



recession

the local impact

As the scale of the recession becomes clearer so does the nature of its impact on communities, on councils and their partners. There is real value in the leadership of every council communicating a coherent narrative on the impact of the recession on its area and the steps being taken by the council and its partners to respond.

The majority of councils have taken action in response to the recession. Some of that action has been innovative and imaginative and the LGA and IDeA are seeking to capture that good and emerging practice in the case studies they are collecting and disseminating. The first set of case studies was published as '[Global Slowdown, Local Solutions](#)'. Further case studies are available on the [IDeA Partnership and Places Library](#).

Inevitably the nature and comprehensiveness of that response varies significantly from place to place. The aim of this checklist is to help elected members and officer in councils to consider all the implications of the recession and their scope for action and to help them to generate the imaginative and innovative thinking that is necessary to deal with these unique circumstances. Our objective is to help ensure that all councils are in a position to meet the leadership challenge posed by these unique circumstances. We want each council to be able to articulate a coherent narrative about the impact of the recession on their area and the action that the council and its partners are taking in response.

This checklist is structured around four key questions:

Do you have a comprehensive picture of the impact of the recession on your area, your council and your partners now and the likely impact over the next two years?

Have you fully explored what action you could take now and put in place a coherent and comprehensive response to the impact of the recession on your area?

Are you exploring the longer term implications of current and emerging trends and what they might mean for your area, your council and your partners?

Are you beginning to think about the action that could be taken now to help shape and respond to longer term trends?

Shared Intelligence has supported the **IDeA** in the production of this checklist. A second version of this note will be issued in January and it will be accompanied by a more detailed guide which will also be published early in the New Year.



Do you have a comprehensive picture of the impact of the recession on your area, your council and your partners now and the likely impact over the next two years?

Communication

Has your council – the leader or elected mayor - communicated a coherent picture of the impact of the recession on your area?

How closely are all elected members engaged in assessing the impact of the recession and communicating the “big picture”?

Service Delivery

Does your council and its partners have a comprehensive understanding of how the recession will impact upon the demand for services in order to enable you to plan and invest accordingly?

Have you undertaken an assessment of the impact of the recession on the financial position of your council? Has this addressed issues such as the impact on: efficiency gains / capital receipts / parking income / planning fees / letting income / procurement / workforce?

Do you understand the likely impact of the recession on the companies and other organisations which supply services to your council?

Community Impact

Have your council and its partners got an understanding of the likely challenges it faces as a result of the recession in terms of the impact on individuals: for example, individual hardship and consequent problems such as mental health and the need for advice services; and the impact on communities, such as community safety and cohesion?

Have you assessed the impact upon particular groups? Has this assessment covered groups such as: young people including NEET group / children in care / children at risk or on child protection register / older people / BME communities / economic migrants / domestic violence / crime / fuel poverty / people out of work / people with disabilities?

Do you understand the impact of the recession on housing in your area, including – house prices, new housing development, repossessions, homelessness and the impact on private and social landlords?

Gathering Intelligence

Are you clear what data you need in order to understand and address these issues and do you have access to it? Does this include anecdotal and qualitative data as well as quantitative data?

Are you pulling this data together in one place across your LSP? Have you, for example, instigated a “recession watch” with your partners?

Are you working with Jobcentre Plus to gain early notice of large scale redundancies in your area?

Are you aware of the pressures and opportunities facing business in your area? Can you take a “business temperature check”? Is the Chamber of Commerce or other local business group providing background information (in confidence if necessary)?

Are you looking at impact beyond your area where the functional economy and/or housing market area extends to neighbouring authorities?



Have you fully explored what action you could take now and put in place a coherent and comprehensive response to the impact of the recession on your area?

Local Recession Planning

Have you systematically assessed the contribution that each of your council's services could make to addressing the impact of the recession on your area, where appropriate working in partnership with other agencies?

Have you developed a local action plan and encouraged partners to do so?

Has your response been communicated effectively to local people?

Are elected members fully engaged in shaping and communicating your council's response to the recession?

