

Agenda item:



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 14th July 2020

Subject: Covid-19 - Road to Recovery and plans for the future

Report From: Chief Executive

Report by: Paddy May, Strategy Unit

Wards affected: All

Key decision: NO

Full Council decision: NO

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a proposed framework for how the city might best position itself in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet:

2.1.1 Expresses its condolences to those that have lost loved ones, and its huge appreciation to the many agencies and individuals that have responded so selflessly and effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic.

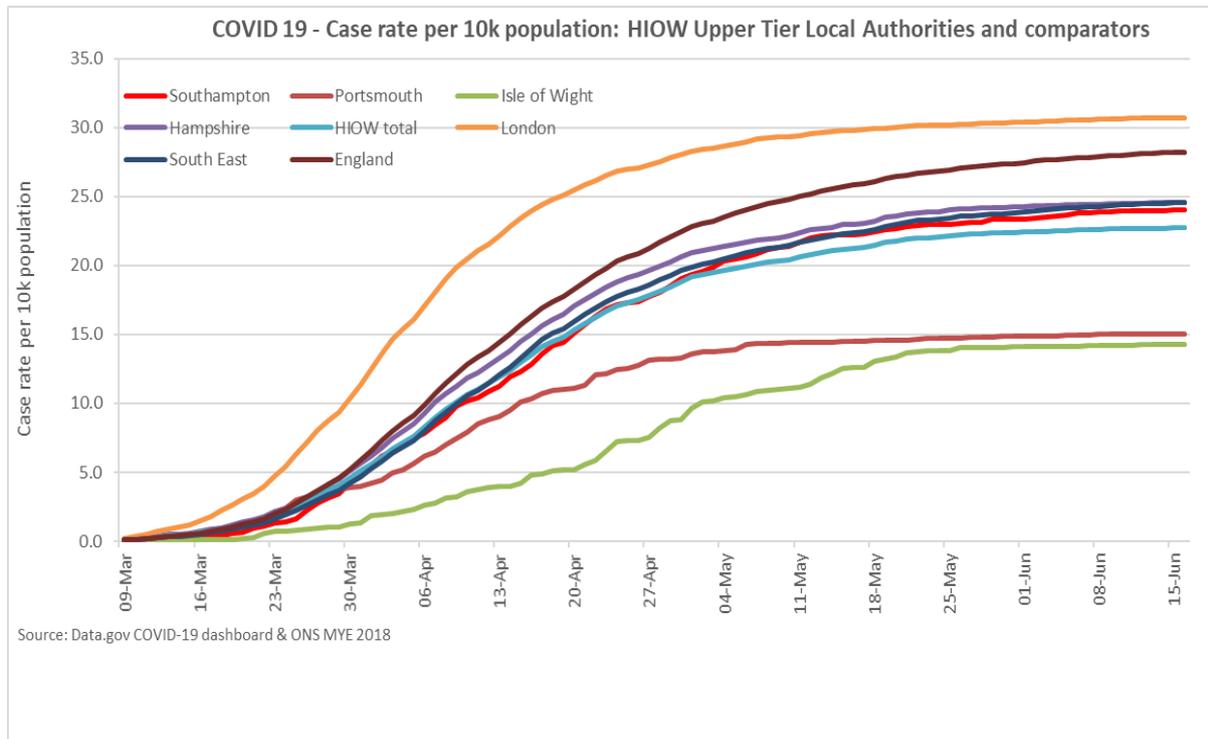
2.1.2 Agrees the process for developing the Vision for the City and alignment with its own priorities, outlined in Section 5.

3. Background

3.1 Whilst the rates of Covid-19 infection so far in Portsmouth have been low compared to other places within Hampshire and nationally (see Figure 1), the impact on the city, our communities and individuals within it has been significant and in many cases tragic and traumatic. As the strict lockdown measures are lifted nationally, the city council will show leadership and energy in supporting our communities and our economy to recover from the impact of the virus and the lockdown in the best way possible. In doing so, the council has the key role in leading the process of reflection and response and work to

galvanize how the city expresses its priorities and values for the future. This includes identifying where opportunities might emerge from the tragic experiences we have been through.

