

Purpose

To renew Bath and North East Somerset and enable our residents to feel more connected to their locality and have greater opportunity to benefit from a broader based, greener and more resilient economy post COVID 19.

What problems are we addressing?

Covid -19 has highlighted the areas over reliance on low value tourism and retail sectors, which along with education, have been hardest hit by the pandemic. These sectors have also underpinned the Council's financial security through its heritage and commercial estate. These sectors are unlikely to fully recover and this fact, alongside the dramatic economic downturn shows that the area's economic base is not resilient and needs to change.

The pandemic has also had the positive benefit of dramatically improving air quality and re-connecting people to nature. It has also created new partnerships across residents, the 3rd sector and business, who have worked quickly and flexibly together in a short space of time, and who want to build on these changes.

Outline of approach

Establish an area wide Renewal programme to promote the renewal of the B&NES economy and community infrastructure, based on the following principles:

1. *Changing people's perceptions of the area through effective place marketing*
2. *Re-opening the area after lockdown in a way that supports the long term vision*
3. *Use climate investments to support economic recovery and jobs.*
4. *Rapid re-skilling of people who have lost jobs in the retail and tourism sectors.*
5. *Building strong resilient local communities*

Workstreams

In order to ensure this work proceeds with pace and focus the proposal is that we structure the work into three workstreams

- 1 **Re-opening and renewing our High Streets**
- 2 **Resilient Communities**
- 3 **Renewal vision**

Each workstream will have a dedicated Workstream Manager. These 3 managers will operate as a project team to ensure co-ordination across the streams with support from a Programme Manager.

The programme will report to a board meeting weekly that will monitor progress, resolve issues, give strategic leadership and ensure the work is owned and agreed at the appropriate level of leadership.

The programme will be led by John Wilkinson and David Trethewey reporting to the Chief Executive.

Workstream 1 - Re-opening and renewing our High Streets

Purpose

The purpose of the workstream is to deliver the recovery plan for safely re-opening Bath and our Towns when the current restrictions are lifted in line with our long term renewal vision.

Background

1. Re-opening and renewing our retail, cultural and commercial centres is one of three workstreams taking place to respond to the COVID-19 crisis as part of our plan for economic renewal in Bath and North East Somerset.
2. By the end of March 2020 many businesses, charities and cultural institutions had closed their doors or suspended their activities and furloughed their staff and / or stood down their volunteers.
3. Recovery from lockdown is likely to happen in stages, starting with open spaces where social distancing is easier to observe. People will be cautious about visiting indoor and enclosed spaces and these will only open when social distancing can be ensured.
4. Destinations with eye-catching marketing and offering a warm welcome, value for money and the chance to spend time with families and friends in a safe environment will recover more quickly. Visitors will expect to find an infrastructure that meets their needs. Recorded public preferences of things to do upon the lifting of lockdown are feel-good activities followed by meeting for a meal with family and friends. Many will be reluctant to travel by public transport and the ability to get people in and out of Bath and our Town Centres quickly and safely, including by cycling and walking is going to be vital. Food outlets that can offer a take-away or grab-and-go service will recover the quickest.
5. For businesses safe means of access to work spaces in Bath and our Towns is also going to be critical as is knowing whether the amenities they need (e.g. food outlets) will be safely open and available for their staff.
6. Consumer confidence will return for domestic tourism before international tourism. Early audiences are likely to comprise the AB socio economic groups, who are most motivated by cultural and heritage destinations. The retail sector may benefit as pent-up desire to shop is released as restrictions on movement are lifted.
7. Bath should be prepared for the accommodation, retail and F&B offers to look different from when the city went into lockdown. High street businesses that survive will still be in a fragile state and the recovery will be an opportunity to make town and city centres more pedestrian-friendly, experiential and sustainable. These opportunities can be explored by a number of Council services, working with businesses and landlords to discern how this can be achieved.
8. The decision to reopen Bath and our Towns for business will be taken by the Local Resilience Forum based upon Government and Public Health England advice. Reopening is likely to take place over a period of time with a series of events and activities that will animate our High Streets.

9. However the recovery of tourism to pre-COVID-19 volumes will not happen in less than three to five years. Although financially painful, it will present an opportunity to reimagine the visitor offer, make it more sustainable and less dependent on high-volume footfall. It will also be a period of transition as the Council finds ways to be less financially dependent on heritage and commercial property revenues.
10. A range of projects have already started and need to be coordinated through the workstream. These are:
- **High Street/F&B:** Allison Herbert, Mark Minkley, Paul Garrod, Cathryn Brown, Lynda Deane, Carol Maclellan
 - **Public realm and open spaces:** Mark Minkley, Sara Brooks / Mark Cassidy, Lynda Deane, Joy Roberts (Chair of the Mayor's Honorary Guides)
 - **Culture, entertainment and outdoor events:** Kathryn Davis, Allison Herbert, Ian Stockley, Linda Todd
 - **Marketing, travel trade, accommodation:** Kathryn Davis, Penny Jenkins/ Clare Langrishe, Harry Tedstone
 - **Visitor attractions:** Stephen Bird, Caroline Kay / Claire Dixon, Tom Boden, Chris Stephens, Richard Wendorf (these already meet as an informal museum leaders team in the district) + Penny Jenkins
 - **Car parking, coaches and public transport:** Allison Herbert, Chris Major/ Andrew Dunn
 - **Employment and skills:** Duncan Kerr, Laurel Penrose, Katie Smith
 - **North East Somerset:**

