug Flight

Summary: This report provides an overview of the emerging pan-London Coronavirus (Covid 19) transition, recovery and renewal structures before beginning to explore the role London local government can play.

Recommendations: Leaders' Committee is asked to:

1. Note the transition from the London resilience arrangements, including the establishment of the Transition Board and the Recovery Board.
 2. Comment on:
 - a. The opportunities and challenges for London local government during the recovery phase?
 - b. How London Councils might best support co-ordination of London local government's own renewal aspirations – drawing on political, managerial and professional expertise in the boroughs?
 - c. How to optimise alignment of borough-led renewal work with the work of the Transition Board and the Recovery Board?
-

London Local Government Resilience Response to the Covid 19 Pandemic – Recovery and Renewal

Introduction

1. London local government's Covid 19 related work has emerged from the immediate response and mitigation phase - and is transitioning towards recovery and renewal. The initial local government response was escalated in step with the stand-up of the formal inter-agency London Covid 19 Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) - with London local government represented through London Local Authority Gold.
2. The strategic and tactical responses at local and pan-London level were subsequently strengthened through enhanced sub-regional co-ordination - to marshal the resources of boroughs as effectively as possible. The next phase of activity begins to move the Capital on from mitigating the immediate implications of the pandemic on our communities and businesses – taking us through the steps required to build London's recovery and renewal, using newly developed structures and arrangements.
3. This report provides an overview of the new pan-London transition and recovery arrangements, including the structures that will facilitate leadership of London's recovery and renewal. It will outline the role of London local government within these structures and arrangements and the role London Councils is beginning to play in capturing the political and professional learning of member councils, commissioning specific interventions that will add value to the work of councils and groups of councils and developing options and arguments for London local government to deploy. This work builds on the steer given by the Executive at its meeting in June 2020, and involves co-ordinating policy input, sharing information and practice as well as advocating on behalf of London local government and our communities.

Background – pan-London Covid-19 resilience arrangements: immediate response and mitigation

4. A formal SCG was initiated on 3 March 2020 with the mandated responsibility to lead the pan-London emergency pandemic response. John Barradell, Chief Executive at the City of London Corporation and Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive at the London Borough of Southwark became independent Co-Chairs following confirmation from Government.
5. A dedicated London Local Authority Co-ordinating chief executive was introduced for the Covid 19 response to represent the local government sector on the SCG, provide continuity and release the regular on-call Gold Chief Executive to respond to any other incidents which might occur. In support of the London Local Authority Co-ordinating 'Gold' chief executive, a range of Task and Finish groups - led by chief executives - addressed key local government issues; supported by a wider group of senior officers as well as colleagues from London Councils and the boroughs.
6. The initial pan-London response phase was characterised by close working between a range of partners, with local government often at the forefront. Through the initial arrangements, in collaboration with partners, London local government achieved a number of successes including the establishment of a pan-London Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) procurement system, accommodating over 1000 homeless people during the pandemic and establishing robust Shielding Hubs that have provided essential support to vulnerable residents. London Councils, itself, has played a multidimensional supporting role in backing up the broader London local government contribution, as set in the reports to the Executive in May and June 2020.

Pan-London recovery arrangements: the transition to recovery and renewal

7. The initial emergency response phase of the Covid 19 pandemic has been reshaped, reflecting the consistent fall in Covid-related deaths (particularly when compared to the designated 'peak' in May); the increasing relaxation of lockdown measures and the gradual re-opening of businesses and public services. This transition is increasingly being recognised as an opportunity not only to recover,

but also to renew and '**Build Back Better**', aiming for genuine improvements for all Londoners - rather than a return to pre-Covid 'normality'.

8. London's recovery effort will be led, in parallel, by two distinct boards addressing the need for both a short-term transition and longer-term recovery:

- **The London Transition Board** – Co-chaired by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Mayor of London – is leading the Capital's transition out of lockdown and co-ordinating the response to emerging trends, issues and risks, as the economy begins to reopen - whilst controlling the virus.
 - The Transition Board has convened a range of key stakeholders to address broader short-term challenges such as transport, social care, infection control, re-opening the economy, community cohesion and the potential of a 2nd wave. London local government will be represented on a number of these groups at both professional and political level. The Board will also oversee the existing programmes that underpin the ongoing and future response to Covid 19 – including the Mortality Management Group, the PMART process alongside other risk identification, mitigation and co-ordination planning.
 - The inaugural meeting took place on 9 June 2020 and its membership includes the London Councils' Chair, Deputy Chair and Vice-Chairs – who all attended and added the perspectives of London boroughs. The Chair of the Chief Executives London Committee is also a member of the Board. It is expected that the Board will continue to meet until the end of 2020.
 - The operational work of the SCG will morph into a Transition Management Group. This multi-agency group will be responsible for the oversight of the joint work undertaken across London at both pan-London and sub-regional levels and will provide assurance to, and deliver the objectives of, the Transition Board.
- **The London Recovery Board (LRB)**, will run in tandem with the Transition Board but with a longer-term view. This Board is Co-Chaired by the Chair of London Councils and the Mayor of London. It has started to plan and oversee

the Capital's wider economic and social recovery. The Government is represented on the Board by Paul Scully MP, Minister for London (and for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets).

