

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Recovery Principles and Priorities

The Deal
2030

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Recovery Principles and Priorities

Our new future:
how we will
make a fairer
and more secure
future for Wigan
Borough in a
world changed
by Covid-19

This executive summary outlines how we are adapting our strategic approach in a changed world. The Covid-19 pandemic has been the most challenging emergency Wigan Borough and the council has responded to in recent times. The nature of the pandemic saw the council react at speed to implement Government policy and five key local political priorities to limit the spread of the virus, protect the health of all our residents and ensure the most vulnerable in our communities are safe and cared for. This has required a remarkable effort by our staff, partners and residents many of whom have worked tirelessly and acted with compassion and love to protect, support and care for others. Yet the financial, social and wider economic impact of the pandemic is the great test we now face and the scale of it cannot be underestimated. As we move from lockdown to a transition period this document signals how as a council we commit to fundamentally transform and collectively work through the unprecedented challenges while retaining the behaviours and principles which are at the core of being Wigan. We will also take this unique opportunity to refresh our priorities and ambitions and move into a phase of transformation where we can create a fairer and more secure future for all of our residents in Wigan Borough.

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AIM OF OUR APPROACH

We aim to support all communities, businesses and public services in Wigan Borough to recover following Covid-19. We will have to transform as a council to address the significant adverse economic impacts of the crisis. We will strive to create a new future through harnessing the innovation and improvements made during the pandemic. We will build on the strengths and creativity of our communities and the partnerships we have developed to build a fairer, safer, greener and more secure society, with better health outcomes and a growing and more sustainable local economy.

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PHASES

Our recovery will be delivered in three phases:

1. Release of lockdown (0 - 2months)
2. Transition (0 - 12 months)
3. Transformation (0 - beyond 12 months through a refreshed Deal 2030)

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PRINCIPLES

We have set out eight principles which will guide how we apply our approach.

1

In order to meet the financial challenges facing us and the social and economic challenges facing the borough we must fundamentally transform as a council through deeper application of our Deal principles and behaviours and accept there is no going back to how we operated prior to the crisis.

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We will listen to our residents to understand how their priorities have changed and we will refresh Deal 2030 on the back of this engagement to ensure our plan for the borough matches the aspirations and priorities of our citizens.

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3

Based on our established asset-based approach through The Deal, we will continue to work closely with communities, businesses and the voluntary sector in the recovery process, so that those most affected are not left behind and our partnership working will be as strong as ever following our shared experience in responding to this crisis.

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To support our local economy and businesses throughout this challenging time we will adopt and commit to community wealth building principles as standard across the council and in collaboration with our anchor partners.

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The low carbon economy and future of our environment is now a fundamental priority when making strategic decisions. This will support the economy and future resilience of the borough.

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6

We will identify best practice and lessons learned in order to support recovery and we will take that learning and innovate, giving our brilliant staff permission to develop new, efficient and effective ways of delivering services to maximise their impact. Our BeWigan behaviours of being positive, accountable, courageous and kind will continue to flow through everything we do.

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We will be robust in identifying potential funding sources to support recovery, ensure communities and businesses can access the support that is available and use creative new ways and models to deliver services and the support that matters most to our people.

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Our plans and decisions will be communicated regularly and openly and in a wide range of methods to keep as many people informed and updated as possible. This will build on the confidence and trust we have developed with our residents throughout the pandemic

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PRIORITY AREAS

We have set out the following priority areas to focus our efforts in the immediate transition phase after lockdown and into a transformation phase for a refreshed Deal 2030:

Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of all our people

Support a sustainable economic recovery that benefits everyone

Build on strengths within our communities

Ensure all our children and young people return to and thrive in their education or training

Meet the council's financial challenges and retain new and better ways of working

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Protect and
improve the health
and wellbeing of all
our people

TRANSITION:

Protecting the health of all of our residents in the borough has been the highest priority for the council during the pandemic. In the transition phase the same priority must be given to helping protect our residents as we emerge from lockdown – and potentially from a second wave of Covid-19. The council will work to ensure that Government policy on easing the lockdown will be implemented in the borough safely and in a managed and coordinated way. The council with its partners will support the maintenance of social distancing as required and the roll out of a testing and contact tracing approach in the borough. As a borough with proportionally high levels of older people we have many residents who will continue to be adversely affected by social distancing measures for the elderly or with underlying health conditions.

