

## **CABINET**

**DATE OF MEETING:** 1 July 2021

**TITLE OF REPORT:** NEXT STEPS IN COVID-19 RECOVERY

**Report of:** Joint Chief Executive

**Cabinet Member:** Leader of the Council

### **I PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This is the fourth report to Members providing an update on the work undertaken by the Council in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Previous reports have been considered by Cabinet in July 2020, October 2020 and January 2021.

1.2 Whilst work progresses at pace on vaccinating the population, it is important to note that the situation remains live, with restrictions still in place.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Cabinet:

- Notes the updates on the Recovery Plan as outlined in Appendix 1
- Notes and endorses the final decisions taken by the Joint Chief Executive under emergency provisions within the Constitution

### **2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum formally declared Coronavirus a major incident. Hart District Council evoked its Emergency Plan and in accordance to the Constitution, enabled decision making under emergency provisions.

2.2 The Council had to fundamentally change during this period

- In the way it provided its services, needing to work remotely under the lockdown provisions and
- Which services it delivered, with new services being delivered from provision of food, medicines and care for those shielding, to business grants to local businesses.

2.3 Recognising the importance of considering recovery processes alongside response to a civil emergency, Cabinet approved the Council's Recovery Plans in October 2020. At the beginning of November (5<sup>th</sup>), England began its second lockdown. This was followed by a series of tiered lockdowns during December but ultimately the Government decision was to undertake a third lockdown in January, with a phased release from the lockdown, from March onwards.

- 2.4 Despite the resource implications, the Council has continued to
- Continue to provide business as usual services to our residents
  - Deliver on our ongoing requirement to the response phase, most recently delivering the Lateral Flow Testing station and then supporting the localised testing for residents in GU51 and GU52 for a variant of concern
  - Progressed many of the key actions arising from the Covid-19 Recovery Plan.
- 2.5 This paper was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> June who noted progress without further recommendations or commentary to Cabinet.

### **3 END OF THE MAJOR INCIDENT**

- 3.1 As outlined in the earlier reports, all decisions taken during a major incident is recorded formally in an Emergency Planning Log. These are then reported to Cabinet to formally endorse as soon as reasonably practical after the decisions have been taken.
- 3.2 To aid visibility of this process, details of emergency decisions taken have been reported verbally to Cabinet at the meetings of February and March 2021. This also reflected the consultation undertaken with Cabinet or Group Leaders prior to these decisions being taken.
- 3.3 On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, the Monitoring Officer formally noted that the Council had stepped down from Major Incident and that further work would continue on Recovery, but that emergency provisions within the Constitution were no longer being used by the Council.
- 3.4 Having reported all decisions up to September in the report to Cabinet in October 2020, the final decisions taken under emergency provisions are shown below

Date	Decision
24 <sup>th</sup> September	New legal requirement to provide social isolation grants to those on low incomes, agreed we would look to deliver this internally until we were able to safely hand over to our external contractor
6 <sup>th</sup> October	Political Group Leaders approved the discretionary payment policy of the Social Isolation Payment scheme
5 <sup>th</sup> November	Second lockdown started – Council's front reception closed to residents Further to a letter from HCC Public Health, advised Countryside team that volunteering events cancelled throughout lockdown
12 <sup>th</sup> November	Following an update to snow emergency plan in light of Covid-19 Cabinet confirmed via Teams their approval for the purchase of a new plough/spinner (capital cost £7.5K) to increase snow shifting capacity for our own purposes and to help resolve any issues arising at vaccination sites.

16 <sup>th</sup> November	Additional Restrictions Grant provided by the Government of £1.3million was a 'one off' funding pot and would be needed to cover both the current and future lockdowns and any provision for economic recovery. Agreed with Leader and Deputy Leader that the spending would broadly be on the basis of £0.5m before Christmas for the current lockdown, £0.5M after Christmas for any future lockdown and the remainder for recovery objectives.
30 <sup>th</sup> November	Discussed and agreed with Political Group Leaders that the HDC Funding for Covid Enforcement would, in accordance with the grant criteria be used for <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhanced Environmental Health resources/capacity (subject to availability) and</li> <li>2. Enhanced Communications associated with Covid-19</li> </ol> <p>The Joint CEx reserved the position to put in place Covid marshals at the Edenbrook Bike track further to Police feedback regarding the high level of use and the requirements of social distancing.</p>
30 <sup>th</sup> November	Discussed and agreed with Political Group Leaders that the HDC funding for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable would be used as follows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £9,531 to Hart Voluntary Action to support current lockdown including Christmas cover for the Hart Response Hub</li> <li>• £30,000 to support a variety of activities focussed on the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Delivery of a Home Help Support service to help those in the CEV group with cleaning and domestic help</li> <li>○ Grant funding to Covid Groups and Parishes who have been supporting their CEV's</li> <li>○ Support for those digitally excluded</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> December	Agreed between S151, Monitoring Officer, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services and Head of Paid Service that due to the unknown timing of the arrival of funding for Covid business grants, there is a need to increase the Counterparty limit with Barclays Bank up to 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2021
15 <sup>th</sup> December	Agreement for Environmental Health to appoint a Covid Enforcement Support Officer for three months (further to agreement by GLAM on 30 <sup>th</sup> November)
17 <sup>th</sup> December	Advised GLAM that further to ongoing concerns from the Police, that a Covid Marshal would be used at Edenbrook Bike Track
24 <sup>th</sup> December	Hart is now in Tier 4 following announcement at 3pm, Political Group Leaders advised that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hart and Frogmore Leisure Centres must close as must Edenbrook Bike Track</li> <li>• We have received a request from NHS for overnight help with those discharged from hospital in an emergency</li> </ul>
5 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Prime Minister announces further lockdown Political Group Leaders advised that

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front line reception closed and website updated</li> <li>• Internal Audit resources reallocated to Business Grants (awaiting guidance on latest tranche) Wokingham will provide internal audit resources during this time</li> </ul>
24 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	In consultation with the Portfolio Holder, agreed an amendment to the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant funding for those premises which are tenanted (so not the business rates account holder) where the landlord themselves cannot apply for an exemption (because they are not the business operator)
25 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Further to a competitive quotation process, a specialist professional has been appointed to help support the Council in making informed decisions associated with our Leisure Centre control. The costs is £4,000 over a four month period
26 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Hampshire County Council has requested locations for Lateral Flow Testing Centres. An email has been sent to Parish and Town Councils but recognising the urgency, Hart District Council has offered the use of the Council Offices as location for the Lateral Flow Testing Scheme.
4 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Further to discussion with the Political Group Leaders, Hart District Council signed a lease to Richmond Practice Surgery (on behalf of Fleet Primary Care Network) for the delivery of a vaccination centre at the Harlington, including the provision of up to 20 car parking spaces within Gurkha Square Car Park.
11 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	HDC to confirm that no events excepting those within a licence agreement with Fleet Town Council for the Saturday Market are to be permitted on Gurkha Square to ensure its continued availability for the vaccination centre (in the face of requests from third parties for the use of the car park for events in anticipation of the end of lockdown)
1 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	Discussed and agreed with Political Group Leaders that in the face of ongoing concerns around the sustainability of businesses across the Hart area, the original split of Additional Restrictions Grant would move more funding from recovery into the current phase to support struggling businesses
1 <sup>st</sup> April 2021	Portfolio Holder agreed the discretionary restart grant policy in anticipation of the exit out of lockdown.
1 <sup>st</sup> April 2021	Council moves out of Major Incident, Emergency Planning Log closed

