

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 03 August 2020

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Covid-19 Community Recovery Plan
Report of:	Director of Leisure and Community
Corporate Priority:	Leisure Opportunities for Health and Fun. Protect and Enhance the Environment.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's Community Recovery Plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Executive summary:

The Council's Community Recovery Plan forms part of a Recovery Framework which will be presented to the Executive on 3 August 2020.

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on every aspect of life and society in our Borough, and it has led to logistical challenges, created financial difficulties and prompted community-wide concerns around health and well-being.

This report focuses on the impact of the pandemic on leisure and community facilities and organisations within the Borough and suggests actions that the Council might take to help the sector to recover over the coming months.

Although we are now entering the Recovery Phase, continuing restrictions around social distancing, public fear around using community spaces and the economic downturn that the virus has triggered mean that even once the doors to community facilities reopen, they will face many further challenges.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Executive approves the Covid-19 Community Recovery Plan and the following actions therein:

- i) To support our Community Centres and Sports Clubs through this challenging period, a special grants programme be considered to assist them with the additional expenses being accrued at this time. This scheme will be presented in a separate report to the Executive;
- ii) the Leisure Centre contract, regarding the agreed capital investment and the duration of the contract, be reviewed. The results of this review will be presented in a separate report to the Executive;
- iii) an assessment of the Council's Arts and Entertainment project, including its capital costs and current business plan be carried out. The results of this review will be presented in a separate report to the Executive;
- iv) youth projects are likely to face additional costs when they finally reopen their facilities. As the Youth Activity Fund for the year has yet to be paid out, it offers an opportunity for the Council to distribute the funding to best support the Youth Projects;
- v) to build on the lessons learnt from the pandemic and to reflect these changes in the future service level agreements with our voluntary organisations;
- vi) to work closely with our voluntary organisations to understand more fully the issues at hand and identify longer term solutions to the provision of the Food Bank;
- vii) to develop alternative proposals to replace the Christmas Lights Switch-On event. These proposals will be presented in a separate report to the Executive;
- viii) in order to encourage smaller craft stands to the Fareham and Portchester markets, those traders not eligible for the discretionary business grant to receive free pitch hire until Christmas 2020; and
- ix) to present a separate report to the Executive recommending the establishment of a community lottery in Fareham.

Reason:

This report forms part of a Recovery Framework in response to the Covid-19 pandemic which will be presented to the Executive on 3rd August 2020.

Cost of proposals:

Any costs associated with community recovery activity will be detailed in separate individual reports to be presented to the Executive.

Appendices: None

Background papers: None

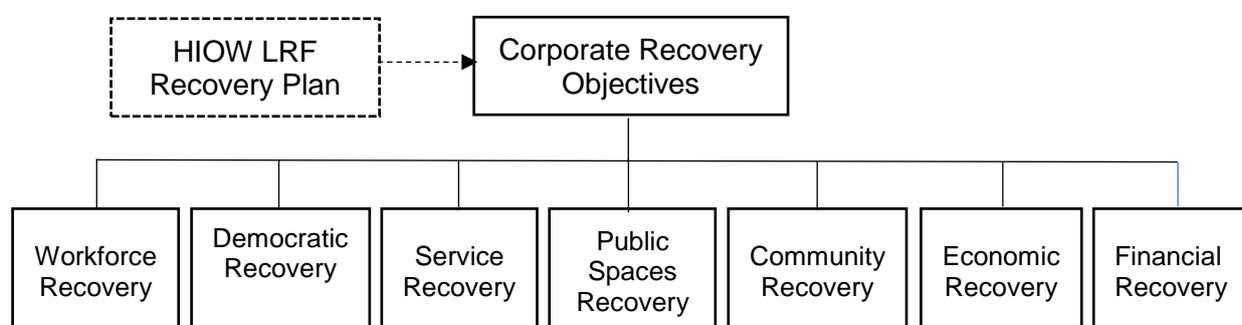
FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Briefing Paper	
Date:	03 August 2020
Subject:	Covid – 19 Community Recovery Plan
Briefing by:	Director of Leisure and Community
Portfolio:	Leisure Opportunities for Health and Fun

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's Community Recovery Plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It forms part of a Recovery Framework (illustrated below) which will be presented to the Executive on 3rd August 2020.
2. The report focuses on the impact of the pandemic on leisure and community facilities and organisations within the Borough and suggests actions that the Council might take to help the sector to recover over the coming months.