Is there a mechanism for co-ordinated action at the local level through the LSP or other means? Are you and your partners clear about their roles and responsibilities in responding locally to the recession?

Where appropriate – for example in the light of functional economic and housing market areas – are you developing a response to the recession in collaboration with neighbouring councils?

Supporting People and Businesses

Have you considered the steps you could take to support vulnerable businesses?

What action can you take to influence the delivery of business support locally?

Have you considered the steps you could take to support vulnerable households?

For example:

Are you taking action to help people and businesses get better access to finance, through for example credit unions, the European Investment Bank and Community Development Finance Initiatives, or the idea of local banks which is being explored by some councils?

Have you reviewed the capacity of advice services? Have you considered the possible implications for children's services and adult social care?

Have you explored the scope for bringing forward infrastructure investment to provide economic stimulus and potentially reduce the risk involved in additional private sector investment?

Have you considered factors such as the fact that high priority employment locations are better placed to support the recovery and the importance of addressing infrastructure gaps in areas earmarked for high housing growth?

Are you reviewing your relationships with the 3rd Sector in light of the recession? Are you considering the potential of the sector in terms of: employment, training, service provision and the provision of advice and support to local people and families?



Are you exploring the longer term implications of current and emerging trends and what they might mean for your area, your council and your partners?

Are you beginning to think about the action that could be taken now to help shape and respond to longer term trends?

Many economists and commentators are arguing that the impact of this recession will be broader and longer lasting than previous recessions (see the brief guide to the recession). This means that the economy and the housing market, for example, are likely to be radically different in three years time than they are now. It also looks certain that public expenditure will be considerably tighter than it is now. This new world is likely to vary in different areas as the impact of the recession bites on local businesses, local housing supply, the quality of town centres, redevelopment schemes and local communities. The financial position of local councils and their partners, and the robustness of local partnerships will shape the longer term impact of the recession.

It is also important to recognise that the action councils take now will have an impact on the longer term. The question is whether that impact is assessed and understood. Recessions can provide opportunities for councils and their partners to shape the longer-term economic structure and functions of their area and it is often local factors that carry greater weighting when assessing the areas strengths and weaknesses. Gathering robust intelligence about the dynamics of the local economic area will, in due course, help to strengthen council's economic assessments and long-term economic strategies.

Have you begun to think about what the "post-recession world" could look like in your area? Are you doing this with partners? Have you considered organising futures events involving local partners and communities to develop and test different scenarios of what the future might look like in your area?

What preparations could be made now, with local partners, in preparation for a much tighter public expenditure settlement?

Have you begun to identify what opportunities there may be in the current circumstances which could be seized to help shape the longer term economic and infrastructure future of your area?

Have you begun to think about what you can do now to best benefit from the upturn? Housing / commercial property / Local Asset Backed Vehicles.

The recession potentially offers the opportunity to address housing demands and shortages. What action have you taken (for example loans to Housing Associations) to take advantage of opportunities to buy land or private houses?

Are you clear where potential opportunities lie? Land acquisition / skills / better partnerships / enterprise / affordable housing / supporting growth sectors, reduced costs / enhancing the community leadership role of local government

In terms of business development and support local experience and delivery are crucial. Are you clear what sectors of the local economy

are most vulnerable and which are the likely growth sectors for the future?

The failure in past recessions has been in not supporting people to get the right skills to take advantage of the opportunities in the upturn or to move into areas of work not affected by the recession. Are you clear what you and your partners should and can do in this regard? Are there freedoms and flexibilities required so that individuals and businesses in need of support are able to access it? How are you helping to promote support programmes to business?

Investment in Innovation now will help produce stronger, more diverse and more resilient economies in the future. It is crucial that we move away from an over-reliance upon a

service economy and particularly financial services. Are you thinking about what part your council can play in helping to support this?

Wider Opportunities

Have you considered how the recession can help to deliver positive change and influence individual and community behaviour, such as encouraging cycling, walking, car sharing, use of public transport, recycling, neighbourliness etc?

Have you considered what part partnership and collaborative working could play in the post-recession world – in terms of, for example, local partnership and sub-regional working?