

Executive

Covid 19 – Recovery and Renewal Overview

Item no: 6

Report by: John O'Brien **Job title:** Chief Executive

Date: 8 September 2020

Contact Officer: John.O'Brien@londoncouncils.gov.uk

Summary:

This report provides an overview of:

- a) The role London local government in the formal Transition and Recovery structures.
- b) The work the Executive commissioned to capture the political and professional learning from member councils on the Covid 19 response.
- c) Potential steps to ensure that borough priorities become more central to London Councils' work on recovery and renewal.

Recommendations: The Executive is asked to:

- 1. Note the update provided in the report attached at appendix A on the Transition Board and the Recovery Board.
 - 2. Note the finding of the surveys to capture political and professional perspectives from member councils on the Covid 19 response and emerging recovery and renewal strategies; provided in the report attached as appendix B
 - 3. Comment on the questions set out in paragraph 8.
 - 4. Give an initial steer on priorities for engagement with:
 - a) The Transition and Recovery Programmes
 - b) The Devolution and Recovery White Paper and other key submissions to Government that have potential strategic impact on London local government.
 - 5. Consider commissioning Lead Members and officers to 'flesh out' propositions for potential longer-term opportunities arising from the learning associated with the Covid 19 response. You may subsequently wish to consider the balance of our priorities given the competing demands.
-

Covid 19 – Recovery and Renewal Overview

Introduction

1. London local government's Covid 19 related work has moved from a response footing to focus on transition issues, with an increasing emphasis on managing the Capital's longer-term recovery and renewal.
2. The report attached at Appendix A provides an overview of London local government's engagement with the formal Transition and Recovery structures. London Councils' Elected Officers continue to play an important leadership role in both Boards and Cllr Peter John co-chairs the Recovery Board.
3. When the Executive considered Recovery and Renewal issues in June 2020, it commissioned officers to work with Portfolio Holders, Lead Chief Executives and other key professional groupings to:
 - I. 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.
 - II. Commission interventions that add value to the work of individual councils and groups of councils in their own recovery and renewal work.
 - III. 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.
 - IV. Deploy this additional work to inform the London Recovery Board as well as our own programme of advocacy and reform.

This approach was endorsed by Leaders when they considered Recovery and Renewal matters in July 2020.

4. The work the Executive commissioned to capture political and professional reflections from member councils on the Covid 19 response is encapsulated in the report attached as Appendix B. Several key themes are highlighted in the report, including:
 - The unprecedented degree of challenge presented by the pandemic.

- The personal, social and economic consequences which are expected to be long-lasting.
- Numerous examples of effective cross-borough collaboration.
- An inspiring response from communities, both on a formal and informal level, supported by councils as conveners and enablers of participation and volunteering.
- The comparative success of local government in moving swiftly to respond to fast changing situations – often drawing on innovative ways of working.
- The degree of fiscal challenge that boroughs are likely to face in the future (as referenced in the earlier local government finance paper on today's agenda).

Considerations

5. The Executive commissioned the above survey with a view to locking in borough priorities as a central focus for London local government's work on recovery and renewal, including London Councils engagement with the GLA as part of the Recovery Programme.
6. Given the unprecedented competing demand on members at a local, cross borough and pan-London level (with multiple Board and Sub Board meetings), the survey results and today's Executive discussion could provide a potentially useful framework for prioritisation of our collective contributions.
7. Members will also be mindful of the broader capacity pressures on all of London local government, including shared resources such as London Councils. The capacity pressures will, of course, become more acute if we need to brigade resources again to respond to a second C19 spike. There is no guarantee that the resources to deliver such a surge in response capacity would automatically be delivered by Government, at a time when local authority income streams remain uncertain.
8. In reflecting on the survey results, it would be helpful if the Executive gave direction on where London Councils should prioritise its work in the future. The following questions, which draw on the survey findings may help focus the discussion:
 - a. Should we seek to build on councils' key role during the Covid 19 response as conveners and enablers of community participation and volunteering?

This may be important given the financial context boroughs are likely to face.

- b. Should we seek to maintain and build on the many excellent examples of cross-borough collaboration in response to the pandemic, by supporting further collaboration across borough groupings where appropriate (potentially providing a platform for further devolution)?
- c. Should we seek to build on the innovative way in which boroughs redirected resources and reshaped services to respond to the pandemic- noting that boroughs demonstrated the ability of local government to grip and use cutting edge technology and social network, in a way which eluded many national agencies?

Opportunities

9. The Executive may wish to use the early discussion around priorities (paragraph 8) as a guide when considering the following potential opportunities:

A. **Provide a framework for our responses** to the forthcoming Devolution and Recovery White Paper (expected later in September 2020) and other key submissions to Government that have potential strategic impact on London local government (including elements of the CSR submission).

