

Item 12

City Recovery - Community Recovery Plan

File No: X034972

Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on communities and the economy. Existing inequities have been exposed and exacerbated, and new groups of vulnerable people have emerged. While management of the crisis is continuing, the staged removal of restrictions on social and business activity has now commenced.

On 4 May 2020, Council requested the Chief Executive Officer prepare a City Recovery Plan to present to Council recommending a pathway to moving beyond the crisis. The three part plan was to consider how the City will continue to operate and adapt its services, how it can support businesses and community to recover, and how it will manage its own financial recovery over the next three years.

This report specifically focuses on how the City can support the community and economic recovery of the local government area over the next 12 to 18 months. The Community Recovery Plan (Attachment A) sets out the background to the Covid-19 impacts, community needs expressed through research and consultation, the proposed strategic response including recovery goals, principles and specific areas for action, as well as an approach to tracking and measuring progress.

The preparation of the plan involved an impact assessment of the pandemic on the local economy, workers and people, as well as widespread consultation with impacted communities, businesses and industry sectors. Insights from the community engagement program, as well as an analysis of the policy responses from NSW and Federal governments, have shaped the development of the plan.

The plan has been prepared in consultation with Resilience NSW to ensure it is complementary to State plans and initiatives and acknowledges current health advice from NSW and Federal governments. It is consistent with the Resilient Sydney Plan and Sustainable Sydney 2030 principles, including inclusive and equitable, social and economic resilience, environmental sustainability and the critical contribution of the creative sector to recovery.

The Community Recovery Plan builds on the City support packages announced in March and April 2020 valued at \$72.5 million and is the next step the City will take together with the community to shape the future of the City of Sydney and the people that live, work, invest, study and visit here.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council adopt the Community Recovery Plan for the period 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021 as shown at Attachment A to the subject report.

Attachments

Attachment A. Community Recovery Plan

Attachment B. Community Recovery Plan - Engagement Report

Background

1. On 4 May 2020, Council requested the Chief Executive Officer prepare a City Recovery Plan to present to Council, comprising Financial, Organisational and Community Recovery Plans.
2. The Community Recovery Plan builds on the City support packages announced in March and April 2020, valued at \$72.5 million.
3. The preparation of the draft plan involved an assessment of the Covid-19 impacts, community needs resulting from the pandemic and an analysis of the NSW and Federal Governments policy response.
4. Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on local communities and the economy, and some of Sydney's other chronic stresses have been amplified because of this pandemic. They include housing affordability, social cohesion, employment diversity and transport in particular.
5. Most sectors of the economy reliant on interaction with people were closed apart from essential services, and the economic output of the City of Sydney local area is forecast to fall 15.8 per cent in the June 2020 quarter compared to the 2018/19 average. This equates to a reduction of output in the order of \$40 to \$50 million every day.
6. The impact has been particularly severe in the City's local government area because there is such a high concentration of businesses and a substantial number of jobs in the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. These include the arts, accommodation and food services, retail and other professional services.
7. Tourism and the visitor economy has been severely impacted from the closure of both national and state borders. The university sector has also been hard hit by the international travel bans.
8. Local jobs are forecast to fall by 12.4 per cent in the June 2020 quarter, even after considering the mitigating effects of the federal government's JobKeeper employee retention program. This forecast does not factor in the rate of underemployment.
9. Women are suffering more job losses and face more dire long-term consequences due to the economic shutdown. Impacts are expected to be particularly severe for young people, with research suggesting they have borne the brunt of job losses and cuts to working hours with expected social impacts to flow on in the years to come.
10. Existing inequities have been exposed and exacerbated, and new groups of vulnerable people have emerged. Many of these people faced the greatest inequality prior to the pandemic. These include people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, individuals on low incomes, women, the elderly and non-citizens.
11. The long-term impacts on mental health are not yet fully understood as people lose their jobs, experience housing stress, and face immense uncertainty and social isolation.
12. Ongoing physical distancing measures will continue to limit the degree to which large volumes of people can safely return to the city within reasonable travel times and public spaces will need to be carefully managed to rebuild public confidence.