3.5 As part of the response phase and further to the information set out above, the Council has

- Between February and April 2021 carried out 1,531 Lateral Flow Tests on our residents and provided a further 1,153 home testing kits
- Allocated over £15,700 through our Hardship Funds to those in greatest need
- Helped over 700 clinically extremely vulnerable and vulnerable residents with food supplies, medication or friendly catch ups to prevent social isolation

- Spoken to 3,200 business to provide advice, guidance and support to help with covid compliance
- Up to the end of May, paid over £24.5m work of funding and processed 3,758 grants

3.6 Whilst we had hoped for the lifting of restrictions on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, we are all now aware of the extension of these restrictions in the face of further increases in Covid-19 cases due to the Delta variant. Faced with this work continues in certain areas such as

- the most recent community testing for a variant of concern for residents in the areas of GU51 and GU52 (Fleet, Church Crookham and Crookham Village) has been a salient reminder that the situation remains dynamic.
- The Council is still accepting applications for the restart grant. Indeed on the 16<sup>th</sup> June emails were sent to all businesses who have not yet applied for the main scheme which we believe are eligible, encouraging the 113 businesses to apply by the deadline of the 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- We await information from the Government whether there will be any other business grant support delivered by local councils (or deadlines extended) as a result of the extension of restrictions now open until the end of July.
- The Hart Response Hub remains in place, providing help and support to those that need to self-isolate

## **4 PROGRESS ON RECOVERY**

4.1 The Recovery Plan, agreed by Cabinet in October was based around five key workstreams;

- Community Recovery
- Economic Recovery
- Financial Recovery (internal)
- Reallocation of Road Space
- Revitalise Hart (internal)

4.2 Each workstream had a number of actions. Appendix 1 provides an update on the progress of each of the actions in relation to timeframes indicated in October.

4.3 Appendix 1 identifies that the majority of actions remain on track, with a number now completed including:

- Preparing and launching the Hart for Business Website Preparation database for businesses and to promote business activity
- Launching the Virtual job club in February 2021 which achieved its first success for participants, securing employment. The Hart for Business newsletter and social media has been promoting apprenticeships and kickstarts

- Launching the 18-30 Campaign and The Walk this way trail to encourage and support residents to be physically active with a particular focus on those most at risk of inactivity
- Completing the Business centre refresh enabling the council to set up and manage the Lateral flow testing Centre operation which carried out 1,531 Lateral Flow Tests over the course of its operation
- Supporting and opening the Community Pantry on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March. Hart are continuing to look at new opportunities to help the community pantry grow and promote the pantry to the district
- Funding provided by Hart and distributed by HVA has provided grant funding to support to voluntary and community organisations to support community recovery. Community Connections grants totalled £8,125 with projects funded including:
  1. Daisy Chain Café - memory café running events to encourage members to come back to face-to-face group
  2. Yateley United Football Club - expansion of walking football and creation of inclusive football group
  3. MHA Communities - increased 1-2-1 support including home visits and walking buddies to help people build confidence to come back to groups
  4. RHL - engaging those who are isolated with 1-2-1 support to help them connect with community activities

#### 4.4 Other key achievements over the last months include:

- Continuing to collate key business and employment statistics which has facilitated the creation and publication of Economic Dashboard updated monthly with key statistics to aid decision making
- Awarding 21 grants, totalling over £5,458, to help community and voluntary groups safely restart face-to-face activity, and a further 15 grants to support the community emergency response
- Work continuing to coordinate COVID comms messages from Cabinet Office, PHE, NHS, HCC, HDC service areas, website and vaccination comms CCG & NHS. We are Currently supporting Hampshire County Council with its targeted community testing for GU51 and GU52 postcodes through our communication channels
- Workshops held to promote town/village centre activity to ensure footfall continues and grows and existing enterprises thrive and new ones are created
- Funding awarded to Fleet Phoenix to support delivery of weekly support sessions for junior school age children who are exposed to domestic abuse at home
- Work underway to support HVA to develop a social and therapeutic horticulture project at the new Edenbrook Community Garden to engage residents most at risk of social isolation and exclusion

#### 4.5 The Council is also progressing with the Revitalise Hart workstream, achieving a number of key milestones including:

1. Office reconfiguration to ensure the council is able to offer staff a covid compliant workspace. This includes temperature monitors upon signing into the building, a hot desk booking system

2. The roll out of the Employee Assist programme
  3. Implementing the working from home concept successfully and continuing to develop the Agile working policy
- 4.6 The Council has also created a 'Here for Hart' Working Group, working with a wide range of community and voluntary organisations. A recent workshop was attended by over 60 people/agencies from including representatives from Housing Associations, HVA, schools, town and parish councils, Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group and a wide range of other voluntary sector groups.
- 4.7 Building on this, and our own substantial ambitions for Community Recovery, as set out in the adopted Action Plan, the 'Hear for Hart' Working Group has been working on a 'Supporting Communities' plan. This plan goes beyond the work of the Council, bringing together evidence of need, action and activity from across the key stakeholders we are working with.
- 4.8 The Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on the inequalities of health outcomes which has been a catalyst for the plan and therefore tackling inequalities and created connected and resilient communities are the focus of the plan.
- 4.9 This document is a draft document and clearly will evolve, develop and deepen our understanding over time as the 'Here for Hart' Working Group finds new opportunities to work together collaboratively and find additionality from a shared approach. This draft document can be found in Appendix 2.

## **5 GOVERNANCE, RESOURCE AND FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 It is clear that Covid-19 has had a major impact on the services it delivers and the projects and ambitions of both the Corporate Plan and Hart 2040 Vision during the past year.
- 5.2 It remains a major part of the Councils activity as reflected upon in the Service Plans for 2020/2021 adopted by Cabinet in July 2020 and the most recent services plans for 2021/2022 adopted by Cabinet in April. The continuation of this work, alongside business as usual requirements and some of the Councils ambitious projects, does continue to place a strain on the Council's resources which will need to be measured and monitored as the year progresses.
- 5.3 This strain has been reflected in a number of ways including
- increased workloads,
  - impact on health and wellbeing of staff
  - variable productivity with some areas vastly improved and others decreased
  - the inability in some areas to take annual leave.

5.4 Financial implications of the Covid pandemic has been reported regularly and in some detail to Members and this will continue with outturn reporting.

## **6 ACTION**

- 6.1 Subject to any recommendations from Cabinet,
- the decisions taken under emergency provisions will be noted and recording concluded.
  - Work will continue on Covid-19 recovery, with many elements of that work being entrained into 'business as usual' operation with reporting via the Councils standardised performance reporting mechanisms.

