

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	21 JUNE 2022
Heading:	COVID-19 RECOVERY SCRUTINY PANEL CONSPECTUS
Executive Lead Member :	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with recommendations formulated by the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel at the previous meeting held in April 2022. Furthermore, with the cessation of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel, this report includes a meeting-by-meeting overview of the progress and achievements attained by the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel to date, including the comments and recommendations that have been submitted to Cabinet over the past two years.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a. Commend the tireless work of the voluntary sector, both during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- b. Continue to build and nurture the relationships forged with partners during the pandemic, and to further develop the Council's role as a community leader providing pivotal central support to all parties.
- c. Ensure the Communications Team continue to prioritise the Council's relationship with Ashfield's voluntary sector, providing an effective conduit for the dissemination of information and signposting services as required.
- d. Continue to support Ashfield residents and offer encouragement and guidance to enable reintegration back into local communities with a particular focus on working with organisations supporting vulnerable groups.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

- e. Continue to ensure available grant funding is effectively administered to local businesses and organisations to assist with the reinvigoration and support of Ashfield's local economy following the pandemic.
- f. Note the information contained within this report, including the summary of work and outcomes achieved by the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel was established to ensure dedicated and robust arrangements were in place as the Council needed to ensure it performed a leading role in supporting communities, businesses, and employees.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered.

Detailed Information

RECOMMENDATIONS

The final meeting of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel was held in April 2022. Members welcomed the attendance of numerous representatives from the voluntary sector, invited by the Chairman to give Members an insight into the challenges they faced and the resulting impact on their delivery of much needed services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following lengthy discussions with the representatives, including a question and answer session, Panel Members formulated the following recommendations for Cabinet to consider:

- a. Commend the tireless work of the voluntary sector, both during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic.*

Throughout the work of the Panel, Members have been acutely aware of the pivotal role that the voluntary sector has played in supporting both individuals and community groups. This has included, amongst other things, specialist advice, transport, welfare checks, financial assistance, food bank access and tackling loneliness during lockdown.

Members also recognised the challenges that the voluntary sector faced both during the pandemic and the continuing after-effects. Whilst demand for services increased massively, the effects of the pandemic resulted in recruitment shortages, financial/funding pressures, and long-term uncertainty on the sustainability of some support organisations.

- b. Continue to build and nurture the relationships forged with partners during the pandemic, and to further develop the Council's role as a community leader providing pivotal central support to all parties.*

The impacts of the pandemic required joint working between organisations under unique circumstances. In addition to maintaining standard service delivery, the Council and its partners had to build on existing relationships to provide the required additional support for communities and businesses alike.

Every organisation had to adapt its day-to-day business to meet these challenges, key to this success was partnership working and a joined-up approach.

Many of the different methods used as a necessity during this time have introduced many new working relationships and partnership working, much of which can continue to be built upon as the District moves forward with recovery.

- c. Ensure the Communications Team continue to prioritise the Council's relationship with Ashfield's voluntary sector, providing an effective conduit for the dissemination of information and signposting services as required.*

Members of the Panel acknowledged the critical role that effective communication played during the pandemic. Ensuring communities, partners, and individuals were provided with information in a timely and consistent manner was key to partnership working.

Guidance and advice often changed weekly, therefore communications had to be prioritised. Many organisations have highlighted that even during these difficult times, a key success was forging even stronger partnership working, consistent communication and information dissemination between the Council, voluntary sector, and other key partners. Members agreed that these stronger links and working partnerships should be maintained.

- d. Continue to support Ashfield residents and offer encouragement and guidance to enable reintegration back into local communities with a particular focus on working with organisations supporting vulnerable groups.*

The pandemic presented fresh challenges to all communities, particularly hard to reach and vulnerable groups. Members discussed how fear and isolation had impacted some people's confidence in reintegrating back into everyday life and undertaking everyday tasks such as using the high street, public places, public transport or seeking medical attention.

Members agreed that working with partners to both inform and support vulnerable groups in a variety of ways will continue to be vital in gaining an understanding of the continued fear of integration and considering how partnership working can explore longer term strategies in resolving this.