Figure 1 - Covid-19 infection rates / 10,000 population



3.2 The Impacts of Covid-19

3.2.1 We already know¹ that the impact of Covid-19 will be most detrimental to those already most disadvantaged and that the pandemic will lead to a national and global recession. Clearly, there has been a direct impact of Covid-19 on many people's health within Portsmouth and there will be many grieving families and individuals suffering from the long term consequences of having caught the virus. As has been reported nationally, there have also been many indirect health impacts which will have a long term consequences. This will include some of the mental health issues that dealing with the virus will have caused, as well as the impact of delayed treatment of other illnesses whilst the NHS prepared to deal with the first Covid-19 peak, and the effects of confinement, social isolation and lost opportunity, including the very significant impact on structured learning and skills development for our young people.

¹ <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/will-covid-19-be-a-watershed-moment-for-health-inequalities>

3.2.2 The impact on local businesses and on the employment of many people locally has also been significant. In a recent report, the Resolution Foundation found that 69% of UK households reported that they have experienced a reduction in income as a result of Coronavirus and that this has led to 23% of households needing to use savings to cover living costs and 13% struggling to pay bills.

3.2.3 In terms of employment, the Institute of Employment Studies in a report "Dealing with the Labour Market Impacts of the Covid-19 Recession" found that :

- Unemployment has already risen far quicker than in any of the last three recessions
- The labour market will not pick up where it left off, as many businesses need to repair their balance sheets and ongoing disruption due to the virus
- Younger people will be at greater risk
- Long-term unemployment leads to permanent labour market 'scars', with those affected more likely to be out of work later in their lives, to be in poor quality work and lower earnings
- A stronger sectoral bias is anticipated, with retail and hospitality appearing particularly vulnerable.

3.2.4 For children and young people there has been a huge loss in education during the lockdown with only around 3-5% of children attending school. Even now, with wider opening, only 25% of children are able to attend school. We know from reports from schools that the engagement of children in home learning has been very patchy and now that more children are returning, the loss in skills is clear. While the Government is funding schools for catch up provision it will be extremely challenging to make up this loss quickly. We know, too, that without the structure of school and college some young people are engaged in less positive activity. Also, referrals to social care from contacts to the MASH are higher than normal levels despite the majority of children being less visible to schools. With increasing family poverty as a result of job losses there is likely to be continued pressure on this service.

3.2.5 All of this demonstrates the importance of a strong response to the Covid-19 crisis that is multi-faceted dealing with health and economic issues at both the system and the individual level. Clearly, much of the response to this will be led by national policies and national initiatives but there is still much that the council can do to help the city and our communities recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. The Council's response to Covid-19

4.1 We have witnessed much that is positive and uplifting in the City's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and it is important that any response looks to lock

these positive changes in and build on them. Examples of this include the community spirit and work of the voluntary and community sector, and in particular the HIVE, who supported our local communities and most vulnerable residents superbly. Further examples would include strong inter-agency collaboration across the health and care sector; a reduction in traffic with more people cycling and walking and using the green spaces that we have within the city; providing accommodation for rough-sleepers; closer working between the schools and the local authority; people working from home and greater use of technologies.

- 4.2 With regard to the council's own operations, during the crisis the council has maintained its grip and focus on delivering and re-designing services to meet the needs of the community. It has successfully delivered all its business critical services such as social care, housing and supporting the homeless, support to schools, waste management and road safety, as well as the sourcing and distribution of PPE - all despite many challenges. It implemented changes to support the policy of allowing people to work from home wherever possible and has enhanced its infrastructure and support regimes to allow this to happen. Staff from less critical services have been redeployed to support elsewhere, including supporting the work of the HIVE and privately run care settings.
- 4.3 A number of council services were delivered in different ways, e.g. virtually, and the council's business continuity group (Gold) have constantly reviewed the delivery of services, when and how to set them back up and how to manage the risks. A survey has been undertaken with staff about their experience and reaction during Covid (with over 2000 responses), and extensive dialogue has been maintained with the Trade Unions.
- 4.4 The vast majority of council services have been stood back up following the initial emphasis on supporting and supplementing the most critical services. This is being done whilst there remain, and will continue to remain, significant reductions in capacity due to shielding / isolation and in the expectation that we need to be planning for a significant circulation of the virus at least into early 2021.
- 4.5 To help this a brief appraisal (see Appendix 1) is being undertaken, in consultation with portfolio holders, to ensure that any service can be re-opened safely. This checks that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken to protect the public and staff, and to make sure that standing-up one service does not inadvertently impact on others, for example by displacing re-deployed staff from more urgent work.
- 4.6 Of those services that have not been resumed, a majority are due to Government imposed restrictions. As the restrictions are lifted we should ensure that we look to operate services in a way that is consistent with our

