

Report sponsor: Director of Financial Services
Report author: Director of Financial Services

Council Response to Covid 19 Pandemic

Purpose

- 1.1 The report provides Members with an overview of the response to Covid 19 and the decisions taken locally using emergency powers.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the contents of this report and the actions taken to manage the issues highlighted in the report.
- 2.2 To thank all the Council staff and everyone involved across all sectors, in the NHS, in partner organisations, in our voluntary sector, in our communities and in our businesses for their incredible effort in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent recovery.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To note the actions taken to support our City's residents and businesses in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 3.2 To acknowledge the efforts of all staff, partners, community and businesses in working together for the benefit of the City during this period.

Supporting information

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The nature and scale of the COVID-19 emergency is unprecedented. Local Government is critical to the effective leadership, co-ordination and implementation of the response. The Council has moved swiftly to establish plans and arrangements that are making sure that vulnerable people get the health and care that they need, supporting our communities, helping business to stay resilient, maintaining essential services and keeping people informed about what to do and where to go for help. Council resources have been prioritised on dealing with the crisis and planning ahead for the recovery and staff have displayed remarkable flexibility and resourcefulness, using local knowledge and intelligence to deliver action on the ground.
- 4.2 The mobilisation of our staff and partners to provide critical services for our community has been significant over the past two months. Our approach has been

strongly rooted in the ambitions and priorities of the City and social justice. We have stepped in during this crisis to ensure that the most vulnerable have homes, food, and social contact. We are providing food parcels to people shielding, feeding children and families in poverty, supporting key workers, housing rough sleepers who do not have a home, providing much needed financial assistance to those in financial hardship and providing nearly £80 million of direct financial support to the City's businesses. We have also been conscious of our diverse communities and taken actions to make sure that equality implications have been addressed. This is a significant response that the whole City should be proud of.

- 4.3 The Council has done this in partnership with our voluntary and community sector colleagues and with our communities. We have worked as quickly as possible to provide an essential safety net – ensuring that people are able to safely remain at home and reduce the spread of Covid-19.
- 4.4 The pandemic and subsequent lockdown has impacted on the nature of the services we deliver and how we deliver them. As would be expected in an emergency, we have responded at pace to protect those who have needed it. Such a response has required, in some cases, a fundamental reimagining of how we deliver services and has, inevitably, created a series of financial pressures and funding challenges. It is essential that many of these arrangements and ways of working continue after lockdown is released and the Covid pandemic is brought under control.
- 4.5 The Council's response, prioritisation of actions and governance arrangements for tackling the Covid-19 emergency have been centred around five key themes:
- Ensuring vulnerable people get the health and care that they need
 - Supporting our communities
 - Helping business and workforces to stay resilient
 - Maintaining essential services
 - Keeping people informed
- 4.6 At the same time, the global pandemic is having a fundamental and negative impact on the economy and presents a series of significant challenges for the economic health of the country and its public finances in both the short and medium term.
- 4.7 The Government has so far announced £3.2bn for local authorities to respond to the Covid 19 pandemic response. In addition, the Government has provided £1.3bn for England to support the NHS and social care with the additional cost of COVID-19. This includes meeting the cost of discharges from hospital that would otherwise have fallen to local government to fund, such as home care and care home costs.
- 4.8 This has been provided as an un-ringfenced grant but recent statements from the Secretary of State suggest that MHCLG indicate that they will fund in full the additional requests from Government for Councils to deliver (such as meeting additional social care costs, provider costs, providing accommodation for rough sleepers , community hub etc) but is more ambiguous on providing additional funding for services that Councils have decided locally that they needed to provide, additional costs for existing service and the loss of income. There is real concern within the

Local Government Sector that the funding will be insufficient. More recently a number of specific grants for Track and Trace, support for rough sleepers and reopening the high street have been announced.

4.9 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's response in key service areas alongside summary financial implications of our response and some key decisions taken to date in relation to the Covid-19 crisis. In doing so, it must be recognised that the situation remains ongoing and it is extremely difficult to make a full, definitive and comprehensive assessment of the longer-term needs arising from this pandemic.

4.10 **Supporting Vulnerable People to get the health and care they need**

4.11 The Council's existing commissioning and delivery arrangements for Adult Social Care allowed the Council to respond quickly to working with Health colleagues to support hospital discharges and provide effective services in the community. The focus has been:

- Managing the hospital discharge and re-ablement process to ensure that there is a streamlined process including all stakeholders and that people are supported in residential/nursing home settings. This includes commissioning extra capacity with Agincare with funding secured from the CCG very early on, thereby providing additional and high quality and sufficient provision within the City;
- Introduction of the discharge lounge at the Hospital facilitating multi-disciplinary input and effective transfer into community settings;
- Supporting providers across the City through prompt payments and payments in advance, uplift in fees where financial impact of Covid could be proven, co-ordination of PPE availability etc;
- Access to Testing.

