

Cambridgeshire County Council's Response to COVID-19

To: General Purposes Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday 26 January 2021

From: Chief Executive and Joint Management Team

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable

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: GPC is asked to note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

Officer contact:

Name: Amanda Askham
Post: Director of Business Improvement and Development
Email: Amanda.askham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 703565

Member contacts:

Names: Councillor Count and Councillor Hickford
Post: Chair/Vice-Chair
Email: Steve.count@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Roger.hickford@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 706398

1. Background

- 1.1. The country is now in a third national lockdown following a rapid and substantial rise in the number of cases of Covid-19, in large part due to the emergence of a new and more infectious strain of the virus. Across Cambridgeshire, the number of cases during the first half of January 2021 has been higher than at any previous time during the pandemic. Pressure on the NHS and Local Government services has risen accordingly and the ongoing restrictions continue to have a detrimental impact on physical and mental well-being as well as on the economy.
- 1.2. It is more important than ever that people follow the rules. This, coupled with the vaccination programme, remains the best chance we have of reducing the number of cases, relieving pressure on the NHS and getting back more of the life that we used to take for granted. Whilst we are in lockdown this means that people should stay at home, going out for a limited number of essential reasons only.
- 1.3. The Council continues its efforts to prevent and control the spread of the virus and to do everything it can to reduce the impact of COVID-19. This report provides an overview of the Council's ongoing response to the pandemic and provides links to more detailed operational information wherever available.

2. Guidance

- 2.1. The law has been updated to reflect the new rules with the current regulations allowing lockdown to continue until the end of March. The new [restrictions](#) will mean everyone must stay at home and may leave only for a limited set of reasons, including to:
 - visit essential [businesses and services](#) which are allowed to stay open, either for yourself or for a [vulnerable person](#)
 - go to [work](#) – but only if you can't work from home
 - [exercise](#) with your household (or support bubble) or one other person, this should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area.
 - meet your [support bubble](#) or [childcare bubble](#) if you are legally permitted to form one
 - seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm
 - attend education or childcare – only for those [eligible](#)
 - to attend: a place of [worship](#), a [funeral](#) or event related to a death or a [wedding](#) ceremony, all of which are subject to guidance on safety and numbers.

3. Latest Data

- 3.1 [Coronavirus Data](#), extracted on 20 January 2021, indicates that in Cambridgeshire there have been a total of 20,130 COVID-19 cases detected since the beginning of the pandemic, with a lower cumulative rate than England (3,080 cases per 100,000 compared to 5,432 cases per 100,000 for England). Similar to national patterns, cases of COVID-19 increased rapidly in late December, peaking in early January at 549 cases per 100,000 for the week ending 4th January, and has now dropped to 334 cases per 100,000 for the week ending 15th January. This is below the England average of 497 per 100,000 and the East of England average of 528 per 100,000.

3.2 Case rates are highest in Fenland, where the weekly case rate is 397 per 100,000 for the week ending 15 January. There have been 520 deaths involving COVID-19 in Cambridgeshire up to 8 January 2021, where COVID-19 is on the death certificate.

4. Vaccination programme

4.1 The Government asked the NHS to deliver a Covid-19 vaccination programme for England from December, so that those who need it most were able to access vaccinations as soon as they became available.

4.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG swiftly undertook detailed planning with its partners, building on the expertise and strong track record the NHS already has in delivering immunisations like the annual flu vaccination programme, to ensure that a COVID-19 vaccination programme does not impact on other vital services and could be swiftly put into place across its area.

4.3 Vaccinations are now well underway in our area. Local people are being contacted when it's their turn to be vaccinated by letter, email, phone or text, giving details of how to make an appointment. As long as people are registered with a local GP, there is no need to do anything else to ensure they get invited to book a vaccination appointment. For anyone not registered with a GP, information on how to register is [here](#).

4.4 The CCG will be inviting more patients to have their vaccinations as soon as additional vaccination sites and vaccination appointments become available and will follow up with any patients who have been invited and not responded.

4.5 More information about the programme, including the current vaccination locations, the priority groups for vaccination and more, is available at this [link](#) which is updated regularly

5. Communications during the current national lockdown

5.1 A revised strategy was developed to revitalise and reinvigorate communications in early January to help keep residents focused on the new national lockdown, remind them of the need for additional vigilance because of the new more transmissible variant, the local support available for individuals self isolating or who are vulnerable and also to support the CCG's communications around the rollout of vaccination centres and messages.

5.2 The strategy was discussed by the Member-led Engagement Board on January 12th who fed into the messages and supported a continued and enhanced role for Members and Community champions in using the regularly updated toolkits. Their suggestion to make the information more direct using easy to understand statistics and eye catching graphics have been incorporated, for example [Coronavirus statistics](#) and [Stay at home](#) messages on Twitter.

5.3 The strategy also includes the need for a focus on high risk groups and businesses – and to date this has included producing communication materials for specific communities – including new and revised translations and videos using community champions and well known advocates.

6. Workforce

6.1 Since the start of the pandemic our workforce have reported that:

- 226 have had COVID tests carried out.
- 280 have had an Anti-body test carried out.
- 62 have been diagnosed with the virus.

6.2 Fortnightly briefing meetings continue with the three recognised trade unions across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The meetings provide an opportunity for answering questions and engaging trade union colleagues on all aspects of the Council's response to the COVID crisis that have a people related connection, as well as changes and updates in the advice we issue as the situation evolves.

6.3 The strong focus on health and wellbeing continues and further advice and support is being issued to help during this latest lockdown, with a particular emphasis on mental health given the prolonged period that many have had to work at home. Information is regularly shared on our Employee Assistance Programme which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. In addition, information on other agencies has been made available including most recently the CPFT Psychological Wellbeing Service and the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service, delivered by Remploy which provides confidential one-to-one workplace mental health support for staff.

6.4 For those who are having to balance work and home schooling at this time sources of information and advice have been shared via the staff bulletin with and also confirmation from the senior team that they understand the challenges and that a flexible approach will be adopted to support people during this time.

6.5 Risk assessments have been reviewed for teams that continue to operate from Council premises during this latest period to ensure that all those who can work at home continue to do so, and all those individuals who have been accessing buildings on grounds of their individual wellbeing have also been reviewed in discussion with them, to balance risk against their specific circumstances.

6.6 Monthly wellbeing hours continue. The next one takes place the last week in January and will be led by an external speaker discussing the effects of racial trauma, micro-aggressions, systemic racism and social media on mental health. In February the focus will be on sleep which many people have said they are struggling with and would welcome some practical advice.

6.7 Online mental health awareness training continues to be rolled out and the sessions that were delivered specifically for managers to given them the knowledge, tools and confidence to better support their people to cope with COVID-related anxiety and build their individual personal resilience were well received so further sessions have now been scheduled for February and March.

6.8 A regular weekly virtual drop in session has been set up to update staff on the current situation around Covid-19 and to give people a chance to discuss their thoughts and ideas with senior managers.

- 6.9 Hints and tips on a variety of wellbeing subjects continue to be included in the twice weekly staff bulletin. These cover topics ranging from how to set up a workstation at home to where to find support for financial matters and dealing with anxiety. The Council's Health and Wellbeing Portal hosts all of this information in one place for ease of access: [Health and Wellbeing](#)

7. Governance and reporting

- 7.1 Members oversee the Council's continued efforts to prevent and control the spread of the virus and response and recovery plans through regular engagement, including:
- Governance through the Council's committee structure
 - Monthly highlight reports from every Director
 - Weekly updates on activity and outbreak control by County and District
 - Member Seminars
 - Weekly Leaders and MP briefing from the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)
 - Service committee workshops on response and recovery
 - Twice weekly media briefings
 - Workforce briefings (currently three times a week)
 - Regular Chairs, Vice Chairs and Director updates
 - Group Leader updates at least monthly
- 7.2 The current Coronavirus pandemic is having an impact across all areas of the Council's work. Links to this month's detailed service committee updates are included below. Where the latest service committee report is not available, information has been taken from the Service Directors Report:

[General Purposes Committee](#) (Finance Monitoring Report including effects of COVID19 on budget)

[Adults Committee](#) (Infection Control Fund – 327, Planning Proposals – 328, Rough Sleepers – 329, Testing in Care Homes – 330)

[Children and Young People Committee](#) (Update on COVID19 and Education - 2.0)

[Commercial and Investment Committee](#) (Business Planning Proposals 391 – 392)

[Communities and Partnership Committee](#) (COVID19 Co-ordination and Response Hub – 2.4, Planning Proposals - 327, Support for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable – 2.4.4 – 2.4.6, Shielding Framework 2.4.3, Winter Support Grant Scheme 2.4.8 – 2.4.11)

[Environment and Sustainability Committee](#) (Business Planning proposal – 41)

[Health Committee](#) (Update from Addenbrooke's Hospital – 360, Public Health Response to COVID-19 – 362)

[Highways and Transport Committee](#) (Projects affected by COVID19 - 54)

8. Significant Implications

- 8.1 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

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Not applicable
Name of Financial Officer: Tom Kelly

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Not applicable

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes
Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?
Yes
Name of Officer: Amanda Askham

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?
Yes
Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes
Name of Officer: Amanda Askham

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes
Name of Officer: Liz Robin

9. Source documents

- 9.1 Links included in the report.