priorities - and check how our priorities might have changed in the light of our Covid experience and its consequences. Attached at Appendix 2 is an indicative timeline showing how a range of Council services have been set up or will operate. We should also consider how we can operate in a way that does not cause more disadvantage to groups that have suffered most from the pandemic and the lockdown such as young people, BAME communities or other communities that suffer disadvantage. This work links into the council's Outbreak Plan which has been developed for the city and for which democratic oversight has been put in place (www.portsmouth.gov.uk/covidoutbreakplan).

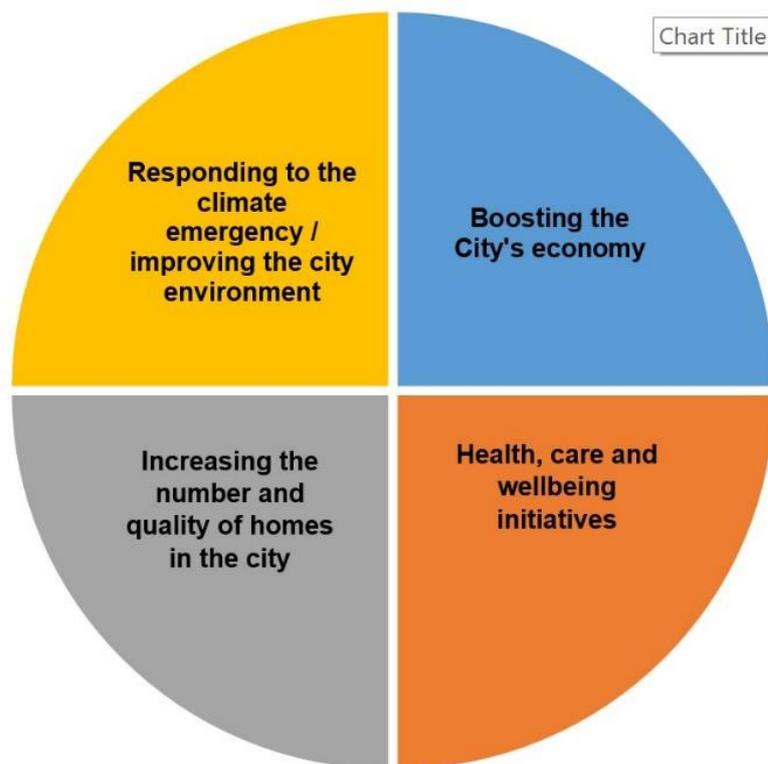
- 4.7 The financial impact of Covid-19 on the council has been significant. It is currently estimated that the impact of the increased costs, lost income and loss of funding will be £32m. At the time of writing, the government had provided additional grant of £12m leaving an overall forecast shortfall of £20m. Even if there is an immediate bounce back in income levels, which during any future recession is unlikely, there is still a significant funding gap that will need to be dealt with. This is also true nationally and so it is likely that all public services in Portsmouth could be challenged financially coming out of Covid-19. The Council has an obligation to plan responsibly in order to protect the financial resilience of the Council which underpins the continued delivery of its critical and essential services throughout this pandemic. This may require the Council to consider a Revised Budget and Capital Programme during the year. On the 2nd July, Government made an announcement of a further funding package to Local Authorities to help deal with the, as yet, unfunded additional costs of the pandemic plus some support to reimburse irrecoverable income losses for some income streams. The statement also mentioned an announcement in the forthcoming Spending Review regarding an apportionment of Council Tax and Business Rate losses between Central and Local Government. Until the details of this latest funding package are released, it is not possible to estimate the extent to which it will reduce the currently forecast £20m shortfall. Government have stated however that *"there will be some shared financial pain"*.
- 4.8 Economic recovery is a key part of the overall recovery plan and the council is working closely with businesses and with business organisations such as the Chamber, Solent LEP and Shaping Portsmouth to support economic recovery. The council has successfully disbursed the various business grants provided by central government and, where possible, has been assisting applicants where their initial applications fall short of the government's criteria. The council is working closely with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum in developing its recovery plan and holds the chair of a number of its workstreams. Through the LRF, the council has petitioned central government to allow local councils to disburse any unallocated

business grant made available by the government; for our LRF area this is a significant sum, c£70m - much needed by local businesses.