- London Councils has nominated leading Members to the two key strands, dealing respectively with economic and social recovery:
- Cllr Georgia Gould will lead on the Economic Recovery workstrand and is Co-Chairing a working group with Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe.
- Cllr Ruth Dombey is Co-Chairing the Social Recovery workstrand, along with Deputy Mayor Debbie Weeks-Bernard.
 - **The Economic Recovery** working group is focusing on stabilising and then re-igniting the Capital's economy, encompassing broad themes such as unemployment, economic growth and a cleaner, greener London.
 - **The Social Recovery** working group will address the broad spectrum of social issues that have been impacted by the pandemic, including themes of poverty, keeping young people safe, health inequality and social isolation.

9. The LRB is designed to bring together cross-sectoral representatives including local and central government, police, health, business, trade unions and the voluntary, community and faith sector - to lead, develop and establish long-term London recovery and renewal. Its overarching objective is to restore confidence in the city, minimise the impacts on London's most vulnerable communities, and rebuild the city's economy and society. The inaugural meeting took place 4 June 2020, where overarching principles and ways of working for the structures were agreed.

10. The LRB will oversee and be supported by the multi-agency London Recovery Taskforce which will ordinarily be chaired by Nick Bowes, Mayoral Director of Policy at the Greater London Authority. The Taskforce will implement the Board's vision and it is working closely and collaboratively with the SCG and Transition Management Group.

Initial scoping work across the key strands

11. The Taskforce held its first meeting on Friday 19 June 2020. The initial feeling of the Taskforce was that it would recommend that the Board move to a 'missions-based approach' for both economic and social recovery, with a manageable number of missions that would reflect both economic and social objectives and embed the Board's agreed principles. This approach would require rigorous prioritisation and clarity on what is inside and outside of scope as well as acceptance that not every desired outcome should form a mission.
12. Given that there are a wide range of organisations initiating their own recovery programmes – not least individual boroughs and sub-regions – the pan-London recovery programme needs to be designed to complement and add value to these efforts.
13. Other points made during the meeting included:
- The **Economic Recovery** piece might potentially be framed around four potential missions – Employment and Skills; Green New Deal; Digital; and 15-minute Cities.
 - The **Social Recovery** piece needed to include prevention as well as a focus on wider determinants including mental health - and mainstreaming new models of delivery e.g. 'community development-based' and wrap-around support
 - Funding for the recovery work is likely to be limited. This may require advocacy for sustainable, long-term funding, combined with flexibility and a creative approach to devolution and public service reform.
 - Other potential (economic) considerations include the role of culture as well as diversity in business formation and leadership.
 - Volunteering has been substantial and impressive during the response – it would be important to build on this.
 - Green initiatives could have a positive impact on jobs and income, as well as delivering environmental benefits.
 - In undertaking a process of prioritisation, it would be important to identify and secure some 'quick wins'.
 - Digital exclusion has been brought into sharp focus by lockdown.

- Important to be guided by data (this may be a good opportunity to ‘fix the data plumbing’).
- Action needs to take place at the appropriate footprint – i.e. borough, sub-regional or, where required pan-London level.

14. Both strands are now moving at pace to develop their thinking and frame tangible proposals for action. These will be reported to the next meeting of the Recovery Board (expected to be later in July 2020) which will need to decide on the overall strategy and priorities for action.

15. Two additional working groups are covering additional ground:

- i. *Covid 19 Housing Delivery Taskforce* – Chaired by Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor for Housing. This group was established in April 2020 to develop a housing recovery plan focused on continued housing supply and developments that can deliver more social and other genuinely affordable homes. London Councils is represented by Darren Rodwell, Executive Member for Housing and Planning. Councillor Govindia and Mayor Fiaz are also members.
- ii. Commemoration. Details of this group of still under discussion and will be confirmed in due course.