- Given the Government's national priorities, it is recommended that the Executive develop a framework that opens with the case for London Local government, grounded in our role as key delivery agents for London's social and economic recovery, rooted in place, with a recent proven-ability to respond quickly and effectively to emerging need (viz Covid 19).
- This might offer opportunities to spell out the sorts of freedoms and flexibilities that would allow us, as a sector, uniquely placed as we are, to better deliver on economic and social recovery. This may draw on the earlier discussion and might include new levers that would support our role in:
 - a. Convening and enabling of community participation and volunteering.

- b. Supporting cross-borough collaboration (potentially providing a platform for sufficient scale to give Government confidence to allow further devolution).
- c. Service reform and innovation, including the use of technology and social networks in a nimble way which is beyond the reach of leviathan national agencies.

B. Commission officers to work up longer-term opportunities – for discussion and potential development by the Executive. These opportunities could include options such as:

- d. Promoting promising/innovative practice on the borough role in catalysing community participation.
- e. Grounding community participation in our wider approach to policy development.
- f. Embedding borough-groupings into future policy and devolution asks – recognising the importance of scale for services – whilst also recognising the importance of joined-up people-centred services
- g. Developing an eye-catching innovation ‘pitch’ – building on and fostering new ways of working and good practice established during the Covid 19 response; potentially supported by a hub that can build on the approach to collaboration and innovation being developed by LOTI.

Conclusion

10. Whilst the negative consequences of the pandemic are all too obvious, there are arguably once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to reposition London local government as the primary agents of public service delivery for and with our communities.
11. To advance this ambitious agenda, the Executive may wish to press officers to quickly develop ideas for its consideration - including scoping how London Councils could provide a space to enable this agenda to be realised through co-creation with boroughs and borough groupings.

12. If the Executive is minded to take the opportunity to focus on a strategy, such as the one intimated above, it is likely to be necessary to take a view on how much of our collective capacity should be focused on this borough-led strategy and by implication how much such be invested into partnership activities (working with the GLA). We would have to come back to you to discuss how this effects our resources, business plans and existing Pledges.

Recommendations

The Executive is asked to:

1. Note the update provided in the report attached at appendix A on the Transition Board and the Recovery Board.
2. Note the finding of the surveys to capture political and professional perspectives from member councils on the Covid 19 response and emerging recovery and renewal strategies; provided in the report attached as appendix B
3. Comment on the questions set out in paragraph 8.
4. Give an initial steer on priorities for engagement with:
 - The Transition and Recovery Programmes
 - The Devolution and Recovery White Paper and other key submissions to Government that have potential strategic impact on London local government.
5. Consider commissioning Lead Members and officers to ‘flesh out’ propositions for potential longer-term opportunities arising from the learning associated with the Covid 19 response. You may subsequently wish to consider the balance of our priorities given the competing demands.

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.

London local government response to Covid 19: Transition and Recovery arrangements

Introduction

This report provides an update on progress around London's respective Transition and Recovery arrangements and identifies further opportunities for London local government.

1. London local government has emerged from the immediate response and mitigation phase of the pandemic and is now focusing on the Capital's transition towards recovery. The start of the transition and recovery phase has seen the embedding of two new pan-London structures: the London Transition Board and London Recovery Board. The two multi-agency Boards, characterised by close working across sectors, work – to a degree- in tandem.
2. Both the Executive (June) and Leaders Committees (July) received papers that provided an update on London local government resilience and emergency response to Covid 19 and the next steps towards recovery, including the role of local government and London Councils. A number of important comments were made that informed the London local government perspective and provided direction to the transition and recovery arrangements, such as addressing inequality exacerbated by the pandemic; tackling unemployment and supporting those on the cusp of needing help; focusing on the green agenda; supporting the hospitality sector and high streets. These contributions have helped inform and shape the strategic direction the broader recovery programme. Concurrently London Councils have been developing work, via surveys of borough Leaders and Chief Executives, to understand learning from the Covid 19 response and opportunities for local government in relation to recovery, renewal and public service innovation – these insights are explored in detail in appendix B.
3. This report provides an update on progress of the pan-London transition and recovery arrangements, with a focus on the role London local government has played in these developments. This will provide Executive Members with an opportunity to reflect and comment on arrangements and progress to date, and the role and opportunities for local government in the future. It will also touch upon broader London resilience arrangements and activity.

London's Covid 19 Transition and Recovery

4. The London transition and recovery programme has continued to make important progress to mitigate any immediate challenges emerging in London and to enable the conditions for a robust recovery. Both the London Transition Board (LTB) and London Recovery (LRB) have developed their structures, practical operations and strategic direction with London local government playing a central role in both shaping and leading progress. The section will outline developments and the current state of play within the arrangements and upcoming next steps.