SCOPE

3. The Community Recovery Plan recognises that community facilities and organisations form an important part of our Borough's infrastructure and that they have been affected as a result of the pandemic, due to: -
 - Closure of community and leisure buildings;
 - closure of outdoor sports facilities;
 - a ban on public gatherings;

- closure of the Fareham and Gosport Basics Bank; and
- public concerns about the risk of infection associated with community activity.

CONTEXT

4. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on every aspect of life and society in our Borough. It has led to logistical challenges, created financial difficulties and prompted community-wide concerns around health.
5. Although we are now entering the Recovery Phase, continued restrictions around social distancing, public fear around using community spaces and the economic downturn that the virus has triggered mean that even once the doors to community facilities reopen, the operators will face many further challenges.
6. It is important to note, that alongside these challenges the Borough's response to Covid-19 has highlighted the adaptability of our community organisations and the value of the Borough's remarkable volunteers. This Plan recognises the significant contribution that charities and volunteers from within our communities have made to ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable people during this challenging time.
7. Across the Borough, a total of 16 Community Centres serve our communities, each one managed by its own Community Association or Trustee Board. Of these centres, 11 are owned by the Council, (Abshot Community Centre, Burridge Village Hall, Crofton Community Centre, Fareham North West Community Centre, the Genesis Centre, Lockwood Community and Sports Centre, Portchester Community Centre, Priors Park Community Hall, Ranvilles Community Centre, Titchfield Community Centre and Whiteley Community Centre), 1 by Vivid (Broadlaw Community Space) and the remaining 4 are owned by the Community Associations themselves, with limited Council oversight (Catisfield Memorial Hall, Victory Hall, Sarisbury Green Community Centre and Wallington Village Hall).
8. Throughout the pandemic, the Council-owned Community Centres have received regular support and advice from Council Leisure Officers regarding various matters.
9. This advice included when to close; how to ensure that their Centre is kept in a safe and secure condition; how to apply for business grant funding; how to accommodate the return of pre-schools; and most recently how to produce an action plan of the health and safety / logistical matters that need to be addressed prior to reopening.
10. Environmental Health Officers have offered to provide support, on request, to ensure that Covid-19 risk assessments are fit for purpose, and One Community continues to offer support to all the Community Centres to make their reopening as safe, stress-free and successful as possible.
11. Of the Council-owned Community Centres, all but one successfully applied for

the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure funding offered through the Business Grants scheme. As a result, many have found they have not been negatively affected financially so far (with some even reporting an increase in the balance of their accounts over the last 6 months).

12. Genesis was unable to apply for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure funding, as they currently occupy the premises under a Tenancy at Will, meaning that the Council itself is the rate payer for the building rather than the charity. However, an application has been made, instead, for the Local Authority Discretionary Grant, which may be able to provide a lower level of financial support.
13. However, the same challenges likely to be faced by other leisure facilities, will be equally relevant to the Community Centres. As the majority of the centres do not carry significant reserves, any drop in hiring of their facilities or increase in costs could have a catastrophic impact on the financial stability of the Association.
14. A special Community Buildings Network Meeting, via a social conferencing platform, was held on 10th July to provide all the Community Centres with up-to-date guidance on expectations for reopening and to understand uncertainties and needs of the Associations.
15. **Proposed Action** - *To support the Community Centres through this challenging period, a special grants programme is being considered to assist them with the additional expenses being accrued at this time. This scheme will be presented in a separate report to the Executive.*

COMMUNITY GROUPS

16. Across the Borough there are many community groups and clubs whom provide a variety of activities for all ages and abilities, held in various venues such as Titchfield Memorial Hall, Portchester Parish Hall and scout huts.
17. Similar to community centres, a majority of these venues do not hold significant reserves and therefore a reduction in hiring's could have a significant impact on their long-term viability.
18. All community groups and organisations, however big or small, have been offered the advice and support of Environmental Health Officers to ensure that their Covid-19 risk management plans are adequate, as well as providing links to social distancing signage for free, upon request.
19. One Community continue to provide support and advice on funding opportunities, governance and volunteering to all community groups and clubs that require it.