- e. Continue to ensure available grant funding is effectively administered to local businesses and organisations to assist with the reinvigoration and support of Ashfield's local economy following the pandemic.*

In recognising the challenges that many organisations have faced both throughout the pandemic and through the recovery process, the Panel commended the work that has already been undertaken in supporting organisations in the community, local businesses, and the community as a whole. Members agreed that continuing to ensure all avenues of grant funding are explored should remain a priority for the Council and its partners.

PANEL ESTABLISHMENT

At the 30 June 2020 meeting, Cabinet considered a report titled *COVID-19 Response Update and Initial Recovery Plans*. The report provided Cabinet with a summary of what the Council has done to respond to COVID-19, a comprehensive update of the COVID-19 decisions taken to date (30 June 2020) and began to explore arrangements for the recovery stage of the pandemic.

Within the report, the proposed establishment of a new COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel was presented to Cabinet, with a view to Cabinet recommending the establishment of the Panel to the next meeting of the Council. The Panel would be made up of 7 Members who are appointed in accordance with the requirements of political balance.

At this meeting, Cabinet resolved the following:

- a. the way the Council has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic to date, the fact that the Council has delivered all essential Council services in full, along with other priority services and additional COVID-19 responsibilities, be noted and welcomed.
- b. the COVID-19 related Executive decisions taken to date (attached as Appendix B to this report), be received and fully endorsed.
- c. the extension of free Town Centre parking until 7 September 2020 be approved.
- d. the initial approach to the recovery phase of the pandemic be approved.
- e. the Recovery Strategy (attached as Appendix C to this report) be approved.
- f. recommendation to Council for the establishment of a COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel.

The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel was subsequently established by Council alongside a set terms of reference as follows:

1. Responsibility for the review of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and taking an active role in respect of the Council's recovery plans as requested by the Executive or as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Scrutiny Workplan, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Reviewing the Council's response to COVID-19 and identifying any short-term actions arising which improve operational and corporate resilience.
 - b. Policy development in respect of the Council's recovery from COVID-19, including preparedness for future waves of COVID-19.
 - c. Policy development in respect of respect of the Council's approach to the renewal of the local economy.
 - d. Policy development in respect of the renewal and reform of local government services, including the future structure of local government in Nottinghamshire.
2. To report any recommendations or considerations to the Executive in respect of the responsibilities outlined above.

3. The Panel will receive updates in respect of the implementation of the Council's Recovery Action Plan.

PANEL MEETING – JULY 2020

The first meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in July 2020. Members received a detailed report including guidance from the Centre for Governance on establishing a COVID-19 related scrutiny panel, a detailed summary of what the Council had done up to that point to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which further included a summary of COVID-19 related decisions taken to that date, and arrangements for recovery.

Members were joined at this meeting by the Director of Legal and Governance and the Council's Strategic Lead for COVID-19 Response, who explained the summary of the work undertaken by the Council in response to the outbreak of the pandemic. Members were also informed of some of the key partnerships the Council operated within, including:

- The Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum
- Multi-Agency Response Group
- Ashfield District Council Incident Management Team

At the first meeting, the Panel made a request to Cabinet that a standing item be placed on the Cabinet agenda to allow the Chairman and Vice Chairman the opportunity to provide responsive comments and recommendations as required.

Members also took the time to establish a work programme for the Panel, planning out each meeting with key themes and attendees identified.