The London Transition Board

5. The core role of the LTB (co-chaired by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Mayor of London) is to co-ordinate and oversee a successful transition from emergency response to recovery. The LTB focuses on short term arrangements up to the end of 2020 and leads the Capital's transition out of lockdown and co-ordinates the response to emerging trends, issues and risks as the economy begins to reopen - whilst controlling the virus. London local government is represented on the Board by the London Councils Chairs and Vice Chairs and the Chair of the Chief Executives London Committee.
6. Since the previous update to both the Executive and Leaders Committee in June and July the LTB have further updated and expanded the programme structure and operation. There are now two established streams:
 - London Transition Management Group (TMG) – The format of the TMG has been largely unchanged since the previous update. This is a multi-agency group is chaired on an independent basis by John Barradell, Chief Executive at the City of London Corporation, and is responsible for the oversight of the joint work undertaken across London at both pan-London and sub-regional levels. It is designed to provide assurance to, and deliver the objectives of, the LTB. The TMG effectively subsumed and broadened the strategic and operational activity previously led by the Strategic Coordination Group during the emergency response phase of the pandemic. The work of the TMG is underpinned by a number of sub-groups including the Mortality Management Group including the PMART process, Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell, Communications, Health

and Wellbeing Group, Business Support, Strategy, Performance, Analysis and Research and any Task and Finish Groups.

- Strategy Groups – these newly established groups focus on key system-wide issues with the aim of reviewing activity underway or planned, and identifying and escalating emerging risks, issues and opportunities. The existing Strategy Groups are Outbreak Control, Business Reopening, Health and Social Care, London's Communities, Education (Schools), Arts and Culture – each have their own respective chairs (the Education group is chaired by Cllr Peter John, Chair of London Councils) and participants that bring their own sectoral knowledge to enable critical review, insight and the ability to anticipate issues. The latest LTB meetings have undertaken deep dives that are centred around and led by the groups. The groups are also supported in their activity by the London Transition Management Group or one of its subgroups.
 - A number of leading Members and London Council officers are closely involved in the above structures.
7. Since the Executive Committee in June the LTB have met on several occasions (1 July, 22 July and 12 August) and have undertaken deep dives to understand challenges and establish next steps around key issues – to date the deep dives have been around: Planning and Licensing; Growing public confidence to restart activity; Outbreak Control; Reopening London's Arts & Culture Sector; Transport confidence and business reopening; Autumn return to school, further and higher education.
8. The latest meeting included the deep dive on the autumn return to school, further and higher education, led by Cllr Peter John, which outlined potential challenges including transport, how to manage the skills gap, what needs to be taught in the curriculum, pupil and parent confidence, mental health and safeguarding of pupils, concerns about digital poverty and guidance on wrap-around care.

London Recovery Board

9. The LRB, co-chaired by the Chair of London Councils and the Mayor of London, continues to establish strategic direction and priorities for London's long-term recovery. It is important to recognise the distinction between the two Boards –

whilst some themes and issues overlap between short and long-term, the LTB focuses and predominantly leads the short-term activity. The LRB functions in tandem with the Transition Board but with a broader and future thinking focus around social and economic recovery.

10. The LRB actively brings together cross-sectoral representation 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.
11. To guide the Recovery work programme and meet the overarching aims agreed by the LRB, the Board adopted a mission-based approach proposed by the London Recovery Taskforce (LRT). The LRT, chaired by Dr Nick Bowes, Mayoral Director of Policy at the Greater London Authority, works to implement the Board's vision. The missions are effectively thematic priorities consisting of several projects and activities. The missions are not exhaustive and do not intend to encapsulate all activity and outcomes required to '**Build Back Better**' – rather they intend to address and focus on key issues arising from the pandemic and enable other programmes of work to develop and progress concurrently.
12. The latest draft missions been developed by the Economic Recovery workstrand (co-chaired by Cllr Georgia Gould and Jules Pipe) and Social Recovery workstrand (co-chaired by Debbie Weekes-Bernard and Cllr Ruth Dombey) in partnership with key stakeholders and were presented the LRB on the 28 July. Feedback from the LRB suggested the missions required further refinement to establish greater focus and prioritisation, as such both workstrands are now working at pace and undertaking a mission refinement process. To inform this process the central engagement team at the Greater London Authority are conducting public engagement through Talk London¹ (an online community for all Londoners to engage on possible future policy decisions) and workstrands will continue discussions with stakeholders to maintain a collaborative approach to the mission development. The refinement process will be completed ahead of the

¹ [Talk London – London Recovery engagement](#)

next LRB meeting on the 15 September, there will also be a key staging point at the LRT on the 3 September.