We will consider and respond to the immediate impacts of Covid-19 on the health and wellbeing of our communities, including the impact of social issues like social isolation, financial worries or concerns, increased poverty, food poverty, impact of multiple health issues, domestic violence and increased vulnerability of specific groups of residents such as our homeless population. We will be taking steps in our physical environment to support physical distancing as well as more journeys

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by walking and cycling. We will work to ensure that our welfare offer is able to meet demand and deliver services that reduce financial burden. We will help tenancy sustainability, support residents in crisis and provide wrap around services with partners to help our most vulnerable residents.

TRANSFORMATION:

The health and social care sector in the borough provides a valuable and essential anchor for the health of our people and as a foundation for our local economy. The council is a cornerstone of this sector and with its partners will continue to bring health and care services closer together for the benefit of the health of our residents and to provide equality of access to services through the Healthier Wigan Partnership. In collaboration with partners new and improved ways established in the pandemic in delivering health services will be retained. The council will be paying particular support and attention to the care home market and its recovery and will look for opportunities to shape this market so it provides the highest possible quality of care and sustainable local employment. We will also be looking at whether an ethical framework approach can apply to the nursery and early years care sector for children.

In-keeping with our Deal 2030 priority of 'Happy, healthy people' the council will support and encourage the habit of increased daily physical activity that many thousands of our residents have been participating in during the lockdown with people being encouraged to continue to maintain at least one hour's daily exercise to improve physical and mental health in the long-term reducing demand on our acute services and increasing healthy life expectancy. Through our #BeKind movement we will build on the neighbourly kindness seen throughout the pandemic and the importance to mental health of being connected to and supported by your local community. Our cultural manifesto 'The Fire Within' we will harness our community's collective creativity with an emphasis on healing, re-connecting and future visioning.

The part our welfare support, welfare rights and advice offer will play is more important now than ever. We will support residents in new ways to help them overcome the social and economic impact of the pandemic.

As a direct consequence of the lockdown there has been less reliance on the car as primary mode of transport. Across Greater Manchester walking or running for exercise is up by 120% and cycling for exercise is up 45%. The work done previously in

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Wigan by developing the Bee Network will be used to promote sustainable transport. We have already started to introduce greater access for cycling and walking with extended pedestrian zone times and more reduced speed limits in urban areas and this will continue. Greater access for safer cycling and walking will support healthier lifestyles and reduced congestion and CO2 emissions.

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Support a
sustainable
economic recovery

TRANSITION:

The borough's economy is set to face its biggest challenge in recent times with a recession likely to be of historic depth resulting in loss of jobs and businesses. The council has helped support local businesses with the rapid distribution of the local small business grant and a comprehensive business advice and engagement offer during the lockdown. The easing of restrictions will be a time of great uncertainty for all businesses. Many will seek to bounce back when direct Government support reduces or ends. Many may fail including SMEs which are so vital to our local economy. There are an estimated 26% of Wigan employees currently furloughed and all analysts agree that there is very significant risk of redundancy after this scheme ends, with projections of between 15-20% unemployment within 12 months. There is a risk that the recession will affect the structure of the local economy in the long term, shifting it away from local businesses which are the bedrock of a thriving local economy, generating good jobs, local investment and increased stake for consumers and workers. As a council we will be in constant communication with businesses to understand difficulties on the ground and where possible to support locally and at a Greater Manchester level. We will also lobby Government where we think new or changes in policies need to be made to keep our

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businesses going, to help people to start businesses and to help people access the skills and training they need for work. Higher levels of unemployment will mean we will anticipate increased demand on our hardship and welfare services which we will be prepared for.

TRANSFORMATION:

We believe the council's role in shaping a fairer local economy is now more vital than it has ever been before. Our partnership for community wealth building was formed just prior to the pandemic lockdown. With local partners such as the hospital, CCG, college and schools we will use our procurement power to rebuild the local economy and support sustainable local supply chains. We will use our combined recruitment reach to ensure that post Covid-19 those furthest from the labour market will not be left at the back of the queue and can access local and sustainable employment which pays fairly. We need to scale up employment support particularly in our areas of most potential. We will continue to support the repurposing of redundant assets to socially valuable activities. In the medium to longer-term we will explore how forms of investment and financial flows can help the creation of new local economic structures such as social enterprises, co-ops and mutuals. This approach delivered at scale and with

ambition in a borough-wide partnership aligns with our Deal 2030 priority of creating 'Economic growth that benefits everyone'. This is now even more critical in supporting our financial viability as an organisation through rebuilding the significant lost income in our budget and therefore our ability to support residents through essential services. Our cultural offer and ambitious cultural manifesto 'The Fire Within' will remain to support the overarching aims set out in the manifesto. We will explore new models in-keeping with our community wealth building principles to support and sustain our cultural sector.

