



# A BETTER VENTNOR?

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 80/19

12 OCTOBER 2020

The purpose of this Report is to provide a basis for the Town Council's discussion of the Isle of Wight Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan, *A Better Way*.

## No. DETAILS

### 1) BACKGROUND

- a) The Isle of Wight Council's adoption of its Covid-19 Recovery Plan, headed *A Better Way*, at its Cabinet meeting of 10 September and covering the period to March 2022 provides a context for considering Ventnor's situation as it faces the consequences of the pandemic: the plan is available [here](#).
- b) Local Authority Recovery Plans are focused, not on the virus itself but on the consequences of it for pay, employment, general health and family and community life.
- c) *A Better Island* comes from a background of substantial research that identifies the Island, and Ventnor in particular, as in the highest risk band for all of these effects.
- d) The next section of this Report references some of that research, section 3 sets that research in the context of the Ventnor's pre-Covid challenges, section 4 identifies the response of *A Better Island* to the findings identified in sections 2-4 and section 5 identifies the basis for *A Better Ventnor*.

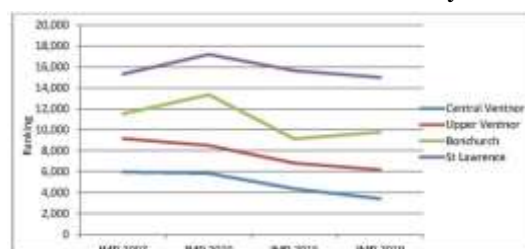
### 2) RESEARCH FINDINGS

- a) *The Geography of the Covid-19 Crisis in England* was published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies on 15 June 2020, stating *What sets this crisis apart is the many different ways that it is impacting families: while the virus itself is primarily a public health issue, the unprecedented responses it has necessitated mean that this is also very much an economic and a social crisis.*
- b) The Isle of Wight is mentioned four times in its 33 pages and the full report is available [here](#).
- c) It is based on assessing local authority areas on their health, economic and social costs and finds that:  
Nine local authorities – Torbay, the Isle of Wight, Blackpool, Northumberland, Dorset, Wirral, Gloucestershire, Bury and Lancashire – are more vulnerable than average across all three domains (shown in black on Figure 13). Torbay and the *Isle of Wight* stand out even among this group; they are in the top 20% most vulnerable on the health, worker and families indices. This likely reflects their relatively elderly populations, economic reliance on tourism and hospitality, and concentrated pockets of local socio-economic deprivation.
- d) A map of England showing its local authorities ranked into five bands with the Island in the most at risk one is attached to this Report as Appendix A.
- e) *Levelling up: where and how?* was published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies as Chapter 7 of its latest Green Budget 2020 available [here](#).
- f) It mentions the Isle of Wight three times and is based on combining measures of pay, employment, formal education and incapacity benefits to assess which areas might be considered 'left behind' and in need of 'levelling up'; it finds that:  
a number of deprived coastal communities (such as Blackpool, Great Yarmouth and the *Isle of Wight*) appear to be both 'left behind' and particularly vulnerable to the immediate economic fallout from the pandemic.
- g) A map of England showing its local authorities ranked into five bands with the Island in the most left-behind one is attached to this Report as Appendix B.

---

### 3) VENTNOR

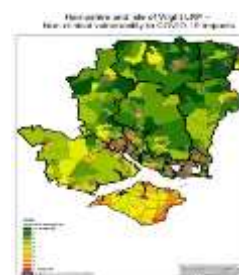
- a) The town is among the *concentrated pockets of local socio-economic deprivation* identified in the Geography of the Covid-19 Crisis in England of the research findings in section 2(a-d) above and in the *'left behind' and in need of 'levelling up'* of the Levelling up: where and how? of section 2(e-g)
- b) That assessment is confirmed by the town's ranking in the government's *Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019*.
- c) That Index, published on 26 September last year, is based on the collation of all relevant data for small areas (roughly 1,500 population) known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) on seven aspects of life related to deprivation, referred to as *domains*: Income, Employment, Education, Health, Crime, Living Environment and Barriers to Housing and Services.
- d) In addition to the seven main domains, rankings are also included for Income Deprivation Affecting children and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People.
- e) England has a total of 32,844 LSOAs and so the national ranking runs from 1 (the most deprived) to 32,844 (the least deprived).
- f) The Island has 89 LSOAs four of which cover the whole of the town of Ventnor that very closely coincide with areas of the town: Ventnor Central, Bonchurch, St Lawrence and Upper Ventnor, each of approximately 1,500 residents.
- g) Both Ventnor Central and Upper Ventnor are ranked on this Index in the most deprived 20% nationally and Ventnor Central is on the border of the most deprived 10% nationally.
- h) As the chart shows, both have been steadily becoming more deprived across the four Indices and 12 years since 2007.