5. Refreshing the City's vision and values - process underway

5.1 Before the pandemic and lockdown, the council's political leadership set out its priority themes (see Figure 2):

Figure 2 - Administration Priorities



5.2 With the whole country easing out of lockdown, it is very tempting for the council to rush back to pre-lockdown priorities and ways of delivering services. However, prior to Covid-19, we had embarked on a dialogue across the city about the city's future vision and values. Indeed, on 14 March, as part of the process, we hosted a conference attended by 100 members of the public comprising a reasonably representative cross section of the city. The work leading up to that conference, and the steps we have taken subsequently are set out in the timeline below:

- initial partner workshops - October 2019
- 20 focus groups with stakeholders and communities - November 2019 - February 2020
- citizens' conference - March 2020
- post-coronavirus survey with citizens' conference attendees - June 2020
- Imagine Portsmouth partner board - initial meeting - June 2020
- citywide consultation - summer/autumn 2020

- 5.3 The priorities identified by the Administration resonate well with the emerging views expressed through the Vision consultations. This now gives us a major opportunity to consider how our proposed actions and those of our partners across the city priorities might best deliver the city's aspirations and whether we can achieve these outcomes in a different and more effective way in the light of what we have learnt from the Covid experience.
- 5.4 Cabinet have taken time out to reflect on their priorities and the Vision workshops ² will inform whether these remain the right priorities and what programmes of activity can best help deliver them. Prior to the pandemic the City was in a strong economic position to drive forward an ambitious economic programme. The Council needs to do what it can to minimise the economic harm of the pandemic and to remain ambitious in what it is trying to do to support the local economy.
- 5.5 The council has an important role to play in engaging with partners on the recovery of the city. The impact of the virus will be significant and so we should work together for the benefit and overall wellbeing of our communities. On this basis the Cabinet are represented along with other agencies on a 'Partners Board' that has been established to guide the Vision work. 'Shaping Portsmouth' is represented on the Board and is working closely with the council to help drive local economic recovery, including setting up 'Futures Together' providing a collaborative framework. The Deputy-Leader and key officers are represented on the Futures Together Board. The Futures Together Board have identified some draft objectives and these are detailed below:
- Ignite the Portsmouth business activity and support using current analysis in order to take advantage of the UK economy re-opening.
 - Ensure that Portsmouth schools needing support from Businesses get access to those resources.
 - Support the Portsmouth charity and not-for-profit sector with any required and available resources and mentors.
 - Coordinate our Communications so that our citizens & businesses have the best access to knowledge and information.
- 5.6 The Government have made it clear that they see investment in infrastructure as an important way to aid national economic recovery. They have already asked LEPs to identify "shovel ready" projects that support green growth and housebuilding. PCC has submitted a prioritised list of potential schemes to the LEP. It is likely that there will be further funding opportunities and on this basis, alongside our Vision, it may be sensible to have a clear set of investment schemes that will support recovery and rejuvenation in the city.

² <https://imagineportsmouth.co.uk/citizen-conference/>

6. Role of the Local Resilience Forum

- 6.1 Finally, it is worth noting the role of the Local Resilience Partnership in responding to the 'critical incident'. In addition to directing the overarching emergency response to Covid, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has also developed information and guidance to assist the multi-agency work on recovery. The agreed objectives for the LRF Recovery Co-ordination Group are attached as Appendix 3. The council is an active part of the LRF and is engaging with their recovery plans. Important to note is that a clear principle of subsidiarity has been adopted by the LRF Recovery Co-ordination Group, especially with regard to community engagement work which is seen as the proper remit of the directly elected local authorities across its geography. However, as with the outbreak plans, there are benefits of working together on themes that cross local authority boundaries such as economic growth and sub-regional infrastructure. As such, we can build on this work in developing our tailored, city-specific responses.
- 6.2 As with all local authorities in the LRF area, we are establishing a Community Engagement group and will make sure that the local community voice is heard through the recovery process.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 As we move from response to recovery we need to consider what the city's and our organisational priorities are for recovery, how we can best engage with partners and support those that have been most disproportionately affected by Covid-19 and the lockdown.

