



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Cabinet

16 June 2020

Report of: Councillor Kelham Cooke
The Leader of the Council



COVID-19 SKDC Recovery Plan

The report sets out a framework for developing a recovery plan from the effects of COVID-19 and provides an overview of the activities planned to be undertaken in the current stage.

Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
Administrative	Non-Key	All Wards

Reviewed by:	Lee Sirdifield, Strategic Director, Transformation and Change	5 June 2020
Approved by:	Karen Bradford, Chief Executive	5 June 2020
Signed off by:	Councillor Kelham Cooke, The Leader of the Council	8 June 2020

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- 1. Approve the framework for developing a Recovery Plan**
- 2. Note the upcoming activities in the “Restart” phase of the framework**

1 Background and Context

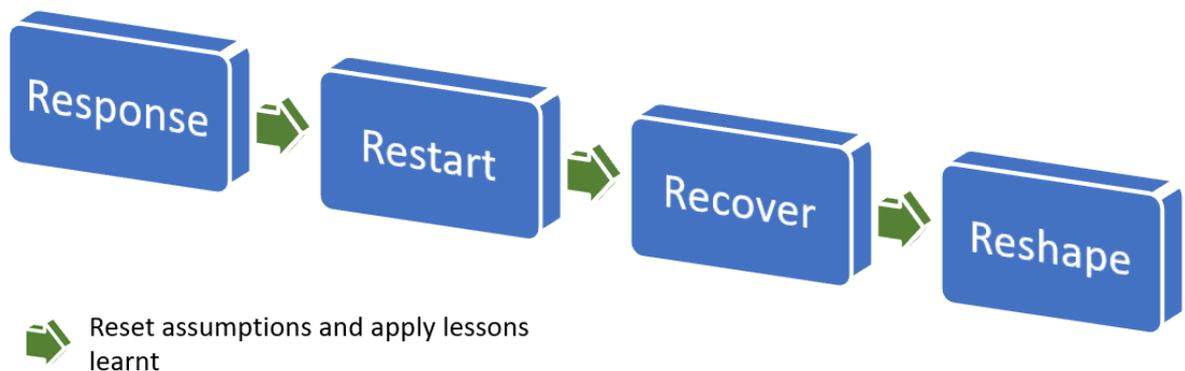
- 1.1 Following an outbreak in early 2020 the World Health Organisation declared that COVID-19 was a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. The ongoing spread of the disease across Europe initiated a response from Government and authorities across the United Kingdom. The situation is rapidly changing and there remain high levels of uncertainty over how the pandemic will progress, the measures that may have to be taken and if some decisions will have to be reversed.
- 1.2 The initial response was, by necessity primarily reactive. The details of actions to date are presented within a separate report on this agenda. SKDC is seeking to build on the positive activity in the 'response' stage and embed lessons learnt in developing a longer-term recovery plan.
- 1.3 Alongside the COVID-19 Recovery Plan the Council is developing a Corporate Plan and a revised Budgetary Framework. It is intended that the Corporate Plan, COVID-19 Recovery Plan and revised Budget Framework are developed alongside each other to ensure a joined-up approach to planning and resourcing priorities. It is anticipated that all three documents will be presented to Cabinet and Full Council in September 2020, establishing key priorities for South Kesteven and providing the cornerstone of the performance management framework.

2 Framework for recovery

- 2.1 Even though the environment is uncertain and dynamic, the initial reactive measures have been accomplished so there is now the potential to plan our next steps in a more proactive manner. The overwhelming focus is on ensuring that the District emerges in the best possible state from COVID-19 and SKDC leads the District effectively.
- 2.2 To best enable the District to recover and thrive in the longer term it is essential that the Council, and other key stakeholders are proactive in planning, managing and delivering a recovery plan and that it enables the Council to take a strategic approach to shaping the future rather than aiming to simply recreate a pre-COVID-19 environment.

