

The Committee received a report and presentation updating on the draft Covid Recovery Plan 2021-2022 which was attached to the report at Appendix 1, requesting comment prior to progression of the Plan to a meeting of the Cabinet and then Full Council. Oldham's current Corporate Plan had expired in December 2020 and whilst work to refresh that Plan had been due to be completed by summer 2020, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, this had no longer been viable. It had therefore been agreed by Cabinet that a Covid-19 Recovery Strategy would be developed to act as an interim Corporate Plan until at least September 2022.

The Committee was advised that building on the learning so far, and anticipated events, a comprehensive Recovery Strategy had been developed which would help to shape Oldham's approach and vision for the next 18 months, whilst continuing to respond to the pandemic as an ongoing critical incident. The consultation process undertaken to develop the Plan was outlined, along with the six key priority focus areas within the Plan as follows:

1. Driving equality;
2. Investing in quality housing;
3. Championing a green recovery;
4. Creating and protecting jobs and supporting businesses;
5. Prioritising education and skills; and
6. Promoting health and wellbeing and supporting the most vulnerable.

The Committee was further advised that each of the focus areas would form a key strand of the Covid-19 Recovery Plan, with individual actions attached to each priority area and that the Plan would reflect the difficult and challenging anticipated times ahead and opportunities arising as recovery from the pandemic takes place in Oldham. The Plan would also set out how the 'new normal' could be embraced to build a stronger local economy, increase community resilience and public participation, support the local health system, and most vulnerable residents.

It was further reported that the Council's annual business planning process would be the mechanism to assure delivery against the Recovery Plan actions and that quarterly reporting via the Corporate Performance Framework would be provided against identified actions. The Framework would also be redeveloped to ensure oversight of the key performance metrics relating to the agreed priorities as well as to ensure effective service of business usual activity, with an annual performance report detailing progress against the Plan priorities also being produced.

The Recovery Strategy would be launched following approval of the Recovery Plan by the Council, ensuring that the priorities were embedded across Team Oldham which would include creating a full communications and engagement programme across stakeholders and residents.

A discussion took place around the Strategy in which the following points were made:

- The extent of Council control over Plan targets was questioned, noting that the Council did not control land supply for building, did not currently build Council houses, could not control quality employment opportunities etc. The point was acknowledged, but the objectives around, for example, around housing were taken from current housing strategies. With acknowledging that job opportunities might not necessarily be what the Council might want them to be going forward, it was necessary to develop opportunities to attract quality jobs.;
- The ambitions of the Council for several years to keep land for 'quality' employment was noted, but concern was expressed that the Council had then let these go for warehousing type developments. It was acknowledged that Oldham was in competition with other Greater Manchester areas that might appear more attractive. An undertaking to provide feedback as to what Oldham could do to address this was given.
- It was noted that the Priorities listed could not be argued against, but the matters behind these such as the Action Plan and performance indicators were the ones to ensure delivery for local residents. Things such as community engagement were in the Council's hands and needed to be undertaken. It was confirmed that such engagement had been undertaken in developing the Plan and would continue in the long term.
- In considering the housing stock, it was noted that whilst the Council might take action to address poor standards in the private rented stock, that issues recurred with new landlords: such circumstances reinforced poverty and deprivation.
- The need to improve on communications to promote Oldham as an aspirational place to live was commented upon. Young people might leave the Borough for educational purposes but, it was suggested they did not return. The benefits of the Borough, including house costs, access to countryside, travel connections etc were not, it was suggested, promoted enough.

It was noted that several issues considered had a Greater Manchester (GM) dimension, and work to influence GM strategies that impact on Oldham was being pursued, along with lobbying of government, the GM Mayor etc.

Returning to targets and monitoring, the nature of these was queried. Members were advised that some could be considered against regional or national indicators. Others would require some qualitative and quantitative work to determine appropriate measures. Further considering community engagement, in the form of encouraging self-help, the voluntary sector and encouraging groups to undertake activity on their own, it was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken in, for example, approaches to poverty, that could be considered in this regard.

It was noted that to manage or provide oversight of the whole Plan would be difficult to do, and it was suggested that Members may be able to look at specific elements where

input from the Committee might assist. It was acknowledged that there were various means to consider progress of delivery, such as through a particular focus on particular themes or one Member of the Committee taking responsibility for a priority area.

RESOLVED that

1. The Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the Covid-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2022; and
2. The Chair and nominee Vice Chair meet with Officers to discuss monitoring or oversight to report to the next meeting of the Committee.