



Creating a Town Centre Recovery Plan (A town centre checklist for place partnerships & local authorities)

June 2020



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Introduction

This downloadable resource for creating a town centre recovery plan should be used alongside the detailed guidance available in the [Revitalising Town Centres Toolkit](#) prepared by the People & Places Partnership for the Local Government Association (LGA).

The online toolkit provides practical guidance and resources to assist councils in taking a strategic and evidence-based approach to revitalising town and city centres. The updated toolkit provides suggestions of further reading, helpful resources and examples of good practice including practical responses to assist post-COVID 19 recovery.

The F-Factors for Success

The Revitalising Town Centres Toolkit is structured using F-Factors success factors developed by the People & Places Partnership for creating a 'Forward Framework' for town centre revitalisation. The F-Factors are used in the following sequence to guide the 'how' (partnership development) and 'what' (action planning & delivery) of town centre revitalisation:

Foundations: the process should be underpinned by an up-to-date review of existing strategies, collective objectives and evidence from recent surveys.

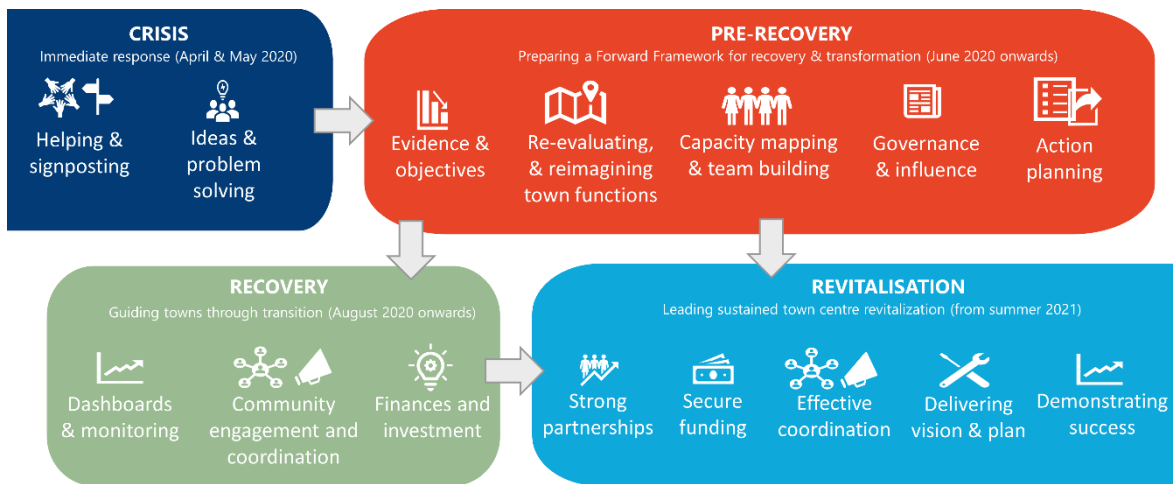
Function: action planning should begin with a clear statement of identified issues; recognition of council and partners' roles; the creation of suitable responses; acknowledgment of gaps in delivery; and identification of impact measures.

Form & Folk: next comes the development of appropriate organisational 'form' to coordinate activity including defining the roles of key partners and wider stakeholder engagement through 'folk'.

Finances: financial planning needs to include identifying opportunities for fund raising, inward investment and partnership sustainability. **Forward planning:** finally, everything gets written down as a 'forward framework' and regularly reviewed.

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The IPM COVID-19 Recovery Framework

The updated Revitalising Town Centre Toolkit uses guidance on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic based on an adaptation of the Institute of Place Management's (IPM) national [Post-COVID 19 Recovery Framework](#). The IPM Recovery Framework has been backed by the Government's [High Street Task Force](#) as part of its national guidance on responding to COVID-19.

The IPM's Post-COVID 19 Recovery Framework has much in common with the toolkit's Forward Framework approach. Essentially both frameworks place a strong emphasis on evidence-based planning and delivery whilst focusing on shaping the 'how' (partnership development) and 'what' (action planning & delivery) of recovery/revitalisation. Both frameworks recognise the key roles of local coordination and communication in delivering successful town and city centre outcomes.

There are four stages to the IPM's Recovery Planning Framework:

Crisis: This stage minimally covered the first 3 months of the COVID-19 outbreak involving rapid crisis management when local authorities and their partners were involved in helping business and other town centre stakeholders including through signposting to and providing funding and advice. This crisis stage was a period of necessary ideas generation and problem solving in ways that brought communities together.

Pre-recovery: The 'pre-recovery' stage is a crucial step towards building collective capacity and moving towards more reflexive forms of place governance and coordinated leadership. This stage commenced for many places in June 2020 and involves councils and town partnerships ensuring that plans are put in place for creating safe and welcoming centres in the short-term whilst social distancing and other measures are required. Planning in this stage also has to focus on a transition to subsequent stages when the virus' impact has diminished and the long-term revitalisation of town and city centres becomes possible.