The proposed framework is set out in the Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: COVID-19 Recovery Plan framework



- 2.3 The proposal is to follow a four stage process for the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, with an expectation that between stages, a 'reset review' is undertaken to ensure that the route being taken is still appropriate, assumptions are valid and to apply any learning from events to date. The four phases are:

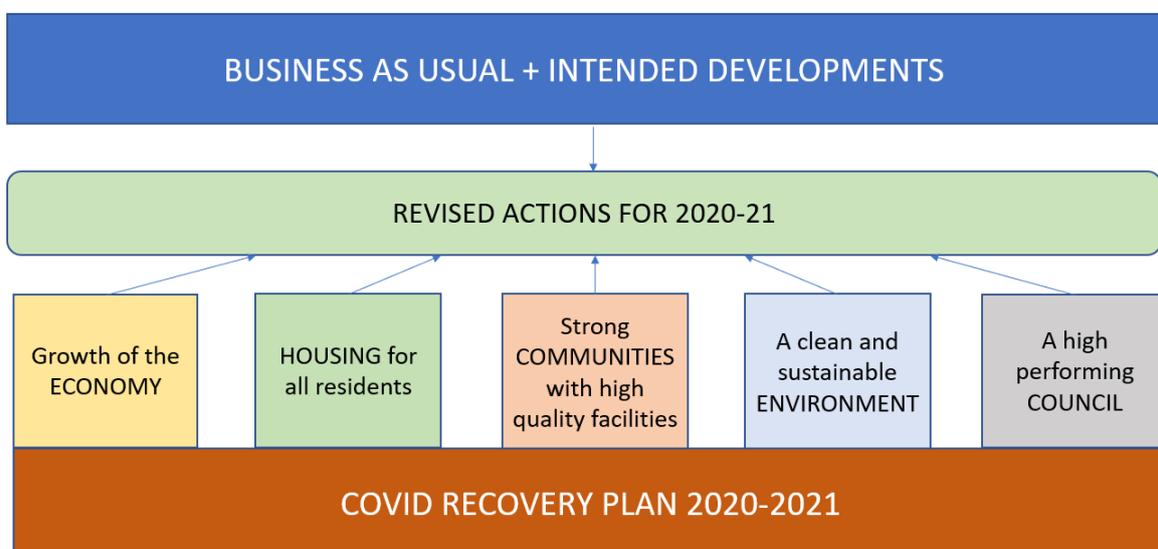
- **Response** – the immediate, primarily emergency / reactive things happening as the pandemic developed (e.g. closing public buildings, staff working from home, initial business grant distribution)
- **Restart** – the phased re-opening of operations (sports facilities, supporting wider businesses to re-open, arts activities)
- **Recover** – stimulating activities to spark wider businesses (sector specific support, focus of InvestSK)
- **Reshape** – revising our long-term plans to incorporate wider changes in behaviours and role in community leadership (greater digital service offering, increased working from home, embedding carbon reduction into new ways of working)

- 2.4 SKDC is currently transitioning from the ‘Response’ to ‘Restart’ phases and expected activities are explained in section 4 of the report.
- 2.5 When services are looking to move to the next stage, it is important that a review and resetting of assumptions takes place. This is to ensure that all latest guidance and information is considered, lessons learned (both internally and elsewhere) are incorporated and what we planned to achieve is still appropriate given any changes in circumstances. This is further considered in section 5 of the report.
- 2.6 Activities should be planned with an end goal in mind. It may be inefficient to re-open a service in its current form if there are plans to substantially change the way it is provided very soon thereafter (for example moving to much more online and digital provision).
- 2.7 The uncertain nature of the environment is not conducive to placing firm timeframes for each of these phases; for some or all services there may be a need to go back stages (for example if there is a second peak and a more constrained lockdown).

3 Interaction with existing plans and the developing Corporate Plan

- 3.1 Figure 2 sets out the interactions between intended actions built into the current year’s budget and the new developments required in response to COVID-19. Based upon some initial analysis and emerging challenges and opportunities, these actions have been themed into five areas.

Figure 2: Developing an overall approach for the District combining the COVID-19 response and other priorities



- 3.2 The above diagram demonstrates that COVID-19 has imposed an additional set of requirements and constraints. The interaction of the original plan and COVID-19 Recovery Plan creates a set of activities. Some of these will be overseen by existing project and programme boards some operational changes through normal line management arrangements and the remainder through a COVID-19 Response Group. These additional actions in the 'Response' phase are detailed in a separate report on the agenda; the actions for the 'Restart' phase are contained within Appendices 1-5.
- 3.3 All activities have been linked to the emerging themes, which have been given the working titles set out below – however it should be noted that these themes are subject to change during the development of the Recovery Plan and other documents under development:
- Delivering Growth of our Economy
 - Housing that meets the Needs of our Residents
 - Strong Communities with High Quality Facilities
 - A Clean and Sustainable Environment
 - A High Performing Council.
- 3.4 COVID-19 has had a real impact upon the objectives (such as supporting business and employment in the area), although it is also presenting a number of opportunities in some areas (addressing carbon emissions through changes in working arrangements).
- 3.5 Alongside the COVID-19 response, work is progressing to develop a draft Corporate Plan. More details are contained within the 'Next Steps' section (section 12 of the report).

4 Restart Phase

- 4.1 This phase is characterised by the phased re-opening of certain services. Broadly speaking the 'Restart Phase' is anticipated to run between June and September 2020. Although it should be noted that there will by necessity be variations between different service areas and the nature of the response is that the wider environment (e.g. a second wave) could result in a return to an earlier phase. The key activities per draft recovery themes are as follows:

Theme	Activity
Deliver Growth of our Economy	Commence discretionary fund for business
	Re-opening town centres
	Progressing priority capital projects
Housing that meets the Needs of our Residents	Restart housing management, maintenance and repairs services
	Start construction of new build Council Housing on sites with planning approval
	Prioritising development within Grantham
Strong Communities with High Quality Facilities	Supporting the Government's 'Track and Trace' scheme
	Phased re-opening of Arts Centres and leisure facilities
	Reshaping support for the voluntary sector and befriending services
A Clean and Sustainable Environment	Publish SKDC's carbon footprint and carbon reduction opportunities
	Phased restart of wider Environmental Health and Licensing services
	Review the service outcomes for Street Scene, Waste and Recycling

A High Performing Council.	Amended budget produced
	Recommend the Constitution review
	Phased return of face-to-face customer services

4.2 The full list of activities is provided as Appendices 1-5. Due to the fluid nature of the situation and the potential that we could move backwards in stages, especially if there is a second peak of the pandemic, there are no target dates associated with these activities.

4.3 The purpose of this report is to enable us to be prepared to transition effectively to future phases. These will be detailed in a further report presented in September.

5 Changes, Reset Reviews and Lessons Learnt

5.1 It is important that in this unprecedented and volatile situation that the outcome of our actions and the wider environment are considered at a regular basis. While each service may have its own timelines (and be dependent on guidance from Central Government), it is felt that broadly we are moving from the 'Response' stage into the 'Restart' stage.

5.2 As we progress through each stage, it is important to consider risks, opportunities and lessons learned to shape our future direction, looking at what went well and what needs to be improved.

5.3 It is recommended that there should be a formal '*reset review*' at key points where the overall emphasis changes to ensure that assumptions are still valid and that resources are directed to the right activities to best achieve the long term aims. Based upon the fluidity of the situation, it could well be that we move backward through the stages at some points if the local or national position deteriorates and further restrictions are (re)introduced.

6 Governance and Accountability including the Role of Members

6.1 The general principles of this approach are to be open, transparent and subject to scrutiny. However, the initial stages were much more reactive and by their nature needed operational and immediate decisions. It should be noted that this could be the case again if the need for greater lockdown measures arise again or certain sectors are required to close. However, as we move through the stages the decisions become more strategic and it is fully expected that decisions will follow constitutional requirements.

6.2 The Leader of the Council will be responsible for the development and delivery of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan. However, the nature of the Recovery Plan is such that it will cut across all of the Cabinet portfolios and Cabinet Members will be responsible for delivery of actions within their portfolios. It is anticipated that scrutiny will be invited to support both the development and delivery of the Recovery Plan, with Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny committee providing scrutiny for the overall plan.

6.3 The Senior Accountable Officer for the COVID-19 response is the Chief Executive and the strategic Member lead is the Leader of the Council. Activities are broken down into themes and these will be jointly led by officers from the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet Members. However, the practical governance steps will change on a phase by phase basis.

6.4 A key element of the response phase for SKDC was the role of Members in supporting the community, informing and shaping the response of SKDC. The intention is to continue to enable all Members to proactively engage with and shape the recovery plan both formally

and informally. The mechanisms for doing this will be outlined in the detailed September report and will be informed by feedback from Members.

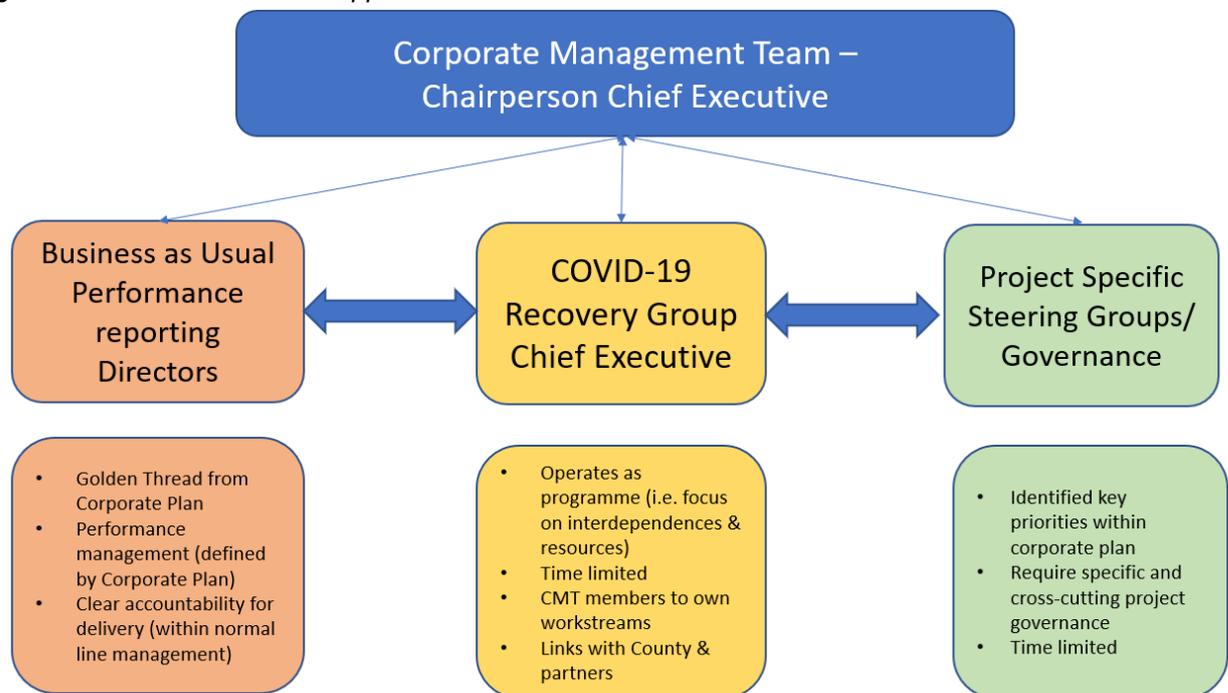
Response Phase

6.5 Due to the urgent and reactive nature, decisions were taken on a delegated basis by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. As we are reaching the end of this phase, all decisions taken via this emergency route were reported to Full Council (on 14th May 2020). A paper setting out all the operational decisions is presented elsewhere on this agenda.

Restart Phase

6.6 Most of the decisions are operational in basis, primarily re-opening services and providing support to others reopening as the situation and Government guidance allows. However, as these actions are more proactive, this paper (and in particular Appendices 1-5) sets out the activities planned in advance for approval by Cabinet. Figure 3 sets out the proposed internal governance structure for this phase.

Figure 3: Internal Governance approach for Restart Phase



Recovery Phase

6.7 Three papers are intended to be presented to Cabinet in September 2020. These are an amended budget paper, a COVID-19 Recovery Plan and a Corporate Plan. These papers will set the context and approach for this recovery phase. Although internally certain tasks will be overseen as part of a COVID-19 response project, services will be subject to usual Scrutiny processes.

Reshape Phase

6.8 It is expected that activities will be built into business as usual processes by this stage. A Corporate Plan incorporating COVID-19 responses will be produced and future annual Budgets and Medium-Term Financial Plans will incorporate all such activities within them. Portfolio Holders will have oversight of all activities relating to their areas of responsibility.

7 Working with Partners

- 7.1 One of the key positive features of the immediate response was the very positive relationship with partners including businesses, the voluntary sector and other areas of the public sector. The framework has been developed to harness the potential of these partnerships and to ensure that community leadership within the District is enhanced through activities within the response.
- 7.2 One of the key partnerships enhanced during the response, has been through the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF). The details of the work undertaken to date through the 'Response' phase are detailed in a separate report on this agenda. We intend to sustain our relationship within the LRF through the future phases of our response, to ensure a pan-Lincolnshire co-ordinated response. The LRF is continuing to operate Strategic and Tactical Co-ordination Groups on which SKDC will be fully represented, alongside this the focus of the activity has moved to the development of a Recovery Plan, which itself contains various task and finish groups (e.g. communities, business and economy, communications, resources and finance)
- 7.3 This will not always mean doing the same things as other local authorities in the area; but ensuring that activities and their impact are understood. The governance structure for the LRF recovery phase is attached in Appendix 6.
- 7.4 A summary of the other groups that SKDC is a part of and the objectives are set out below:

Forum	Objectives	SKDC attendance
Lincolnshire LAs Leaders Groups	Set strategic direction to LA response in Lincolnshire Identify key messages to feedback internally and externally	Leader of the Council
Lincolnshire LAs Chief Executive Group	Strategic overview of LA response in Lincolnshire Adopt consistency and learn form best practice in the County Influence strategic direction of regional and national response	Chief Executive
Lincolnshire LAs S.151 Officers Group	Focus on financial issues/challenges in Lincolnshire Adopt consistency in financial modelling and a best practice approach Coordinated lobbying of regional and national platforms with regard to local authority financial impact	Director of Finance
Lincolnshire LAs Chief Monitoring Officers Group	Early identification and response to emerging issues (e.g. GDPR/safeguarding challenges) Robust and consistent response to key and emerging issues Understand issues around democratic processes and virtual meetings	Director of Law and Governance
Lincolnshire LAs Community Response Group	Adopt agreed approach to identifying and communicating with vulnerable residents Develop flexible and streamlined approach to utilising volunteering groups Learning from best practice and influencing LRF response	Assistant Chief Executive
East Midlands Councils	Sharing challenges and solutions	Chief Executive

Local Government Association	Communicate as a single voice for the LA sector around challenges and support requirements Guidance around key issues (e.g. furloughing)	Leader of Council and Chief Executive
District Councils Network	Sharing challenges and solutions from a District Council perspective Communicate as a single voice to Government of financial challenges of District Councils (resulting in improved provision in second round of Government funding)	Leader of Council and Chief Executive
Lincolnshire Leisure Group	Develop a consistent and informed approach regarding current and likely future leisure issues in the light of current restrictions Provide advice to Chief Executives on co-ordinated approach to the leisure sector	Head of Leisure
Lincolnshire Planning Group	Work collaboratively to embed new planning processes, governance and delegations Response collectively to new planning guidance/approach developed by Government	Strategic Director of Growth
Greater Lincolnshire Housing Delivery Group	Work collaboratively to stimulate housing growth, explore opportunities to attract funding into the housing market. Coordinate housing growth potential in the sub-region and share best practice.	Assistant Director-Housing
Lincolnshire Environmental Health Managers Group	To ensure a consistent countywide approach to the enforcement of the new Health Protection Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations Share intelligence and information with other agencies e.g. Police and Trading Standards	Head of Environmental Services
LRF Test and Trace sub-cell	To work collaboratively in order to ensure that, in Lincolnshire, the national Test and Trace programme meets the need of the local population	Head of Environmental Services

8 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny

- 8.1 The framework for the COVID-19 Recovery Plan and strategic fit with other documents was discussed with Councillors at the all Members Briefing on 1 June 2020.
- 8.2 SKDC officers and Members have been consulting with partners and external stakeholders about the nature of the recovery plan, including others that are developing similar plans to ensure they interact effectively. These include, but are not limited to, the groups outlined in the table above. Part of SKDC's consultation includes partners, such as the key representatives in the voluntary sector who have indicated a keenness to work with SKDC in developing the recovery plan.
- 8.3 This report has not been considered by a scrutiny committee as it is setting a framework for future activity, however the full report, which is expected to be considered by Cabinet and Full Council in September, will engage fully through the scrutiny process.

9 Available Options Considered

9.1 Alternative options considered and rejected are as follows:

- Do nothing – effectively continue with a reactive approach and delegated decisions for the foreseeable future; this was rejected as it is felt that it is important to ensure plans are developed to steer activity
- Do minimum – waiting to produce the September amended budget report and incorporate all future actions into this; this was rejected as this would combine strategy, finance and an emerging COVID-19 environment into a single document, which would be very complex and therefore less transparent
- Return to ‘normal’ – create a Corporate Plan and amended Budget through standard processes and rely on adopted Scrutiny and decision making processes (and internal line management) for enacting decisions; this was rejected as we feel the situation is too volatile for this at the moment; this is seen to be more appropriate at the ‘Reshape’ phase

10 Preferred Option

10.1 The preferred option is to form a specific approach to the changing COVID-19 requirements and integrate this back into business of usual in a phased approach. This maximises the transparency, openness and scrutiny opportunity while balancing the need for reactive responses during emergency periods.

11 Reasons for the Recommendation(s)

11.1 To set out an appropriate framework to develop and over time to integrate our COVID-19 response to usual activities and to present the actions proposed in the next stage of our response.

12 Next Steps, Communication and Implementation of the Decision

12.1 Internal and external communication form specific actions within the COVID-19 response. The focus on communication will be on specific activities within the plan, rather than communicating about the framework itself.

12.2 A draft Corporate Plan is being developed. This will be informed by a range of informal briefings and workshops with Cabinet and other Councillors and also via formal scrutiny and oversight, before being presented to Cabinet in September. If supported by Cabinet it will then be considered by Full Council. Research and performance data are being collated and validated by officers currently as part of internal consultation to ensure that priorities and actions are evidence based.

13 Financial Implications

13.1 There will be a requirement to present an amended budget to reflect the known changes to the approved budgets and put forward the options for financing the forecast changes in the budget framework. The actions contained in this report will be met from existing resources and any variations to existing budgets will be considered as part of the amendments.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Interim Director of Finance

14 Legal and Governance Implications

- 14.1 A planned, structured approach to recovery and reshaping the Council's services is to be welcomed, as it provides a structured, transparent and accountable framework for the Council's functions, duties, and responsibilities towards the communities of South Kesteven.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Shahin Ismail, Director of Law and Governance

15 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 15.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out and is presented in Appendix 7. As the actions are primarily intended to support people and businesses within the District disadvantaged by COVID-19 the general assessment is positive. There remains a risk that a move to more remote and digital service provision could negatively impact older people and those without access to internet (potentially in the more rural areas); these will need to be assessed and mitigated on a service-by-service basis as those plans are developed.

16 Risk and Mitigation

- 16.1 A risk register is presented as Appendix 8. The headline risks / threats and the mitigation actions are highlighted below:

- That the impact of COVID-19 puts pressure on the Council's financial position – this is mitigated by ongoing monitoring of the financial position of the Council and with the development and presentation of an amended budget to Council planned for September
- That there is a second wave of COVID-19 infections – the framework is setup to allow a reversion to a more reactive phase as needed to deal with any emergency situations and processes are in place to allow the Council to work in this way
- That COVID-19 has a significant financial impact on business and residents throughout the District – the framework focuses on actions to support people and businesses throughout, but a focus is given in the 'Recover' phase of activities. Individual actions throughout (such as the rates relief scheme) are in place to support businesses and residents as much as possible

- 16.2 In addition, on a service by service basis, there will be a service level risk assessment and building use assessment before any changes are made.

17 Community Safety Implications

- 17.1 There are no direct community safety implications in this report. Re-opening and changing services may have specific implications and these will be considered on a service by service basis; but the adoption of this framework does not.

18 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Councils declaration of a climate emergency?

- 18.1 The approach recommended retains 'A Clean and Sustainable Environment' as one of five key themes identified for consideration for both the COVID-19 response and the developing Corporate Plan. This is to ensure that the impact on carbon and general sustainability is fully considered in all decisions.

19 Other Implications (where significant)

19.1 All significant implications are highlighted above.

20 Background Papers

20.1 Decisions taken during COVID-19 response period including decisions made under General Exception and Special Urgency arrangements – Full Council 14th May 2020
<http://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s25571/Decisions%20taken%20during%20the%20COVID-19%20response%20period.pdf>
COVID-19 Budget Position – Cabinet 16th June 2020
COVID-19 Position Statement – Cabinet 16th June 2020

21 Appendices

21.1 Appendices 1-5 – Activities in COVID-19 ‘Restart’ Phase
Appendix 6 – Governance Structure for LRF Recovery Phase
Appendix 7 – Equality Assessment
Appendix 8 – Risk Register

Report Timeline:	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	18 May 2020
	Final Decision date	16 June 2020