



Supporting our Communities

Thanet District Council's Plan for Recovery



Foreword from the Leader of Thanet District Council, Cllr Rick Everitt



The Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the most significant challenges that Thanet District Council has ever faced. It has required sudden and dramatic changes to the way we work, as Councillors and officers.

We have needed to respond to an unprecedented threat to public health, working with a range of third sector organisations, as well as government and other public bodies, including Thanet's town and parish councils, while at the same time ensuring that we continued to deliver our normal frontline services to residents as far as possible.

I am proud of the way that Thanet District Council and the local community as a whole have met this challenge. As Leader of the council, I want to thank all of our staff for their continuing hard work and professionalism, whether on the frontline or an improvised office in their home.

Behind the scenes we have also been focusing on what we need to do in the recovery phase, because we recognise that the effects of the pandemic will be long lasting, on individuals, businesses and the economy. They will potentially reshape our community.

This work is being taken forward as a matter of urgency and will be further developed as the council scopes what is needed and gains a better understanding of the effects on the district. We will continue to manage the immediate impacts while also planning for the future.

To prepare the council for the significant changes ahead, we have developed a recovery plan that is split into two distinct sections which will underpin the council's approach over the coming weeks, months and years. And of course an important part of that work is sharing the plan with you, so you can have confidence that the council will continue to deliver for our community in the challenging times that no doubt lie ahead.

The Recovery Phase

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 the council has been responding to the crisis. Although the full impacts are not yet known, plans are now underway to move the organisation and the district towards recovery.

This work is being treated as a matter of urgency and will be further developed as the council scopes the work and gains a better understanding of the impacts on the district.

The outline below sets out the next steps which will guide Thanet District Council's recovery from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. This will be supported by more detailed action plans that will underpin the council's approach over the coming weeks, months and years.

The Recovery Plan is split into two distinct areas:

Community Leadership:

Comprising of two recovery workstreams covering Communities and Economic.

Organisation Leadership:

Comprising of two recovery workstreams covering Financial and Organisational.

Community Leadership

Communities Recovery:

- Our first key step will be to understand the impact that the pandemic has had on the local community.
- We will continue to provide the 'Covid-19 Community Hub' to ensure our vulnerable residents still get the support they need during the recovery phase. To ensure both the shielded and vulnerable groups are supported we will keep the dedicated phone line open five days a week.
- We will continue to provide employment training and support to our housing clients.
- We will support our tenants that have suffered an income drop as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic through our EK Housing Welfare Benefits Advisers.
- We will ensure that every rough sleeper has support that is targeted at preventing them from returning to the streets.
- We will continue to support our households in temporary accommodation to find more settled homes.
- We will work to encourage the housing market by working with developers and builders to recover/accelerate housing delivery.
- We will work with partners to produce a Beach Management Plan to support the responsible use of our beaches and surrounding amenity.

Economic Recovery:

The UK is expected to face a significant economic downturn as a result of the pandemic. Whilst it is still too early to understand the full impact, the district's economic recovery may take three to five years. Recovery planning for this workstream will therefore be phased; short, medium and long-term.

Short-term

- Our first key step will be to understand the impact that the pandemic has had on local businesses.
- We will award discretionary grants to small Thanet businesses worst affected by Covid-19.
- We will work together with local businesses to support the safe reopening of our high streets.

Medium-term

- We will revise our Economic Development Strategy to reflect the changing environment that the pandemic has brought about.
- We will work with our partners to develop a 'community wealth-building' concept for the district to increase local investment.
- We have recently approved a new Destination Management Framework which will support the District's economic recovery over the medium term.
- We will review our property assets to identify opportunities to support and develop the Thanet economy.

Long-term

- If successful, funding bids to the Government for the; Margate Town Deal, Future High Street Fund, Heritage Action Zone will aim to create a more resilient economic environment for our coastal towns.

Organisation Leadership

Council's Financial Recovery:

- We will continue assessing and monitoring the financial impact of COVID 19 on the council.
- We will review our current year's budget position and the future Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure the council's reserves are replenished.
- We will review and realign our Capital Programme to support the council's recovery plans.

Organisational Recovery:

- We will review the council's premises and future working environments to support the transformation of the way we work and delivery of services to the public.
- We will work with our commercial tenants to facilitate compliance with regulations that may facilitate their reopening.
- We will continue to work closely with the Town and Parish Councils to support them in their Covid-19 recovery plans.
- We will continue with the new ways of working that proved effective as part of the response to the pandemic, by providing a range of options for flexible working for our staff, ensuring there is no detriment to service delivery. Remote working will also support the council to meet environmental targets.
- We will motivate and empower our staff to meet customer needs and review how we deliver services including a move to more digital interactions for our customers.
- We will review our current operational working practices and structures to reflect the changing environment that the pandemic has brought about.

Our response so far: 23/03/2020 - 31/05/2020

- Almost **£30m** of grants given to local businesses
- Processed **15,000** changes to new and existing benefit claims
- Supported **8,500** residents with council Tax Hardship Grants payments totalling **£1.2m**
- Managed **289** homelessness approaches
- Provided emergency accommodation for **42** rough sleepers
- Prevented/relieved **113** households from being homeless by enabling them to stay in their home and/or securing privately rented accommodation
- Set up a **Community Hub** phone line available **seven days a week**
 - **2,853** enquiries to the community hub
 - **150** volunteers registered with the hub
 - **6,500** calls made to the Shielded Residents
 - More than **328** people helped with their shopping
 - More than **460** prescriptions collected
- Served **11** Enforcement Closure Notices
- Dealt with **814** flying tipping reports
- Handled over **30,000** customer calls, this includes over **2,500** benefit enquiries, almost **2,400** business rate enquiries and over **6,000** Council Tax enquiries
- Over **1,700** tonnes of waste collected for each fortnight on average
- Over **330,000** bins collections every fortnight
- Held council committee meetings **virtually** throughout the pandemic