CONTACT: Patricia Hughes – Joint Chief Executive  
EXTENSION: 4450 EMAIL: [patricia.hughes@hart.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.hughes@hart.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Recovery Plan

Appendix 2 - Supporting Communities – a plan to promote community recovery and tackle inequalities in Hart 2021-2023

## Appendix 1 – Recovery Plan – Workstream Action Plans

Community Recovery				
Activity	Expected Outcome	Update	Next Steps	RAG
<p>Local insight and evidence of need: Bring together hard data and local intelligence to maintain an up-to-date picture of the need and impacts (including socioeconomic and wellbeing) within communities, to inform our community recovery priorities</p>	<p>The Council and our partners will have a good understanding of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities or specific groups within communities most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 situation or most 'at-risk' of negative impact</li> <li>• Trends over time in wellbeing including socio-economic wellbeing</li> </ul> <p>Where/how to focus our resources to help those most in need and address disproportionate impacts on specific groups</p>	<p>Item now forms part of service line activity</p>	<p>Further updates will be provided via service plan monitoring reports</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Communication and signposting: Establish a communications framework/plan and coordinate with partners to cascade messages to residents about how they can stay well (over and above specific COVID-19 guidance), and signpost residents to available support including psychological, financial,</p>	<p>Residents are supported to take steps to keep themselves well and know what services can support them if needed</p>	<p>18-30 campaign and Walk This Way trail launched</p>	<p>Support national campaigns including:  Carers Week Men's health week Loneliness awareness week</p>	<p>Target completion date: November 2021</p>

employment, housing and wider wellbeing				
<p>Voluntary and community sector capacity: Enhance and promote support for the voluntary and community sector, such as to enable community activity to restart safely and to sustain or build upon community activity established in response to COVID-19 where appropriate</p>	<p>Resilience and capacity of voluntary and community sector Community activity restarts safely resulting in improved wellbeing and a reduction in loneliness and isolation in communities</p>	<p>£10,000 Community Connections grant scheme launched to support projects which aim to reduce social isolation, improve wellbeing and help rebuild confidence, for residents considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or Clinically Vulnerable under Government guidance. Funding allocated to 4 projects (£8,125) to date and 1 further application being processed.</p> <p>HVA is proactively reaching out to voluntary and community groups to understand their current situation and any support needs. A grant of £10,000 has been provided to HVA</p>	<p>Continue to administer remaining Community Connections funding and top up the fund with an additional £10,000.</p> <p>HVA to continue engagement and support to groups including administering small grants and other support to enable community activity to restart</p>	<p>Target completion date: June 2021</p>

		to enable them to support emerging needs of groups, particularly those working with vulnerable groups. HVA also continue to administer remaining £3,000 of grant pot to help community activity to re-start safely (launched in August 2020)		
Addressing local inequalities: Use the insight gathered in action 1 to develop and deliver a small number of targeted initiatives to address the impacts on specific geographies or groups most affected by the COVID-19 situation	Support is available to those most in need of it and there is a reduction in inequalities within the district. The council has enhanced relationships with specific communities/population groups	Your Way Forward social media campaign delivered January - March 2021, aimed at connecting 18-30 year olds with support for a range of issues from mental health to money and housing. Delivered via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Paid for posts on Facebook and Instagram resulted in an average 1,500 people reached and 128 engagements	Develop next phase of Your Way Forward campaign - possible focus on money and debt  Hold workshop with partners in Fleet and Yateley Primary Care Network areas and identify actions we can take together.  Hold workshop with partners to	Target completion date: September 2021  This work is ongoing and likely to extend beyond September 2021

		<p>per post (likes, reactions, comments, shares, link clicks). Your Way Forward web page had been visited over 2,000 as at 11 March.</p> <p>Workshop planned with partners in Fleet and Yateley Primary Care Network areas to explore working together to address inequalities in mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Initiatives launched to support residents experiencing financial difficulties and unemployment including Community Pantry and Hart into Employment.</p>	<p>explore how we might work together to enable more people living with long term conditions or disabilities to be physically active and access local activities</p> <p>Continue to promote and support development of Community Pantry and Hart into Employment</p>	
<p>Making it easier to access support and services: Make it easier for residents to access the support they need, when they need it, by enabling more residents to use digital</p>	<p>Residents can more easily access services and support including through digital technology. Increasing digital inclusion also resulting in more residents being able to</p>	<p>Community hubs exploration underway for medium term solutions (for development in</p>	<p>Item now forms part of service line activity and further updates will be provided via service plan</p>	<p>Target completion date: November 2021</p>

technology and exploring opportunities for the council to collaborate with other community services to have a stronger physical presence in communities, such as through co-location in community hubs	connect with friends, family and the wider community through digital channels	2021/22) and engage key partners	monitoring reports	
--	---	----------------------------------	--------------------	--

<b>Economic Recovery</b>				
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>RAG</b>
1. Procurement of a study on Economic Recovery from Covid-19	Report to set out what actions Hart can take to ensure the Districts economy recovers from the various impacts resulting from Covid-19	Now applying the recommendations in other workstreams	N/A	Completed
2. Collation of key business and employment statistics	To ensure that the Council has up to date relevant data to inform its decisions and actions in relation to economic recovery	Creation and publication of Economic Dashboard updated monthly with key statistics	Item now forms part of service line activity and further updates will be provided via service plan monitoring reports	Completed
3a. Prepare and launch new Hart for Business website	To promote Hart District as a location for business re-location and growth.	Website launched. The new Hart for Business website captures and promotes living in Hart and all its benefits and includes a list of employment sites included on the new Hart for Business website	None	Completed
3b. Promotion of Hart District as a place to work/live/visit	High quality promotional material in various formats (video; adverts; leaflets/guides; phone app etc) to promote attract companies/people to the District	Comparison on packages undertaken. Continue to contact different commercial agents and explore mechanisms for promoting website	Item now forms part of service line activity and further updates will be provided via service plan monitoring reports	Completed

<p>4. Establish a programme of engagement with businesses in Hart</p>	<p>To have a better understanding on how businesses (large and small) have been impacted by COVID-19 and what their short/medium/long terms plans are (also considering Brexit) and how can Hart assist</p>	<p>Collating feedback from meetings held to date.</p>	<p>Item now forms part of service line activity and further updates will be provided via service plan monitoring reports</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>5. Establish a central database of businesses operating in Hart and a business premises directory</p>	<p>To have an up to date business database of who operates and where in the District. To include properties available to rent/purchase for companies wishing to grow/relocate</p>	<p>We continue to collate business data, this will provide up to date information to inform which businesses to target and to be able to monitor a dynamic situation. Communication with commercial agents will continue.</p>	<p>Item now forms part of service line activity and further updates will be provided via service plan monitoring reports</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>6. Widen scope of existing employment and skills advice to support the rise in unemployment and lack of employment opportunities</p>	<p>To ensure that Hart can offer as much support as possible to those looking for work and training</p>	<p>Virtual job club launched in February 2021 with a small initial cohort and has achieved its first success will 1 participant securing employment. The Hart for Business newsletter and social media has been promoting</p>	<p>Item now forms part of service line activity and further updates will be provided via service plan monitoring reports</p>	<p>Completed</p>