LEISURE CENTRES

20. Our two leisure centres, Fareham and Holly Hill, are both managed by Everyone Active. When the Government instructed the leisure and fitness sector to close its facilities, Everyone Active furloughed all of their staff, with the exception of the two general managers who have continued to manage and

preserve the integrity of the buildings so that they could re-open at the earliest opportunity when restrictions are lifted.

21. Financial assistance to help meet the essential costs of supporting both Fareham and Holly Hill Leisure Centres during their closure was agreed.
22. When the buildings reopen, the enforcement of safe social distancing rules will lead to a reduction in the number of customers the Leisure Centres will be able to accommodate in their facilities at one time, thereby reducing the financial viability of some of their activities. At the same time, Everyone Active will see an increase in cleaning and equipment costs as a result of the anticipated need to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff, increased hand washing for everyone entering their facilities and regular cleaning of all shared fitness equipment.
23. Also, of relevance is that it is currently unknown to what extent this significant period of enforced isolation and heightened awareness of personal vulnerability will have on public confidence to return to such facilities.
24. Further to the significant challenges identified already, last year the contract for the management of the Council's two leisure centres was re-tendered. Everyone Active's submission, which was approved by the Council's Executive in November 2019, included a significant financial outlay to improve the facilities at Fareham Leisure Centre, including plans to extend the ground floor gym area and create a climbing wall and soft play area. This contract was awarded for 10 years.
25. **Proposed Action** - *As a result of the Covid-19 impact, and in light of a changing economy, the Leisure Centre contract, both with regard to the agreed capital investment and the duration of the contract, is being reviewed. The results of this review will be presented in a separate report to the Executive.*

PRIVATE GYMS AND SPORTS FACILITIES

26. With the exception of Fareham and Holly Hill Leisure Centres, all gyms in the Borough operate as private businesses. As such, they, and all other local businesses and organisations, have been offered the advice and support of Environmental Health Officers to ensure that their Covid-19 risk management plans are adequate, as well as providing links to social distancing signage for free, upon request.
27. The gyms have also had the opportunity to access the Government's furlough scheme for their staff, as well as Small Business or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants. This financial support will have provided some degree of resilience for these businesses. However, it is likely that they will face financial vulnerability for a considerable period of time after they reopen.

SPORTS CLUBS AND GROUPS

28. Sports Clubs have received regular guidance throughout the pandemic, offering advice on the restrictions that are in force, information about the grant streams

that are available, clarity regarding their health and safety responsibilities for any buildings and sought and received advice on the support available from Environmental Health in carrying out the risk assessments required to prevent the spread of the virus when they reopen.

29. In addition, the Council has continued regular maintenance of both the bowling greens and cricket wickets throughout the lockdown period, to ensure that the sports were able to easily restart once the restrictions were lifted.
30. Currently, outdoor sports are permissible as long as they have adequate risk assessments in place to do so safely. However, indoor sports remain restricted as a result of the risks posed by increased inhalation and exhalation in a confined space.
31. The Chartered Institute for the Management of Physical Activity (CIMSPA) and Sport England have launched a free online training initiative to support sport, fitness and leisure sectors reopening. Its aim is to provide staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills they need to confidently restart their coaching activity.
32. The experience for each Sports Club will be unique, dependent on the sport and venue, but the main challenges will be a reduction in players able to take part at one time, a consideration of how the use of the facilities can accommodate the required social distancing measures, an increase in the costs to the Club from the purchase of PPE and additional cleaning products, and the impact that these increased costs and reduced income will have on the balance of the Club's accounts.
33. **Proposed Action** - *To support the Sports Clubs through this challenging period, a special grants programme is being considered to assist them with the additional expenses being accrued at this time. This scheme will be presented in a separate report to the Executive.*

MUSEUM

34. Within Fareham Borough Council's portfolio is Westbury Manor Museum. This visitor attraction, celebrating Fareham's vibrant history, is managed by Hampshire Cultural Trust on behalf of the Council.
35. The Museum closed on the 20th March as a result of the pandemic and until the 15 of July, when the building and gardens were opened on a reduced basis, they remained closed to the public.
36. Hampshire Cultural Trust have received support from both Property Services and Leisure and Community to help ensure the facility was reopened with all systems functioning safely, taking account of the extended period of closure and the age of the venue.
37. There will also be a necessity to provide ongoing support to Hampshire Cultural Trust in safely attracting visitors, to ensure the venue remains financially viable.
38. As with all customer-facing activities, the staff and volunteers at Westbury

Manor Museum will be able to access the support from the Councils Environmental Health Team.