13. The following list is the latest draft London Recovery missions – these are likely to be updated over the coming months:

Mission 1: A Strong Civil Society - *All Londoners -especially those who suffered unequal impact of Covid-19 -are served by a thriving, diverse and sustainable Civil Society and Faith sector.*

Mission 2: A robust safety net, a good standard of living and the tools to thrive - *All Londoners receive the support they need to avoid or be lifted out of poverty, and to relieve hardship*

Mission 3: No one's health suffers because of who they are, where they live, or if, how and where they work - *To address the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on certain groups, and take steps to ensure that the rebuilding of London reduces the gap in healthy life expectancy*

Mission 4: A new deal for young people - *Every young Londoner to have the best start in life; to be happy, safe, fulfilled & ambitious –focussing on those facing the greatest barriers to realising their potential.*

Mission 5: Good Work for All Londoners - *No Londoner, particularly those people disproportionately affected by the pandemic or BREXIT, is left without access to education, training or a job opportunity.*

Mission 6: Green New Deal - *Increase [by %TBD1] the size of London's green economy by 2030, to accelerate job creation and to drive a fair and inclusive recovery from Covid-19 that tackles the climate emergency, eradicates air pollution and builds long-term, community-led resilience.*

Mission 7: Digital Access for all - *Every Londoner to have access to connectivity, basic digital, skills and digital employment opportunities and support by 2025*

Mission 8: '15 minute cities –the city on your doorstep' - *Thriving, inclusive and resilient high streets and town centres in every London Borough with culture, diverse retail and jobs within walking distance of all Londoners*

14. There are a number of cross-cutting principles that will underpin and be embedded across the missions and at all stages of the recovery programme. These principles are currently categorised as outcome-orientated or input-orientated – how they will be framed and tangibly embedded within the missions is still under development:

Outcome-orientated:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Recognising and addressing structural inequalities, promoting a fairer, more inclusive London and focusing on supporting the most vulnerable
- Environment: Delivering sustainability, mitigating climate change and improving the resilience of our city
- Health: improving the health and wellbeing of all Londoners

Input-orientated:

- Collaboration: Collaborating and involving London's diverse communities
- Innovation: Innovating and using digital technology and data to meet emerging needs
- Value for money: Ensuring affordability of measures and providing value for money

15. Once the missions have been formally agreed the two workstrands will then endeavour to establish how they will deliver the missions outcomes, including working with key stakeholders, connecting to existing groups and decision-making fora, and indicative timeframes.

Pan-London activity: Next steps

16. The LTB and LRB will continue to develop and progress their respective work programmes and London Councils will update the Executive Committee on key developments. Opportunities to further shape and influence the LTB are limited due to its short-term nature, however transition activity and preparations to respond to emerging challenges are well established at a borough level. There remains an important opportunity to both shape the strategic direction of the LRB priorities, particularly during the mission refine process, and establish how best to position London local government in contributing to delivering outcomes and other key activity. For example, aligning delivery with sub-regional and local activity and utilise best practice from local government to shape delivery.

17. The broader role, opportunities and activity distinct to London local government are explored in appendix B to the Chief Executives Overview Report which analyses the findings of the borough Leaders and Chief Executive survey on recovery and renewal.

London local government resilience

18. Boroughs have resilience arrangements in place, complimenting activity and direction within the LTB, to respond to any emerging challenges relating to the pandemic for example each local authority has Local Outbreak Plan in place in addition to other localised arrangements.

19. In addition to Covid 19 specific resilience, arrangements and preparations will be established to respond to broader issues particularly as we approach the end of the Brexit transition period.

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

- Initiated a review into the “London local government Covid 19 response: Rapid identification of lessons learned”. This will cover rapid, early identification of lessons learned from London local government’s joint working on COVID 19 during the period between March and July 2020 and, in particular, the ways in which the political and professional strands of the collective response worked together. This is not intended to be a full review, but is intended to throw up examples of practice and process that worked well and should be built on in responding to any further waves of COVID 19, as well as issues that need to be addressed in order to strengthen London local government’s response to any future waves of the virus.
- Conducted surveys of borough Leaders and Chief Executive on 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.

Conclusion

21. London boroughs continue to make a significant contribution to the capital's resilience. To provide assurance to Leaders it will be important to continue monitoring the progress and development of the London transition and recovery programme. As London local government continues its involvement and leadership there will be opportunities, particularly in longer-term recovery, to best position boroughs to deliver key outcomes and lead in the renewal of service delivery.

Recommendations

The Executive Committee is asked to:

1. Note the progress and updates on pan-London Transition and Recovery arrangements.
-

Borough Covid 19 recovery and renewal survey findings

Introduction

This report analyses findings from borough Leaders and Chief Executive surveys on London local government response, recovery and renewal from Covid 19.