		<p>apprenticeships and kickstarts – there are currently 84 open kickstart placements across Hart &amp; Rushmoor, with 4 of those within the Council. There are 14 live Apprenticeship vacancies within Hart with 3 due to be advertised in May within the Council. These give vital opportunities to young people, who are still our largest age group on UC</p>		
7. Preparation of Town Centre Strategies/Action Plans	To promote town/village centre activity to ensure footfall continues and grows and existing enterprises thrive and new ones are created	<p>Workshop held. Attendees included Fleet, Odiham, Blackwater, Yateley and Hook. Purpose was to encourage each parish to think about the future of their town/village and how working with an expert could help develop plans and take action. HDC will have no formal involvement</p>	Reminders to be sent out to Parish and Town Councils to assess what interest there may be post local elections.	<p>Target completion date: December 2021</p>

		in procuring or preparing the action plans although may be requested to attend working groups etc.		
--	--	--	--	--

Reallocating Road Space in Response to COVID-19					
Activity:		Expected Outcome	Update	Next Steps	RAG
Fleet Town Centre - Pedestrianisation of Fleet Road		To expand/enhance 'safe space' within the centre to facilitate social distancing To increase outdoor space for shops, cafes and restaurants to enable social distancing Provide safe space within the centre to hold markets, events and other outdoor activities, which will increase the attractiveness of the centre To increase consumer confidence in the centre	No update since January 2021 report. Reported updated to O&S February 2021. Fleet Road was pedestrianised over the summer period to facilitate social distancing within the town. The road has now been reopened with on-street parking bays closed to continue to facilitate social distancing.	None	Completed
Enhancing pedestrian and cycle provision	Enhanced cycling provision between Fleet Railway Station and Fleet Town Centre	To enhance the existing cycling lane on Fleet Road between Fleet Railway Station and Fleet Town Centre in order to promote cycling along this key transport corridor and facilitate social distancing	No update since January 2021 report. Reported updated to O&S February 2021. The Council is working with HCC to take a more strategic approach to improve cycling routes across the district, including this route. This work has now been incorporated into the Council's Green Grid project.	Workstream has been incorporated into the Council's Green Grid project.	Completed

	Safe routes to school	To identify improvements to existing routes to school to promote walking and cycling and facilitate social distancing	No update since January 2021 report. Reported updated to O&S February 2021. The Council is working with HCC to improve existing and create new walking/cycling routes to school – This work has now been incorporated into the Council’s Green Grid project.	Workstream has been incorporated into the Council’s Green Grid project.	Completed
	Key routes across the district	To identify improvements to existing routes to promote walking and cycling and facilitate social distancing	No update since January 2021 report. Reported updated to O&S February 2021. The Council is working with HCC to improve existing and create new walking/cycling routes within the district – This work has now been incorporated into the Council’s Green Grid project.	Workstream has been incorporated into the Council’s Green Grid project.	Completed

<b>Revitalise Hart</b>				
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>RAG</b>
HR & Wellbeing - Update and add new policy and procedure documents. Including looking into flexible and agile working.	To bring our policy's up-to-date and reflect the 'new normal'	Agile working policy drafted and review of other policies ongoing.	Policy review, discussion and consultation.	Target completion date: December 2021
HR & Wellbeing – Introduce an employee assistance programme. Training for managers on how to deal with change, supporting staff remotely. Remote working training ect	To make sure all staff, managers and HOS are offered the right training to help them transition in to the 'new normal', and have the right support to make this a success	PAM Assist Employee Assistance Program (EAP) chosen as provider. Launched in March 2021	None	Completed
HR & Wellbeing – To make sure we have a clear communication plan for staff and councillors. To make sure key conversations are being had in 121s on what to expect and support is offered and reasonable adjustments are made and DSE carried out.	To make sure staff and councillors are update with changes within the organisation.	Manager training carried out to support key conversations between managers and employees & Member DSE assessments carried out	Incorporated into service action plan as BAU activity. No further reporting required	Completed
Digital & IT - Telephony replacement	Develop a unified communication platform to provide a cloud-based solution for phone, video and chat capability on any device at any location	Infrastructure work completed May 2021	None. Further updates will be actioned in due course	Completed
Digital & IT - Website review	Review the current website for user experience, content and functionality. Evaluate hosting and support relationship with	SLT reviewed business case. PID and project plan now in draft for review	Discovery phase to commence with initial engagement	Target completion date: December 2021

	current provider and re-tender. Include migration from Drupal 7 to new platform		across service lines scheduled	
Digital & IT - Accessibility regulations	Test the site to ensure that it meets new accessibility regulations. Embed a new monitoring culture with content editors. Review role of content editors and editorial process across site	Accessibility threshold reached	Ongoing review required. Further Updates will be made via service plan monitoring	Completed
Digital & IT - modern.gov implementation	Replace the existing manual process in Committee Services for issuing agendas, reports and minutes with a fully configured web-based report management system	Phase 1 completed and implemented across all members and staff. Phase 2 underway.	Phase 2 training to be scheduled and rolled out	Target completion date: August 2021
Digital & IT - Office 365 application education incl. SharePoint	Provide refresher SharePoint training programme for members to ensure application is being used correctly and efficiently	Training completed	None	Completed
Digital & IT - Self-service portal review	Review the different customer journeys through each portal from the website and investigate how the Council can consolidate and/or improve	Data review completed monthly and now forms part of BAU service line item	None	Completed

	functionality for customers across different services			
Digital & IT - E-signatures	Implement e-signatures across the organisation, starting as a pilot in Housing for agreements and contracts	Contact agreed. Pilot completed in housing and rolled out	None	Completed
Opportunity for agencies to co-locate in the community building	To investigate the opportunity to deliver a modern flexible co-working hub, which can offer public like-minded organisations a base to work from. Need to consider future running costs and ensure the income exceeds these perceived running costs.	Work initiated and review underway	Outcome likely dependent on the work of the cross party Campus Regeneration working group.	Target completion date: December 2021
Promotion of working from home concept	To deliver successful implementation of a flexible working model to improve efficiencies as well as work-life balance across the Council. Additional potential benefits being a reduction of car traffic within close proximity to the Fleet Civic site and a reduction of fixed real estate costs.	Working from home concept successfully implemented. Agile working policy being developed.	Agile working policy to be agreed.	Target completion date: December 2021
Mobilise key Council services	A key target is improving customer engagement and a key part will be ensuring	Not yet started		Target completion date: December 2021

	those residents that face Digital/IT challenges can visit a local centre to seek help/ guidance/support.			
Repurpose the building vs moving	To investigate the opportunity to repurpose the Council offices or to relocate (within the framework of discussions through the Civic Regeneration Project). The building is too large and requires significant reconfiguration to meet current Council demands. Need to balance financial, planning, sustainability and environmental opportunities and constraints.	Early stage work	Ascertain flexible working model concept, translating into size specific requirement of office space. Workplace design can then commence to reconfigure offices	Target completion date: December 2021

# **Supporting Communities - a plan to promote community recovery and tackle inequalities in Hart 2021-2023**

## **Introduction**

The Council's vision is for Hart:

"To become the best place, community and environment to live, work and enjoy."  
(Hart District Council's Vision for 2040)

This Plan describes how we will work together with people, partners and in our places to:

1. Support communities to recover from the impacts of the pandemic
2. Better understand and tackle social and health inequalities
3. Nurture safe, supportive and inclusive communities

It brings together in one place the Council's priorities, partnerships and projects in support of these three aims. Some of this existed prior to the pandemic and some has emerged in response to the pandemic's impact on communities.