THEATRE

39. The Council's main theatre is Ferneham Hall. In 2018, the Council produced a vision to replace the Hall with a new arts and entertainment venue and then in October 2019, the Executive agreed the capital budget for the new venue. Members also agreed to award a contract to BH Live to manage the venue on behalf of the Council.
40. Since then, detailed work has been undertaken on the design of the building leading to a successful planning application during the lockdown period.
41. One of the current challenges now being faced by the entertainment sector is that it relies on content (shows, performers, etc) and much of this has been postponed or cancelled, with some of the producers of the shows putting staff on furlough.
42. This has created some uncertainty in the arts and entertainment sector as has the current guidance regarding social distancing in enclosed indoor spaces.
43. As the new venue is not due to open until 2022, it is difficult to determine what, if any, restrictions will be in place at that time, and whether public appetite for theatre attendance will fully return.
44. **Proposed Action** - *As a result of the Covid-19 impact, and in light of a changing economy, an assessment of the Council's Arts and Entertainment project, including its capital costs and current business plan is being carried out. The results of this review will be presented in a separate report to the Executive.*

YOUTH PROVISION

45. There are currently five Youth Facilities across the Borough and a further two Youth Clubs that meet regularly in Community Centres. Each of these Youth Projects is provided with qualified Youth Workers by Y Services, a youth-focussed charity.
46. Every financial year the separate Youth Projects are invited to apply to Fareham Borough Council for Youth Activity Funding, to assist them with the challenges of running a service that is not-for-profit, for the benefit of the community. The amount designated for the Youth Activity Fund every year is a total of £30,000.
47. At the commencement of lockdown, only two of the Youth Projects had satisfied the Council's criteria to enable an award of Youth Activity Funding to them for the year (a total of only £5,493.25). However, as the Council had been notified that the Youth Clubs would be closing due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the decision was made to delay the payments being made.
48. Each of the Youth Facilities that lease their own building have been provided

with the opportunity to apply for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure funding. All those who took up this offer have been successful in their applications. Y Services also took the opportunity to furlough staff, which has reduced the current financial challenges for youth provision.

49. As a result of social distancing measures and the restrictions this would place on numbers able to attend each Youth Project, Y Services are investigating alternative options to support young people in key areas of the Borough, such as outdoor meet ups and social conferencing-based youth groups.
50. **Proposed Action** - *The Youth Projects are likely to face additional costs when they finally reopen their facilities, as a result of the PPE and cleaning products required. As the Youth Activity Fund for the year has yet to be paid out, it offers an opportunity for the Council to distribute the funding to best support the Youth Projects.*

CHURCHES

51. Churches are required to carry out thorough risk assessments to prevent the transmission of Coronavirus. A number of restrictions are also in place; numbers of attendees are set at a maximum of 30, singing and chanting should be avoided, and any cash donations are discouraged.
52. Christians Together in Fareham provides a networking system for all the churches in the area and ensures that relevant information regarding Covid-19 is received by all its members. However, churches across the Borough will each face their own challenges, dependent on their venue size, the age and vulnerability of their congregation, and the stability of their finances.
53. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on every Church. Established patterns of worship have been disrupted or adapted to fit the social distancing measures, including small outdoor worship groups or the use of video conferencing and live streaming to provide ongoing spiritual support. The closure of buildings has meant that the majority of 'rites of passage' have not been able to be provided, with the exception of funerals which were performed with strict adherence to the necessary social distancing restrictions (and often with fees being waived by the church).
54. From a financial perspective, income from church hall hire has ceased and regular weekly donations by the congregations has been disrupted, with some giving more through direct debits and many others having less disposable income to offer to the church. With this in mind, it is anticipated that the recovery from Covid-19 will provide significant financial challenges for many churches.
55. However, the pandemic has also provided some positives. Churches have reviewed how they usually provide support for the less mobile in their congregations and have discovered that there are more appropriate ways to connect with these members. In addition, many church members have taken the opportunity to engage in voluntary service, through organisations such as Acts of Kindness, One Community and Waypoint Church itself.

