

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**To:** Environment and Sustainability Committee

**Meeting Date:** 28th May 2020

**From:** Steve Cox, Executive Director – Place and Economy

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Key decision:** No

**Outcome:** The Council's response to COVID-19 and our strategies for county-wide recovery will have a significant impact on outcomes for individuals and communities.

**This report provides an update on:**

- the Council's ongoing response to the current Coronavirus pandemic;

**Recommendation:** The Committee is recommend to:

- a. note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus; and
- b. note the creation of the Covid 19 Environment Sub Group and the work that it is doing.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The coronavirus pandemic has affected every part of life - in Cambridgeshire, across the UK and globally. In the UK, over 220,000 people have been infected by the COVID-19 virus, more than 32,000 have sadly died and the country has been in lockdown for over 7 weeks. Thousands of businesses are currently closed across Cambridgeshire, with staff furloughed or working from home and every single person in our County has had to change the way they live their lives.
- 1.2. In these very challenging circumstances, the Council has reacted quickly with the dual focus of responding to the crisis and keeping critical services running. Our workforce and our councillors have moved to working from home if possible and, where face to face services are critical, these are being carefully planned and safely delivered. We have changed almost overnight to work in different ways to support the most vulnerable people in our communities, developing new responses and maintaining all critical services.
- 1.3. Local Government around the UK, and indeed around the world, is beginning to think about the longer term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic –the detrimental effects on more vulnerable individuals and groups but also the opportunities for positive change. Officers and Councillors are working with their professional networks to determine the ‘right’ way to tackle recovery, sharing ideas and good practice. To ensure that the Council takes a strategic approach to recovery and redesign, a Recovery Framework has been developed.
- 1.4. The Council’s recovery framework will be built towards ambitious definitions for individual, community and county wide outcomes. It will determine both the immediate and longer term steps the Council needs to take to play its part in achieving these outcomes across Cambridgeshire. Further details of the Council’s Recovery Framework can be found here: [COVID19 and Recovery Report May 20](#)

## 2. ONGOING RESPONSE

- 2.1 In April, a report to this committee gave details of the initial response to the Coronavirus pandemic, nationally and locally. Reporting structures and governance were detailed as well as the immediate priorities for the Council, which included:
  - Supporting the NHS, particularly through quick and effective response to new Hospital Discharge Guidance.
  - Supporting our care homes.
  - Establishing a county-wide coordination hub so that shielded and vulnerable self-isolators are supported with supplies of food, medicine, and other essential support.
  - Ensuring that vulnerable children are supported during the pandemic.
  - Implementing measures to protect and support our workforce.
  - Managing our supply chain.
  - Maintaining public trust and confidence by providing good and regular communication and by amplifying public health and government guidance.
- 2.2 During the last four weeks, work has continued in all of these critical areas as it has become increasingly clear that many of our emergency response activities will need to stay in place for several months, at least. Further details on immediate response and how we are shifting from emergency to ‘new normal’ services is included in this month’s reports for each Directorate, which are available here: [COVID 19 Weekly Reports](#)

- 2.3 Since the last committee cycle, we have also set up a response to deal with tracking and tracing and are awaiting further guidance on our role in this work. We have set up a Track and Trace sub-group to ensure that we have a robust local system which meets the requirements of the national contract tracing programme. Initial information suggests that contact tracking will predominantly be done at a regional/national level through Public Health England our local role appears to fall into 4 areas:
- Support for people who are told to self-isolate after testing positive who have no immediate support from family/friends.
  - Support for local outbreaks, from Public Health and Environmental Health colleagues, working alongside the regional PHE Health Protection Team.
  - A role in the flow of data around this activity – from testing, through contact tracking, to local support for those who need it.
  - Communications to amplify the national messages around take up of the NHS app/online reporting of symptoms, getting tested and self-isolation for those with symptoms and for those who have tested positively.
- 2.4 We are currently reviewing “OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy” which was published on 11<sup>th</sup> May, considering implications for our services and workforce and planning accordingly with our partners.

### 3. COMMITTEE SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHT REPORTS

- 3.1 Key highlights in activity within Place and Economy since the last Committee are as follows. These are presented for the whole of Place and Economy because of the cross cutting nature of a number of the activities and their relationship to the work of this Committee:
- **Specialist FFP3 face masks were transferred from our highways provider, Skanska to the health sector to reflect the urgent need for these. This has meant some of our highways policies have been revised, particularly how potholes will be repaired as without the masks, saw cutting out of the road surface is not possible. Skanska are sourcing alternatives and the normal policies will be returned as soon as possible;**
  - All 9 Household recycling centres were re-opened on May 11<sup>th</sup>. This followed a lot of planning and work with highways to ensure adequate traffic management is in place. The reopening has gone well and customers have adapted to the new arrangements at the sites;
  - **The outstanding number of highway faults that need attention continues to decline with less than 500 left at the time of writing;**
  - **The number of potholes filled each week remains between 1,500 and 2,000 and Members and the public are encouraged to continue reporting so we can take advantage of the lower traffic levels;**
  - A plan has been developed with Cambridge City Council to allow for social distancing when retail re-opens from the start of June. Officers are working with other districts to see if similar support is needed;
  - **Plans are being drawn up for restarting of the parking enforcement service in Cambridge when it is considered this is appropriate. No date has yet been set;**
  - **Although shortly after lockdown commenced, most highway works sites closed down as sub-contractors to Skanska furloughed staff, most of these sites are now working again and there are only a few where specific processes mean they will not be able to resume immediately;**

- Council officers have worked closely with the Combined Authority to develop a series of Pop Up cycle lanes for Cambridge City and other areas across the county for immediate implementation. This is intended to be part of a rolling programme of implementation across the county. The initial schemes will be in Shelford Road, Trumpington Road, Chesterton Road, Milton High Street, Girton Road and Kings Hedges Road. One way operation in Mill Road, Cambridge is also being implemented;
- There has been a 94% reduction in busway passengers and at least an 80% reduction on other buses. Stagecoach are looking at increasing their service patterns now though, as more people travel to work. This will need to be supported by further government money as the current service pattern is not viable without it;
- There has been a 70% drop in traffic across the highway network;
- **‘Thank You NHS’ markings have been painted on the approaches to Addenbrookes and Hinchingsbrooke hospitals;**
- Around 80 P and E staff have been redeployed to the hub. A plan for the staged return of these has been agreed as services start to pick up;
- **Two road resurfacing schemes have been brought forward at Pidley and Bar Hill;**
- Officers are working to implement schemes (such as the pop up cycle lanes) to capitalise on the benefits of the reduced traffic for air quality;
- A cross section of senior representatives from the private, public and charity sectors attended a first meeting of the COVID Recovery - Environment Sub-Group on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The meeting started to identify the impacts of Covid-19 on the environment and how this can inform the economic recovery. Uniquely, this is the only sub-group to identify positive impacts resulting from Covid-19. The next step is to develop an action plan that builds on the evidence and learning from the last 10 weeks to embed change as part of our recovery. The draft action plan will be shared with Committee next month. The positive environmental impacts, most notably include air quality, noise, nature and awareness/access to quality green space.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The estimated financial impact on the Council has been submitted to MHCLG in two returns, in common with other Councils. In many areas these remain indicative and uncertain estimates contingent on the length of disruption and the impact on activity levels, and it is expected that these will be further refined and validated, in the run-up to the July GPC meeting. GPC will be asked to approve any necessary budget revisions or grant allocations at that stage. The following table presents the summarised estimated impact, at this stage, for this Committee, as submitted to MHCLG. These do not necessarily relate to what the request in budget revision will be:

		<i>Headline full-year estimates for this Committee submitted to MHCLG in early May 2020 £360K</i>					
April commitments	Committee name	New commitments	Income forgone	Impaired savings	Gross Total	Specified funding	Net Total
£360K	E&S	0	£360K	£0	£360K		£360K

- 4.2 The two Covid-19 pressures are reduced planning income (£60K) and a £300K waste pressure for reduced trade waste income and a loss of Household Recycling centre

recyclates income. When these figures were collated it was before the HRC's opened, so the additional traffic management costs relating to this will be reflected in the next report.

## **5. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 5.1 The current Coronavirus pandemic will have both an immediate and a longer term effect on all of the Council's priorities. The impacts will be monitored and managed through our risk logs and recovery plans and will feed into the annual review of Council strategy.

## **6. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Despite the devastating effects of the Covid 19 virus, as noted by the Covid 19 Environment sub Group, there have also been some positive implications around air quality and the potential for changed long term habits. The challenge will be how to lock these in as recovery develops.
- 6.2 It is likely that we will see a rise in referrals to children's services both locally and nationally as the pressures on families increase. Demand may also grow in adult services as the effects of interrupted care on chronic conditions emerge. It is therefore essential that we plan for an extended period of response and that the recovery programme rapidly identifies interventions which may minimise detrimental impacts.
- 6.3 In spite of the additional funding that has been allocated by the Government, the Council is still facing a deficit of nearly £8m which, if not supported through further Government funding rounds, will have to be met by considering all options available to this council . A range of scenarios will need to be developed and tested to support business planning. As patterns of demand and behaviour become clearer following the immediate response stage, the organisation will need to have a range of options and contingency plans in place to anticipate and mitigate against financial pressures.
- 6.4 Our COVID-19 response has relied not only on the commitment and hard work of our own workforce and providers but also on the huge number of volunteers and community organisations who have come forward to help in their communities. As part of recovery and redesign work we will be learning from this fantastic community and partner response and further developing our Think Communities approach.
- 6.5 As a Council, our greatest asset is our people. Our workforce has mobilised in many different ways, working wherever they are needed to deliver critical services, often under very challenging circumstances. We continue to work carefully across all teams to ensure our workforce is well equipped, stays resilient and feels supported as we tackle this crisis together.

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	YES Chris Malyon
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?</b>	
<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?</b>	YES Fiona McMillan
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	
<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	YES Christine Birchall
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	YES Liz Robin

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
None	