At the conclusion of the first meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a) the Council's initial response to the pandemic including the consequential impacts to the Council, the local economy, and its communities as outlined in the report, be received, and noted;
- b) the following initial work programme for the Panel be approved to facilitate delivery of the Panel's objectives in a timely and responsive manner:-

Date of Meeting:	Focus Theme:	Attendees:	Cabinet Update:
3 September 2020	Local Recovery Themes Update and The Peoples' Memorial	All Service Directors	15 September 2020
6 October 2020	Small Business and High Street Recovery	Local Business Representatives	13 October 2020
5 November 2020	Multi-Agency Working	Police, NHS, Charities,	1 December 2020

		Discover Ashfield, County Council	
10 December 2020	TBC	TBC	20 January 2020

- c) the Council's Corporate Leadership Team be invited to attend the next Panel meeting in September 2020 to brief Members on their designated area of COVID-19 response and recovery;
- d) an item be placed on the agenda for the Panel meeting scheduled for 3 September 2020, to enable Members to consider in more detail the suggestions for a memorial to commemorate and honour the unstinting commitment and bravery shown by all key workers and volunteers during the pandemic;
- e) Police Inspector Mark Dickson and Kings Mill Hospital's Chief Executive, Richard Mitchell, be invited to a future Panel meeting to consider the successes achieved through multi-agency working during the pandemic.

PANEL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2020

The second meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in September 2020. Members were presented with a report featuring updates from the Council's Corporate Leadership Team relating to each of the Council's directorates and COVID-19 specific response and recovery themes. Key themes such as government funding, housing and communities' recovery, and local economic recovery were included in this report.

The Panel welcomed attendance from the Director of Legal and Governance, the Director of Place and Communities, the Director of Housing and Assets, the Director for Resources and Business Transformation, the Corporate Finance Manager, and the Chief Executive.

During the height of the pandemic, Panel Members were also presented with the most up-to-date guidance and legislation regarding COVID-19 restrictions.

The meeting took the format of a question-and-answer session, with Panel Members taking the opportunity to ask questions of each member of the Corporate Leadership Team based on the updates provided within the report. The Panel also received questions from the public which were answered by those in attendance.

The key areas of concern identified at this meeting were:

- What further support can be offered to small businesses?
- What support could be offered to charitable organisations and churches?
- Homelessness and rent arrears escalating
- Potential impact of a second wave

At the conclusion of the second meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a) the updates provided by the Corporate Leadership Team relating to the Council's Directorates and COVID-19 specific recovery themes, as outlined in the report, be received, and noted;

- b) an item be placed on the agenda for the Panel meeting scheduled for 6 October 2020 focusing on Small Business Recovery in Ashfield;
- c) the Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services be requested to extend invitations to business representatives from a variety of sectors and areas across the District to attend the next meeting of the Panel and participate in the discussion relating to Small Business Recovery;
- d) an item be placed on the agenda for the Panel meeting scheduled for 6 October 2020 to enable Members to consider in more detail the proposals for local government reorganisation.

CABINET MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2020

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel attended the September 2020 meeting of Cabinet to provide an update on the work undertaken at the first two meetings of the Panel.

Key Worker Memorial

The Panel were very keen to see the installation of a suitable memorial to commemorate the bravery and excellent work carried out by all key workers and volunteers during the COVID-19 outbreak. It was unlikely that S106 funding would be available to purchase and install the memorial, but officers were still considering the possibility of funding through public realm contributions.

Letter of Thanks

The Panel requested that a formal letter of thanks on behalf of the Council be sent to all foodbanks and community groups that worked to support vulnerable people and communities during the pandemic.

PANEL MEETING – OCTOBER 2020

The third meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in October 2020. Members were presented with a report providing further information regarding small business and high street recovery, which was selected as a focus theme for this meeting as part of the Panel's established work programme.

Members welcomed attendance from the Director of Legal and Governance, the Director of Place and Communities, the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulatory Services, the Town Centres and Markets Manager, and Senior Economic Development Officer.

The Panel also welcomed attendance from Martin Rigley, the Chairman of Discover Ashfield, who offered a business perspective to the Panel. Martin updated the Panel on the work of the Discover Ashfield Board, and also took the time to answer a series of questions and comments from Members ranging from advice to businesses in the event of additional lockdowns to advice to new businesses starting up during the pandemic.

At this meeting, Panel Members were asked to consider the Economic Recovery Plan that detailed the latest real-time data to help the Council understand the significant impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic disruption had on Ashfield's economy.