56. For many churches the pandemic has strengthened their connections with their communities, and many are embracing the opportunity to build on these relationships.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

57. Although the Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting restrictions have provided many difficulties, this time of need has also demonstrated the value of our community organisations and built on our existing good relationships with them.
58. The Council has Service Level Agreements with One Community and Fareham Citizens Advice. Both charities have gone over and above to work alongside the Council in ensuring the significant needs of the community were met at this time of great stress for many residents.
59. Citizens Advice staff and volunteers readily transferred their business lines to their homes and were available to provide support around issues such as financial difficulties, food bank requests, eviction threats, employment concerns and domestic abuse whenever needed.
60. One Community helped to add to the offer available for the community by securing volunteers to shop for people who were vulnerable as a result of their health rather than their finances. They also collected medication for residents who were shielding, provided a friendly ear for isolated elderly residents and were a tremendous point of support for all the other charities who were aiming to meet the growing needs of the community.
61. In addition, One Community have recently been successful with a funding application to Awards for All to establish their 'Back to the Future' project which aims to provide support for vulnerable people who are struggling to re-engage with their communities following periods of isolation.
62. The Council will be able to support this project through our promotional networks, to ensure that as many residents in need as possible are able to access the support they need to live a fulfilled and socially connected life.
63. Both of these organisations have excelled, but equally it has provided both with the opportunity to grow. One Community now has access to more volunteers than ever and there is a renewed pride in being able to help other people. The Council will help this movement thrive by running a campaign recognising the value of volunteering and encouraging potential volunteers to register with One Community.
64. The challenges of meeting the needs of our vulnerable residents has also led to growing and very positive relationships with local charities Acts of Kindness and Waypoint Church. Each have plans of how they can continue to support the community as the urgency of lockdown ends and the Council will continue to advise them of any emerging funding streams or support available to enable them to continue supporting Fareham residents.

65. **Proposed Action** – *To build on the lessons learnt from the pandemic and to reflect these changes in the future service level agreements with our voluntary organisations.*

FOOD BANK

66. On 30th March, Fareham and Gosport Basics Bank made the decision to transfer the running of the Food Bank to Acts of Kindness, on an interim basis, as it largely comprised of older volunteers, who themselves were identified as vulnerable with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the 'Fareham Food Bank' premises is a tightly packed, narrow building, which made maintaining appropriate social distance, whilst working in the building, unachievable.
67. The Council supported this solution and was able to identify a hangar at Daedalus from which Acts of Kindness could operate the Food Bank safely and effectively.
68. As the Covid-19 restrictions begin to lift and residents are encouraged back to a 'new normal' the future of the Fareham Food Bank is unclear and the Council await discussion with the Food Bank trustees regarding their future plans.
69. However, it is important to recognise that the loan of the hangar at Daedalus was only temporary and, whichever organisation provides the Food Bank facility going forward, a more appropriate location will need to be identified. In the new normal, social distancing is likely to persist for some considerable time which means that the old food bank location will continue to not be fit for purpose.
70. Currently, the demand for Food Bank parcels is increasing. Many people are unable to carry out their usual work due to their own vulnerability, even more have been made redundant and residents on benefits often report that their Universal Credit payment is not sufficient to last them for two weeks.
71. In an attempt to deal with the root of the problem and offer help and advice rather than cover up the symptoms, requests for the Food Bank are now automatically referred to Fareham Citizens Advice prior to accessing the Food Bank.
72. **Proposed Action** - *It will be important going forward to work closely with both Acts of Kindness / Fareham and Basics Food Bank and Fareham Citizens Advice to understand more fully the issues at hand and identify longer term solutions to the provision of the Food Bank.*

SHOPMOBILITY

73. The Council has a Service Level Agreement with Community First to run Fareham's Shopmobility scheme. This service provides mobility aids for visitors to Fareham Town Centre who have mobility challenges.