1. In June the Executive Committee received a report on London local government resilience specifically in relation to the immediate Covid 19 response – this detailed developments, progress and next steps around the Capitals transition towards recovery. Following this the Executive commissioned London Councils to conduct a survey of all London boroughs to help inform London local governments perspective on recovery, to learn from experiences and practice during the emergency response phase and to develop an understanding of opportunities distinct to local government within the context of recovery and renewal.
2. London's transition from immediate response and mitigation to recovery and renewal created the scope to understand and identify opportunities for public service innovation and reform that reflected the 'new normal' and built on the integral role of local government during the emergency response. Over July London Councils surveyed both borough Leaders and Chief Executives primarily to collate and develop perspectives on the future of the Capitals Covid 19 recovery, the survey also aimed to compliment and build on ongoing discussions and existing contributions. The survey presented an opportunity to assemble broader learning and possibly forestall any additional initiatives by establishing a framework that regional and national partners can learn from.
3. This report will analyse the survey findings, highlighting emerging themes, challenges and opportunities that will shape the London local government perspective. This will comprise of lessons learned during the emergency response phase and identify themes around challenges and successes, followed by the key opportunities for innovation and renewal. These themes and insights will shape possible next steps and establish what activity can be taken forward from a pan-London perspective.

Leader and Chief Executive survey analysis

4. Borough Leaders and Chief Executives were asked to complete complementary surveys. The Leaders survey was designed to invite their strategic perspectives, including on opportunities for public service innovation and reform, together with identifying necessary freedoms and flexibilities that could help unlock new and improved service delivery. To complement this, the Chief Executive survey explored broader perspectives around emergency response and recovery, seeking to understand strategic perspectives on the key issues and challenges that need to be addressed as we transition to the recovery phase and to draw out emerging thinking on the practices, activities or processes that might best be restored, retained and reinvented. Combined, the surveys served as complimentary and the findings will be analysed together by drawing upon consistent themes and responses across the surveys. The survey findings also sought to build on existing work around these issues and topics at both a borough and sub-regional level.
5. The Leaders survey supplemented earlier discussions at the Executive and Leaders Committee and received 10 responses (33% response rate) and the Chief Executives survey received 18 responses (55% response rate) but both receive a rich range of perspectives from boroughs in different sub-regions and from inner and outer London. This helped establish more representative themes and insights.
6. The responses will be analysed in three sections: learning during the emergency response phase, key themes for London's recovery (separated into economic and social) and opportunities for public service innovation and reform. The analysis will focus mainly on the key themes.

Learning during emergency response phase: challenges and success

7. To establish the experiences and learning from the response phase boroughs were asked to identify the most significant challenges and success during the initial response to the pandemic (which was described roughly as the period of 1 March to the 1 June). Boroughs described a noticeably broader range of challenges compared to successes which reflected the level of complexity they

faced in establishing their response and the different experiences they had based on the needs of their locality.

8. The following are the key challenges identified by local government:
9. **Public health response and Shielding Hubs.** The most common and difficult challenge for boroughs was establishing a robust public health response within local areas, including the setting up of Shielding Hubs and supporting wider health needs for communities and residents.
10. Boroughs led on establishing Shielding Hubs which aimed to provide support to shielding residents within local authority geographies. Hubs had to be developed at pace to ensure vulnerable people had access to the help they required within the context of changing, and sometimes unclear, commitments from Government. Initially boroughs were expected to provide support to tackle social isolation as many shielding residents lost access to key social and community structures during lockdown, however many boroughs quickly found themselves conduct activity beyond those expectations and establish processes and committed resource to deliver food packages and medicines. To establish the necessary procedures boroughs worked closely with partners, particularly the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCS), to quickly mobilise staff and residents to provide urgent support. Furthermore, this support often spanned beyond the shielding cohort to include other vulnerable residents (e.g. those in poverty or with mental health difficulties).
11. **Agile working and staff mobilisation.** From an organisational perspective, boroughs had to quickly adapt their traditional ways of working to become agile and virtual workplaces effectively overnight – this includes the capacity to enable new ways of working and support staff in making this transition. At the beginning of the pandemic boroughs were equipped differently to enable and establish agile working practice across the organisation – whilst some organisations found it easier than others to make this shift the pace and scale proved challenging across the board.
12. Additionally, within the context of lockdown and the need for staff to shield and self-isolate, it was difficult for local authorities to redeploy and mobilise staff. For key frontline staff, particularly in social care, it was essential to keep them safe and maintain a base to ensure they were able to continue deliver essential services.