---

### 4) A BETTER ISLAND

- a) Ventnor's situation is acknowledged in the Isle of Wight Council's Recovery Plan only because of its inclusion on page 14 of a map from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight's Local Resilience Forum and titled *Non-Clinical vulnerability to Covid-19 impacts*.
- b) The map breaks the area into Middle Lower Super Output Areas (MSOAs (basically two LSOAs together) and ranks them into ten categories; a larger copy of the map is attached as Appendix C to this Report.
- c) That shows half of Ventnor – the MSOAs of Central Ventnor and Upper Ventnor - along with Newport, in the *at most risk* layer.
- d) There is no specific mention of Ventnor in the Isle of Wight Council's *A Better Island*.



---

### 5) A BETTER VENTNOR?

- a) Given the challenges Ventnor faces, *A Better Ventnor* needs collaborative working within a strong partnership between the Town Council and the Isle of Wight Council so it is disappointing that the town is not acknowledged in the latter's Recovery Plan.
  - b) The third bullet point in its section on *Place Recovery* (page 18) identifies the need to *achieve sustainable, welcoming places with inclusive public realm improvements in our towns that are accessible for all* and then lists its major investments in Newport (Harbour regeneration)
-

---

and Ryde (Interchange investment).

- c) Both are, of course, welcome and will benefit the whole Island, but what about the other 'places' that are identified as being 'left behind', 'at risk' and significantly deprived?
- d) Not only is there neither mention of nor plans for Ventnor, there are growing indications that the Isle of Wight Council is taking from Ventnor rather than supporting the town.
- e) Examples of that include:
  - o the selling of a part of Upper Ventnor's Garden Estate for a gain of £180,000 while refusing to fund the whole £2,000 cost of an initial stage for the potential development of the rest (see Report 77/20 for this meeting);
  - o the selling of the old Market Street Public Toilet for a gain of £80,000;
  - o proposing to charge the town £5,900 a year to rent four Central Car Parking Bays for a restoration of a disability friendly town centre Public Toilet (see Report 79/20 for this meeting);
  - o the cost to the town of £170,000 (47% of its Precept) this year and future years of having to take on the provision of services – Public Toilets Paddling Pool, Beach Cleaning, Grounds Maintenance, Library, Youth Service, Ventnor Park – that the Isle of Wight Council could no longer afford to provide;
  - o failure to respond to our Business Case for taking on the management of the town's other four car parks that was submitted nearly two years ago; and
  - o refusal to provide £1,000 match funding for an assessment of a possible new layout of the Central Car Park that could provide additional bays.
- f) The assistance provided to the Town Council's staff team by the Isle of Wight Council's officers, not only in facilitating the transfer of services, but also in ongoing advice and dealing with residents' complaints and concerns is excellent and much appreciated.
- g) The Town Council also understands the Isle of Wight Council's major Budget issues as its government funding has been reduced by up to 60% in recent years with perhaps more to come.
- h) But the Town Council's own regeneration plans do not require significant funding from the Isle of Wight Council – its requests to date total less than £10,000 – but do require engagement and support that, specifically:
  - o does not expect £5,900 a year from the Town Council for using four car parking bays for the town to invest another £150,000 to restore an accessible disability friendly Public Toilet;
  - o responds positively to the Town Council's Business case for taking on the management of the town's other four car parks that would enable flexibility – including seasonal adjustments – of tariffs and the issuing of Ventnor specific Permits that would assist the town's tourist-focused businesses while still providing the Isle of Wight Council with its provided for income; and
  - o provides the £2,000 cost of a site survey and initial sketches for the potential development of the remainder of the Upper Ventnor Garden Estate to provide employment and economic opportunities.

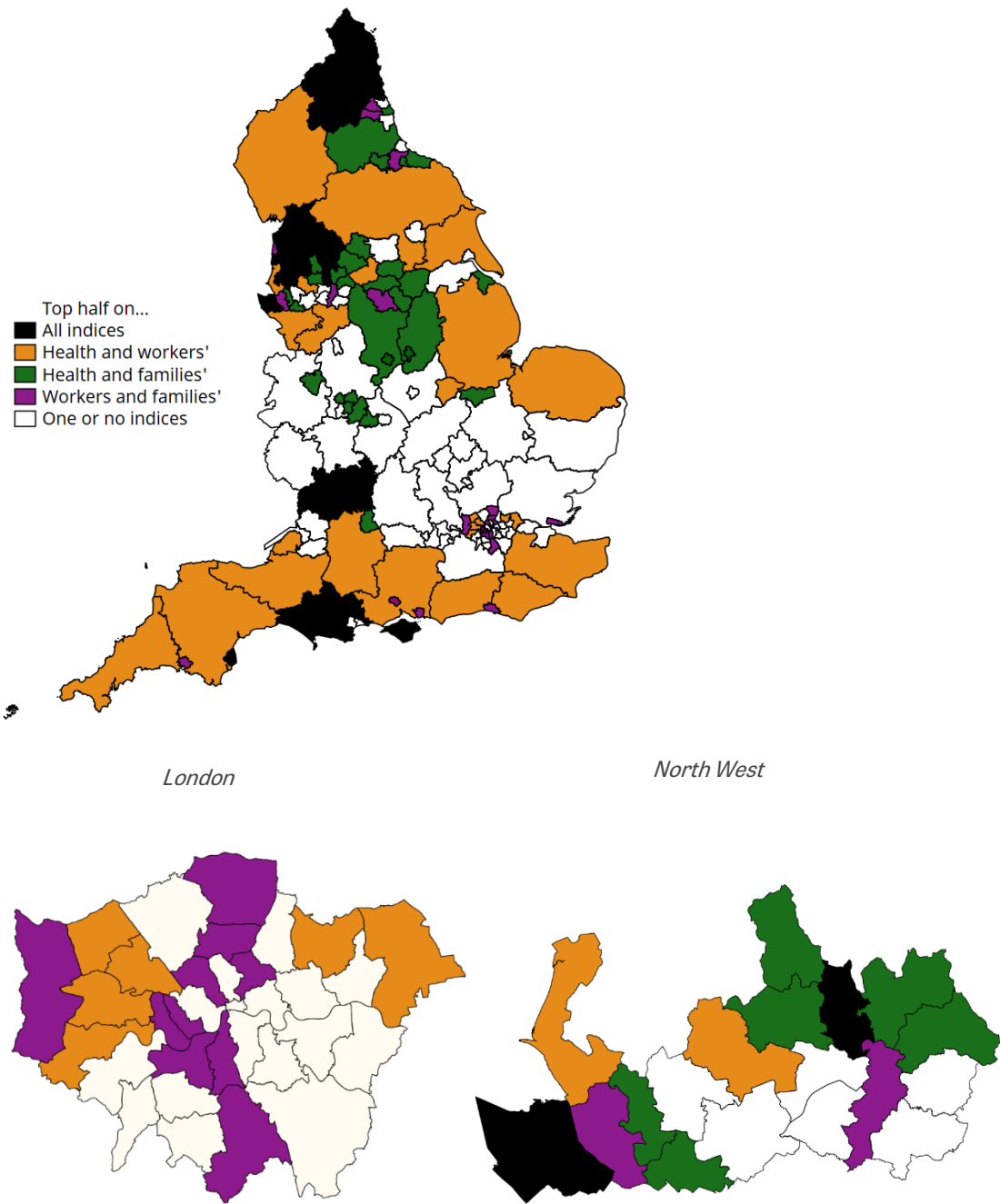
---

## 6) RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to:

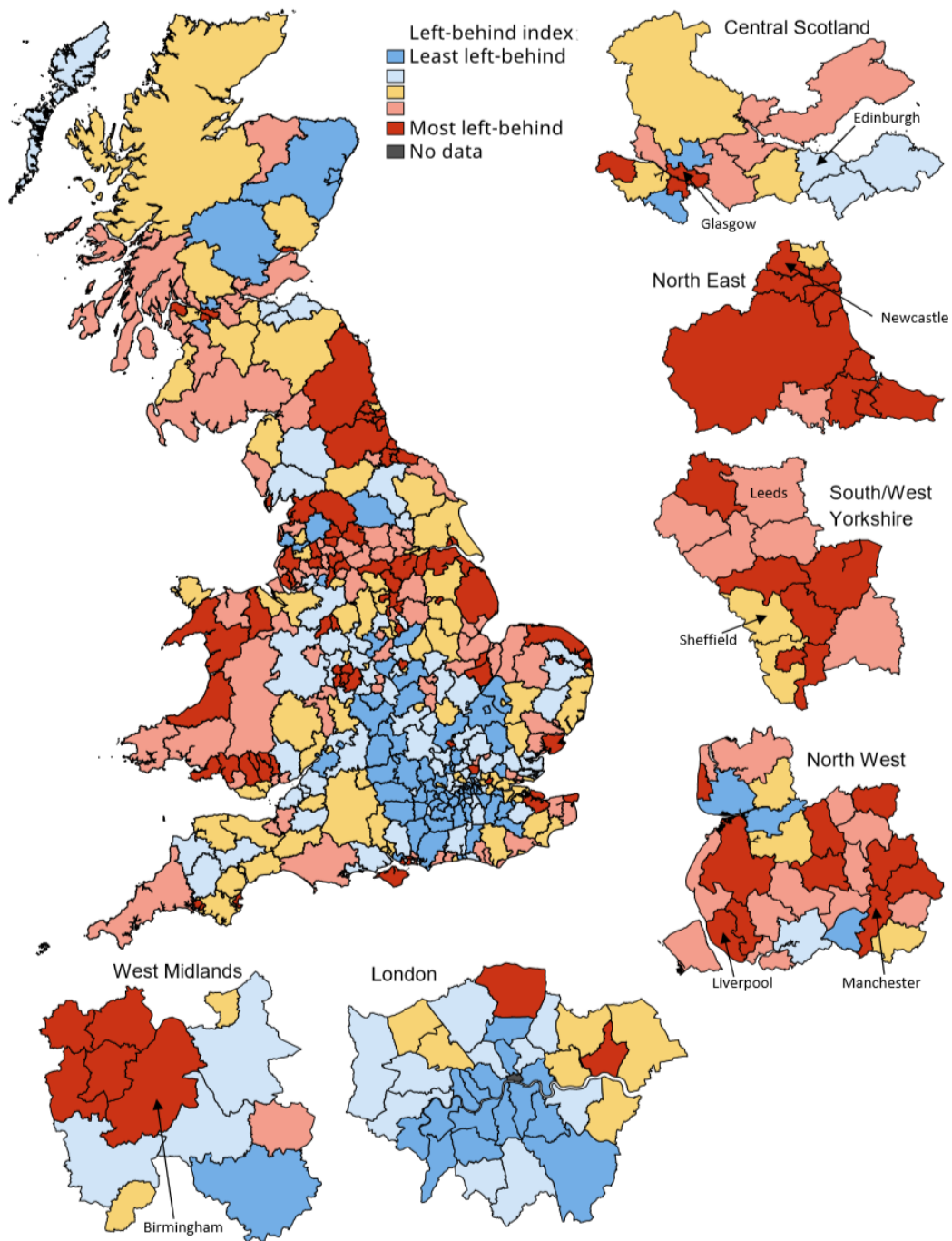
- i) agree its response to the Isle of Wight Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan *A Better Way*; and
  - ii) ask its County Councillors to work with the Town Council in progressing that response.
-

Appendix A



Note: Data are not available for the City of London or Isles of Scilly. Data sources are listed in Appendix Table A4.

**Figure 7.2. Quintiles of illustrative left-behind index**



Note: Darker red areas indicate areas classified as in the most 'left-behind' fifth, with darker blue areas in the least 'left-behind' fifth. Boundaries are for lower-tier local authorities as of April 2019.

Source: See the online appendix to this chapter for details of components of the index.



Hampshire and Isle of Wight LRF –  
Non-clinical vulnerability to COVID-19 impacts