The response is being recognised regionally and nationally as being effective, targeted and supportive to the whole care sector in the City. The Council is also leading on training for neighbouring Councils on infection control and addressing the myriad of Government and Public Health guidance for this sector.

4.12 The Government has provided £2.8 million of targeted funding for infection control in care homes, of which 75% is being passed directly to care homes to mitigate risks of care home cases and transmission between homes.

4.13 The Covid Pandemic has had a major impact on ways of working for Children's Social Care including a reduction in front door referrals, for example as referrals for schools have reduced due to schools being shut. Access by social workers has also changed to take into account limitations in access during lockdown. The Council has adopted a variety of approaches during the period to safeguard children including virtual contact alongside more traditional approaches. Nationally, there is a worry that there will be a major spike in safeguarding referrals as lockdown is lifted with the likelihood of further increases in looked after children supported by the Council.

4.14 **Support for Communities**

4.15 Providing effective support to the community has been at the heart of the Council's response. This is truly a partnership with the community and our partners and has included the following:

- To coordinate the local response to the Government 'ask' to support those on the shielding list including distribution of food parcels
- To ensure a volunteer co-ordination that responds to the non-essential and non-critical needs
- To provide a central hub for access to information, support, reassurance and engagement. This has been delivered through the Derby Community Hub which operates 7 days a week and is run jointly with Community Action Derby and Derby Direct. This also involved working with the British Deaf Association to make sure our information is accessible for Deaf people and with communities so information was in a range of languages through videos.
- To support communities and manage any tensions through locality working.

4.16 Since the pandemic began, over 1,000 local volunteers have registered for the Community Hub and over 2,000 requests for service from vulnerable people have been met. Councillors have played a key role in supporting this initiative and engaging with voluntary and community sector groups. Derby's Community Hub has been only part of the amazing response by communities across the City. Through Community Action the Council has been able to provide a number of small grants to support this activity.

4.17 The success of this partnership with the Community sector has resulted in a very effective response to those requiring support at this time, especially in ensuring that support reaches those self-isolating at this time meeting their physical, social and emotional needs, for example befriending.

4.18 The Council has also supported the work of our many voluntary and independent providers at this time through the guaranteeing of payments until the end of June even where traditional service models have been impacted by lockdown. Alternative and innovative ways of working have been adopted to continue to meet community needs.

4.19 National studies are recommending that Councils continue to work with community partners through new collaborative, agile and innovative ways to meet community needs. Based on the Derby response we are well placed to build on this partnership in the future.

4.20 **Support for Rough Sleepers/Homelessness**

4.21 The Government quickly identified rough sleepers as one of the most vulnerable groups at risk from Covid 19 and requested local authorities to secure accommodation that would provide them with a safe and secure place with appropriate support services. This approach built on the Council's rough sleeping approach prior to the Covid 19 pandemic.

- 4.22 The Council quickly secured the sole use of the Holiday Inn Express on Pride Park to provide the necessary accommodation. This alongside Milestone House has allowed the Council to offer accommodation meaning that no person needed to be on the streets and appropriate accommodation for self-isolation if required.
- 4.23 The centralised provision has been a success with over 87 unique guests who have stayed at the hotel since it opened. Occupancy has normally been between 40 – 50 residents a night.
- 4.24 The response has been a truly multi-agency approach with staff from Derby Homes, Derby City Mission, NHS colleagues all working out of the hotel providing targeted and effective support services. This has helped some of the initial problems to be addressed and increased stability for this vulnerable group.
- 4.25 The Government has recently announced further funding with the aim to reduce and eventually eliminate the need for rough sleeping.
- 4.26 **Operational Services**
- 4.27 The Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown has had a major impact on the Council's key operational services such as waste collection, crematoria etc where availability of staff, demand pressures and the need for social distancing and PPE have created unique and complex challenges.
- 4.28 Early in the lockdown it was not possible to provide a full service due to staff availability or the need to secure alternative and additional capacity. It was necessary for a short time to cease the brown bin services and the recycling centre at Raynesway. There were also difficulties in completing recycling collections. In response the Council:
- (a) Secured up to 8 additional refuse collection vehicles and crews from the private sector
 - (b) Restarted the brown bin service in early May
 - (c) Reopened Raynesway on the 16th May in a manner that is now being held up as a national exemplar
 - (d) Introduced additional capacity in the Crematorium and Cemetery Service including working with faith communities and investing in an additional cremator
 - (e) Secured additional mortuary capacity jointly with Derbyshire County Council.
- 4.29 There are many operational challenges of providing operational services with the requirements for social distancing and keeping our staff and communities safe. These will need to be factored into risk assessments, equality impact assessments and operational practices going forward with consequential cost impacts not in the Council's MTFP.
- 4.30 **PPE**
- 4.31 During the Covid 19 pandemic there has been many iterations of Government guidance alongside difficulties in securing PPE equipment.
- 4.32 The Council responded through setting up a cross Council PPE group, undertaking risk assessments and training and procuring direct PPE equipment alongside that

secured from Central Government.

