

Partnership Council Covid-19 Recovery Sub Group

Purpose

1. To propose the establishment of a Recovery Sub Group (“the sub group”) of the Partnership Council to build on and drive transformation in public services following the Covid-19 crisis.
2. To consider the draft Terms of Reference at Annex A for the sub group.

Background

3. The Covid-19 crisis has led to unprecedented levels of engagement between all levels of government and public services in Wales in a drive to protect citizens and provide urgent services.
4. Welsh Government, local authorities, public service partners and the private sector have risen to the challenge and developed innovative and flexible approaches and solutions to meet emergency requirements.
5. The degree and regularity of engagement between national and local government has helped enable this collective and effective response. It is important to build on that going forward as our country starts to rebuild our public services and our economy, albeit in the knowledge that this will not be a linear process and there may be the need to revert back to response phase should spikes or a second peak occur.
6. There is much being done at a local level through individual authorities and services; and through joint groups such as Strategic Co-ordination Groups. In addition, it is proposed that a sub group of Partnership Council could provide a vehicle for public service leaders to feed into and help shape the Welsh Government’s recovery planning.
7. The work of the sub group will not replace the requirement for other partnership arrangements involving local communities, partners and mechanisms for making decisions about local services. This sub group will identify common issues and bring to a strategic and national level which in turn will inform, support and provide a clearer context for the local effort.
8. The Welsh Government’s recovery planning is shaped by the First Minister’s ‘Framework for Recovery’ and the ‘Unlocking our economy and society’ documents. The Counsel General is also convening expert round-table discussions to consider the impact of COVID 19 on public services, the economy and vulnerable people, and how to ensure that Wales can have a green recovery in the future.

Proposed sub group to support a shared recovery

9. Further to weekly discussions between the Minister for Housing and Local Government and local authority leaders, and correspondence with the WLGA Leader, Local Authority Leaders have agreed a proposal to establish a Recovery Sub-Group of Partnership Council to continue this shared effort towards recovery.
10. This Recovery Sub Group will focus on preparations for a future recovery, including considering the issues, risks, opportunities and priorities for sustainable recovery and longer-term transformation. Further detail is included in the terms of reference at Annex A.

Annex A

**PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL FOR WALES:
RECOVERY SUB GROUP
Terms of Reference**

1. Purpose

The Recovery Sub Group (the sub group) is a sub group of the Partnership Council for Wales.

As Wales slowly moves out of lockdown and into Recovery phase, this sub group will provide a formal mechanism for Welsh Ministers, local authorities and other public service leaders to continue engagement on COVID-19 recovery. This is not a short term crisis, and the continuation of the effective shared leadership shown by public services in recent months will be crucial in implementing the recovery plan for Wales.

The Group serves an advisory and consultative role rather than a decision-making one.

2. Remit and objectives

The Partnership Council for Wales has a remit which includes public service reform and collaboration, driving the pace of improvement of public services in Wales, and taking action to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services.

During the past months, public servants have proven themselves to be resourceful, innovative and flexible and it is essential that the learning from this period is harnessed and used to transform services.

The work of the Group will be within the context of wider work on recovery, including the adoption of the values expressed throughout the Welsh Government's publications related to the pandemic.

On 24 April 2020 the Welsh Government's '*Leading Wales out of the Coronavirus Pandemic: A Framework for Recovery*' described three pillars which helped describe the general approach to determining how and when restrictions might be eased, and thus the beginnings of a long journey to recovery. The transformational elements of the sub group's work will be regularly tested against some of the key principles of that framework, including the potential levels of impact of transformational change on economic benefit; social and psychological well-being; and equality.

The Welsh Government's subsequent publication of '*Unlocking our society and economy: continuing the conversation*' in May went further in describing the essential considerations which will dictate the pace at which Wales will move into and through the recovery phase, and the steps that will entail.

The sub group will advise and provide views to Welsh Ministers in planning the recovery and will provide reports to the Partnership Council to inform the Council's considerations of these and associated issues.

The potential work areas to be pursued by this sub group could include:

- **Ensuring that lessons are learned and embedded** following the experience of the Covid-19 crisis and the innovation shown by public servants and leaders in Wales. The sub group will help develop a unified approach to ensure this innovation and creativity will help define new ways of working and new ways of providing services to citizens and businesses.
- **Providing views and advice to Welsh Ministers and Partnership Council** in relation to the longer term recovery of Wales and the potential levels of local impact that a transformative agenda might have for communities in terms of economic benefit; social and psychological well-being; and equality.
- **Capitalising on the digital agenda**, working with digital leaders and looking in the learning relating to digital services and agile working, and exploring tools and mechanisms to aid recovery, particularly through increased collaboration and digital engagement.

The detailed remit of the sub group will be further developed and agreed by members and with Partnership Council.

3. Mode of operation

The Group will meet frequently [*frequency to be determined*] in the first six months and then adjust frequency as necessary, dependent upon a range of factors including the impact of any further surges in Covid-19 cases or deaths.

This will be a task and finish group and its remit and mode of operation will adjust accordingly. There will be a formal review from time to time to make sure that the Group lasts only as long as it creates value for members.

Papers should normally be circulated at least five working days before the meeting. Material may be circulated for consideration out-of-committee with the consent of the Chair.

4. Resources

The Secretariat for the Group and associated working groups will be provided by the Welsh Government. Agendas and papers will be jointly agreed with WLGA in advance.

5. Membership

The Group will be chaired by the Minister with responsibility for local government matters (the Minister) or by another Welsh Minister nominated as his or her substitute.

The Minister may invite other Welsh Ministers or Deputy Welsh Ministers to attend meetings for agenda items relating to their portfolio responsibilities. The Minister will be supported by Welsh Government officials as necessary.

Membership is to be confirmed.

6. Delegations

The sub group may establish technical working groups to support its work. The remits of such groups will be agreed by the sub group. The sub group may also establish task-and-finish groups if required.

The membership of the task and finish groups will comprise officials of the Welsh Government and selected public services officers and, where appropriate, independent advisors. Specialist advisers may be invited to attend specific task and finish group meetings by the relevant chairs when required.

The number of members on each working group should be consistent with efficient and effective decision-making.

7. Reviews

The Group will review these terms of reference periodically.

8. Communications

Throughout the recovery phase, it has been recognised that there is a need for strong communication and a conversation with the public at national and local level. As with the behavioural and social controls in place at various points of the Covid-19 pandemic, the recovery journey will require a high level of engagement and buy-in from the public to help mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in the community.

This sub group will need to consider the impact of recovery work and to give priority to how changes will be communicated both to the public and our workforces as the recovery phase progresses.

The agenda, papers and minutes of each meeting of the sub group and any reports commissioned by the sub group will normally be published by the Welsh Government on its website in accordance with legislation governing public access to information.

Welsh Government / Welsh Local Government Association June 2020