The profound impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the inequalities it has shed light on have acted as a catalyst for the Plan. The Council is committed to working with partners and communities to properly understand the impacts and together, decide the immediate and longer-term measures needed to tackle inequality and drive the best outcomes for the communities we serve.

This is a two-year Plan, to align with the Council's Equality Objectives for 2021-23. It is a 'live' document which we will continue to review and evolve so that we can be responsive to changes in local needs and make the most of new opportunities as they arise.

## **The journey so far**

The Council has worked together with a wide range of partners and community groups over many years to improve the wellbeing and welfare of communities. We have done this through:

- Partnerships such as the Hart Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Domestic Abuse Forum, and Starting and Ageing Well Networks.
- Strategies and plans such as the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Plan, and Economic Development Strategy.
- Programmes such as the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer which delivered change to help us prevent homelessness earlier and support a wider group of people.
- Support to our local voluntary and community sector including grant funding and Hart Lottery.

We will build on this strong foundation as we work with partners and communities to recover and rebuild following the pandemic.

## The Covid-19 response

During the first year of the pandemic, we worked hard with partner organisations, and the community to deliver critical services and respond to the most immediate and urgent welfare needs.

We have worked together with partners and communities in new ways, and we have strengthened and created new relationships. New groups of volunteers have emerged, and existing services and groups have adapted to deliver differently and respond to the need in their community.

The scale of the volunteer response and the dedication of volunteers and staff has been extraordinary, and we extend our gratitude to all of them. We want to continue to work with communities and partners to harness this effort as we move forward together, to support the recovery of the district.

### The response so far: March 2020 – April 2021

#### Housing

Between April 20 and March 21 our Housing team has provided:

- emergency accommodation for 42 people
- more than £21,500 of grants to people experiencing hardship
- housing advice and assistance to 408 households.

#### Community grants

In partnership with Hart Voluntary Action (HVA) we have:

- Awarded over £4,200 of grants to support voluntary and community response to the emergency.
- Awarded almost £5,400 of grants to support community activity to restart over the summer and early autumn, prior to the November lockdown.
- Launched the Community Connections grant scheme for projects which aim to reduce social isolation, improve wellbeing and help rebuild their confidence, for residents considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or Clinically Vulnerable under Government guidance.

#### Volunteering

- We worked in partnership with HVA to establish the Hart Response Hub (HRH) to connect people with practical support such as prescription collection and shopping. The HRH is now fully managed by HVA.
- HVA recruited 750 volunteers to support the HRH.
- From its launch in March 2020 to April 2021, the HRH handled 704 cases, with 394 of those allocated to local volunteers for ongoing support.
- Parish and Town Councils and voluntary groups have also been instrumental in recruiting and managing volunteers to support the response. It is estimated that around 1000 people have volunteered as part of the HRH and the groups connected to it. This does not include the volunteers who have given their time as part of mutual aid groups and with services such as the Foodbank.
- We worked with HVA to establish a Lateral Flow Test site at the Council offices, supported by 37 volunteers, many of them aged under 25, who

have given 370 hours between the opening at the end of February and mid-April.

- By mid-April 2021, HVA had also recruited 227 volunteers to support the vaccination programme and 32 new volunteer car drivers to help get people to their vaccination and other appointments.

### **The Covid-19 recovery journey**

The recovery journey began as the first lockdown was lifted in the summer of 2020. Since then, we have experienced two further lockdowns, but the recovery work has continued.

As the council moved from emergency response to recovery, we wanted to find out the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had had on Hart communities:

- We carried out a Covid-19 resident survey to establish the changing behaviours, concerns and aspirations of our residents.
- We set up a “community sounding board” with representation from some key partners from both community and business, who could help us understand the impact on the community and the scale of the work ahead to re-build.
- We held conversations with existing forums including the Ageing Well Network and Starting Well Network.
- We collated and analysed local and national data to provide additional evidence of impacts.
- We reached out to our own councillors with a survey to understand the impact they were seeing at an individual ward level.

We used this information to shape a high-level community recovery plan.

A separate set of issues and challenges were emerging in relation to business and so a decision was made to form two workstreams, one focussed on addressing business related issues, and a second for addressing community issues. This document relates to the latter.

We are living in highly uncertain times and the impacts of the pandemic are still emerging. We continue to review emerging evidence and engage with our partners to update our understanding of the impacts on residents and communities.

In October 2020 we formed Here for Hart - a network of partners who provide welfare and wellbeing support to Hart residents - to share local insight and help deliver coordinated action to support community recovery. In May 2021, we held the virtual Here for Hart event, bringing together a wider range of community partners to help shape the recovery plans. Attendees talked about the importance of:

- Maintaining the sense of community togetherness which has developed during the pandemic and keeping volunteers engaged.
- Raising awareness of groups and services so that Hart residents know what is available locally to support them.

- Reaching out to residents who have been most impacted by the pandemic and those who are most isolated, and the challenges this presents.
- Supporting people who have been most isolated during the pandemic to rebuild their confidence to connect with others in the community.
- Maintaining and building on the collaborations and partnerships between local groups and services developed during the pandemic.
- Keeping what has worked from new digital ways of working, while bringing back face-to-face activities and service provision which is important to so many.

### Inequalities and impacts

Hart is one of the least deprived local authority areas in England and for most people it is a happy, healthy and safe place to live. However, this is not everyone's experience. For example, there are neighbourhoods with relatively higher income deprivation compared to the rest of the district, including in Yateley East, Blackwater and Hawley and Hartley Wintney.

Affordability of housing in the district is low and lower than in Hampshire and the South East as a whole<sup>1</sup>.

31% of the population of Hart live in rural communities compared to the Hampshire average of 21.8%<sup>2</sup>. National research suggests that wealth and wellbeing in rural communities can mask small pockets of deprivation and poor health outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

According to national research, lower income neighbourhoods in Hart are more highly dispersed than in most other local authority areas in England<sup>4</sup> which may further mask the needs of lower income households.

For children and young people, living in a rural community may affect the experience of being from a lower income household:

“The experience of poverty in rural communities can be a particularly isolating one as many rural areas are predominantly affluent, and children and young people are particularly vulnerable to stigma and difference.” (Tess Ridge for Department for Work and Pensions, 2009)

Hart is in the top 20% best performing local authority areas for social mobility, ranked 29 out of 324 local authority areas in England<sup>5</sup>. Social mobility compares the chances that a child from a disadvantaged background will do well at school and get a good job. This means that children from less well-off families living in Hart have a good chance of doing well at school and progressing on to a good job. However, there are aspects of social mobility where Hart does not perform so well including:

- The percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)\* who achieve a 'good level of development' at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage (rank 251)
- The percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least a level 4 in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 (rank 177)

- The percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training one year after completing their GCSEs (rank 210)
- The percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 entering higher education by the age of 19 (rank 191).

\* A Free School Meal (FSM) is a statutory benefit available to school-aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits.