13. **Maintaining social care provision.** Building on the challenges relating to adopting new ways of working and staff mobilisation boroughs had to establish new ways to enable frontline staff to continue face to face service provision and deliver services in new ways, whilst ensuring there is enough capacity in the system to ensure vulnerable residents were not left behind. The most considerable challenge was supporting care homes and tackling outbreaks, as experienced at a national level. Local authorities had to respond outbreaks and help maintain infection control within care settings.
14. There were also concerns around the availability of care placements, relating to the capacity of the care system to respond. At a pan-London level the 'Proud to Care' recruitment campaign was launched to bolster the sustainability of the sector during the peak of the pandemic.
15. In addition to the key themes list above there were several of other challenges described by boroughs:
- Uncertainty around future funding and sustainability, particularly in relation to the loss of income and increased expenditure (see items 5 and 6 for more)
 - The impact on local economies both the implications for residents – namely increasing numbers of people requiring support (e.g. due to unemployment, poverty) - and the challenges for businesses (particularly the retail and hospitality sector) and high streets.
 - Early and significant challenges around the lack of available Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for frontline staff.
 - Unclear guidance from the centre: at times boroughs had difficulty keeping key services operating within the context of changing and complex guidance and direction.
16. Boroughs also identified several key successes and achievements that were also recognised as means to help pave the way to rethink and deliver public services in the future:
17. **Establishing Shielding Hubs.** Whilst this was also recognised that the establishment of Shielding Hubs was a challenge, it was clear that Hubs were a significant success during the emergency response phase. Boroughs prided on the ability to mobilise staff, residents and communities at pace, and establishing the organisation structures and mechanism to ensure smooth

operation e.g. setting up contact centres, signposting, virtual working. This resulted in delivering to around 120,000 food requests (from non-shielding residents) and providing direct support to around 60,000 shielded residents across London.

18. The success of the Hubs presents is a way of operating and working with communities that can be, and already has been, developed and embedded within local authorities. For instance, Camden Council developed a digital platform during the response called Beacon that has developed a federated response across internal services and voluntary sector providers to match support with need. This platform builds on the improved use of data and collaboration with the voluntary sector to support residents in a locality.
19. **New and improved partnership working and collaboration.** It was quickly recognised that partnerships and collaboration were vital to the emergency response phase – this was demonstrated both within sectors (e.g. between boroughs; sub-regional working) and across sectors and communities (e.g. with the VCS, health, police, businesses). This proved essential for the successful and maintained delivery of key services (e.g. shielding hubs, social care, food provision, communications), helped address the digital divide across communities, improved commissioning and procurement processes and resulted in the establishment of mutual aid and community groups in response to the new and emerging patterns of inequality with different localities.
20. **New ways of working and workforce flexibility.** This theme was well characterised as embedding a 'One team' approach across the organisation. Many boroughs described a successful, but challenging shift to agile and virtual working including the ability to develop virtual service delivery (e.g. virtual library, online learning, customer services, virtual cultural offers – the City of London developed platforms that enable them to remain engaged with cultural audiences e.g. Our City Together¹ and Barbican's Cinema on Demand²) that residents were able to adapt to. This shift has helped accelerate digitisation and the provision of online services within boroughs.
21. Staff mobilisation was also considered a challenge, but many boroughs recognised the success in ensuring frontline staff remain accessible to

¹ <https://www.ourcitytogether.london/>

² <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/cinema-on-demand>

residents, redeploying staff across services and re-prioritising service delivery to effectively respond to the pandemic and the needs within their communities.

22. In addition to the key themes list above there were several other successes described by boroughs:

- Maintaining key service delivery within the context of essential service re-prioritisation and reduced workforce capacity. In London Borough of Barking and Dagenham an early decision was made to grant a 10 per cent increase to the fees paid to care providers to maintain the sustainability of provision - other examples include maintaining refuse collection, social work, safeguarding and support for at-risk children and adults.
- Communicating effectively to communities, businesses and residents – adapting and using a range of communication channels and working with partners to target different communities.

Key themes for London's recovery

23. To reflect the strategic direction of the London Recovery Board (see appendix A) boroughs were asked to identify the key issues and components that should inform and shape London's economic and social recovery. These themes cover both short and long-term timeframes, recognising there is a transitional process involved in a successful recovery.

The key economic recovery themes are:

24. **Unemployment and welfare provision.** The most significant theme recognised as playing a central feature in economic recovery was the anticipated increase in unemployment and the number of residents requiring welfare support. It is crucial that support is available for those who may become unemployed and substantial direct investment and resource needs dedicating to employment support, training, upskilling and apprenticeships. Whilst provisions are required to the newly unemployment there must be accompanying work to prevent any future unemployment, for instance supporting business to prevent further closures and ensuring they can continue operating but also, in the longer-term, support new businesses and emerging markets.