- 4.33 A centralised PPE hub/store was set up at London Road which has operated efficiently meeting the needs of the Council and providers across the City.

4.34 Business Support

- 4.35 The Covid 19 pandemic has had a major impact on the National Economy and the financial viability and sustainability of large and small businesses within the City. Recent announcements by companies such as Rolls Royce illustrate the longer-term impact of what was originally viewed as a sharp economic hit. The Council has set up the Economic Recovery task group involving a variety of businesses, business groups and partners to co-ordinate the response.

- 4.36 The Council has been able to directly support businesses through business grant and reliefs totalling £81.2 million. Over 4,000 businesses in the City have benefited from this support:

Support to Businesses	£m
Business Rate Grant	45.9
Retail and Nursery Reliefs	35.3
Total	81.2

The Council has also provided flexibility in business rate payments to support businesses at this difficult time.

4.37 Hardship Fund

- 4.38 The Government has allocated £2.1 million of a hardship fund providing for a £150 rebate for those people of working age in receipt of Council Tax support. This is expected to benefit approximately 14,000 people and provide direct financial support at this difficult time. The Council continue to support households through Single Discretionary Awards, Welfare Reform Activity and access to trusts for support.

- 4.39 Alongside this there has been a significant increase in the Universal Credit claimants in the City with consequential impacts on the need for support. The Council is working with partners to enhance money advice services within the City.

4.40 Public Buildings/Commercial Properties/Traded Income

- 4.41 The Council closed the majority of public buildings in accordance with Government guidelines. This included leisure centres, libraries, markets, commercial buildings. This has had a significant impact on income levels in the short term where income has ceased and its likely to have an impact in the medium term as usage remains suppressed.

- 4.42 Alongside the reduction in commercial income the Council has experienced significant income losses in respect of car parking income, public protection fines etc.

- 4.43 The impact of income losses outweighs the additional costs in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic and across the Country is impacting on the financial sustainability of Councils in the medium term. Representations are being made by the LGA for

additional funding to allow Council's to navigate their financial sustainability during these difficult times.

4.44 **Procurement**

- 4.45 The Government issued procurement guidance PPN/02/20 encouraging Councils to support their suppliers and maintain provision of services. The Council in response has:
- (a) Moved to immediate payment of invoices
 - (b) Supported suppliers through guaranteeing payments to the end of June, even if there were changes in services provided due to lockdown restrictions
 - (c) Worked with providers to ensure sustainability of the Market, for example care providers
 - (d) Flexed current contracts to meet service demands, for example residential care provision with Agincare.

4.46 **Governance**

- 4.47 The Council very quickly put in robust arrangements including:
- Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Strategic Coordination Group (SCG)
 - Council SCG comprising of the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors
 - Tactical Coordination Group (TCG), comprising the Directors Network
 - Task and Finish Groups, for example PPE.
- 4.48 The Council has also led or taken active roles in sectoral or regional groups such as Health and Social Care, Human Resources redeployment, Community Resilience groups etc. Partners recognise the response and value add of the City's response to the Pandemic.
- 4.49 The responsibility for emergency planning is delegated to the Strategic Director of Communities and Place. The key delegation is Part 3 of the Constitution, Strategic Director for Communities and Place, B20 as follows:
- Coordinating and managing emergency planning powers, mobilising the council's resources in the event of a major incident and liaising with the emergency services during the conduct of a major incident and subsequent recovery from an incident;*
- 4.50 This has been delegated to the TCG to agree necessary actions which are documented on a Decision Log maintained by the Director of Financial Services. The Decision log is shared weekly with the Cabinet Member for Licencing and Governance by the Strategic Director for Communities and Place. Separate issue log and risk registers are also actively monitored.
- 4.51 Weekly updates are provided to Group Leaders by the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors.
- 4.52 The Governance arrangements have worked well and allowed the Council's response to be responsive and agile. The Council's teams have worked cross departmentally to

develop policies, risk assessments and capacity and skills where required. The Lead on Equality and Diversity produced a shortened version of our equality impact assessment form and this was used successfully to embrace equality in the re-opening of the Raynesway Household Waste and Re-cycling Centre