The Economic Recovery Plan set out seven emerging themes to guide local economic recovery:

Emerging Themes to Guide Local Economic Recovery

- 1. Town Centre Recovery:** Boost local consumer demand and confidence by promoting Ashfield District as a great place to live and visit. Attract spending back to Hucknall, Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton Town Centres through promotional activity, local purchasing campaigns and community projects. This could involve the Council working with local partners to implement an 'open for business' campaign to publicise businesses, offers and events as town centre businesses gradually re-open.
- 2. Regeneration Capacity Building:** This would need to include a Full Time Regeneration Team for ADC tasked with producing a new Economic Development Strategy. New dedicated capacity building and leveraging of the Council's own dedicated resources to instigate a full time Regeneration Team for Ashfield District capable of delivering and taking forward its own Economic Development Strategy for the District. This could involve progressing a wider Place Marketing campaign to encourage a broader range of developers and investors to come back to Ashfield. This would involve the new Regeneration Team marketing the District's assets effectively to developers and housebuilders more generally and promote Ashfield as a place for aspiring households to move to.
- 3. Skills and Training:** By working with local education and training providers, the D2N2 LEP and others to ensure that local residents – in particular young people - can access skills and employability support including specific opportunities for re-training, business start-up, and developing digital/e-commerce competencies.
- 4. Industrial Sectoral Support:** As Ashfield's business base transitions from restart, to recover, to renew, this should include a locally responsive business resilience programme with targeted support to enable firms to adapt to new technologies (such as enhancing digital and e-commerce capabilities), diversify or access new markets (including exporting opportunities) and support business start-ups amongst residents re-entering the labour market as a result of Covid-19.
- 5. Green Business Growth:** This would involve harnessing innovation 'Green Recovery' opportunities generated by the pandemic (such as medical technology and clean growth), using these to accelerate existing business clusters, development proposals and local business ecosystems, particularly where these align with Government economic recovery funding initiatives.
- 6. Development and Infrastructure Projects:** This would aim to kick start investment and stimulate economic activity within the District, engaging with key partners such as the LEP to leverage funding opportunities from emerging funding packages such as the Getting Building Fund. This would include progressing opportunities such as the Maid Marian Line Rail Extension to the proposed HS2 Hub at Toton; the new Garden settlement(s); and the opportunities emerging from the Towns Fund and Future High Streets fund proposals.
- 7. Supporting Ashfield's Residents and Workforce:** The Pandemic may create a significant mental health crisis for Ashfield's residents due to heightened levels of anxiety due to the risk of catching the infection, disrupted education, lost jobs/income, dying, or losing family members. From an economic perspective, this theme would include ADC working with the NHS Nottingham City CCG to ensure widespread availability of mental health and psychosocial support and to assist residents to overcome financial difficulties and to come out of debt and re-enter the workforce.

Furthermore, Members received a verbal update from the Director of Legal and Governance in relation to Local Government Reorganisation.

At the conclusion of the third meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a) the Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its developing recovery programme, as outlined in the report, be received, and noted;
- b) the Senior Economic Development Officer be requested to provide a briefing note to the next meeting of the Panel outlining the work of the new Business Support Hub and the signposting and support service being offered to local and enquiring businesses in relation to potential access to grant funding (including temporary Covid-19 funding);
- c) an invite be extended to Jonathan Gribbin, the County Council's Director of Public Health for Nottinghamshire, to attend the next meeting of the Panel to advise Members in relation to the development of the county-wide response to the pandemic and subsequent recovery plans;
- d) the Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel be required to submit the following interim recommendations to the Cabinet on 13 October 2020:
 1. the draft Economic Recovery Plan be approved with the proviso that the Plan is updated accordingly as circumstances change;
 2. work be undertaken to consider establishing a scheme to recognise local businesses that have excelled at adapting to guidelines and providing a COVID-secure environment for customers, in conjunction with key partners such as Discover Ashfield;
 3. the Council continues working toward the establishment of a Key Workers Memorial, including consultation with Ashfield residents and key partners;
 4. the Council's established Business Support Hub offers support for those looking to set up new businesses or reinvent existing businesses as a result of the pandemic;
 5. Cabinet be commended for the decision to implement 2-hour free parking in all town centre car parks to aid the longer-term recovery of Ashfield's local economy;
 6. congratulations be extended to the Planning and Economic Development Team, the Environmental Health Team, and the Discover Ashfield Board for their continued efforts to ensure that local businesses sufficiently adapt to COVID-19 measures and survive the ongoing economic difficulties brought about by the pandemic;
 7. that the Council looks at all options to use all of the ring-fenced 'Reopening High Streets' Fund innovatively.

CABINET MEETING – OCTOBER 2020

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel attended the October 2020 meeting of Cabinet to present the recommendations and comments formulated by Members at the Panel meeting held earlier in that month.

Cabinet was informed that the Panel had focused on small business recovery at the previous meeting, which was well attended by Officers and the Chairman of the Discover Ashfield Board, Martin Rigley.

Cabinet was presented with the recommendations set out above from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel. All of the recommendations were positively received and approved by Cabinet.

PANEL MEETING – NOVEMBER 2020

The fourth meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in November 2020. Members received a report setting out the most up-to-date guidance and restrictions, considering how they would impact Ashfield. Members also received a further report on business recovery and support as requested at the October 2020 meeting of the Panel. This report featured details of the Business Support Hub.

Invitations had been extended to numerous business representatives from Ashfield from a variety of sectors. The Panel hoped that discussions with business representatives would aid understanding of the challenges businesses continued to face throughout the pandemic, and to help identify the most appropriate support for the Council to offer moving forward.

Members welcomed attendance from the Director of Legal and Governance, Director of Place and Communities, Senior Economic Development Officer, and the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulatory Services.

Members also welcomed attendance from various business representatives across Ashfield, as the majority of the meeting took on a question-and-answer format to allow Members to ask questions of the representatives and allow the representatives to ask questions of the Officers in attendance.

Discussions centred on topics such as:

- Regenerating Ashfield's Town Centres
- Support and advice for small businesses
- Car parking initiatives
- Business grants

Overall, this was a fantastic example of scrutiny being used to effectively engage communities in Ashfield, and Panel Members were pleased to be able to offer this opportunity to the representatives in attendance.

At the conclusion of the fourth meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a) Cabinet be provided with a briefing note outlining the work of the Panel to date and the issues/suggestions raised at the meeting including:
 1. concerns for the ongoing viability and survival of sole traders and small businesses should lockdowns continue;
 2. to avoid undue worry and to allow local businesses to react proactively to the current climate, a request for additional communication regarding the latest Government guidelines to be sent out to business communities in a swift and timely manner;
 3. the benefits of establishing an Ashfield business forum to enable local businesses to network, interact and support each other as required;

4. to continue work around the establishment of a shop recognition scheme for businesses that have provided exemplary Covid-secure environments for customers;
 5. options for how the Council and local businesses can continue to support local foodbanks and health and wellbeing organisations during the pandemic;
 6. appreciation to Cabinet for the imminent provision of hand sanitiser stations at car parking ticket machine location;
 7. concerns around the extensive, ongoing, cost of providing PPE to protect employees and a hope to see a tax relief of reimbursement scheme from Government in the near future.
- b) the Economic Regeneration Unit be requested to formulate some appropriate case studies, to reflect the experiences shared by the business owners in attendance at the meeting, to showcase via the Council's media platforms as appropriate;
- c) an invite be extended to Inspector Mark Dickson to attend the next meeting of the Panel to offer an insight into the perceived rise in incidences of crime as a result of the recent pandemic.

CABINET MEETING – DECEMBER 2020

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel attended the December 2020 meeting of Cabinet to provide an update on the work of the Panel and present the comments and recommendations formulated at the previous meeting of the Panel held in November 2020.

Cabinet was presented the following comments and recommendations set out above.

Cabinet was pleased to see the Panel working to understand the real issues facing small businesses and how the Council could continue to assist with recovery. The comments and recommendations submitted by the Panel were accepted by Cabinet.