25. Furthermore, unemployment in conjunction with other factors, will have subsequent impacts on the demand for welfare provision and support – for instance increasing Universal Credit claimants, debt support and hardship support - which will require additional resource particularly from public and voluntary sector organisations.
26. **Supporting businesses and high streets.** This is an extremely different time for businesses, particularly local businesses, and for high streets. Both lockdown and decreased consumer confidence has had a significant impact for business operations and trading, with specific concerns for the tourism, culture and hospitality sectors. There must be a focus supporting business and preventing future closures where possible, local authorities also have a role in helping them to remain open securely and adhering to the latest guidance. There is also recognition that new businesses and market opportunities may emerge in the future that must also be enabled and supported.
27. There is also an opportunity to invest in local high streets and communities – building on the idea of '15 minute cities'. High streets can be used as hubs to generate business, employment and wellbeing. Combined, supporting businesses and rethinking opportunities on high street will also help re-establish and improve consumer confidence. For example, the new Start Up Richmond programme is supporting businesses and high streets by providing targeted support, webinars, and 1-2-1 mentoring for affected businesses.
28. **Establishing a Green Economy.** As London restarts the economy there is an important opportunity to embed the principles of the green agenda and establish a genuine Green Economy during the recovery phase. Boroughs describe a range of activities and priorities though should underpin a Green Economy including green jobs, zero-carbon economy, promoting and establish active travel, retrofitting and green energy and supporting businesses to have a genuine role in the green economy.
29. **Young people.** This recognised the significant economic impact on young people and a sense of prioritisation to ensure initiatives and opportunities are available for them to enter or re-enter the job market. Contributions included training, a focus on increasing job prospects and targeted support for vulnerable young people.

The key social recovery themes are:

30. **Health and Wellbeing.** The pandemic amplified pre-existing health inequalities and exacerbated the need to tackle disparities within different groups (this included disparities around access to health care and health outcomes e.g. the disproportionate impact of Covid 19 on 'BAME' people). Furthermore, the true extent of the long-term health impacts of the pandemic are unknown and there is an expectation that there will be more challenges ahead. Therefore, a clear mission must be established to tackle existing inequalities, prepare for future challenges (e.g. outbreak prevention and management; post-Covid waiting lists; winter preparedness) but also ensure the health and care sector have the capacity and resource to respond. It is also important to support people's wellbeing including support to reintegrate former shielding residents into the local community and providing access to and encouraging physical activities (e.g. parks and open spaces).
31. **Mental Health.** There was a particular focus on tackling immediate mental health challenges resulting from the pandemic. At the forefront were those caused by bereavement and supporting those individuals, families and communities – with consideration of faith communities – who have experienced loss. But this also encompasses challenges for young people, marginalised groups, those who have had Covid 19 and the impact of lockdown in relation to social isolation, unemployment, education absence. There was overall recognition there are many immediate implications to tackle in the first instance, in addition to existing longer-term and pre-existing challenges.
32. **Tackling homelessness.** Local government had a crucial role in accommodating rough sleepers during lockdown and working with partners to ensure they had access to wider support (e.g. mental health, substance misuse). As London transitions to recovery there is recognition that a considerable challenge will be to keep the homeless accommodated and ensuring they do not return to the streets but also to support people from being evicted within the context of an extremely challenging economic climate.
33. The emerging economic and social present a broad range of priorities but reflect the breadth of issues, challenges and activity that must be undertaken to ensure London can recover and '**Build Back Better**'. These key themes

have been used to inform and shape the strategic direction of the London Recovery Board, co-chaired by Cllr Peter John, and are, for the most part, reflected within the emerging missions. However, some of the specific activity and priorities are best progressed and delivered by local government, providing particular and distinct opportunities for boroughs.

Opportunities for public service innovation and reform

34. London local government quickly rose to the challenge of responding to the pandemic and demonstrated its important leadership role to help keep the Capital and communities safe, mobilising communities and working collaboratively and effectively during pandemic. There is now an opportunity to reflect on the success of local government and learn from good practice but also build on the momentum generated from this success. This is an opportunity to rethink the way local government operates, how it works with partners and communities and delivers services. Boroughs were asked about key opportunities for public services innovation and reform including the freedom and flexibilities necessary to unlock this and - building on the delivery and practice during the emergency response phase - what practices, activities and processes can, should or will be restored, retained, or reinvented in the context of a 'new normal'.
35. This section will bring together the key ideas and opportunities that are distinct to local government and could be explored taken further as we continue to shape London's recovery and renewal.
36. **Collaboration.** Before delving into specific areas and opportunities for public service innovation and reform collaboration emerged as a central theme that should underpin the work and role of local government in recovery and future service delivery. The success of collaborative structures during the pandemic presents an opportunity to rethink how local government approach and build on collaboration, joint working and partnerships. Collaboration in this respect is also multifaceted – it encompasses retaining the partnerships forged during the emergency response phase between local authorities both at a sub-regional level and pan-London level; with other public sector bodies particularly within the health sector; the joint working established with the VCS to reach

out to and mobilise communities and engaging with communities themselves to encourage and enable active community participation. Services areas across local government collaborated innovatively and flexibly, with a strong sense of shared purpose through the professional networks. This is also the opportunity to reinvent the approach to collaboration by sharing learning and good practice, developing new collaborative processes and increasing community engagement. Some of this will be explored in greater detail but the consensus among response was that working together across sectors is essential.