Workstream 2 - Resilient Communities

Purpose

The purpose of this workstream is to plan and deliver an approach to the renewal of our work with the Communities of Bath & North East Somerset to address the issues the incident raised but also to build on the strengths of the community.

Background

1. This workstream is one three workstreams we are setting up as part of the economic and Community recovery and renewal of our places. It recognises the importance of strong resilient communities to the renewal of the area.
2. Bath & North East Somerset is an area combining urban and rural communities and has historically been a prosperous place with active communities playing a strong role in local life. There have however been areas of deprivation and there are differences in the capacity of different localities.
3. A successful response to the incident will require us to work with all our communities and build on the strengths within them to address the impacts we all face. This will require us to work in partnership, engage and where we can encourage positive action. There are likely to be increased needs and demands for services and we need build strong preventative approaches.
4. There is an increasing alignment of agendas around resilient communities, prevention of demand for services, employment and access to employment and the Climate and Nature emergency and low carbon communities.
5. The impact of Covid -19 on the council has been profound and will impact on the services that it can deliver to residents and communities and necessitate a shift in how residents needs are met and the relationship between public services and residents. This change needs to be understood, communicated and the Council its partners and residents and communities work together on solutions.
6. The incident has created new needs for our work but also have identified people and communities that we may not have been previously aware or responding to. Equally responding to the incident has brought together key partners and groups to work in new ways to develop new networks and generate innovative solutions.
7. We need therefore to take a new approach to our work recognising this new reality and building on strengths to enable communities to resolve as many of their issues themselves recognising that the Council will only be able to focus on its key statutory responsibilities
8. We have made progress over the last few years in working with local communities and communities of interest through the local forums and on initiatives such as the Community Libraries programme. However there remains an issue about an agreed approach within Bath.

9. Over the last year the Council with partners had been working on the Compassionate Communities approach and in March the leader officially signed the Council up to the approach
10. This enabled when the incident was declared the partners to come together to create a true, Public, private and voluntary sector response, the Compassionate Communities Hub. This has been a great success and we now need to think about how we build on that success as part of our continuing community response and into our renewal phase.
11. Many of the impacts will be into the medium to long term and we need to plan on the basis of a continued but changing need and to work out our shared outcomes and priorities to make our communities as resilient as we can.

The workstream needs to:

- Determine the future approach to the Community Hub
- Develop a community based approach to prevention
- Work on new models for engaging communities in the resolution of their issues
- Build on strengths in existing partnerships and communities
- Identify key areas for interventions and attention by the Council and its partners
- Mainstream Council services into new community led and or based approaches that recognise local need
- Further encourage community led responses to meet need
- Look at how low carbon communities can be further progressed

Workstream 3 – Renewal vision

Purpose

The purpose of this workstream is create a vision for our medium and long term renewal for the area, and to ensure our policies support and deliver that vision and the Corporate Strategy of the Council.

Background

- 1 This workstream is one three workstreams we are setting up as part of the economic and Community recovery and renewal of our places. It recognises the importance of clear vision and strategic approach to what we are trying to build for the renewal.
- 2 The vision will need to be evidence based but recognise we won't have all the knowledge of the impacts of COVID 19 for some time
- 3 The workstream will need to ensure at the Council is working as one on this work, all related policy work will need to be managed through the programme, including (but not exclusively), Climate emergency, transport, spatial planning, nature and green infrastructure, economic development and growth and skills etc
- 4 The work will need to recognise the key priority around the Climate Emergency and ensure we have principles around a zero carbon renewal
- 5 The workstream will need to link to strategic partnerships, such as the B&NES Economic Partnership, the WECA recovery and renewal taskforce, the Sub National transport body and the Western Gateway.
- 6 The workstream will need to manage the issue of short term delivery on issues whilst making more long terms strategic plans. So giving a clear policy steer to the organisation on existing plans, projects and processes will be a key task.
- 7 The workstream will need to operate as a gateway process for new initiatives ensuring that any work is aligned and supports our vision and is not going to distract our efforts from the priorities

The workstream needs to:

- Undertake analysis of the impacts of COVID and likely future changes
- Develop a coherent vision for the renewal, building on the existing ambitions of the administration
- Agree level of ambition, ie Zero carbon, green economy, etc
- Pull together the people working in this scope to virtual/real team
- Communicate the vision and set up work to deliver against it