8. Impact assessment

- 8.1 A preliminary Impact Assessment has been completed

9. Legal Implications/City Solicitor comments

- 9.1 The current reaction to the Covid situation as managed through adherence to Central Government Guidance, statutory enactment and sensible planning on the part of all is such that there have, at this juncture, been no failings in key delivery of statutory obligations. It is noteworthy that there has been no functional challenge to anything undertaken by the Authority in the sense of either complaint or legal challenge as to the rationale of any decisions or indeed the implementation of such decisions.
- 9.2 Additional to the above there is a clear understanding of the key requirements associated with the Authority discharging its statutory and common law obligations with respect to its workforce and invitees to the premise and out post sites owned and run by the Authority.
- 9.3 The reaction of the Authority is such that there has been meaningful engagement with the Public Sector Equality Duty with clear consideration of

the impact of Covid within the context of those groupings within our community that have protected characteristics - particular efforts have been made with respect to the elderly, disabled and the BAME groups. The chances of a functional challenge based upon any omission upon the part of the Authority is remote.

9.4 The above said, there is a need to maintain the current focus as clearly there will be ongoing challenges to the current enforced situation. However, given that the Authority has clearly engaged and is performing well there is a good position on the ground to respond to any challenges by way of complaint or indeed put upon a formalised legal basis if and when they are made.

10. Director of Finance and Resources comments

10.1 The overall financial implications associated with the Council's response to the pandemic are currently estimated to cost £32m which after £12m of Government support will leave the Council with a financial shortfall of £20m to address. A further funding package from Government has recently been announced but the detailed allocations to the Council have yet to be received. The extent to which this will reduce the £20m shortfall therefore is not yet known although it is expected that the Council will still have a significant financial shortfall to manage.

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Standing up Services Template

Appendix 2 - Indicative timeline for resumption of Council Service

Appendix 3 - The LRF Recovery Coordinating Group Objectives

Signed by:

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DAVID WILLIAMS
Chief Executive
Portsmouth City Council

Standing up Services - Decision Template for Gold Command

Introduction.

Directorates are asked to review all services across all priority areas to maintain a dynamic assessment of partially or fully closed services or those that are being delivered in a different way. As COVID continues, directorates will need to adjust the delivery of services recognising community impact and any changes in their prioritisation, as the risks and impact changes.

Whilst not to belittle a traumatic event, we must remember that we are doing this from a position where Portsmouth, for many reasons, has a relatively low infection rate, and has demonstrated good adherence to social distancing. We should not throw this away, but do need to take measures to support the most vulnerable and impacted by the lockdown measures, including young people and the economy.

Our management of ceasing, limiting and standing up services has been in place since the 17th March. PCC is currently operating at a business critical setting ensuring that it is providing critical and essential services. In business continuity terms these are classed as critical (level 1 services). Following a recent review a number of other high, medium and low services (priority 2, 3 and 4) have already been set up. A number of services are being delivered in different ways.

Role of Corporate Business Continuity Group (AKA PCC Gold Command)

PCC Gold provides the mechanism to review and agree re-prioritisation of service delivery. This has direct political as well as professional input. Directors are asked to bring to Gold proposals to stand up service delivery. Gold will provide a check and balance to the decision and ensure consistency in approach across all PCC services; we shouldn't assume that what we stood down is necessarily a priority for standing back up. There is an opportunity to shift resources across the organisation and this process enables that to happen.

The template provides the mechanism to enable Gold to be engaged in a consistent way. Directors are asked to consider:

- What is the trigger and need to stand the service back up? e.g. HMG guidance has changed (and we agree to follow it) or the impact of closure is too significant
- In what sense are we looking to stand the service back up e.g. to start a service back up that has not been operating or moving from a virtual setting to a physically open setting?
- Is there an alternative way to deliver the service to achieve the same result? How should the service be restarted?
- Is there demonstrable evidence to support the consequence of not standing back up the service? Is it need, financial or symbolic?
- Are there sufficient resources available to deliver the service within existing cash limits? What is the opportunity cost?
- Can support services support any implications for standing the service back up? Where appropriate this should engagement with the City Helpdesk so that they are aware of changes in the delivery of services.