37. Community participation. Building on the underpinning theme of collaboration the response to the pandemic amplified the need to reinvent the way local government works with communities. This opportunity is borne out of the successful Shielding Hubs. Community participation and active citizenship was integral to the support provided to vulnerable residents – residents and communities quickly responded to calls to action to help others in their local communities including delivering medicines and food packages to both shielding and non-shielding residents and providing social interaction (often over the phone) to help tackle social isolation. The myriad of activities and gestures of good will demonstrated the willingness for people and communities to help each other and themselves – the role of local government was to facilitate or act as an ‘enabler’ to local communities and through this role boroughs reported a strengthening of the civic bond and building of trust between councils and their residents. As reference in paragraph 18 boroughs have already built on the momentum behind Shielding Hubs to develop community hubs, but at a pan-London level this momentum could be part of a paradigm shift that positions London local government as a key enabler that empowers communities and genuinely involves them in local decisions and solutions.

38. Digital and technological innovation (new ways of working). The local government Covid 19 response saw greater and more innovative use of technology and the increasing digitalisation of local government services (also see paragraphs 11 and 20). This presents an opportunity to reinvent local government operation and service delivery. The necessary and successful shift to agile and virtual working enabled local authorities and their staff to be

more flexible around the way they work, for example spending little to no time in the office and hosting formal meetings such as committee, cabinet and Councils meetings online. The proliferation of agile working removes the need for physical meetings which also eliminates barriers for sub-regional and pan-London work. There was particular appetite to retain remote working and flexibility for staff.

39. Staff and residents also demonstrated incredible flexibility in service delivery and developing virtual solutions. It was recognised that some services need to maintain face to face delivery and that there are challenges around digital exclusion that must be addressed. For example, Wandsworth Council, with Battersea Power Station, collaborated with local community partners to launch the Power to Connect campaign to raise awareness of the issues around digital exclusion and to support local families across Wandsworth. The outputs from this work included the provision additional IT equipment with 1044 laptops being provided. But there is an opportunity to channel shift which will encourage residents to utilise digital platforms and enable services to become increasingly digital where feasible or possible. An example of this could be to modernise registrars' processes to reduce the need for face-to-face contact.
40. During the response there was also improved information and data sharing both across local government and other sectors. The processes for data collection during the emergency response phase was described as more efficient and effective which could help inform the way we approach data in the future.
41. **Health and care integration.** The demand on health and care services created during the pandemic have amplified the need for improved working between the two sectors including scope for improved adult social care provision within the context of cross border health provision. This provides useful context for the existing work which is being led by Cllr. Sir Ray Puddifoot in partnership with the NHS.
42. **Physical building space.** Linked to the new ways of working, local government can rethink the use of physical building space and public assets. The success of agile working has demonstrated that the need to frequently access physical office space will be reduced in the future – this is reflected both in the increased uptake of remote working and the need for continued

social distancing measures in local authorities and within other sectors and organisations. This presents an opportunity to reinvent the use of public assets and making the case to rationalise the number of public buildings and focus on multi-use hubs or co-locating offices as opposed to single-service buildings.

43. Whilst some of these opportunities for innovation and reform have already gained momentum further freedoms and flexibilities are required to develop and embed existing, emerging and new activity. Boroughs identified necessary freedoms and flexibilities required to help unlock public service innovation, including:

- **Funding and budgeting flexibilities** (also see items 5)– including longer term funding solutions and greater funding sustainability; investment into high streets; investment into prevention; greater power to raise new revenue streams and income sources.
- **Corporate freedoms and flexibilities** – including more flexible use of corporate estates; less Government involvement in operational issues.
- **Economy and skills devolution** – including local government leading employment and skills opportunities at a pan-London and sub-regional level to help tackle unemployment and support local employment needs; freedoms to shape the school curriculum to compliment local economic ecosystems; devolution of welfare support and taxation to regions or sub-regions; clarity around local, regional and national boundaries for skills and training.

44. Some of these freedoms and flexibilities can be progress at different levels and channels but it is important to identify where London local government can best add value to unlock activity and establish what could be prioritised.

Conclusion

45. Given the rich contributions from boroughs to the survey and the growing evidence base for borough innovation and agility in responding to the pandemic, members may want to draw on these findings and data to inform their consideration of next steps as part of the discussion under the Chief Executive's overview report.

Recommendations

The Executive Committee is asked to:

1. Note the findings of the borough Leaders and Chief Executive surveys.
 2. Comment on the findings as part of the discussion under the Recovery and Renewal overview report.
-