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to cause great disruption to people's lives and livelihoods, from physical and emotional wellbeing to housing, work and relationships. It has affected all of us, but it has not impacted everyone equally. Inequalities in our society have been exacerbated and exposed. Some groups have been at greater risk of contracting the virus, developing severe symptoms, or experiencing negative social, economic and wellbeing impacts from the lockdowns and other social restrictions.

These differences in people's experiences during the pandemic reflect wider structural, social and health inequalities in our society which are shaped by a complex combination of people's socio-economic circumstances, where they live, and characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender and disability (see Figure 1).

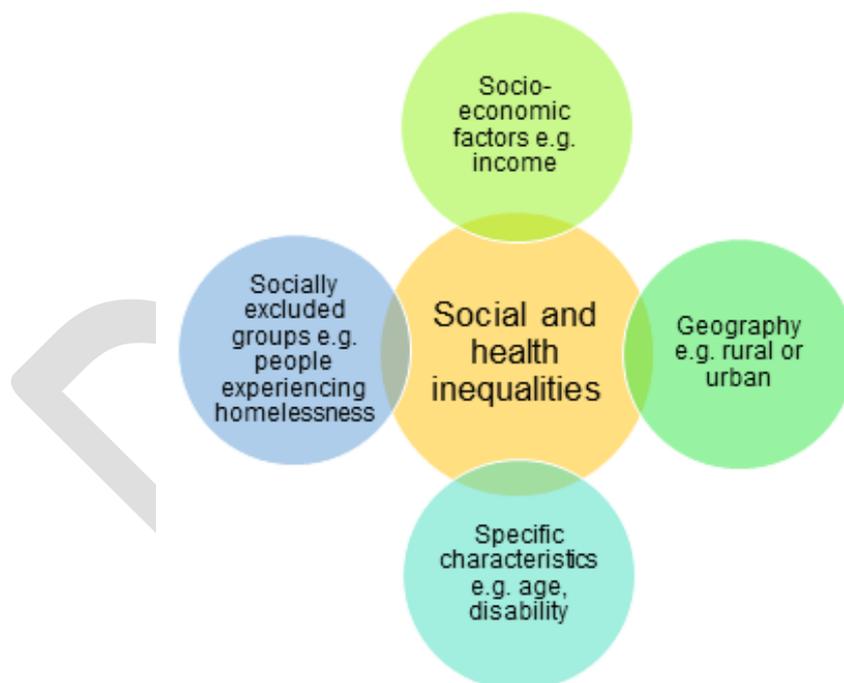


Figure 1

We have brought together available data together with feedback from local groups and services, to help us build a picture of impacts and inequalities (see below).

Community partners have told us that they are concerned about the increasing pressures on individuals and families during the pandemic and that more people are coming to them with multiple or complex issues than before the pandemic. They are also concerned about residents who are most isolated within our communities, and those who may be more reluctant or less able to seek support.

Many of the impacts highlighted below are inter-connected, for example, those experiencing financial impacts are also more likely to have experienced worsening of their mental health.

## Finances and employment

**Feedback from community partners:** Concerns about those experiencing financial difficulty and more people experiencing financial difficulty for the first time.

### Data:

In the UK, young workers, women, low paid workers, workers from an ethnic minority group, and disabled workers have been most negatively impacted economically by the pandemic<sup>6</sup>.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on employment in Hart and for Hart residents<sup>7</sup>:

- The employment rate fell from 89.0% in 2019 to 81.4% in 2020. By comparison, the employment rate in the South East fell from 79.5% to 78.3% in the same period<sup>8</sup>.
- From the beginning of the pandemic to October 2020, Hart saw the largest reduction in local area job vacancies of any area in Hampshire, dropping by 56%.
- The unemployed claimant rate\* increased from 0.9% in March 2020 to 3.4% in March 2021.
- 18–24 year-olds have experienced the highest unemployed claimant rate throughout the pandemic at 6.8% in March 2021.
- There has been variation by ward in the unemployed claimant rate.

\*ONS Claimant Counts provide a snapshot in time of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus those who claim Universal Credit and are required to seek work and be available for work.

Hart Foodbank saw an unprecedented 115% rise in the number of people needing support between April 2020 and March 2021.

Citizens Advice Hart have supported more clients with multiple or more complex issues. They have also seen a shift in the age profile of clients, with a larger proportion of clients aged 25-54 and a smaller proportion aged 65+ compared to the year before. This may reflect the fact that younger adults have experienced the greatest financial impact during the pandemic or that this age group is more confident to use remote channels to access support than those aged 65+.

## Mental health and wellbeing

### Feedback from community partners:

There has been a worsening of mental health and more people experiencing anxiety, especially among those who were living with mental health problems before the pandemic.

The Hart and Rushmoor Wellbeing Centre (a local mental wellbeing service) has seen an increase in referrals to their service across all age groups.

**Data:**

National data suggests levels of happiness, life satisfaction and mental distress have fluctuated throughout the pandemic. Younger adults and women were more likely to report worse mental health and wellbeing during the first lockdown than older adults and men<sup>9</sup>.

Older adults who were recommended to shield and older adults with multiple health conditions (many of whom were self-isolating) reported higher levels of depression and loneliness than other older adults<sup>10</sup>.

Almost half (47%) of disabled people reported high anxiety in September 2020 compared with less than a third (29%) of non-disabled people.

The Health Foundation projects that over the next 3 years, referrals to mental health services for adults and children could increase by an average of 11%<sup>11</sup>.

See below for impacts on children and young people.

### **Social isolation and loneliness**

**Feedback from community partners:**

The pandemic has increased social isolation and loneliness for a wide range of people including children and young people, older people, disabled people, unpaid carers, families, and people working from home.

Some people have experienced a loss of confidence and are nervous or fearful about going out and about, particularly those who have been more housebound or socially isolated.

It can be difficult for local groups and services to reach those who are most isolated, particularly people who are reluctant to ask for or accept support.

**Data:**

National research indicates that levels of loneliness have increased since Spring 2020. Young people and single people were more likely to have felt lonely in the last seven days<sup>12</sup>.

Disabled people reported feeling lonely more frequently than non-disabled people in September 2020 (45% and 32%)<sup>13</sup>.

### **Carers**

**Feedback from community partners:**

Carers of all ages have struggled and many are exhausted.

**Data:**

National research by Carers UK suggests that the pandemic has resulted in millions of new carers, many of whom are juggling work and care. 81% of carers surveyed said they were providing more hours of care since the start of the pandemic. 8 out of 10 carers reported that the needs of the person they care for have increased since the pandemic. Almost two thirds of carers (64%) say that their mental health has worsened as a result of the pandemic. Almost three quarters (74%) report feeling exhausted and worn out as a result of caring during the pandemic<sup>14</sup>.

## Drug and alcohol misuse

### Data:

Analysis by the Royal College of Psychiatrists found that over 8.4 million people in England were drinking at high risk levels in September 2020 compared to 4.8 million in February of the same year<sup>15</sup>.

The number of people contacting NSPCC with concerns about drug or alcohol misuse among parents rose by 66% between April 2020 and February 2021<sup>16</sup>.

