



Covid-19 assumptions in your long-term plan

One of the main questions your communities are likely to ask when assessing your 2021-31 long-term plan (LTP) and associated consultation document, will be how your council will support its community in its recovery from the disruption of Covid-19.

Your community will also want to know how your council will respond to long-term issues such as climate change, freshwater quality, and changing health standards. Your community will expect solutions that balance the recovery from Covid-19 with these long-term issues.

Your council's decisions to address these issues will directly affect your community's cultural, economic, environmental, and social well-being. Consulting with your community is important so the trade-offs of the decisions your council is looking to make are properly understood.

As elected members, you should be aware of these matters when evaluating the information prepared by council officers to support the LTP and its associated consultation document.

The Covid-19 assumptions your council should consider when preparing its long-term plan

In our last bulletin, we discussed the importance of elected members considering and agreeing on the significant assumptions underpinning the LTP. One set of significant assumptions we suggested that you focus on was the Covid-19 disruption and recovery. A question for council officers and elected members to ask is: what are the Covid-19 disruption and recovery assumptions?



The exact nature of Covid-19 disruption and recovery assumptions will be different for each council. However, when considering them, we believe it is a good idea to prepare assumptions on the following matters:¹

- **Government health restriction assumptions** – these are assumptions about the timing and extent of future lockdowns and when restrictions on the borders will end (this will inform assumptions on the resumption of international travel and expected tourist visitors).
- **Population growth assumptions** – these assumptions are about migration forecasts and implications for residential, commercial, and industrial growth, and what input from your council is needed to support that growth. Covid-19 might significantly change the previous growth forecasts for some councils.
- **Economic assumptions** – these assumptions are about expected economic growth, inflation, and unemployment, which can be used to forecast demand for the council's services (e.g. community support and regulatory services) and the effect on the council's revenue and what the community can afford.
- **Behavioural trends** – these assumptions are about how people live and work, including "working from home" trends and how people gather within the community. These might also affect the demand for the council's services (e.g. community facilities and transport networks).

Where there are high levels of uncertainty about these assumptions, your council might need to model multiple scenarios. Doing so will enable your council to be more transparent about the risks and consequences in the LTP and associated consultation document.

Don't forget about stimulus funding

Many councils have received, or will be eligible to apply for, funding from central government to fund projects that will help stimulate the local economy. Where these projects are expected to be carried out during the period of the 2021-31 LTP, the LTP should include the projects and their associated funding.

Where significant, you should consider and agree the assumptions related to stimulus funding. In particular, you should check that the timing of the projects are consistent with what your council has agreed with central government.

Questions for elected members when considering Covid-19 disruption and recovery assumptions

- What Covid-19 disruption and recovery assumptions has your council identified to inform the LTP and associated consultation document? Are you satisfied that these assumptions are complete and there is appropriate evidence to support them?
- Are you satisfied that your council's response to the Covid-19 disruption, where it needs to, is balanced with consideration of long-term issues such as climate change, freshwater quality, and changing health standards?
- Can your council demonstrate that it has considered how its response to the Covid-19 disruption will affect different aspects of community well-being?
- Are you satisfied that your council has adequately described in the LTP and, where appropriate, the consultation document how it will support the community in its response to the Covid-19 disruption?
- Do you have enough information about your council's response to the Covid-19 disruption to engage with your community?

¹ We have adapted the areas from work we have seen councils do as they prepare for the 2021-31 LTPs.