PANEL MEETING – DECEMBER 2020

The fifth meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in December 2020. The Panel received a report detailing the three-tier COVID-19 restrictions introduced in early December 2020, and considered how they would impact communities, businesses, and the Council.

Members welcomed attendance from the Chief Executive, Director of Legal and Governance, Director of Place and Communities, Town Centres and Markets Manager, Corporate Finance Manager, and the Senior COVID Business Support Officer.

Members further welcomed Inspector Mark Dickson from Nottinghamshire Police who attended the meeting to talk about the impact of COVID-19 from an operational perspective and to address concerns regarding possible increasing crime and anti-social behaviour due to the pandemic.

Inspector Dickson advised that all front-line policing operations had been stripped back and Police Officers went out into the community to educate and enforce national lockdown rules. Members were informed that there had been increased levels of anti-social behaviour during the first lockdown, and much time had been taken up dealing with breaches of COVID-19 restrictions.

Members took the opportunity to carry out a question-and-answer session with Inspector Mark Dickson and Officers in attendance. Some of the key themes from this session included:

- Concerns over social distancing rules not being followed
- Relationship between the Police and the Council's Community Protection Officers
- Staffing issues
- Mental health issues
- Area-specific anti-social behaviour issues
- Homelessness

Following discussions with Inspector Dickson, the Chairman introduced the Council's Town Centre and Markets Manager and Senior Business Support Officer to advise the Panel as to the support and assistance being offered to local businesses and retailers navigating through the latest restrictions.

The Panel were informed of the work being carried out by the newly established COVID-19 Information Team. The new Team had already established good working relationships with local businesses, and the pandemic gave the Team more focus and opportunity to spend time with local businesses to assist with the setting up of COVID-secure environments.

Members were advised that the pandemic had created opportunities for many local businesses who not only were protecting customers but were offering continued support to fellow businesses and communities.

Finally, the Corporate Finance Manager presented the current position in relation to the facilitation of the COVID-19 Business Support Grant through the Council.

At the conclusion of the fifth meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a) the Council's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, its developing recovery programme, and the operational response from the Police, as outlined in the report and as considered at the meeting, be received, and noted;
- b) the following meeting date be agreed for the Scrutiny Panel in early 2021:
2 February 2021

CABINET MEETING – JANUARY 2021

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel attended the January 2021 meeting of Cabinet and delivered a verbal update on the work of the Panel.

The Vice Chairman gave an overview of the discussions held at the previous meeting of the Panel, held in December 2020, where Members held a detailed question and answer session with Inspector Mark Dickson from Nottinghamshire Police. The Vice Chairman noted that additional Police patrols in areas of Sutton, Hucknall, Kirkby, Jacksdale, and Underwood had been initiated following the Panel's discussions with the Inspector.

Both the Chairman and Vice Chairman informed Cabinet that they would continue to keep all Members in the picture regarding the latest COVID-19 information and statistics and had circulated regular email updates.

PANEL MEETING – FEBRUARY 2021

The sixth meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in February 2021. Members were presented with the usual report detailing changes to COVID-19 guidance and restrictions, including area-specific statistics. Additionally, Members were provided with a report detailing corporate performance from April to September 2020 to provide an insight into how the pandemic impacted service delivery across the Council.

Members welcomed attendance from the Chief Executive, Director of Place and Communities, Director of Legal and Governance, the Corporate Finance Manager, and the Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation.

The Panel also welcomed Richard Mitchell, the Chief Executive of Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to the meeting. The Chairman, through the Panel and on behalf of the Council, firstly extended immense gratitude to the NHS and the staff at Kings Mill Hospital in particular for the unrelenting care and support of local residents throughout the pandemic.

Richard Mitchell spoke about his role as Chief Executive at Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust which covered Kings Mill Hospital, Newark and Mansfield Community Hospitals. The Panel were informed that the overall care service provided had been immense and staff had worked tirelessly to provide care to patients. However, the pandemic had taken its toll and staff were exhausted and, in many cases, emotionally spent. He continued to say that the Council had been a great support during the pandemic and the relationships that had been cemented would endure and be invaluable going forward.