## Children and young people experiencing multiple issues

### Feedback from community partners:

Children and young people have experienced massive upheaval and a range of impacts such as increased anxiety and low mood, isolation and loneliness, impacts of family tensions, and witnessing domestic abuse in the family.

### Data:

These issues are also reflected in national data and research.

In 2020, one in six children in England were identified as having a mental health problem, increasing from one in nine in 2017<sup>17</sup>.

Children and young people were more likely to experience a mental health problem if a parent also experienced psychological distress, if they lived in a family who reported problems with family functioning or a household that had fallen behind with payments<sup>18</sup>.

One in four young people (26%) feel “unable to cope with life” since the start of the pandemic, increasing to 40% among those not in work, education or training<sup>19</sup>.

## Digital divide

### Feedback from community partners:

While the pandemic may have encouraged more people to use digital technology in new ways, there are concerns about the impact on people who do not or cannot access digital technology, something which has been heavily relied upon during the pandemic to access education and services, apply for jobs, access and manage finances, and stay in touch with friends and family.

**Data:**

Research shows that certain groups are more likely to be digitally excluded than others. The main factors that influence the digital divide in the UK include age, socio-economic status and whether a person is disabled<sup>20</sup>.

There have been national concerns that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have experienced the greatest disruption to their education, as they are less likely to have the devices and internet connections required for home learning<sup>21</sup>.

**Physical activity and mobility****Feedback from community partners:**

People have been spending more time at home and for some this has meant being less active which has resulted in loss of mobility and increased frailty, particularly for older people.

Some community partners expressed concerns that children and young people have had fewer opportunities to be active as a result of the pandemic.

Some community partners told us that they had seen more people out walking and enjoying their local area.

**Data:**

The majority of physically active adults in England managed to maintain their habits despite the challenges of the coronavirus, however, during the first eight months of coronavirus restrictions, there was an increase in the number of people who were inactive. In Hart, the proportion of adults doing the recommended 150+<sup>22</sup>.

National data shows that the proportion of children and young people reporting they were active during mid-May to late-July 2020 fell by 2.3% compared to the same period 12 months earlier. Physical activity levels among teenage boys were hardest hit by the pandemic but girls became more active as they found alternative ways to be active<sup>23</sup>.

Research for England shows that not all groups or demographics were affected equally, with women, young people aged 16-24, over 75s, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, and those from Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic backgrounds most negatively impacted beyond the initial lockdown period<sup>24</sup>.

**Impacts on the voluntary and community sector****Feedback from community partners:**

There is limited data available to assess the impact of the pandemic on the voluntary and community sector in Hart. However, local groups attending the Here for Hart event told us that:

- many had had to stop delivering much of their face-to-face activities
- some had moved existing activities online

- some had set up new activities to meet needs in their community
- for some their funding sources and ability to fundraise had been impacted
- opportunities to reach out to people in need of support had been reduced
- some volunteers were keen to return to face-to-face activity while others were more reluctant

**Data:**

National data<sup>25</sup> shows that:

- many voluntary and community organisations have seen an increased demand for services
- equal split between those who have seen their funding decrease/increase with most stating their financial position has remained the same
- just over half stating covid-19 will have a moderate negative impact on their ability to deliver their objectives in the coming year

## Priority themes

Based on the data and conversations with partners and communities, the following priorities have been identified:

### 1. Connected and resilient communities

Supporting the renewal of community activity across the district, harnessing the community action which arose from the pandemic, and making it easier for people to connect with local support and opportunities.

### 2. Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all

Working with our partners to improve the lives of residents who are facing the most challenges including those most negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Taking forward initiatives which target the inequalities experienced by specific groups of people, to ensure that everyone can access opportunities which will improve their lives.

## Key areas of work

We have already started to deliver a wide range of actions. In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 we will focus on the priority actions set out below. Together these key areas of work will help us to deliver against our two priority themes.

We will continue to review this Plan and key areas of work will be updated for year 2.

We will work in a way which:

- Addresses locally defined needs, either at a district or more local level.
- Involves other services and community organisations in shaping this work.

- Enables and supports community-led initiatives and solutions.
- Combines targeted work to reduce the inequalities experienced by some groups within Hart alongside an effort to improve outcomes for all.

Activity	Timescales
<b>Work together with community partners to support delivery of this plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to bring partners together to guide the community recovery work under the banner of Here for Hart.</li> <li>• Explore different ways to keep collaboration going and to share information between community partners.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Support the recovery and resilience of the local voluntary and community sector</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support HVA to proactively engage local voluntary and community organisations to understand how they have been impacted by the pandemic and what support they may need.</li> </ul>	<b>Dec 2021</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant funding of HVA for 2021-22 to enable them to provide advice and support to local voluntary and community organisations and support the involvement of Hart residents in the community recovery.</li> </ul>	<b>Grant awarded April 2021</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with community partners to explore opportunities for community hub development to bring together a range of support in one place.</li> </ul>	<b>End March 2022</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the Hart Lottery to benefit local good causes.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Support residents who are experiencing financial difficulties or unemployment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of a Community Pantry and local larders in Hart.</li> </ul>	<b>Pantry established Mar 2021 –</b>

	<b>ongoing development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the Hart Employment and Skills Hub to assist people back into work</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund a pilot of Hart into Employment, a new supportive online community delivered by experienced careers advisors.</li> </ul>	<b>Pilot launched April 2021 – ongoing monitoring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and support campaigns to promote the support available and encourage people to seek assistance early, focusing on groups who have been most impacted by the pandemic, for example, through the Your Way Forward campaign aimed at 18-30 year olds</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide core grant funding to Citizens Advice Hart for 2021-22, to enable them to provide free, confidential advice.</li> </ul>	<b>Grant awarded April 2021</b>

**Tackle social isolation, promote wellbeing and help people to rebuild their confidence**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain up-to-date information about health, wellbeing and welfare support on the Council’s website.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support campaigns, projects and partnerships which aim to improve mental health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support HVA to run the Hart Response and Recovery Hub to help to connect residents with the support they need during the recovery phase.</li> </ul>	<b>Grant awarded April 2021 – ongoing monitoring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support development of the Minding the Garden project, an inclusive social and therapeutic gardening space and weekly group sessions at Hart’s Green Garden.</li> </ul>	<b>Grant awarded – ongoing support for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support HVA to further develop the Hart Health Walks scheme to increase the number of walkers, including engaging more people living with long term conditions.</li> </ul>	<b>Grant awarded</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide small grants to projects which enable people to re-connect with community and wellbeing activity, focusing</li> </ul>	<b>Community Connections</b>

specifically on residents considered clinically or clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 under Government guidelines.