This pre-recovery stage involves a strong initial focus on planning for 'how' revitalization can be achieved and therefore includes: analysis of evidence to define objectives; capacity mapping and team building; consideration of effective models for governance and maximizing strategic influence. This stage equally has to focus on the 'what' of town



and city centre revitalization through the evidence-led re-evaluating and reimagining of town centre functions such as travel, property, public realm, business, branding and digital development.

In-line with the Forward Framework approach used in this toolkit, the pre-recovery stage involves preparing documentation for defining the steps involved in governance and team building as well action planning for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering reimagined town and city centres in the longer-term.

Recovery: This stage focuses on delivery of initial actions to create safe and welcoming town and city centres whilst COVID-19 is still prevalent and social distancing remains necessary. Wherever possible these actions will offer the ability to test or transition into potential long-term improvements to revitalise town and city centres. In many instances, investments will be primarily aimed at delivering long-term transformation. With partnership development and town centre action planning in place, this stage will focus on successful delivery through using data dashboards in monitoring progress; ensuring effective community engagement and coordination across the town; and managing the necessary finances and fund raising.

Transformation or revitalisation: The transformation or revitalisation stage as it will be referred in this toolkit, requires a conscious attempt to improve town and city centres for the long-term. This involves learning from understanding and innovation in the previous stages though with a growing focus on building on progress in addressing new challenges, such as climate change, economic inequality and the repurposing town and city centres. The focus is on maintaining a high standard of joint working and outcomes-focused actions through maintaining strong partnerships, secure funding and effective coordination in delivering a vision and plan whilst demonstrating success.

Using the ‘town centre checklist’ for recovery planning

The updated town centre checklist overleaf has been prepared using a combination of the IPM’s Post-COVID 19 Recovery Framework and the original Revitalising Town Centre Toolkit’s Forward Framework approach.

The updated self-assessment ‘town centre checklist’ for councils and their partners uses a series of prompts to help gauge current and future progress in strategy development and delivery. It incorporates guidance and prompts from the stages of IPM’s Recovery Framework and is compatible with detailed guidance provided by the [Revitalising Town Centres Toolkit](#). Specific pages of the Toolkit for each town centre success factor listed in the checklist include built-in information on COVID-19 recovery planning. Ideally the checklist should be used alongside the Toolkit as part of a six-monthly or annual review process as the different factors are progressively addressed.

A traffic light system of red, amber, green can be used to visually represent progress being made in developing and delivering a town or city centre recovery plan.

Red = No significant progress yet made in understanding and addressing this factor.

Amber = Analysis undertaken and significant planning in place for partnership development and to address identified issues.

Green = Comprehensive plan in place and significant steps made in partnership development/delivery



Town centre checklist for recovery planning

FOUNDATION		Progress
Evidence and objectives	Has a baseline survey of issues been completed including COVID-19 impacts, objectives defined and short/long-term outcome monitoring 'dashboard' agreed?	
FUNCTION		
Travel, parking, and access	Is an integrated town centre travel, parking and access strategy in place with immediate social distancing measures and transition to increased sustainability?	
Planning and property	Are town-centre-first policies, master-planning or asset management in place that take account of COVID-19 impacts and engage businesses and landlords?	
Streetscape and public realm	Has a prioritised streetscape and public realm improvement plan been agreed that facilitates social distancing and increases long-term, cross-town foot-flow?	
Business support	Is there tailored mentoring and support to enhance the quality, performance and distinctiveness of businesses based on recovery needs and future trends?	
Place branding and marketing	Is there a clear understanding of the town brand with pooled resources and a creative, collective campaign offering reassurance to existing and new markets?	
Digital tech and data	Is there an assessment of digital infrastructure and skills with an investment plan for the collective use of data in marketing and monitoring the town centre?	
FORM		
Governance and influence	Is there an appropriate structure, membership and credibility to coordinate local stakeholder activity and influence cross-departmental or strategic partnerships?	
FOLK		
Community engagement and coordination	Is there strong public, private and community engagement with active and coordinated involvement in planning and delivery that extends to community assets development and is backed by a clear communications plan?	
Capacity mapping and team building	Are there an effective chair, suitably skilled board, employment of necessary staff, effective management of trained volunteers and established relationships for joint working with other stakeholder groups?	
FUNDING		
Finances and investment	Is there an organisation with robust financial procedures and strategy agreed for diverse and sustainable fund raising and income to support a town centre? Is it 'run as a business' with inter-relationships understood and investment secured?	
FORWARD PLANNING		
Strategy and plans	Is there a well-defined 'forward framework' comprising an overarching vision/strategy, a rolling organisational business plan and a parallel action plan coordinating and monitoring delivery on the ground?	