Members and Officers took the opportunity to carry out a question-and-answer session with Richard, discussing some of the following key themes:

- How has the pandemic impacted the four main pathways of care?
- Vaccination uptake
- The importance of staff feeling valued and supported

Following this discussion, Members moved on to consider the Corporate Plan Performance Update delivered by the Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation. The Panel were informed that the Council had worked extremely hard since the pandemic began and were the only local authority in Nottinghamshire that has continued to deliver Tier 1 and Tier 2 critical services without interruption. The Council had also delivered a variety of humanitarian services across the District and continued to facilitate many of the waste collection campaigns.

At the conclusion of the sixth meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a) the work undertaken by the Council and the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust as a partnership, to support the NHS and Ashfield residents through the pandemic, be noted, welcomed, and continued;
- b) a letter of appreciation and thanks be forwarded to Richard Mitchell and all the staff at the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for their unwavering dedication and care to the people of Ashfield during the pandemic.
- c) that Cabinet be recommended to endorse:
 - the continued lobbying of the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide a vaccination centre in Hucknall

- the provision of a mass asymptomatic testing centre in Sutton in Ashfield

PANEL MEETING – JULY 2021

The seventh meeting of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in July 2021. The name of the Panel was changed from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel to the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel at the 2021 Annual Council Meeting to align with the shift in focus of the Panel's work. Members were presented with a report detailing service updates in respect of the following:

- Collection Rates and Grant Payment Information
- Environmental Health and Commercial and Environmental Protection
- Neighbourhoods and Environment
- Cemeteries
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Town Centres and Markets
- Governance

Members welcomed attendance from the Director of Legal and Governance and the Leader of the Council.

The Chairman gave the Panel a brief synopsis of the work undertaken so far in relation to the Council's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, reiterating that there was still a long recovery road ahead for everyone and the Panel's role was now to listen, learn, and provide ideas, suggestions, and recovery initiatives to Cabinet. The Chairman placed on record a personal thanks to all Officers who had worked so tirelessly through the pandemic. Ashfield District Council had been exemplary in its response to the pandemic and went above and beyond to protect and support residents and businesses through the lockdown periods.

Members debated the following points of consideration:

- acknowledgement that the Council needed to stay abreast of the vaccination take-up rates and continue to focus on areas of poor uptake to encourage vaccination across all age ranges
- a suggestion that an update on vaccination rates within Ashfield be presented to each Panel meeting
- huge appreciation and gratitude for the work undertaken by the Covid Information Officers over the past few months
- whilst recovery of town centres was vital, it was important that the Council did not ignore recovery of the smaller towns like Huthwaite, Stanton Hill and Selston
- recognition of the incredible delivery of the vaccination programme at the local centres by staff and volunteers alike
- concerns regarding fake and misleading news in relation to vaccinations for younger age groups and how the Council might mitigate against this on a local level, whilst encouraging uptake in Ashfield.

At the conclusion of the seventh meeting, the Panel resolved the following:

- a. that a preliminary recommendation be submitted to Cabinet for the creation and installation of four commemorative benches within the key areas of Ashfield, with the design for the bench being given further consideration by officers, as appropriate, prior to any final decision being made.

CABINET MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2021

The Chairman of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel attended the September 2021 meeting of Cabinet to provide an update on the work undertaken by the Panel at the previous meeting held in July 2021, and to present some recommendations regarding the tribute to key workers. Following discussions, Cabinet resolved at this meeting that:

- a) approval be given to identify funding for four commemorative benches to be located in suitable locations in Kirkby, Sutton, Hucknall, and the Rurals, as a tribute to the tireless efforts of key workers during the COVID-19 pandemic
- b) following initial design suggestions by the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel, further design work regarding the commemorative benches be commenced in line with identified funding.