**grant  
scheme  
launched  
Feb 2021**

- Maximise use of the Council's leisure and countryside assets with a focus on improving wellbeing and addressing inequalities in access. **Ongoing**
- Work with a range of partners to enable more older people, disabled people and people living with long term conditions to access physical activity opportunities to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. **March 2022**
- Promote and seek to assist development and delivery of initiatives which reduce the digital divide. **Ongoing**
- Support HVA to develop an online directory of community activity and support. **October 2021**

---

**Work with partner services to improve support for people and families who are experiencing multiple or complex challenges**

- Work alongside the Rushmoor and Hart Supporting Families Programme to co-ordinate support for families who are dealing with more than one problem at a time. **Ongoing**
  - Work together with our partners to strengthen the links between housing, health, and other services, to improve transitions between services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. **Ongoing**
  - Ensure that every rough sleeper that was brought in, during the "Everyone In" campaign has support that is targeted at preventing them from returning to the street. Each of these people will have help moving on to a permanent home. **Complete**
  - Continue to support our households in temporary accommodation to find more settled and appropriate homes. **Ongoing**
  - Develop the partnerships and capability for Housing First in Hart, ensuring clients who have experience of homelessness and chronic health and care needs have access to an independent, stable home from which to rebuild their lives. **September 2021**
  - Connect with mental health services to provide our staff with training and guidance around topics such as suicide prevention and personality disorder. **Ongoing**
-

---

### Enable children, young people and families to access support and opportunities

- Co-ordinate the Hart Starting Well Network and supporting development of a joint Hart and Rushmoor Local Children's Partnership, to enhance joint working between local services. **March 2022**
  - Work with and supporting local youth groups and services who provide valuable advice, support, recreational and learning opportunities. **Ongoing**
  - Promote and encourage employers to engage with the Government's Plan for Jobs schemes such as the Kickstart initiative and apprenticeships, to create new employment opportunities, particularly for young people within Hart. **Ongoing**
  - Connect employers with local schools and colleges to provide current career insight talks, activities and work experience opportunities, to support young people in making informed decisions about their future careers. **Ongoing**
- 

### Work with our partners and communities to keep people safe

- Focus on removing barriers that prevent people from reporting crimes such as domestic abuse and hate crime which have historically low levels of reporting. **TBC**
  - Support youth and community initiatives which can help to divert young people away from crime and protect them from potential exploitation. **Ongoing**
  - Fund to support Fleet Phoenix to deliver a weekly support session for children of junior school age, who have been witness to Domestic Abuse in the home. **Grant awarded April 2021**
  - Support public campaigns that raise awareness of domestic abuse and the support available to victims and perpetrators. **Ongoing**
  - Co-ordinate the Domestic Abuse Forum to share information, expertise and training opportunities between local services. **Ongoing**
- 

## The role of the Council and our partners

Reducing inequalities is an economic and social challenge. Our Corporate Equality Policy describes our commitment to actively address inequality, taking a lead where necessary, to ensure quality services for everyone in the community.

As a Council there are factors that we cannot directly control but we recognise that we have a role to play in coming together with others to tackle these issues where we can. We will seek opportunities to improve outcomes for local people through coordinated action with partners and communities.

This Plan will be supported by action to deliver our Equality Objectives 2021-23. We set these objectives to help us deliver improvements in policy making, service delivery and employment, by focusing attention on the priority equality issues for our organisation and the district.

The Council also has a key role to play in driving forward the community recovery in Hart, enabling collaboration between local partners and involvement of communities in the community recovery process.

The response of local communities, during the pandemic, to support and help others has been truly outstanding. Sharing information and working collaboratively, over the coming months, will be critical to forging stronger more cohesive communities that are enabled to protect and promote their own wellbeing.

We will work with a wide range of partners and community organisations to deliver the actions set out in this plan. It is not possible to list all these here, but broadly speaking we will work alongside:

- Hart Voluntary Action which has a key role to play in supporting voluntary and community sector organisations and volunteers that work within it.
- Individual voluntary and community groups who know their communities best and can help to develop local solutions and reach those people most needing support.
- A range of welfare and advice services who support people through challenging times in their lives including but not limited to Citizens Advice Hart, Hart Foodbank, Yateley Industries, Fleet Phoenix, Jobcentre Plus, and mental health services.
- Our statutory partners such as Hampshire County Council, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and Safer North Hampshire – our Community Safety Partnership - who have a key role to play in co-ordinating and driving forward community recovery action.

### **Links to other plans and strategies**

The Supporting Communities Plan will support delivery of the Council's Vision to 2040 ambition to:

"Empower people to help themselves whilst ensuring there is support for the most vulnerable. Working closely with our partners to enable people to live safely and independently and help our most vulnerable residents to get the support they need, when they need it"

This Plan sits beneath the Council's Corporate Plan – which is due to be renewed in 2022, and alongside the Council's four service plans (covering each of the service

areas – Place, Community, Environment and Technical and Corporate). Each service plan contains an element of Recovery. As this plan focuses on Community Recovery, it dovetails most closely with the Community Service plan. This Plan is monitored by the Head of Community Services, in partnership with the Community Recovery Board.

The Supporting Communities Plan will also work alongside our Homelessness Prevention Strategy and the Safer North Hampshire Partnership Plan, as well as taking forward many elements of the Hart Health and Wellbeing Plan.

---

1

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoresidencebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

2 <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/countryside/2016-Demographyandarea.pdf>

3

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1.39\\_Health%20in%20rural%200areas\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1.39_Health%20in%20rural%200areas_WEB.pdf)

4 According to the English Atlas of Inequality developed by the University of Sheffield,

5 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index)

6 <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8898/CBP-8898.pdf>

7 <https://www.hart.gov.uk/strategic-projects-council>

8 [www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157305/subreports/ea\\_time\\_series/report.aspx?](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157305/subreports/ea_time_series/report.aspx?)

9 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/2-important-findings-so-far>

10 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/2-important-findings-so-far>

11 <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/spending-review-2020>

12

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/mappinglonelinessduringthecoronaviruspandemic/2021-04-07>

13

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsondisabledpeopleingreatbritain/september2020>

14

[https://www.carersuk.org/images/News\\_and\\_campaigns/Caring\\_Behind\\_Closed\\_Doors\\_Oct20.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/images/News_and_campaigns/Caring_Behind_Closed_Doors_Oct20.pdf)

15 <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/news-and-features/latest-news/detail/2020/09/14/addiction-services-not-equipped-to-treat-the-8-million-people-drinking-at-high-risk-during-pandemic-warns-royal-college>

16 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2021/parents-drug-and-alcohol-misuse-raises-concerns-as-reports-to-nspcc-soars-during-the-pandemic/>

17 [https://files.digital.nhs.uk/AF/AECD6B/mhcyp\\_2020\\_rep\\_v2.pdf](https://files.digital.nhs.uk/AF/AECD6B/mhcyp_2020_rep_v2.pdf)

18 [https://files.digital.nhs.uk/AF/AECD6B/mhcyp\\_2020\\_rep\\_v2.pdf](https://files.digital.nhs.uk/AF/AECD6B/mhcyp_2020_rep_v2.pdf)

---

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/tesco-youth-index-2021>

<sup>20</sup> <https://post.parliament.uk/covid-19-and-the-digital-divide/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://post.parliament.uk/covid-19-and-the-digital-divide/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.sportengland.org/news/childrens-activity-levels-down-many-embrace-new-opportunities>

<sup>24</sup> [www.sportengland.org/news/impact-coronavirus-activity-levels-revealed](http://www.sportengland.org/news/impact-coronavirus-activity-levels-revealed)

<sup>25</sup> <http://cpwop.org.uk/what-we-do/projects-and-publications/covid-19-vcse-organisation-responses/>

DRAFT