13. In identifying where and how the City should act to implement a recovery plan, the policy responses of the Federal and NSW governments were analysed. The proposed actions in the plan are primarily concerned with issues that fall within the direct control of the City and where no other level of government is already providing a response.
14. In some instances, due to gaps in policy and service areas between levels of government, the City is going to need to act where it does not normally, or at a scale not previously required. At the same time, the City may need to continue to advocate for other levels of government to respond.
15. It is proposed that the progress and outcomes of this plan will be measured against four broad recovery goals:
 - (a) Recovery is inclusive and equitable.
 - (b) Recovery supports a resilient economy and community wealth building.
 - (c) Recovery is a catalyst for a green and sustainable future.
 - (d) Recovery is strengthened by a robust and diverse cultural sector.
16. Three principles will also guide the City's approach to recovery efforts including:
 - (a) People are actively involved in recovery, shaping change in their city and their future.
 - (b) Recovery is responsive to government health directions, led by stewardship and collaboration.
 - (c) Decisions are evidence-based and allow a flexible response.
17. The proposed strategic response includes six areas for action which focus on the individuals, groups, businesses and industry sectors with the greatest unmet need:
 - (a) Safely manage public places and streets to support community life and business.
 - (b) Provide equitable access to the essentials for safe and comfortable daily life for all residents.
 - (c) Strengthen community cohesion to build the resilience of local communities.
 - (d) Protect and empower the cultural and creative sector by prioritising the role of local creativity, cultural spaces, talent and knowledge.
 - (e) Rebuild the visitor economy through promotion of our vibrant and safe city with activated main streets and nightlife.
 - (f) Support businesses and organisations to innovate and adapt, so that industries can evolve and grow.
18. The plan proposes a measurement approach and framework to monitor and evaluate the progress in the implementation of the actions as well as a process to regularly report to Council over the 12 to 18 month delivery timeframe.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

19. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with all ten strategic directions and objectives, contributing in an integrated way to the economic, social, environmental, cultural, active, and public transport, urban design and governance aspirations set out in Sustainable Sydney 2030.
20. The Community Recovery Plan is also aligned with the aspirations of the forthcoming Sustainable Sydney 2050, as expressed in the Environment and Resilience and Affordable and Equitable Update reports to Council in February and March 2020. It is important the actions we take now work towards the city our communities have told us they want in the future.

Consultation and Engagement

21. Council asked the community how the City could support them, and conducted widespread consultation with impacted individuals, groups, businesses and industry sectors to inform the focus of the plan.
22. Through surveys, workshops and listening sessions, the community expressed a clear desire to be part of their own recovery. Many acknowledged their own social isolation has contributed to health and wellbeing concerns and increased anxiety related to financial impacts, job losses housing stress and access to essential services.
23. The City's own Covid-19 survey had over 2,700 responses identifying a role to:
 - (a) support vulnerable people;
 - (b) communicate clearly on changes;
 - (c) support local businesses;
 - (d) lead public health adaptations / assist community to do the same;
 - (e) advocate to NSW and Federal governments for better services;
 - (f) support the arts and cultural sector;
 - (g) reopen facilities including libraries, pools, community centres; and
 - (h) make it easier for businesses to get approvals.
24. Listening sessions and workshops were hosted with small business owners and representatives from heavily impacted sectors of the economy. Key insights included a desire for reliable and timely information, financial assistance, continued advocacy to the NSW and Federal government for increased support, place planning to support recovery, and marketing and promotion of Sydney main streets and fine-grain to local and regional visitors to generate footfall.

25. A series of five roundtable conversations were hosted by the Lord Mayor to hear from representatives from the arts and culture sector, resident groups, charities and food relief services, hotels and tourism and small business. These conversations provided valuable insights into the direct impacts to each of the sectors, the challenges each is facing into the future and identified opportunities for collaboration as recovery work continues.
26. The plan acknowledges the role of partnerships as critical to effective implementation, which will involve working closely with community groups, business and other organisations, as well as with the NSW Government, including Resilience NSW, to coordinate actions or joint responses.
27. It also acknowledges that the City must maintain ongoing engagement with communities to determine the priorities, timing and focus for implementation of the proposed actions by consulting widely with industry, representative organisations, communities and the City's Advisory Panels.
28. This will ensure implementation is informed by independent, cross-sectoral advice and that once again communities can influence decisions that affect the future of their city.
29. A summary of the community consultation is included in Attachment B to this report, the Community Recovery Plan - Engagement Report.

Organisational Impact

30. Any projects arising from the implementation of this strategy will be incorporated into existing and upcoming project plans, grant applications and budgets. Resources will be reallocated from existing projects and operations to deliver the actions set out in this plan.
31. The strategy proposes a distributed governance model that ensures the sharing of accountabilities both across the whole of the City of Sydney, as well as the local government area.

Risks

32. The Community Recovery Plan has been developed at a time when the health crisis is not yet over, and the status of government restrictions are constantly changing. The full extent of the impact is unknown, and it is difficult to predict the duration of the social and economic consequences.
33. The actions must therefore take account of this uncertainty; timed according to the removal of restrictions, scaled depending on the response and prioritised to meet the greatest need.

Budget Implications

34. The Community Recovery Plan will be delivered within existing operational and capital funds planned for 2020/21.
35. Any incoming grants from the NSW or Federal Governments would complement the City's funding sources.

Relevant Legislation

36. The Local Government Act 1993 and Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 are relevant to this Community Recovery Plan in relation to governance, procurement and data management.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

37. The Community Recovery Plan has a duration from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021.

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