We have a strong, well-evidenced plan for the growth of our towns and the wider borough as set out in our Deal 2030 priority of creating 'Vibrant town centres for all'. Disruption is inevitable but we cannot let the Covid-19 crisis de-rail that plan. It is now more essential than ever. The plan we have positions us strongly to make the case for additional resources and we need to maintain our level of ambition as we move out of this crisis, whilst sustaining the cultural identity that sets us apart. But it's not all about money. We will develop strategic partnerships with the GMCA, the private sector, RSLs and with agencies like Homes England and Historic England, building on the positive relationships we've been establishing over recent years. Through

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those partnerships we will develop strong programmes for growth and regeneration that will drive us through recovery and beyond.

A strong borough partnership delivering education, skills and employment opportunities will be essential to the future of our economy. The borough's recent high levels of employment are highly likely to be hit post Covid-19 with further increases in the number of people who are not in employment, education or training. Young people are likely to be disproportionately disadvantaged. Our partnership will focus on good quality skills and employment provision in partnership with businesses which are locally rooted and invested in our borough. We will seek inward investment in the borough particularly in growth sectors such as digital, the low carbon green economy, construction and engineering. We will need to consider quick conversion courses to help ensure people can move rapidly from one job into another or from declining to emerging job areas. This will also need investment in skills and people at a time when many will feel uncertain.

We will support the growth of the low carbon economy in the borough based on community wealth building principles to foster and develop local supply chains, to deliver local economic growth and employment

opportunities and enable the borough to become less reliant on fossil fuels over the next 5-10 years. We will promote use of electric vehicles, supported by an increase in electric vehicle charging points across the borough. Low carbon heating will replace traditional gas in new developments from 2025, and we will enable communities to be powered by non-traditional renewable sources such as ground source heat pumps, district heating networks, the deployment of solar PV on council owned buildings.

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Build on the new
strengths within
our communities

TRANSITION:

The relationships established with partners and the voluntary and community sector through The Deal together with our neighbourhood model was the foundation on which we built our community response to Covid-19. It was highly effective in bringing the council, public sector partners, the voluntary and community sector, elected members, business and volunteers together to meet the needs of those who were shielded, self-isolating or vulnerable. The response was a real-life example of 'Communities that care for each other' as set out in Deal 2030. This support to our most vulnerable residents will continue throughout the transition period and we will ensure that we provide help and support to people when and where they need it.

TRANSFORMATION:

Our neighbourhood model is the ideal way we deliver public services in Wigan Borough – a joined up approach with the assets in that community as close to and as responsive to local need as possible. Through working together with partners we can create a more coordinated voluntary and community sector in the borough that meets the demand of the local areas they serve and the borough as a whole. To do this we will engage with our VCSE partners to create a sustainable sector which responds to our borough's most pressing priorities and

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aligns with what is most important to our residents.

We now have an additional 700 more volunteers who stepped forward to help their fellow neighbours in the pandemic. We will continue to work with this brilliant army of volunteers. It was through the kindness of strangers in our neighbourhoods that many people were helped throughout the crisis. On a very local level many of our communities became stronger, happier and more resilient. This new strength is something we want to harness and build on.

One of the enduring positive outcomes of the Covid-19 crisis has been the coming together of individuals and communities in appreciation of a broad range of public sector workers and other designated keyworkers. The council has an opportunity to channel this new movement into enhanced levels of civic pride. Together we will celebrate our shared culture, enhance the places across the borough, celebrating our towns and district centres, through the Our Town campaign, and protecting and enhancing our green infrastructure and open spaces. Through the creativity of our artists, arts organisations, museums and libraries, our communities will be heard and will explore the meaning of all this. We will celebrate, console, commemorate, coming together in new ways.

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Ensure all our children and young people return to and thrive in their education or training

TRANSITION:

The lockdown has been a confusing and unsettling time for our children and young people. Our schools have done an incredible job in providing placements for the children of key workers and our children that need additional help and support, maintaining education remotely for thousands of children across the borough. Our partnership working with our schools has been stronger and more effective and this will continue as we see schools opening their doors again for learning. We have kept improvement building work on some schools progressing so that they are ready for the new school year. We have also worked intensively so that children who need us the most, including those with special educational needs, have been safe during this stressful time for families. There has been additional pressure on our foster carers and we will aim to recruit more so that all children have a safe and loving home. We are aware of the pressures on our early years and nursery settings and will be monitoring sufficiency in early years closely as we recover. Access to high quality early learning is not just critical to support children making the best start to their life, but also important in supporting parents to return to work. Our skills and employment team will be working closely with our colleges and training providers so that our young people can quickly return to their education and training courses. We look forward

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to some sense of normality returning to the lives of our children and young people so they can enjoy the 'Best Start in Life' that they deserve as set out in Deal 2030. They have kept us hopeful through difficult days and it is now time for them to be able to look to the future with joy and optimism. Our partnerships in children's social care with Greater Manchester Police and the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service have been vital in working with us throughout the pandemic and are key to both the transition and transformation phase in ensuring that we have a whole system responsive approach.

TRANSFORMATION:

We want to accelerate our plans for working in partnership with our schools and services across education, social care and health to provide a 'team around the school' to support our children who need us the most. We will take this forward as schools start to phase their openings and move back to a 'new normal'. We are unsure as yet how children will respond to going back to their settings, but we will use our resources and expertise across the system to support the reintegration and the emotional impact that this may have had. We also want to capitalise on the innovative ways that schools have supported and educated our children during this time and look at how this can be

developed safely with partners including from the cultural sector, to create more bespoke education opportunities for children and young people who may struggle to maintain a full-time place in a mainstream setting. This is a fantastic opportunity to innovate the education system for our children and young people with special educational needs. Children's social care teams operating over the weekend and with extended hours has been instrumental in providing responsive and timely support and as part of our transformation we will be looking to make this part of our core approach.

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Meet our financial challenges and retain new and better ways of working

TRANSITION:

After ten years of austerity and reducing its budget by £160m the council delivered a balanced budget in March. Yet the pandemic has delivered yet another huge challenge for the council's financial management. Initial estimates calculate the pandemic will cost the council at least £40m. This is through increased costs and, most significantly, in a fall of anticipated income. The Government is expected to support the council through approximately £20m of funding which will mean a £20m shortfall. While we can mitigate some of the short-term costs the medium-term is especially concerning and will require further bold steps to transform what we do and how we do it. A new budget strategy is being created and our strategic approach will inform what we must continue to deliver and invest in and what we no longer do as a council.

TRANSFORMATION:

There can be no doubt that Covid-19 has transformed the way we conduct our working lives. The ease with which thousands of council staff switched to remote working using video conferencing to communicate and make collective decisions has opened up new and exciting approaches. We want to harness all the ways in which remote working can improve our working lives. These include reduced costs in travelling off-site,

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more efficiency in reduced time spent travelling to and from work and meetings, fewer cars on the road, more efficient meetings, greater collaboration across borough partners and colleagues nationally. We will also look at our current building portfolio and the purpose of these buildings in light of new working patterns and practices.

We will work with our staff to build on new working practices including flexible working hours to meet staff and residents needs and capitalise on the development of an auxiliary workforce trained and experienced in supporting our key critical services.

All of our future transformational changes will be in the context of a much more challenging position for the finances of the council. We will seek transformation which aligns with our new priorities and improves service provision while increasing income or delivering efficiencies.

We will enable a more digitally focused economy with better digital infrastructure and the roll out of our full fibre network will be a major milestone in achieving that. We are also aware that the crisis changed the way the council worked in many small but significant ways for the better. We want to capture these and build back better.

We will capitalise on and embed the environmental and air quality benefits of the lockdown to ensure we achieve the council's carbon reduction targets. The council will introduce 'Green Apprentices' who will aid in the transformation of Wigan's renewable and low carbon energy generation and consumption, significantly supporting the reduction of harmful carbon emissions. We will ask local businesses to support these ambitions in-keeping with our community wealth building principles. Young adults across the world are campaigning for a cleaner, greener and more prosperous future, and this is no different at the local level in Wigan borough. By engaging with the younger generations, providing much needed apprenticeships with a focus on the green sector, we can slowly begin a transition to a green circular economy.