74. As a result of the increased vulnerability of many of their clients, the service will only be able to operate with very strict adherence to minimising the risks of potentially being exposed to Covid-19.
75. Shopmobility has already carried out much work around recognising and addressing these risks but may require support, in particular with the promotion of key messages to encourage both previous and new users to access their service, which in turn will help to increase footfall into the Town Centre.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

76. The Council's Leisure and Community Team organise around 20 public events throughout the year including 999 Day, Access All Areas, National Play Day, Thumbs Up Thursday, Bygone Fareham and the Christmas lights switch on. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 all of these events have been cancelled this year.
77. The events held in Fareham Town Centre are all free to attend and attract many families, encouraging them to not only enjoy the event but to also make use of the many cafes, restaurants, shops and businesses in Fareham, enabling them to spend a whole day in the town.
78. Although the Christmas lights switch on event later in the year is not going ahead as a large public event as it usually would, the Council would still like to encourage shoppers into the town centre leading up to Christmas helping to support the businesses in the shopping centre, West Street and High Street.
79. Officers are working on a proposal which could see a Christmas market in the town centre, taking into account social distancing and safety requirements to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19.
80. Bookings for West Street and the Performance Podium are now being taken, with strict terms and conditions covering social distancing and safety requirements. Any new bookings must complete a risk assessment covering these terms and must provide Public Liability Insurance. Bookings are taken on a case by case basis, depending on other pre-arranged activities taking place on West Street on that day.
81. **Proposed Action** – *Develop alternative proposals to replace the Christmas Lights Switch-On event. These proposals will be presented in a separate report to the Executive.*

MARKETS

82. A weekly market is held in Fareham Town Centre every Monday and Portchester on a Wednesday. These events not only provide a means by which smaller businesses are able to trade, but they also attract additional visitors to Portchester and Fareham. The health of the market, then, also has a direct consequence on the other businesses in the shopping centres.
83. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the markets were forced to close to prevent the transmission of the virus between stall holders and visitors. In

June, as restrictions eased and activities that take place outdoors were able to continue, the markets reopened.

84. Trading levels were greatly reduced as a result of lower public confidence in visiting public spaces. To counteract the lower income from trade, the Council offered the market traders free pitch hire during June 2020.
85. The Council has recently agreed to provide discretionary business grants of up to £2,500 for the regular traders to be paid in monthly instalments, to help stabilise their finances until public confidence in communal areas increases and trading levels rise.
86. **Proposed Action** – *In order to encourage smaller craft stands to the markets, those traders not eligible for the above grant will receive free pitch hire until Christmas 2020.*

COMMUNITY LOTTERY

87. In addition to the Sports Clubs, Community Centres, Youth Groups and the Community Organisations with whom the Council holds Service Level Agreements, many small charitable and shared-interest groups operate across the Borough for the benefit of the community.
88. Every one of these community organisations will face the challenge of increased costs and (for the majority) reduced income as a result of Covid-19 and its after-effects.
89. The Council plans to assist with the establishment of a Community Lottery for Fareham, which will provide each charitable organisation with the opportunity to raise funds by encouraging those buying Community Lottery tickets to designate their organisation as a 'primary recipient'. This will mean their charity will receive 50p from the sale of each £1 ticket.
90. Although 50p is a minimal amount, the more the organisation promotes their good cause, the more people will designate them as a primary recipient. In this way, the charity has the opportunity to increase its income, at a time when this will be of greatest benefit.
91. **Proposed Action** – *to present a separate report to the Executive recommending the establishment of a community lottery in Fareham.*

FINANCE

92. Any costs associated with community recovery activity will be detailed in the separate individual reports to be presented to the Executive.
93. Officers are preparing a separate Economic Recovery Plan, which will review the impact of Covid-19 on the Fareham Town Centre economy and include priorities and proposals for supporting the town centre. This will include reference to market concessions and Town Centre events. It will also set out in more detail plans to support the recovery of Fareham Town Centre and how the grant fund awarded to the Council will be allocated to support these

activities.

CONCLUSION

94. This report sets out the Council's Community Recovery Plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It forms part of a Recovery Framework which is to be presented to the Executive.
95. The report focuses on the impact of the pandemic on leisure and community facilities and organisations within the Borough and suggests actions that the Council might take to help the sector to recover over the coming months.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Lindsey Ansell, Director of Leisure and Community (Ext. 4567) or Emma Watts, Leisure and Community Manager (Ext. 4440)