- Have Comms been involved to explore whether there is a need to communicate the service changes, and if so who this needs to be communicated to - this will be a pre-requisite for gold approval?
- Have you approved the appropriate risk assessment and have you engaged with Public Health re infection risks?
- Are there any PPE or office/space requirements and are these understood, supported and can they be met?
- Has engagement with Members and/or partners occurred before the proposal is presented to Gold?
- What communications will be required to support the implementation?

Bringing forward requests to PCC Gold Command

The Director is asked to inform the PCC Gold Command Chair of the intention to bring a request to stand up services - these can be fed through via Paddy May. This will enable a view to be taken as to whether a specific Gold agenda item is required (e.g. if there is a wider impact of the decision or it is a high priority public facing service) or whether it can be approved without this.

At Gold, the director, or their representative, will be asked to provide a summary which outlines clearly the rationale, evidence and confirmation that the plan for implementation is ready including any key dates or outstanding preparation.

The Gold chair will guide Gold to a decision on the request. In the event that additional resources are required, or the discussion creates additional points to consider, the decision may be delayed pending the resource investigation / additional work.

Any decision of Gold will be formally recorded and the Gold Chair will update Group Leaders (Wednesdays) and All Members (Fridays). Directors are responsible for the implementation of the decision and any further Cabinet engagement as part of the pre-work and the implementation.

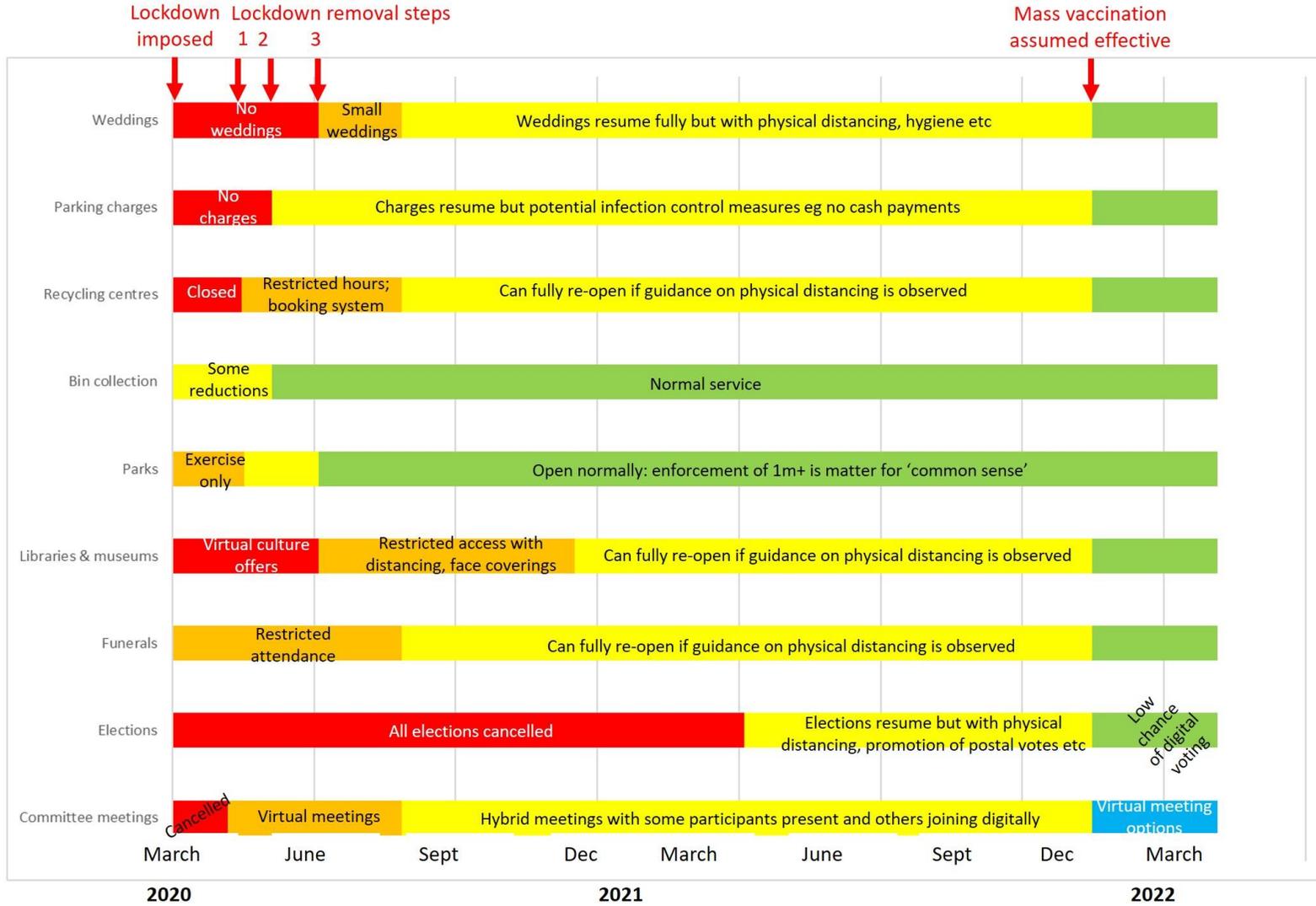
Standing up Services Pro-Forma

Directorate Name		
Service looking to be stood up		
Proposed date for standing-up?		
Brief description of normal service operation		
What is current state of service? e.g. not running / running virtually / partially running etc. (please describe briefly)		
What is the rationale for wanting to set the service back up again? What would happen if service wasn't stood back-up?		
Briefly explain how you wish to set the service back up?		
Have you undertaken a risk assessment? Please confirm that you have engaged with Public Health to check there are no additional requirements to be considered re infection risks where appropriate?	YES / NO	(If YES please confirm that there is sufficient mitigation in place to respond to the risks and that public health are content with plans)
Are there any PPE requirements?	YES / NO	(if yes please confirm that appropriate supplies are in place via ppe@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)
Are there any office requirements?	YES / NO	(if yes please confirm you have engaged with Facilities Management and have their approval)
Do you have the resources in your cash limit to set up the service as planned and run it as planned?	YES / NO	(Please quantify and explain how you wish to fund this)
Have you engaged with support services to ensure that they can support any implications?	YES / NO	(please highlight any issues discussed)
Please confirm you have engaged with Comms to explore what Comms may be needed?		(please highlight any issues discussed)
Have you engaged with Members (including portfolio holder) - and partners (if appropriate)?	YES / NO	(if YES please highlight any issues discussed - if NO please explain why not?)
Submitted to Gold Chair	DD/MM/YYYY	

Discussed with Gold Chair	DD/MM/YYYY	
Send to Gold for discussion?	YES / NO	Reason:
Decision of Gold		
Signed by Director / Gold Chair	Director	Gold Chair

Indicative timeline for setting up Council Services

Council



LRF Recovery Coordinating Group - Objectives

1. Help HIOW communities and businesses to recover and move forward as speedily as possible through an effective, collaborative, and well-communicated multi-agency response led by the local authorities
2. Develop and maintain an impact assessment for the COVID 19 pandemic in HIOW
3. Develop a concise, balanced, and affordable (whatever that means now) recovery action plan
4. Ensure a system is in place for the monitoring and protection of public health and that plans are in place to manage response alongside recovery (second wave or non-covid-19 incident)
5. Critical services including our utilities and transport networks continue to be supported to be supported and maintained
6. A pro-active and integrated framework of support to businesses is established
7. Help those traumatised by their experience of the impact of COVID 19 on themselves, their families and their loved ones address their trauma (and grieve their loss)
8. Maintain and enhance confidence in the resilience of public agencies to respond to civil emergencies
9. Celebrate and commemorate the contributions made to support our communities through the incident and give the public opportunities to express their appreciation
10. Collaborate to help re-build those critical services most ravaged by the incident and reflect on future prioritisation
11. Co-ordinate environmental protection and recovery issues arising
12. Information and media management of the recovery process is co-ordinated
13. Establish effective protocols for public involvement and liaison and restore public engagement in all levels of the democratic process.
14. Cherish and implement the learning from the incident, including capturing best practice and reflect on future priorities in the light of collective experience.