London Councils Recovery and Renewal Engagement

16. London Councils Office Holders and officers are engaged directly with the recovery and renewal work, with a view to adding value to the work of boroughs and groups of boroughs.
- Lead members have continued to play a key role, including convening member-level ‘virtual meetings’ in relation to business and the economy; transport and the environment; housing; community safety; and children’s services - including liaison with MPS leads and MOPAC.
 - Leading Members made a number of points during the initial meeting of the Recovery Board on 4 June 2020, Including the following:
 - The importance of aiming to ‘**Build Back Better**’.

- The critical potential of Green investment (e.g. green energy and retrofitting) to generate jobs.
- The need to focus economic and social interventions on young people who are understood to be hit hardest, particularly economically.
- The importance of rebuilding confidence, particularly for business but also for people within their everyday lives.
- The need to consider the impact on social cohesion and inequalities (including the digital divide).
- The need to consider the mental health impacts.
- The balance of emphasis needed between inner and outer London.
- Public transport issues, including work to support a modal shift as well as the need to improve orbital vs radial capacity.

17. In addition, **London Councils** has:

- Initiated work to gather evidence of the impact of the pandemic on services and local priorities for renewal and 'Building Back Better' - to inform the development of recovery/renewal policy.
- Continued to actively engage with Treasurers, SLT and MHCLG officials to support boroughs prepare and assure their assessment of the financial implications of managing the pandemic, and to analyse and understand the overall impact for London. This will help develop the case to Government around challenges for councils, particularly around loss of income (including Council Tax and business rates), as well as direct costs and undelivered savings. Clearly these issues remain vital going forward and Members may wish to reflect on finance and resource matters when they come to discuss this paper at the Executive.
- Continued to monitor key economic concerns across boroughs, making the case for support to local businesses and the self-employed and convening Economic Development Leads.
- Worked with members and professional networks to initiate the development of learning points for future collaborative working with the NHS in London.

- Continued to help harness London local government's wider managerial and professional capacity. Helping interpret the data which is being collected to provide a stock-take for LLAG and the SCG.
- Worked with Housing Directors to help support boroughs in taking the next steps for rough sleepers that are currently placed in temporary accommodation.
- Worked with Government and TfL to articulate borough concerns around the impact of changes to the concessionary travel arrangements and to support boroughs in developing next steps.
- Working with other funders and the voluntary and community sector to continuously assess the stability of the sector (staffing, funding, increased demand on services), support contingency plans in response to the needs of Londoners and provide links across local, sub-regional, pan-London and national support structures.
- Worked with MOPAC and the MPS to monitor community tension and promote constructive local dialogue between the MPS, councils and communities.

18. In addition, as discussed by the Executive at its meeting in June, London Councils is working with Portfolio Holders, Lead Chief Executives and other key professional groupings to:

- Capture the political and professional learning from member councils over the past few months and use that to help inform boroughs' consideration of their own recovery strategies.
- Commission interventions that add value to the work of individual councils and groups of councils in their own recovery and renewal work.
- Make the case to Government, the Mayor and others for investing in propositions built on London local government leadership of key recovery and renewal themes, e.g. A locally led Green Recovery proposal.
- Deploy this additional work to inform the London Recovery Board as well as our own programme of advocacy and reform

Conclusion

19. London local government, including London Councils, has the opportunity to play an important role in shaping and implementing London's recovery and renewal.
20. London Councils' Office Holders and officers have been working closely with partners, particularly City Hall, Health and Resilience partners, as well as Government, business, and wider public sector agencies, in developing the emerging arrangements.
21. This engagement provides a platform which Office Holders and the broader Executive can use to seize the opportunity to help inform a potential vision not only for recovery, but potentially for '**Building Back Better**' – supported by London Councils and the deeper political, managerial and professional resources of all of London local government.

Recommendations

Leaders' Committee is asked to:

1. Note the transition from the London resilience arrangements, including the establishment of the Transition Board and the Recovery Board.
2. Comment on:
 - a. The opportunities and challenges for London local government during the recovery phase?
 - b. How London Councils might best support co-ordination of London local government's own renewal aspirations – drawing on political, managerial and professional expertise in the boroughs?
 - c. How to optimise alignment of borough-led renewal work with the work of the Transition Board and the Recovery Board?

Financial Implications for London Councils

Additional expenditure and potential reductions in income from London Councils' response to the pandemic are being identified and monitored. Each Directorate has an appointed officer responsible for recording these incidences in their respective areas of operation and an overall model is being maintained by the Finance team. This is being

reviewed on a very regular basis. Most of the additional burden will have been incurred from the start of the 2020/21 financial year, so there will be significant opportunity to review income and expenditure to consider the need for any adjustments and the potential use of any uncommitted reserves.

Legal Implications for London Councils

None specifically flowing from this paper.

Equalities Implications for London Councils

None specifically flowing from this paper.