- 4.53 The Council's workforce has moved quickly to digital working supported by ICT with minimal officers being required to physically be in Council buildings. More recently democracy commenced with an urgent leaders meeting followed by an Executive Scrutiny and Cabinet meeting.
- 4.54 Nearly 200 employees have been redeployed during the first stage of the pandemic response to support priority areas. This has greatly helped with the capacity and response in pressured front-line service areas.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 The Covid 19 Response has been undertaken in partnership with all the major stakeholders in the City. This has re-energised a sense of purpose and drive from all to do the best for the City.
- 5.2 The Derby Hub has provided a focal point for community engagement. The Council has promoted services and assistance through regular communication, including a resident letter issued to all households in the city, which was also produced as a BSL Video and in large print.

Other options

- 6.1 Do Nothing: This was not an option as the Council has an obligation to respond to Emergencies and to provide community leadership.
- 6.2 Deliver just what the Government specifically requested: The Council early on decided to do whatever was required to support the City during the Covid 19 crisis. This is inextricably linked to the Council's purpose and values.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 The Government have provided two tranches of un-ringfenced funding to support the Local Authority response to Covid 19

Funding	£m
Grant 1	7.7
Grant 2	7.2
Total Funding	14.9

In addition, the Government provided cash flow support of £16.5 million through deferral of business rate payments across to Government and the early payment of a

number of Social Care Grants.

- 7.2 In addition to the un-ringfenced funding the Government has announced ringfenced grants for:

- (a) Infection Control in Care Homes
- (b) Test, Track and Trace Programme
- (c) Rough Sleepers
- (d) Opening the Highstreet

- 7.3 The Council is required to submit data returns to the MHCLG detailing spend and forecasts. To date, two returns have been submitted totalling:

	£m
Additional Costs to the end of May	5.1
Loss of Income to the end of May	3.8

Further additional costs and loss of income will be incurred post May.

- 7.4 Additional significant deferrals of Business Rates and Council Tax are expected during 2020/21. This is likely to result in a significant collection fund deficit which under current accounting rules will have to be addressed in the 2021/22 MTFP.
- 7.5 Current Government funding is only expected to address the impact of Covid 19 to September placing increased pressure on the MTFP for the rest of the year. In addition, the 'knock on' effects of the Covid 19 pandemic on activity levels and ability to secure income will have a marked impact on the financial sustainability of the Council in the medium term.
- 7.6 A more detailed reporting and appraisal of the financial impact of Covid 19 on the Council's overall MTFP and Capital Programme will be detailed in the Quarter 1 budget monitoring report.
- 7.7 The Council through national representative bodies such as the LGA, Sigoma, continue to make representations to Government for additional funding to allow the effective response to continue to the pandemic and secondly to maintain the financial sustainability of the Council.

Legal implications

- 8.1 The actions detailed within this report are either exercised as part of the emergency powers delegated to the Strategic Director of Communities and Place or as part of the existing constitution framework and delegations already in place.
- 8.2 Decisions and actions were undertaken in accordance with the Government guidance issued at that point in time. Government guidance has constantly changed during this period with the result that decisions may have been subsequently refreshed to be in accordance with the latest government guidance.

Other significant implications

- 9.1 The Covid Pandemic will have a significant impact on the City, its economy and communities and provision of Council Services in the future. It is important that the Council and the City continue with the agile way of working and collaborating demonstrated in this period.
- 9.2 The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the Council's financial sustainability will require re-prioritisation of Council spend and plans.
- 9.3 Equality and diversity implications have been considered as part of impact assessments for any major service changes. Videos in community languages and in BSL have been produced to make sure our community has access to Covid 19 information and support. We arranged for a mobile phone and SignVideo Relay System so Deaf people can contact our Hub. Our Comms Team has made sure that our website has access to a range of national Covid 19 help and support information, including domestic abuse, in many languages, Easy Read and SignHealth.

With assistance from our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Employee Support Network, we are writing to our BAME colleagues offering a range of support and risk assessments, following national concerns about BAME groups facing higher risks of being affected by Covid 19.

Our Lead on Equality and Diversity has also been offering equality, diversity and inclusion advice to outside agencies and communities to support our COVID 19 response.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu	26/05/2020
Finance	Simon Riley	24/05/2020
Service Director(s)		
Report sponsor		
Other(s)	Heather Greenan	25/05/2020
	Ann Webster	26/05/2020
	Liz Moore	27/05/2020

Background papers:

List of appendices: