


## REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

**21st September 2020**

<b>Subject:</b>	Reset and Recovery
<b>Cabinet Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life
<b>Director:</b>	Executive Director for Children's Services - Lesley Hagger
<b>Contribution towards Vision 2030:</b>	
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Lesley Hagger – Executive Director for Children's Services

### **DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Scrutiny Board:**

1. Receive the presentation which provides an up to date position on reset and recovery activity across children's services and education functions;
2. Consider the findings from the impact assessment work undertaken on communities in Phase One of the corporate reset and recovery programme.

#### **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

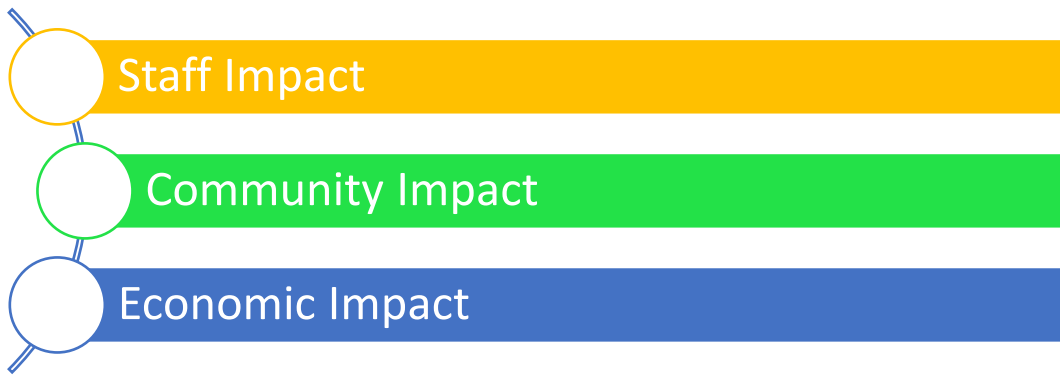
- 1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Board with the most recent position statement regarding the reset and recovery of services relevant to children's services and education.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Scrutiny Board is sighted on the activity undertaken in Phase One of the corporate reset and recovery programme and the findings from this work in relation to impact on the community.

## **2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030**

- 2.1 Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic with our communities, stakeholders and partners will have an impact on all ten of the Vision 2030 ambitions.

## **3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020, the Scrutiny Board received a report about the impact of Covid19 and lockdown on children, young people and their families and the way that services have responded. This report provides a further update.
- 3.2 During the summer period, the council's support to vulnerable children was of particular focus whilst schools were not operating. This included providing food and supplies, learning and play resources, and other support, including increased online mental health and wellbeing support and increased detached youth work activities.
- 3.3 From the start of the new academic year, all children have been expected to return to school. Sandwell's schools, college and other learning providers, including our early years settings and childminders, have worked tirelessly to ensure that children can access education and care.
- 3.4 The assurance meetings with DfE and Ofsted, which were daily for the first few months of lockdown, have continued to take place several times each week, and have increased again to daily meetings since the start of the academic year. It is expected that Ofsted will undertake a focused visit in the next few months looking at the support provided to vulnerable children.
- 3.5 The priority for Phase One of the reset and recovery programme, our immediate post-crisis response, has been to move out of lockdown safely and ensure that we retain flexibility to respond to changes in the local infection rate to support the most vulnerable in our communities. The report to the Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> September will outline more detail on Phase One.
- 3.6 In order to achieve the required outcomes from Phase One on understanding the impact of COVID-19, on 18 June 2020 the Reset and Recovery Board established three impact working groups:



3.7 Each group had the following remit: -

- i. to share impact intelligence (including service user/ community intelligence) from directorate areas and external contacts, discuss findings, themes and future implications
- ii. to agree the key messages from analysis of the intelligence to feed into the overall impact report, with particular focus on the following points: -
  - o The impact of COVID-19 on existing issues (negative/positive impact)
  - o Whether COVID-19 resulted in new issues for the borough/council?
  - o Suggest areas for the next stage (thematic working groups).

## 4 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Services for children and young people have continued to be provided with minimal reduction, however, it is expected that the full impact of lockdown on children and young people will not be fully realised for some months. Service areas are planning to respond to a 'surge' in demand, particularly as all children return to school.
- 4.2 Sandwell's schools are open for all children; some have taken a phased approach to the re-introduction of year groups. There have been a number of schools where pupils and/or staff have developed Covid19 symptoms or have had positive test results. Schools are very well-prepared to manage these situations.
- 4.3 The DfE has required a range of additional reporting during the Covid19 period and is producing a range of reports that set out the national impact of the pandemic on children and young people. The first report from the DfE is expected on 16<sup>th</sup> September.
- 4.4 The Impact Working Groups have now concluded their initial analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on our borough, although it is acknowledged that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to be felt by our communities for

some time to come. We will work to continue to understand this developing picture to ensure that the Council continues to respond to any new and emerging needs.

- 4.5 This Community Impact Working Group, led by the Executive Director - Children's Services and the Director – Housing and Communities, has met twice during July and August 2020 and has found that the effect of COVID-19 on our communities reflected that of the national picture, experiencing issues around mental health, food insecurity, digital exclusion, financial hardship and social stresses. Also, like the national picture our BAME communities have been affected greatly by the pandemic.
- 4.6 A more comprehensive view of the findings from the Community Impact Working Group is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.
- 4.7 The Economic Impact Working Group has considered the impact on employment and skills for young people; the Staff Impact Working Group has considered the impact on staff, our services and the finance of the council and details will be contained in the report to the Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.
- 4.8 Phase two of the reset and recovery programme will take the findings from this impact analysis to inform the development of a revised corporate plan in order to ensure that the council continues to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

## **5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

- 5.1 Town Workshops were held with elected members, this ensured that all members had the opportunity to participate, and add intelligence to, the impact analysis. Discussions that took place in this series of seven events were fed through to the impact working groups.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive held a series of staff focus groups, to both offer staff an opportunity to ask questions and to hear about staff experiences of lockdown, challenges in working from home and ideas they may have for the future. Again, this intelligence was fed into the Impact Working Groups.
- 5.3 Looking forward it is paramount that the key messages from the impact work are shared and discussed across our organisation and with our partners, so we can develop a shared understanding of the challenges we face and the positives we want to harness. There are plans to consult widely internally and externally with the findings of the impact analysis.

Consultation with the voluntary sector has been planned to take place during September through four separately themed workshops.

## **6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 The framework set out in the report approved by the Emergency Committee will result in the development of plans to enable the organisation and the borough to recover from the impact of COVID-19, therefore alternative options are not required at this stage. When developing approaches and determining specific activities, it will be essential to consider alternative options to ensure the most appropriate way forward is agreed.

## **7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The development of the Reset and Recovery Plan will not require specific resources over and above those already allocated to corporate planning activities within the 2020/21 budget.

## **8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 Transparency in decision making and accountability for delivery of the Reset and Recovery Plan will be key to its success. Governance will feed into the existing democratic arrangements and develop over time as more functions come back online. Links to regional activity will be key to the recovery of the council and borough, working in partnership with others, sharing intelligence and maximising the opportunities for Sandwell as whole.

## **9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on the reset and recovery process, no specific activity was required on the framework. However, the impact assessments of COVID-19 carried out as part of this framework will highlight if any specific groups have been impacted more than others. This intelligence will drive priorities and activity within the Reset and Recovery Plan.
- 9.2 Throughout the development of the Reset and Recovery Plan, equality impact assessments will be conducted on specific proposals at the appropriate time.

## **10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

10.1 Any information used to compile this report is subject to information governance legislation and is managed in accordance with the council's policies and protocols. A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

## **11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

11.1 There is no requirement to carry out a Crime and Disorder and Risk Assessment.

## **12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS**

12.1 The information contained within the presentation that accompanies this report will be incorporated into specific plans developed as a result of this framework.

## **13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)**

13.1 The immediate impact of COVID-19 on the health and wellbeing of both Sandwell residents and council staff has been captured through the impact assessments. These impact assessments have identified priorities for action that will be assessed further in Phase Two of the recovery framework. The longer-term impacts will not be understood for some time, particularly the impact on children's wellbeing and safety. It will be important to continue to update our impact assessments throughout the planning period to ensure any planned activity addresses the key issues.

## **14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND**

14.1 As part of the development of the Reset and Recovery Plan and in response to increased financial pressures on council budgets, we will need to review the council's corporate estate rationalise costs and ensure it accommodates the future needs of a more flexible workforce.

## **15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

15.1 The work carried out over the last few months has captured data and intelligence from a broad range of sources. This has enabled us to determine the impact of COVID-19 on the borough and on the organisation.

15.2 It is clear from our experiences of responding to the crisis that we work better by coming together. Therefore, the key messages from this

intelligence should be shared and discussed widely in order to identify the best activities and approaches to address the issues.

- 15.3 Members are asked to consider the findings from the impact assessment work in order to shape the future priorities for the council and Sandwell as a whole.

## 16 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 16.1 Cabinet report – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

## 17 **APPENDICES:**

Appendix A – Presentation to Scrutiny Board meeting  
Appendix B - Community Impact outcomes

**Lesley Hagger**  
**Executive Director for Children's Services**