PANEL MEETING – NOVEMBER 2021

The eighth meeting of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in November 2021. The Panel received a report detailing the vaccination programme in Ashfield, as requested by the Panel at the previous meeting held in July 2021. The report presented to Members included details of latest COVID-related figures from the UK Coronavirus Dashboard, latest efforts to promote vaccination uptake in Ashfield, and details of the School Age Immunisation Service.

The Panel welcomed attendance from the Director of Legal and Governance and the Service Manager for Place and Wellbeing. Members also welcomed attendance from two representatives from the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Rosa Waddingham – Chief Nurse and David Ainsworth, Mid Notts Locality Director.

David and Rosa explained their roles within the CCG and their responsibilities for ensuring delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination within Nottinghamshire. They both took the opportunity to thank Ashfield District Council for the support received with delivery of the vaccination programme, stating that the Council had been instrumental in ensuring take up within Ashfield.

The representatives from the CCG delivered a comprehensive presentation to the Panel on the vaccination programme, with the following key information relayed:

- Phase 1 and 2 Programme Reflections
- Vaccination Take Up Rates
- Booster Programme
- Vaccination Programme Next Steps

Following the presentation, Members took the opportunity to undertake a question-and-answer session with the CCG representatives. Discussion focused on the following:

- The Vaccination Bus

- School Vaccination Programmes
- Vaccine availability
- How to tackle misinformation

At the conclusion of the eighth meeting, the Panel resolved that the following recommendations be presented to Cabinet for consideration:

- a) to continue to prioritise partnership working with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a schedule and identify suitable locations for the vaccination bus;
- b) to undertake a co-ordinated and targeted engagement approach using all communication methods available to the Council designed to reduce vaccine hesitancy; this should include debunking misinformation, sharing updates on the vaccination programme, and continuing to advertise the vaccination bus;
- c) to undertake a wider communications exercise to share relevant case studies relating to COVID-19 vaccinations and booster jabs;
- d) to explore any extra measures that could be implemented to support people with mental health and learning difficulties that may prevent them from accessing the COVID-19 vaccination;
- e) to recognise the challenges in vaccination uptake present in Greenwood and Summit, Abbey Hill, Leamington, and Sutton Central and New Cross wards and consider how the Council can use its position to improve take-up in these areas;
- f) as a result of e) above, if approved, Councillors representing the above wards be consulted and engaged in any activities to target vaccination uptake.

CABINET MEETING – DECEMBER 2021

The Chairman of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel attended the December 2021 meeting of Cabinet to provide an update on the work undertaken by the Panel at the previous meeting and to present a set of recommendations formulated by Panel Members regarding the vaccination programme in Ashfield.

Cabinet thanked the Panel for working on the key issues still present as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and approved the following recommendations set out above.

PANEL MEETING – MARCH 2022

The ninth meeting of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel took place in March 2022. Members welcomed attendance from Lorenzo Clark, the Ashfield Contract Manager for Everyone Active, who was in attendance to deliver a presentation to the Panel regarding Everyone Active's COVID-19 recovery process in relation to the Council's leisure facilities.

Members were given an overview of the actions taken by Everyone Active at the start of the pandemic when Government ordered leisure sites to be closed on 20 March 2020.

Following the presentation, Members took the opportunity to engage in question-and-answer session with Lorenzo, with the following topics discussed:

- Help given to customers looking to cancel membership

- Booking no-shows reducing capacity
- Community engagement initiatives
- What key lessons have been learnt
- Positive lessons from the pandemic
- Online streaming

Members were extremely impressed with the presentation delivered and the subsequent discussion, and noted the information shared by Lorenzo Clark.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The work of the COVID-19 Recovery Scrutiny Panel has been carried out in line with the refreshed Corporate Plan and the Council’s recovery plans for the District.

Legal:

There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report. [RLD 31/05/2022]

Finance: There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. [PH 01/06/22].

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

There are no risks identified within this report.

Risk	Mitigation

Human Resources:

There are no HR implications resulting from this report.

Environmental/Sustainability

There are no environmental or sustainability implications resulting from this report.

Equalities:

There are no equalities implications resulting from this report.

Other Implications:

None.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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